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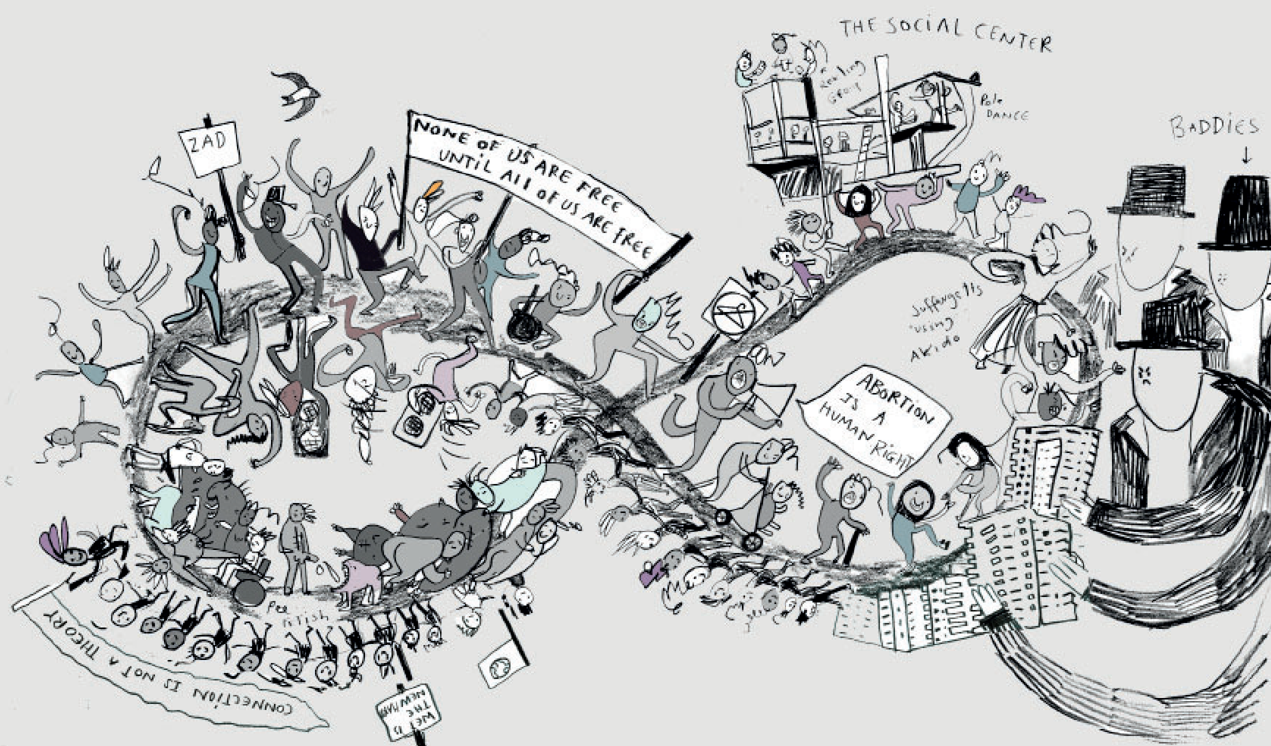

Sexualities and Critiques of Capital

WOMEN & GENDER RESEARCH VOL. 33, NO. 1 2022

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Redaktionsledelsens forord

Velkommen til det nye nummer af *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, som denne gang består af temanummeret: "Sexualities and critiques of capital". *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* nummer 1 (2022) byder dog ikke blot på et væsentligt og aktuelt tema. Det markerer også en ny redaktionsledelse: Fra 2022 består redaktionsledelsen af ansvarshavende redaktør Michael Nebeling Petersen (KU), administrerende redaktør Bontu Lucie Guschke (CBS) og indholdsredaktør Mons Bissenbakker (KU). Derudover er *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* fra 2022 flyttet til Center for Køn, Seksualitet og Forskellighed på Københavns Universitets humanistiske fakultet. Redaktionen består dog fortsat af forskere fra en bred vifte af danske og nordiske universiteter, hvoraf mange har været med i flere år. Den nye redaktionsledelse og den samlede redaktion ønsker at benytte lejligheden til at takke Hilda Rømer Christensen og Koordinationen for Kønsforskning for det mangeårige arbejde med at udvikle tidsskriftet.

Vi er glade for og stolte over, at *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* fra 2022 har modtaget tidsskriftstøtte fra Danmarks Frie Forskningsfond til at udkomme to gange årligt i de kommende tre år. Vi er ligeledes taknemmelige for støtten til udgivelse af *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* fra Hulda Pedersens Legat i 2022. Den nye finansiering muliggør ikke alene, at vi kan publicere stærke og spændende kønsforskningsartikler, men også at vi kan sikre den fortsatte udvikling af tidsskriftet og dermed understøtte en vedvarende akademisk samtale om kønsforskning i en dansk kontekst. Tak til Danmarks Frie Forskningsfond og Hulda Pedersens Legat.

Kvinder, Køn & Forskning har i mange år stået vagt om den videnskabelige integritet. Den nye redaktionsledelse vil fortsætte det arbejde og sikre, at tidsskriftet fortsat lever op til de højeste internationale videnskabelige standarder. Alle artikler i *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* undergår således anonym fagfællebedømmelse af mindst to uafhængige og uvildige eksperter inden for feltet.

Med flytningen og den nye redaktionsledelse introducerer vi også formatet "Redaktionsledelsens forord", som sigter på at situere de enkelte numre i kønsforskningens vidensinteresser og specifikt i *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*s historie. Således ønsker vi at betone, at nærværende tema, "sexualities and critiques of capital", placerer sig i forlængelse den feministiske teoris lange tradition for at kombinere analysen af køn med analysen af kapitalisme og økonomi. Spørgsmålet om køn og kapital har da også været noget, som tidsskriftet gennem årene har søgt at analysere og forstå. Det være sig i forhold til diskussioner om arverettigheder, ligeløn og betaling for hus- og omsorgsarbejde, som i spørgsmål, der relaterer sig til sexarbejde, rugemoderskab og velfærdsstatens historiske omfavnelse af køn, intimitet og familie. Samtidig er der, som temaredaktionen også peger på, behov for en mere eksplicit analytisk kombination af køn, seksualitet og kapitalismekritik, som også rækker ud over et fokus på heteroseksuelle, ciskønnede, hvide kvinders kampe – en udvikling, som dette temanummer søger at bidrage til.

Som temaredaktionens introduktion påpeger, udkommer dette nummer på et tidspunkt, hvor anti-gender diskurser fylder stadigt mere og kønsforskningen er genstand for politisk kritik. At kønsforskning er sprængfarligt stof, er dog hverken noget nyt eller alene et lokalt dansk fænomen. Snarere kan man tale om, at der over de seneste år er sket en repolitisering og intensivering af køn som et politisk spørgsmål, der over hele verden nok en gang spændes for mere konservative og antifeministiske vogne. Denne repolitisering understreger behovet for at forske i og arbejde med et blik for, hvordan forskellige undertrykkelsesstrukturer sammenvæves, sådan som vi aktuelt ser det i spørgsmålet om retten til kropslig selvbestemmelse i USA: Det pågående politiske arbejde for at etablere indskrænkninger af den frie abort sker således efter et års intensivt lovarbejde med at underminere transpersoners ret til kropslig selvbestemmelse, såvel som i konteksten af vedvarende angreb på racialiserede kroppe gennem politivold og overvågning. Udviklingen i USA

er ikke enestående. Lignende backlash og angreb på kvinde-, LGBT+- og minoritetsrettigheder og -forskning ses i en række lande verden over. Dette er blot en af de mange grunde til, at akademisk viden om de intersektionelle sammenhænge bag spørgsmålene om køn forbliver stadigt aktuelle. Den systematiske viden og fortsatte samtale om kønnets intersektionelle, historiske, sociale, kulturelle, geografiske og økonomiske baggrund udgør et nødvendigt grundlag for at forstå rammen for vores samtid. Ikke mindst de politiske kønskampe, som finder sted lige nu – i Danmark og i resten af verden.

På vegne af redaktionen

Michael Nebeling Petersen, Bontu Lucie Guschke og Mons Bissenbakker

Liberating Bodies: Sexualities and Critiques of Capital

By Mathias Klitgård, Liu Xin and Laura Horn

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Sexualities under capitalism offer an entry point to the constitution of subjects, communities, and desires of past and future. Emphasis on the political significance of sexuality presents one of the most important feminist contributions to the analysis of global capitalism. The organisation of sexualities hierarchizes labouring bodies according to sexualised, racialized and gendered definitions of legible subjectivities. As such, sexual politics mark the constantly changing field through which binaries of the public and the private, production and reproduction, the deserving and the undeserving, the proper and the dysfunctional, bodily autonomy and its social embeddedness shape the how, when and where of capitalist exploitation and dispossession.

This special issue provides a platform for critical analysis and debates that shed light on the complex and often contradictory ways through which sexualities and capital are related to, shaped by, and constitutive of each other. It aims to provide insight into sexual politics as fundamental technologies of power within capitalism, and how sexual oppression under capitalism foments critiques of domination and communities of resistance. In this introduction, we sketch out these emerging debates as we contextualise key contemporary discussions concerning the intersection between sexualities and capital across different fields. We insist on the relevance and urgency of these discussions, including topics such as communities and/of resistance as well as one crucial question that this issue's forum discussion tries to address collectively, namely, "why do we put up with it all?"

In the face of overlapping economic, ecological, health and care crises (Fraser 2021; Rao 2021), intensified political tensions and exacerbated socio-economic inequalities that are materialised along deeply gendered, sexualized, racialized and classed lines, we are witnessing an increased interest in thinking through issues pertaining to sexualities, bodies and desires as central to understanding and critiquing contemporary capitalism (Peterson 2016; Smith 2020; Gore 2022). The liberatory approach to the crossings between sexual politics and critiques of capital resounds through much of the emerging literature in Queer and Trans Marxisms and Social Reproduction Theory and critiques of the household (Bhattacharya 2017; Floyd 2009; Lewis 2016; Liu 2020; Raha 2021). The intersection also plays a constitutive role in decolonial

anti-capitalisms, pleasure activism and mutual aid organising (brown 2019; Lugones 2007; Piepzna-Samarisinha 2018; Spade 2020) as well as abolitionist projects ranging from prison abolition to gender abolition and family abolition (Gleeson 2017; O'Brien 2020; Wilson Gilmore 2022). These projects explain how oppressive mechanisms are operationalised through the contradictions of capital and are sustained over time. And they elaborate how people manage to find each other and sustain lived alternatives in spite of these oppressive structures.

The question of sexual and gender minority formation and the problem of the hierarchising and exclusionary dynamics of identity politics are important for discussions of sexualities and critiques of capital. While the relation between the economic and the cultural, and between redistribution and recognition continues to be subjects of debate (see for example Butler 1997; Fraser 1995; Oksala 2017), a growing body of literature maintain that sexualities and sexual politics are both foundational to and shaped by the capitalist mode of production and accumulation (see for example Drucker 2015; Hennessy 2000; Raha and Baars 2021; Valencia 2018), as well as the changing relations of labour and formations of state and nation (see for example Chitty 2020; Guitzel 2021; Liu 2015). This can be observed in the way that the contingent inclusion of particular sexual minority identities in nationalist narratives and imaginaries feeds into the neoliberal logic of "privatization and personal responsibility" (Duggan 2003, 12) on the one hand, and the figure of the exceptional and civilized nation-state on the other hand (Puar 2007, Rao 2020). Through the biopolitical disciplining and regimentation of sexualities, bodies become governable and exploitable. Or, as the necropolitical flipside of the same dynamic, they become marked and discardable as surplus populations.

Discussions of the unfolding contradictions of capital are incomplete without an understanding of the logics and politics of sexual dissidence and gender nonconformity analysed in relation to the household and various normative constructions of the family. In the introduction to their recently published volume *Transgender Marxism* (2021), editors Jules Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke write that:

> *"There is no thoroughly anti-capitalist politics that does not include a critique of the household as a social unit of capitalist governance. There is no critique of value that succeeds without becoming queer. Household and mode of production are never segregated: their motion grinds us between workplace and homestead. But if our gender experiences are not outside the grandiose processes of political economy, where are they located within them?" (Gleeson and O'Rourke, 2021, 15)*

The household, and relatedly, questions of social support and care labour, are key sites for examining the (missing) link between the organisation and lived realities of sexualities and capitalism. Viewed historically, the meaning and constitution of household and family have changed according to the regime of capitalist accumulation. For example, M.E. O'Brien (2020) charts the transformation of the family in the US context from property owning and inheritance based family during the period of early industrialization, to family as a site of social conservatism of the workers movement in the nineteenth century, and to family as atomised, white and heterosexual institution in the 1960s and 1970s. The different family formations also produce specific modes of exclusion and shape the dynamics of sexual deviancy and sexual rebellion. For example, the property owning family during the early industrialization excluded proletarian and enslaved people. The family formed during the workers movement, although legitimised working-class family life, discriminated sex workers. In the Nordic countries, there have historically been similar patterns of transformation, but specifically anchored to the development of the Nordic welfare state. The changes show the different kinds of stabilisation and destabilisation of various kinds of organising the family, manifesting in different ways the imperatives of heteronormative family formation.

In the present era of neoliberal financialization, the family takes on a new and more diverse form but remains central to the social reproduction of capital. This form can be understood through what Lisa Adkins (2016) calls "asset-based capitalism", where social/familial relations become objects of financial calculation following the logics of asset ownership and asset inflation. Adkins uses these logics as analytics for understanding the new formations of inequalities and sexual politics that are materialised through neoliberal household practices. Instead of separating production and reproduction, this new family relation "places the ideals of intensive mothering, domesticity, entrepreneurialism and an investor spirit towards work and working on the same continuous plane" (Adkins 2016, 3). Faced with dangers of individualised precarity, the household and the nuclear family unit re-emerges as sources of economic security and sites of welfare. As Melinda Cooper notes, "capital has absorbed the antinormative critique of late Fordist liberation movements while capturing their energies in neoliberal/neoconservative imperative of private family responsibilities." (2017, 253). Even in the Nordic welfare states, with their supposedly decommodifying policies, the 'crisis of care' has become increasingly pronounced (Hansen et al 2021).

If the family has variably constituted the gendered space of reproduction, this has dire consequences for the reproduction of those subjects who will not be sustained by the traditional nuclear family. In light of these difficulties accessing reproductive labour, it seems important to develop an expanded and reformulated social reproduction theory that challenges the heteronormative household. Instead of dissociating sexuality from material concerns, a "queer and trans social reproduction theory" (Raha 2021) allows for the consideration of the life-sustaining work involved in community care and in gender construction *both* as unpaid labour and as a form of resistance (see also Ellison 2017). Drawing on the work of Angela Davis, Jordy Rosenberg calls this a "dialectics of social reproduction" where there is a tension and mutual conditioning between "the ways in which life is both made and makes other life possible, and the ways in which that life is stalked and subjected to violence" (Rosenberg 2021, 265).

Echoing the above studies, the special issue as a whole aims to underscore the need to account for the shifting and specific dynamics of power differentials in the critique of and political mobilisation against capitalism. The engagement with sexual politics in light of critiques of capital reverberates through fields and themes whose elaboration goes beyond the scope of this introduction. For the reader who is new to this constellation, we suggest you turn the page directly to the forum with M.E. O'Brien, Nat Raha and Grietje Baars as well as the subsequent comments by Jin Haritaworn and Lisa Adkins. We have asked all forum contributors to provide generous references and have compiled these in a rather comprehensive, although always tentative, reading list, which can be found at the end of the forum.

Sexualities and capital have historically often been thought as separate fields of study in the sense that they utilise different sets of methods, empirical material, disciplines and modes of critique. In the Danish context, this has left marks both in academic and activist circles, where a split between the two fields have historically materialised. Such a divide can also be seen in the history of this journal, *Women, Gender & Research*, which importantly considers the topic of sexuality and sexualities as more than a mere sidekick to the gender question of traditional women's studies, and queer and trans* studies in their intersectional complexities have long had a strong voice in the journal. However, critiques of political economy have appeared sporadically and often through a conceptualisation of the category of woman as predominantly stable, heterosexual and white. The last issue where economic structures of exploitation played a central role for a special issue was, quite tellingly, in 2010 with an issue on "The labour market and the gender pay gap". Since then, Danish academia has, in what some call 'the Marxist turn', seen an increased interest in critiques of capitalism. This is visible not only in conference and special issue appearances in the field of critical theory and Marxist studies but also in a certain mainstreaming of left-wing responses to the

ongoing climate crisis, which emphasise its roots in the extractivist capitalist order.

This imagined foreclosure of a dialogue has often prevented serious constructive engagements across the aisle. In short, the question has too often been *whether* sexual politics is compatible with various anti-capitalist projects and vice versa, and not *how* this is possible. The stakes are now higher than ever, and we cannot afford rhetorical distancing of affinity groups and alienating those whom we should be in solidarity with. This special issue bridges these two critical traditions and casts light on their overlapping struggles and intersecting potentials.

The special issue appears at a time when studies on gender, race and coloniality experience a series of attacks from right wing politicians and public intellectuals. This anti-gender studies agenda is, as many commentators have noted, not unlike the so-called anti-gender movements of France, Hungary, Poland, the UK, and elsewhere. In this context, *Women, Gender & Research* has been mentioned many times as a bulwark for the kind of research that ought to be defunded, and the journal remains under constant threat of a new surge of attacks.

During the spring of 2021, the call for papers for this special issue was cited from the main podium of the Danish parliament as an example of "excessive activism" in Danish gender studies. In this call, we emphasised the importance of activist work for developing various accounts of sexual politics under capitalism. A significant source of inspiration for the work of our contributors is the ongoing dialogue and collaboration with feminist anti-capitalist and anti-racist grassroots movements and activisms within and beyond academia. This focus on various strands of activism is not accidental. As feminists and critical theorists, we know that knowledge is never disinterested. Knowledge is always produced within specific political and material contexts. When we invite activist work to inform our academic work it is exactly with this in mind, and it is to work towards academic knowledge production being useful for those most heavily marginalised by and resisting intersecting sexualised and classed repressions.

Overview of the contributions for this special issue

With her article "Colonial Intimacies: Constellations of Property and Kinship in German Colonial (After)Lives", Hannah Vögele asks how the categories race, gender, and sexuality develop with, through and for proprietary relations. Vögele highlights the relevance of the colonial context for the co-emergence of capitalist property relations and social and intimate relations that are racialized, gendered and sexualised. With a focus on German colonial rule, she analyses property and intimacy from the perspective of colonial interventions in sexuality and family relations. Her article puts forward a powerful argument that solutions for problems such as gendered violence cannot be found within the current liberal proprietary order and its isolated notions of the private family, individualised responsibility, the criminal justice system and bordering practices. These constraints raises, finally, the need for anti- and decolonial feminist critiques.

In her article "Queering the crisis of care: The future of families in the legal recognition of socially reproductive labour", Miriam Bak-McKenna makes visible the ways in which the division between work and care, as well as between production and reproduction, is reproduced in the heterosexual family model. Using Danish parental leave policies as a case study, McKenna argues that even as non-traditional family forms are becoming recognized, the sole focus on gender in this case recreates and reinforces the heteronormative family as the ideal.

David Reznik's article "Queering comradeship: Anti-capitalist relations in *We Are Who We Are*" engages with Jodi Dean's conceptualization of comradeship to explore the queer connections and anti-capitalist relations in *We Are Who We Are*, a 2020 television series by Luca Guadagnino. Reznik sets his close reading and discussion of the radical relationality between the show's protagonists against the material background in which the show unfolds, that is an American military base in Italy. Highlighting the intersections of capitalist political economy, imperialism, and

gender/sexuality, he insists on the possibilities of queer comradeship to inspire revolutionary change and promote the everyday subversion of global war capital.

In the forum, M.E. O'Brien, Nat Raha and Grietje Baars, approach the main question of the special issue - how to understand the complex and often contradictory ways through which sexualities and capital are related to, shaped by, and constitutive of each other - through various perspectives. These perspectives include the relationship between social reproduction and queer and trans subjectivities, the changing configuration of capitalism and its implication for queer and trans Marxist practices, and global corporate capitalism. The forum is moderated by Liu Xin and Mathias Klitgård. In their respective texts, Jin Haritaworn and Lisa Adkins make commentaries that link to but are not discussed in the forum. Haritaworn's text puts emphasis on the queer of color framework for examining the changing modalities of exclusion of racial capitalism. Adkins' essay underscores the necessity of grappling with the specific logic and operation of the asset economy for understanding the shifting configurations and governance of sexuality.

In Jules Gleeson's essay, we are introduced to two different accounts of the concept of 'fetish' and its analytics in the work of Freud and Marx, respectively. Gleeson argues that we have inherited as common sense a Freudian framework where fetish is a pathology that demonstrates a queer quirk in the development of a healthy (cis-heterosexual) sexuality. Such an understanding of the fetish, as it becomes evident in Freud's writings, participates in racist fantasies of the uncivilised and immature colonial Other. Instead, Gleeson demonstrates how the fetish-character of the commodity that we find in Marx's mature writings works as a satirical comment on these western bourgeois constructions that allows us to grasp the socio-objective allure of the commodity. This non-psychological account of the fetish instead points to two necessary sides of the commodity as the object of desire: the sensuous and the supra-sensuous. Gleeson closes with a reading of the piss fetish documentary *Piss Off* (2019) and shows how these two accounts make for two different understandings of the fetish in question.

In her essay "Abortion is legal!", Nuria Giniger analyses the historical and ideological base that led to the National Senate in Argentina legalising abortion on 30 December 2020. The essay has two objectives. On the one hand, Giniger offers a genealogical account of women's struggles in Argentina and, on the other, she reflects on different liberal elements of the campaign and how it proves limited for the wider struggle for social and gendered emancipation. Through her historical analysis of the Argentine feminist movement(s), Giniger argues that while the individual right to abortion is essential as defiant of state and church, a socialist pro-abortion politics has historically underscored the importance of also including a broader critique of the institution of the nuclear family and the church and has offered substantial support for women's labour rights.

Tom Ward's essay "The politics of queer precarity: Queer resistance to rentier-capitalism" focuses on the possibilities of counterhegemonic organizing against the housing crisis and how it has come to structure queer life. As a queer tenant union organizer, Ward shares his experiences with political organizing against the housing crisis in Ireland and Britain, in a housing system that gentrifies and privatises urban space and forces queer people into hostile and unstable housing. Through a discussion of the consequences of rentier capitalism for the restructuring of aspects of queer life, Ward shows how new forms of queer resistance can emerge to develop emancipatory horizons.

Alva Gotby, in her essay, focuses on the politics of friendship and the importance of communities and networks of support for meeting people's needs at the face of intersecting systems of oppression. Drawing on queer Marxist approaches to family abolition, Gotby suggests that friendships could offer an alternative to the structural violence of the nuclear family as valorised through the dominant social logics of white, bourgeois gender categories. For Gotby, abolishing the family doesn't mean further individualisation but could invoke friendship structures that are already in place and

which are already essential to so many social organisations of care today. In a call to nurture those different forms of sociality based on friendship, we can start to create caring relations that render the traditional family form superfluous.

In "Rethinking feminism: From critique of capital to decolonial analysis", Signe Arnfred takes the reader with her on an autobiographical review essay of feminist thinking and writing through many decades of academic and political engagement. Focusing on how to conceptualize gender and how to think feminist struggle in anti-capitalist ways, that is combining feminist and anti-capitalist struggle, Arnfred brings together jigsaw puzzle pieces that show the interconnections, linkages but also tensions between these different discussions. She highlights the crucial contributions of feminists like Ifi Amadiume and Oyèrónké Oyéwùmí and unfolds Maria Lugones' argument about the coloniality of gender. Arnfred's intimate and inspiring essay showcases the strength of feminist decolonial anti-capitalist thinking from 1970s Marxist-feminist organizing in Denmark to contemporary struggles as in the 2019 *Feminism for the 99% Manifesto*.

Matthew Cull reviews Christopher Chitty's posthumously published book *Sexual Hegemony* (2020). In this highly favorable review, Cull highlights Chitty's work as 'queer realist', i.e. interpreting hegemonic sexual formations not as free-floating regulative ideals but rather as a formation that under particular historical socio-economic conditions gives class-political advantages to its practitioners. Chitty, in Cull's review, is therefore interested in moral and pathological accounts of male same-sex practices only insofar as they become instrumentalised for statecraft and the reproduction of class relations. Herein lies important insights for queer history, political theory and beyond.

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Colonial Intimacies: Constellations of Property and Kinship in German Colonial (After)Lives

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Abstract

This paper contends that relations of property and propriety of "western modernity" engender and articulate different forms of violence, crucially including sexualised violence. Upholding anti-colonial feminist approaches, this paper takes seriously the need to trace how modern ways of relating are intimately connected to colonial modes of dispossession and propertisation. Therefore, I draw on historical resources and present a constellation history with fragments from relations of intimacy in German colonial rule. This shows how hegemonic family relations and marriage laws were used to control access to land and resources, as well as workers and their bodies. Logics of imperial intervention in sexuality and the use of sexualised violence extend beyond this specific spatio-temporal context into the present. This highlights how categories of race, gender and sexuality develop with, through and for proprietary relations. The ambiguous role of white women vis-à-vis colonial relations of ownership reinforces a critique of limited approaches of liberal feminism and stresses the importance of anti-colonial organizing against violence.

KEYWORDS: modern property, German colonialism, family relations, gendered violence, racialised sexualities, propriety

On March 8, 2021, international women's day, or feminist fight/strike day as some activists have recently called it, about 15 000 – 20 000 women (cis and trans), non-binary and gender non-conforming people and trans men, marched through the streets of central Berlin. The protest had been organized by the *alliance of internationalist feminist*s*, an alliance of explicitly anti-racist and anti-colonial feminist groups and individuals. The route through the centre of Berlin had been carefully chosen. Starting at the European Commission, it also stopped at the Pergamon Museum, the newly built Humboldt Forum and the Foreign Office. The visit to the European Commission, for example, served to highlight Europe's violent border regime. Activists point to the concurrence of that violence with the European Union's proclaimed values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. The Humboldt Forum within the reconstructed *Berliner Stadtschloss,* the old Prussian Palace, now hosts ethnological collections plundered by European empires. According to official statements, it is supposed to 'present the cultures of the world', to 'help better understand the world of yesterday, today and tomorrow'[1]. Only completed and opened in 2021, it carries a huge cross on its dome with the large golden inscription 'that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth'[2]. Against this backdrop, the feminist demonstration moved determinedly from one place to the next linking histories and presents of state, economic, scientific, and cultural violence to gender violence, and the fight for gender and sexual liberation.

I want to unpack the intimate connections brought out by this kind of feminist organizing against gendered violence. Anti-/decolonial feminist theory and practice emphasises the continuity between different forms of violence including capitalist expropriation, militarisation and coloniality. 'What do discussions about abuse, rape or femicides today have to do with reinvigorated representations of Germany's imperial past?', one might ask. To me, this functions as more of a rhetorical question. Yet, within much of dominant discourse, such questions are often asked not only out of honest curiosity, but to cast doubt on the connections that are being made. Common responses to gender violence often shy away from bringing together different transnational and historical social structures. Instead, they separate and individualize the issue, seeking solutions within the bounds of the current political and legal system. Prevailing responses stress individualized responsibility, the safety of the private, salvation through progress with and by the criminal justice system and bordering practices.[3] Whilst motivated by a frustration with these dominant contemporary approaches, for this paper, I am not so interested in another in-depth critique of their dynamics. Rather, I gather a specific constellation history of emerging violent relations. This shows the specific backdrop against which different mobilisations against violence exist today. This configuration is built from stories from the context of intimate and familial life in German colonialism. Together, they portray the racialising, gendering and sexualising processes of dispossession and propertisation of land and people(s). The stories illuminate how property, more precisely the specific way property functions in "modern" societies, ties issues together over time and space, and thereby also enables, and congeals, certain forms of violent continuities. Put differently, I highlight the relevance of the colonial context for the co-emergence of capitalist property relations and social and intimate relations that are racialised, gendered and sexualised in a particular way. These excursions also showcase the harm of white and liberal feminisms and add to anti- and decolonial feminist critiques.

I join anti- and decolonial scholars in stressing the colonial relations underpinning capitalist development and the continuity of coloniality.[4] In the context of colonial dispossession and propertisation we can see the far-reaching impact of the constitution of specific ownership relations on all social relations. At the same time, long-term appropriation of land and bodies is only made possible by manifesting specific exclusive relations of gender, race, and sexuality (as well as other categories of exclusion, separation

and exploitation). More specifically, this project follows Brenna Bhandar's (2018) work on the racialising properties of British colonial (property) law. Her research shows how the colonial appropriation of land has been dependent on the marking of certain ontological qualities of the human and vice versa (ibid, 171). In other words, under the framework of liberal modernity, capitalist property relations co-emerge with specific subjectivities ordered according to racial (and other) categories. I explicate this further with a focus on gendered and sexualised relations and the forming role of legal and social interventions in kinship relations, sexualised violence and the patriarchal family. In settler colonial contexts, marriage, inheritance and guardianship laws were used to control access to land and resources, as well as workers and their bodies. These practices and laws constituting ownership were not only racial but racialising, not only gendered but gendering.

While there is a general argument to be made about how modern property's specific characteristics of right to exclusion, disposability and destruction cannot but imply violent relations, my argument here is first and foremost one of historical specificity. I politicise and historicise property and intimacy from the perspective of German colonial interventions in sexuality and family relations. When I make (generalising) assertions of dominant notions, such as of the institution of the family, I speak from the specific social context of Germany, embedded in discourses from Europe and North America. I present a configuration of stories around hegemonic relations of ownership, (inter)marriage, the role of white women and (hetero)sexuality in German empire, especially zooming in on moments in German South West Africa, German Samoa and German East Africa around the turn of the 20th century, and relate them to the metropole and the world at large. Illuminating the function of intimacy in colonisation and the colonial impact on intimate relations finally underlines why the fight for gender and sexual liberation today has everything to do with pasts, presents and futures of imperial land thefts, dispossession, settlements or plunder.

Constellation History of Intimacy and Ownership

Several notions of intimacy emerge from the 8th of March protest that point beyond its immediate set up. The protest did not only create intimacies of bodies assembled for a common purpose. This is not to dismiss the relevance of such a distinctive collective affective experience - especially in times of a global pandemic and its individualised management of control and privatized intimacy. But the protest also pierced the notion of separate, exclusive and enclosed periods of time and space. It connected places and issues that are usually kept at a safe distance from one another. I am interested in this analytical function of the concept of intimacy that stresses proximity and refuses to accept isolated theoretical constructions and abstractions. Intimacy becomes a form of spatio-temporal and conceptual method of bringing things close together that are positioned as far apart in dominant narratives. Thereby, it reveals how the emergence of one concept or institution, in fact, depends on the constitution of another. At the same time, as a thematic focus it highlights dominant limited notions of intimacy as private family and romantic coupledom. Thereby, we can ask about the role of family and kinship relations as a regulative ideal for political economic orders. Following Lisa Lowe, I unpack multiple meanings of intimacy. In *Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lowe (2015), explicitly takes up supposedly distant global historical and social processes. She shows how emerging notions of freedom and liberal modernity went hand in hand with the colonial appropriation of wealth by the European bourgeoisie. When activists use protests to stress that European values of human dignity or democracy concur with its violent border regime, Lisa Lowe shows these values to emerge from within not contrary to transnational processes of violence. Similarly, Christina Sharpe (2010, 3) moves beyond common individualized understandings of intimacy 'to think through configurations of relations of domination' across different categories of time and space.[5] Intimacy becomes a heuristic that shows the proximity and relatedness of phenomena,

people and subjectivities. By way of doing that it also challenges dominant European notions of intimacy, or rather, shows their dependency on other forms of social relations and work, as well as the need to keep other (potentially dangerous) intimacies in check. For Lowe, bourgeois intimacy functions as a 'socio-spatial medium for metropolitan and colonial hegemony' (ibid, 30). Combining analytical tool and focus, I highlight how familial policies work to establish and sustain ownership, through racial separation, sexual propriety and white hegemony, all whilst keeping a veneer of private and individual success supposedly separate from structures of violence.

Starting from the here and now, I locate that present moment in a constellation of global presents, pasts and futures. Thinking with and beyond Walther Benjamin (1980 [1940], 693), I map a constellation history of intimacy, property and violence, not to present a full image of history 'how it really was' but rather to illuminate certain aspects and conjunctions within it. The point is not to recover an ultimate historical origin point or the single most important causal connection that would ultimately lead the way to (continuous or future) progress. Other than Benjamin, I am also not interested in grand messianic salvation. Rather, I focus on the order and disorder of ordinary things and relations. With Elsa Dorlin (2019, 8), I see the mapping of a constellation history as 'exploring the memory of struggle' instead of necessarily 'rounding up the most illustrative examples.' The structure of ordinary everyday life and social and intimate relations with others produce the transnational horizon of possibility for local events (Zimmerman 2012, 247–48). While most literature thinks from the context of British Empire and North America, I link this transnational image to the less scrutinized historical material of German imperial rule. Stitching together intimate moments, I jump back and forth and in between places and times. Coalescing around the household, this explicitly brings out social, moral and legal protections of the white bourgeois, heterosexual, monogamous family in preserving the colonies and white hegemony. It also especially illuminates white women's central role in this struggle for hegemony. This is not to say that this is the only possible or most important configuration of historical fragments. But it is one crucial way of making the development of proprietary intimate relations visible against the backdrop of other relations in time and space.

(Flashes of) Intimacies in Proprietary Orders

The family and romantic (mostly heterosexual) relationships represent the most common association with intimacy. This dominant notion developed with, and remains wedded to, the private home, marriage, property and reproduction. Yet this formulation of romantic and familial intimacy hides both its conditions of emergence and preservation and its constituting social character. It isolates the bourgeois family, and the individual emerging from it, by keeping them apart from all the people and laboring processes sustaining them. At the same time, it manifests a distinct understanding of privacy and self-actualization. When we look at the processes and relations that built the walls of the bourgeois home and the objects in it, that cleaned and cared for its members and at the same time enabled a formation of subject and family that understood itself separate to these processes, we see both intimate relations and subject formation in a different light. David Eng (2010, 10) describes as the 'racialization of intimacy' the ways in which the boundaries around the private serve to hide its racial underpinnings. It is precisely the 'labor of enslaved and indentured domestic workers [that] furnished the material comforts of the bourgeois home', as Lisa Lowe (2015, 196) reminds us. Privacy, family, marriage, property and right appear as fundamental building blocks for liberal subject formation, that is, for the development of individual will and moral action, as well as for the formation of the nation state.[6] The importance of the private bourgeois family – as well as the contortions necessary to pretend an independency of this structure from global extractions of wealth – persist today.

Building on a long history of especially Black and Indigenous feminist theorisations of

proprietary intimacies in slavery, colonialism and their afterlives, I trace when certain intimacies appear as so threatening that they are suppressed. This is not to locate specific liberatory potential in intimate or explicitly sexual practices beyond the norm. Rather, I want to work out the conditions of possibility of dominant notions of intimacy and their specific role in stabilizing and reproducing hegemony. For white bourgeois European forms of intimacy to prevail and ensure the survival of European hegemony, other intimate relations had to be controlled or destroyed based on emerging categories of difference. Empire, as Anne McClintock (1995, 16) describes it, 'was intimately wedded to the Western reinvention of domesticity.' For domesticity to exist for some, others had to do the hard work to provide for it and be kept in their place to do so. Kinship ties present a danger to property relations when kinship persists or develops where property should prevail. The struggle over kinship reveals itself as simultaneously a struggle over property and hegemonic social relations. In and around processes of colonisation and enslavement, propertied white people, predominantly but not exclusively men, wanted to uphold a regime of property that enabled the dispossession of peoples as well as guaranteed property in persons (see also Harris, 1993). Dispossessed, enslaved and colonised people desired to establish kinship relations against and beyond this violence. Turning non-proprietary relations into relations of property is not an easy, natural or unresisted process – be it relations between people, land or other non-human relations.

Indigenous scholars have long stressed the social, juridical, economic and cultural interventions in relationships and the concurring normalisation of violence necessary to enable and secure appropriation of land, resources and bodies. Nishnaabeg writer and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson makes clear the connection between gendered and intimate violence and dispossession. She explains how, '[t]he more destruction our intimate relationships carry, the more destruction our political systems carry, and the less we are able to defend and protect our lands, and the easier it is to dispossess' (2021, 123). Colonialisation as a civilising project imposed the heteropatriarchal nuclear family as the dominant social unit and destroyed alternate ecologies of intimacy and relationships of reciprocity. This helped break up collectively held Indigenous lands and transform land into private property of men as head of household, then mainly the property of settler men, corporations and the state. Stable (patrilinear) inheritance of property establishes continuous ownership over time and is central to nation-building and the reproduction of a hegemonic population, such as white settler society. Indigenous people were forced into this amongst other by social and legal means, such as 'tying land tenure rights to heterosexual, one-on-one, lifelong marriages, thus tying women's economic well being to men who legally controlled the property' (TallBear 2018, 147). Land allotment policies, relocation programs, compulsory conversion to Christianity and residential schools severed relationships to land and human and non-human kin, as well as disciplined non-conforming gender and sexuality (TallBear 2021, 473). Settler sexuality, that is, dominant monogamous heterosexual marriage relations, continues to prop up privatized relations of property to land (ibid; Morgensen, 2011). Settler practices and policies categorize nonproprietary relations and relations in excess of notions of exclusivity, productivity and exploitability as noncilivised to legitimate exclusion from citizenship, the right to care for children, to hold land or move freely on it. This way, the privatization of property goes hand in hand with the racialisation of intimacy. Hegemony continues to be secured through social and legal techniques, if differentially articulated in different moments of time.

The proprietary order built with transatlantic slavery required those deemed as property to be separated from their relations of kinship, or at least for their kinship relations to be ever threatened. Hortense Spillers (1987) extorts us to better understand what enslavement meant by connecting kinlessness with the requirements of property. To uphold someone's status as property they need to be isolated from strong bonds that might defy propertisation. The bourgeois patriarchal notion of the family based on 'the vertical transfer

of a bloodline, of a patronymic, of titles and entitlements, of real estate and the prerogative of "cold cash," from fathers to sons' was limited to 'the mythically revered privilege of a free and freed community' (ibid, 74). Whilst this dominant family structure maintains racial supremacy, excess forms of kinship, intimacy and connectedness are not allowed to thrive. Especially enslaved women were forced to reproduce kinlessness (Angela Davis 1972; 1981). Colonial legislatures realised the inherent dangers of kinship for a system premised on race fixing humans as property. The legislative intervention of *partus sequitur ventrum* served to install heritability of enslavement.[7] Bearing children meant the forced reproduction of property (relations). As Jennifer Morgan finds, this was crucial in the 'context of a labor system wherein white men routinely and possibly systematically raped the women they claimed as property, [but] their own paternity could not devolve to their children' (Morgan 2021, 5). Importantly this legal intervention into kinship ties not only secured white men's property rights, but also legitimated white women's kinship ties (ibid). This manifests not only race relations but also narrow relations of gender and sexuality. Meanings of gender, sex and sexuality emerge as primary rather than secondary to the development of racial formations in slavery and colonial capitalism.

Property relations of political economic systems such as colonial capitalism necessitate attempts of creating seemingly stable hierarchical categories of relating. These (violent) social and intimate relations do not emerge in fixed ways and their creation remains incomplete and fragile. In fact, the fragility of supposedly stable categories requires continuous violence for their upkeep. Catherine Hall (2014), for example, describes the risk of particular intimacies to colonial orders by way of her investigation of British slave-owners in the Caribbean and their legacies. Her archival work shows that while the status property of enslavement vs. the status property of whiteness as freedom was juridically determined and structured into the plantation system in the Caribbean, this system was repeatedly 'fractured by sexual relations which characterized colonial society' (ibid, 29). Within plantation colonies, colonial businesses built on kin connections, marriage and inheritance to ensure transmission of property to other propertied white people. Investigations however show the existence of propertied women of colour in the Caribbean. They inherited wealth as well as enslaved people from their white fathers or partners (ibid, 34). The colonial anxiety towards the consequences of intimacies between different colonial subjects and especially towards nonwhite inheritance stresses the fragility of the white family, needed for the survival of white patriarchal domination.[8] The status property of whiteness reveals itself as a slippery concept consistently posing the question of how to secure itself while simultaneously struggling with clear legibility.

Struggles Over Property and Kinship in German Empire

In Germany, aspirations to build an empire, by land and by sea, coincided with nation state building in the late 19th century. At the same time, feminism emerged as a social force to be reckoned with, though starkly divided between bourgeois and proletarian women.[9] This makes a constellation of property and kinship in German colonial rule interesting beyond the fact that German empire has been much less regarded in the literature. At the turn of the century, Germany was rife with social tensions during economic and social change. Rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, the rise of the bourgeoisie and empire led to profound social questions, class conflict as well as a crisis of masculinity. Women's organizations proliferated and did not take a back seat on national issues. German expansionist relations, of course, began much earlier and exceed formal imperial rule with global German settlements, trade and corporate investments. Within such 'pan-german racialised biopolitical ambitions', family relations and sexuality were already central not only for colonial hierarchies and the creation of difference but also for settlement policies and property regimes in the 'colonial ordering of the world' (Eley 2014, 35). This only intensified with the formal establishment

of the colonies. Gender appears as a central factor in the historical literature.[10] Engaging with brief glimpses of struggles over property and intimate relations in German empire presents a case of how and when racialised and gendered relationality undergird or appear to threaten the stability of political-economic orders.

[German Samoa] We Ketch That Damned Fellow

'[W]e ketch that damned fellow.'[11] Under the sound of cries like these, Carl Eduard Michaelis, self-professed German hygienist, was forced to flee German Samoa in 1911. Samoan women rioted against his racial thinking and drove him out of the German colony. Even among German colonialists his views were not well received. He had arrived only shortly before and, appalled by the 'racial corruption' in the colony, quickly published a racist open letter against interracial relationships. Maintaining that he was 'above all white and only secondarily German', Michaelis (1911, 38-40) praised the US as better fulfilling the imperative of colonialism, identified by him as the advancement of the white race by way of a strong racialised order. Such a racial order was neither the case nor the consensus at the time in Samoa. There were less settlers on the island than in other (German) colonies but more mixed marriages and interracial families with children (Walgenbach 2005, 77). Many German settlers had been afforded access to wealth and social mobility by marriages with relatively elite local women (Fitzpatrick 2017, 214). In Samoa, different actors struggled over the specific political economic model for the colony.[12] Colonialists disagreed on the establishment of a settler vs. a plantation colony whilst confronted with anti-colonial resistance. Within these struggles over different models of using colonial possessions and extracting wealth in 1911, Samoan society was still less strictly ordered around emerging categories of race. For example, citizenship designations were organized along binaries, but the privilege of being classified 'foreigner' instead of 'native' was not only extended to children of married mixed couples but also to children of non-married mixed parentage. Within this political situation different to other colonies racial hygienists like Michaelis were happy to escape unscathed from the island, considering the 'threatening lynch justice of the fair sex'[13] as some newspapers termed the women's uprising.

[German South West Africa] Mädchenfuhren

In contrast, in German South West Africa, Germany's first and foremost settler colony, interracial marriage bans had already been instituted shortly after the turn of the century and the genocidal wars against the Herero and Nama peoples.[14] At the beginning of colonisation it was custom for German men to gain access to property and trading connections through so-called intermarriage (Wildenthal 2001, 128). This changed with the further establishment of settler society against strong anti-colonial resistance, with German women playing a significant social role.

And so, in December 1898, a "christmas present" arrived in Swakopmundo, German South West Africa. This so called *'Weihnachtskiste'* from colonial Germany entailed a shipment of white women, or "girls" ('*Mädchenfuhre'*), ready to be wed (Mamozai 1989, 139). This was not the first shipment, nor would it be the last. White women would continue to be sent to settlers in the colony 'deprived of women' (Jenny 1966, 66; own translation). From the 20th century onward, this was organized as an established programme of the *Frauenbund der deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft* (German Colonial Women's League) outlasting the status of today's Namibia as a German colony.[15] Not (yet) awarded political rights of their own, white bourgeois women still presented the backbone of white propertied society. Whilst the Women's League members were part of the ruling class, wives of high-level officials and owners of colonial companies, the women who were shipped off to the colonies came mainly from lower classes.[16] This program of white women's emigration to the colonies shows a lot of the ambiguities

of propertied women seeking to keep class and race hegemony. This also alludes to the complex relationship between white women, property and self-ownership. In the words of colonialist Klara Brockmann (1910, 3), the first purpose of white female emigration was 'to prevent intermarriage, which would mean the spiritual and economic ruin of the settler.' The Colonial Society and first and foremost the Colonial Women's League made sure that 'there is quite excellent, nice and pretty material of German girls coming' (Verhandlungen des Reichstags 1909, 7279), to avert threatening economic and legal consequences of long term 'interracial' relationships. The purpose of these emigrations, performed in the language and imaginary of the commodity, was to support the efforts of building and cementing white settler society in sole possession of land as well as economic, social and political resources.

More than just an absurd anecdote of the past, this specifically gendered settlement program and its role in the struggle over colonial ownership of power and resources shows how social and intimate relations are formed and sedimented (or potentially modified). Even if these 'shipments'[17] of white women were not the biggest, or most defining, element of colonial power and land grabs, they bring together a set of important processes. Their relevance is not limited to the context of the colonies alone. The interracial marriage debate, for example, became central to discussions about citizenship and German-ness that live on today.[18] We see the lineages of different contemporary feminisms in the different political mobilizations of white bourgeois, proletarian and colonised women – depending on their relation to the white family, racial separation, sexualised violence and the ownership of bodies and land.

Interracial Marriage Bans and White Women's Relationship to Property

"Interracial" marriage bans were instituted in German South West Africa in 1905 and hereafter enforced in the other colonies, if to different degrees.[19] Among other things, marriage bans meant that property settlements were refused to colonised women previously married to white German settlers. In the end, while legalized relationship and familial arrangements were purged, the importance of sexual access to colonised women did not disappear. As Lora Wildenthal (2001, 105-106) describes, '[t]he older pattern of marriage, long-term cohabitation, public liaisons, and rape was replaced by the new system of prostitution, secret liaisons, and rape'.[20] The race mixing debate became such a strong contestation precisely because of 'the fundamentality of propertied male citizens' rights' (ibid, 80). Tensions between different forms of masculinity derived from different ways of appropriating colonial wealth. As per Wildenthal, liberal nationalist colonists 'generally arrived too late for the military glory and land grabs of the early years. Their hopes for land and a compliant, cheap labor force depended on state-ordered expropriation of colonial subjects, not on political alliances and intermarriage with them.'[21] Liberal nationalist colonists needed to strictly demarcate the owners of political rights which meant unprecedented interventions in social and intimate relationships, destroying sexual, familial and political ties. In German South West Africa, the inscription of white supremacy through legalized property relations intensified amongst others with the so called Native Regulations (*Eingeborenengesetze*) after the war. These made ownership of cattle and land mostly impossible for colonised subjects and obligated them to work for white settlers, register themselves with the colonial administration and carry passes. The impact of liberal nationalism - and its categorization of rights - on colonial societies was at once 'equalizing for some and racializing for all' (ibid, 84). While colonised subjects where denied the ability to own and be an owner, colonisers were confirmed not only as owners of land and resources but owners of others, their productive and reproductive capabilities.

Within these struggles, white women's relationship to modern property remains complicated. Yet, once we understand this "identity" as articulating different societal structures together rather than representing any one simplified (inter) section, it becomes easier to grasp. The fact that

social reality is complex need not mean indiscernible muddiness. The commodified – and commodifying – export of white women can co-exist with the fact that white women were also seen as one of the central cultural carriers for colonialism and bourgeois society. White women appear as both potential proprietors and potentially propertised. Class differences are central as propertied women of the ruling class had a clear interest in colonial success and white hegemony. This mirrors other historical studies, such as by Stephanie Jones-Rogers (2019), that show the immense investments in slavery by wealthy white women, to hold on to their human, and landed, property – despite supposed property-lessness under the system of couverture. White propertied women established their political and legal subjecthood to retain exclusionary power over property, human and otherwise, both within the juridical system and through societal measures. Beyond generalized assumptions of female passivity or marginalisation, the German Colonial Women's League formulated clear colonial gender roles and responsibilities to be found in their propaganda paper, *Kolonie und Heimat*, in which man appears as conqueror, woman as preserver. Reiterations of the importance of German women and family can be found throughout the paper:

> *'But if we want to preserve the colony internally as a German colony and if we want to prevent the colony from one day being lost to us externally, we must ensure that German families are founded and that the influence of the German woman comes to bear.'*[22]

Kolonie und Heimat focused on stressing the responsibilities of settler women, centred around cultural colonisation and the reproduction of race hegemony. White women were to address white settler society first and foremost, cementing notions of propriety and keeping especially lower-class settlers in line (Walgenbach 2005, 119–20). Even if not legally, white women, especially ruling class white women, were granted certain forms of ownership, including self-ownership. However, this self-ownership is constantly undermined by the conditionality of it on simultaneous self-sacrifice for the white family and race.

In contrast to white colonial women, colonised women were positioned quite differently vis-à-vis this proprietary order of colonial capitalism. Whilst denied access to ownership by colonial rule and continuously interfered with in their known ways of relating to each other and themselves, they resisted the socio-legal techniques of colonisers in their own ways. Birth strikes are but one example. Through forms of ordinary resistance colonised people refused to (re)produce more bodies for Germans to use and work to death. While white German women denounced the sexuality of Black women and helped justify their rape by white men, white women fulfilled their role as objects of reproduction and sexuality with far less resistance (Ayim 2020, 54). It was no rarity for white women to bear more than seven children. In contrast, Black women sometimes refused to bear children and the disposability of their bodies and reproductive capabilities altogether (ibid). The refusal to reproduce a colonised work force was not lost to white people. Understanding that 'the Herero, after the uprising is often on the position that he does not want to produce children. He feels like a prisoner, which is what you hear with every job that doesn't suit him, and he doesn't want to create new labour for his oppressor' (Brief eines Farmers 1912, cited in Mamozai 1982, 52, 167; own translation). Colonists tried to 'remedy this deplorable state of affairs' by offering rewards for every child born, but 'mostly in vain' (ibid). Resistance to colonial rule took many forms despite, as much as because of, extreme violence. This shows the dependency of hegemonic ownership on the reproduction of a dispossessed workforce and differential articulations of gender and sexuality depending on racial and class position in this hegemonic order.

[German Samoa & Germany] Plasticity of Race

Colonial politics do not remain in the colonies. Threats to hegemonial power and ownership over

political, economic, social and cultural resources were carried to the metropole - and so were (discussions about) mechanisms of control. By the time of the Michaelis case, and after several rebellions, wars and independent economic organizing, heightened anxieties about the colonies also affected debates in Germany.[23] In particularly, the National Liberal sections of the press, painted the Samoan 'women's uprising', or even 'women's revolution', as a threat to German imperial hegemony and proof of the dangers of intermarriage, as Matthew Fitzpatrick (2017, 215) shows. The racist hygienist Carl Eduard Michaelis had not been the first to attack intermarriage in the context of German Samoa. In Germany the discussion had started to heat up since liberal politician, and previous governor of Samoa, Wilhelm Solf had published a pamphlet against intermarriage in Berlin.[24] His objective exceeded crude racial hygiene. The self-published *Eingeborene und Ansiedler auf Samoa* (Natives and Settlers in Samoa) was part of his effort to establish a specific political economic structure in the colony. For the upkeep of economically profitable colonies, he sought to strengthen profitable large-scale plantations and prevent large-scale settlement (especially by lower-class German farmers who he saw as culturally incapable of supporting a cilivising mission). Familial relations between colonists and colonialists impact the long-term possibilities of political economic order in the colony and German empire's commercial enterprise (Fitzpatrick 2017, 221), thus the need to inhibit intimacies (and their consequences). Imposed racial categories and separation also moved to German politics. Trying to induce the German parliament to extend interracial marriage bans from colonial to national German law, Solf, then Colonial Secretary, proclaimed: 'We are Germans, we are white and we want to stay white' (Verhandlungen des Reichstags, 1912; Kundrus 2003, 18). While these interracial marriage bans never made it into national law, racialised citizenship did.

The guidelines that arrived in Samoa in 1912 instructing on how to proceed with intermarriage show the plasticity of racial citizenship, German-ness and intimate categories of race:

(i) 'Marriages between non-natives and natives will no longer be permitted.
(ii) The children of the hitherto legitimate and recognized mixed marriages are white.
(iii) Providing they are included in the current list of half-castes, half-castes stemming from illegitimate relationships are to be viewed as white. This list is to be revised and the undeserving are to be struck from it.
(iv) Half-castes born after the announcement of these rules are natives.
(v) Those natives who speak fluent German and can prove a European education can apply to be deemed white.'[25]

Officially, children from intermarriages were considered "white" before 1912, while after this date they were counted as "natives". For Walgenbach (2005, 80) this means, 'belonging to the white collective was therefore not a question of pigmentation but the product of a legal decision or an arbitrarily set temporal caesura.' These guidelines and the surrounding social and political struggles make clear the impact of law on racialisation and relationship structures. But they are also about more than just an arbitrary break in the social order. In this specific case, flexibility remained around racial conceptualisations and possible kinship relations, especially surrounding the notion of "deserving vs. undeserving" of white status. Racialising laws put in place to secure hegemony show their limits, revealing both the plasticity of race (or gender) relations and the effort expended to stretch the limits to the benefit of those making them. Specific productive and *proper* members of colonial society were enabled access to the status property of whiteness.

Whiteness, Sexuality, Propriety and the Protection of Property

Bourgeois politics needs to reproduce and control new populations to survive. In the colonies, this included not only the colonised population but also the colonising white settlers. New forms of

the organization of social life were not accepted without resistance. The colonised population was used to a different way of relating to each other, their land and their means of (re)production and defended this against colonisation. But white settler society, too, needed to be trained to adhere and stick to the new proprietary regime. If social and legal codifications of marriage and sexuality were only later introduced to strong racial considerations, this questions any a priori sense of race or exclusive kinship structure. Racialised economies of sex that assume an always dominant notion of race as prime and prior organizing principle of colonial societies are challenged by the 'heterogeneity of colonial inter-communal relations' (Clever and Ruberg 2014). Based on the specific configurations of relations in Samoa, Matthew Fitzpatrick (2017, 227) makes the case against 'historiographical truisms' that assume colonial stability of race.[26] We can see how political economic circumstances and considerations shape dominant and deviant sexual relations and the conditions under which potentially antagonistic racial and gender relations develop.[27] By way of legal, social and cultural interventions, sexuality becomes an important part of social control. For the regulation of sexuality notions of the 'proper' are also mobilized. Propriety can function in attempts to repress or control flashes of intimacies particularly when the ownership over land, resources, people, and thereby space and time, appears on the line.

[German East Africa] Scandal

In 1910, a scandal shook the German colony of East Africa, also reverberating in the metropole. Governor Albrecht von Rechenberg was accused of homosexual relations, most scandalously with African men, amongst others his servants. The scandal was initiated and publicized by Willy Roy, editor of the main settler newspaper, the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*. It was embedded in a long history of tensions between the governor and settler society, that had been fought out in the newspaper. The confrontation developed around different ideas of colonial state organization, along the now familiar lines of a more patriarchal focus on settlements vs. a more liberal focus on trade. Within settler society, homosexuality charges were used for both intra-class competition as well as inter-class conflict. While same-sex relations were quite common in upper class culture, this conflicted with strong concerns over propriety in the colony (Schmidt 2008). White settler society was far from homogenous and social contestations around class played a significant role. Social and legal control around proper sexuality helped uphold class hegemony (Walther 2008). But additionally, the racialised and sexualised space of 'colonial intimacy' of the colonial household made it impossible to 'uphold veneer of propriety in perpetual presence of servants' and made white privacy unsustainable (Schmidt 2008, 59). The policing of interracial and homosexual transgressions functioned to keep intimacies from threatening colonial hegemony. In moments of social upheaval or crisis, (the scandal of) sex outside the household of heterosexual patriarchal monogamy exposes potential vulnerability. Thus, notions of propriety are called upon as shields for property interests of groups fighting over hegemony.

With whiteness and proper conduct closely bound together, whiteness entailed control over relationships, including one's relationship to desire and thus one's behaviour – especially in public.

White men did not want their sexual congress to threaten property interests, as in different historical conjunctures, such as during slavery and laws of *sequitur partus ventrem*. A repetition of an offense became suspect, moving the issue from slight transgression of proper conduct to a problem of fundamental character and thus ontology. White men 'were expected to possess character and moral desire to make "proper" choice' (Walther 2008, 20). This was especially pertinent against the imagined incapacity of Africans, especially Black women, to possess anything close to ownership over their bodies and sexual desires. Black women were seen as either 'exceeding practitioners of sexuality' or 'property of their husbands', both attributions serving to deny status of proper subjectivity (Schrader 2019, 140) – marking them as out of control and incapable of

self-control or self-ownership. Sexualised violence was an ordinary part of colonial life, an 'important expression of racialised and gendered nature of the colonial experience' (Schmidt 2008, 59). The ordinary violence of racialised and sexualised relations was rooted in more than simple forms of 'othering'. Different relations of violence are necessary to uphold a system based on propertisation, and its future expansion. There is more to the control of sexuality than just discrimination or exclusion of those with sexual practices and orientations outside of the norm. Rather, marriage as well as normative and disciplining reproductive family relations are central to ownership struggles and the reproduction of hegemonic white society. In German East Africa, where owning enslaved people was prohibited but slavery itself was not abolished until it became a British colony after WWI, it was common to see Africans, especially women and girls, as potential property (ibid, 54). Sexualised violence contained the potential for scandal with cases of overt and extreme, public(ised), sexualised violence, such as in the case of Carl "Hänge"-Peters.[28] Sexualised violence and/or transgressions were conventional until they disturbed white hegemony – a danger present in forms of intimacy, violent or not. To retain the link between whiteness, proper conduct and legitimate ownership, the potential for scandal had to be restrained. Propriety becomes a tool within struggles over hegemony.

Concluding Notes: Making Intimacies

With this constellation of stories from German colonialism, this paper joins the literature on the nexus of property and kinship from the British Empire and North America and illuminates global webs of intimate relations throughout time. Despite differences depending on local contexts, we also see profound commonalities in social and juridical techniques of dispossession and appropriation as well as direct connections of place and time in between which people, resources, policies, laws and concepts travel. This specific configuration of stories stresses how socio-legal interventions, such as interracial marriage bans, the actions by the Colonial Women's League and the selected control and prosecution of sexualities, racialise intimacies and kinship relations whilst protecting hegemonic ownership relations. Racial relations are produced and sharpened through the inhibition of long-term intimacies and their familial and property consequences. The (mis)use of sodomy accusations and the politicization of (homo)sexuality in moments of crisis stresses the relation between sexuality and political economy. White bourgeois women's organizations' role in in building up colonial ownership and white empire articulates and engenders class, race, gender and sexual relations – and presents a (violent) history of certain limited feminisms significant for today.

Germany still refuses to own up to its colonial terror or enact genuine reparations. Instead, imperial aesthetics are reinvigorated, and colonial violence continued, be it through the European border regime, global economic dispossession, war profits or so-called development aid/cooperation – often under the banner of "feminist" interior and foreign politics. At the same time, still today, white settlers in Namibia, many of which are of German descent, own most of the land while descendants of Ovaherero and Nama are continuously dispossessed and pushed into "native reserves". Violent familial ties between coloniser and colonised persist, amongst others born out of rapes, sexual exploitation and intimate violence committed by German soldiers[29], colonists and settlers (Kauari 2019). Societies and their systems of categorization change through struggle, but past violences rarely remain in the past, they rather live on in similar or differently articulated forms.

In struggles over ownership of land, people and resources, notions of race, gender and sexuality are entangled and co-constituted. Various forms of violence and their legitimation are needed to maintain and perpetuate property orders and the ways of relating that go along with them. Against the ever-present backdrop of coloniality, it is crucial to remind ourselves of the centrality of familial politics for the stability and reproduction of a proprietary order and the (political economic global) conditions of possibility for such dominant

privatized notions of intimacy and gender and sexual liberation.

I map constellations of violence to create proximity between different struggles. This is necessary to avoid isolated and limited political approaches that ultimately re-produce and enhance violent proprietary relations. We cannot find the solution for problems, such as gender violence, within the current liberal proprietary order and its isolated notions of the private family, individualized responsibility, the criminal justice system or bordering practices. Thus, the lens of intimacies serves not to complicate things to the point of confusion by stretching concepts and contexts, but rather to avoid the kinds of questions, and answers, that erase important historical and social circumstances. As a catalyst it refuses to remove complexity and fall back on easy causal explanations. But it also doesn't use complexity as an apologetic shield which would inhibit deeper understandings of concrete and sometimes direct links between relations of violence. The connection between conceptions of identity and ownership described here suggests that dominant relations of oppression and violence based on white, racist, patriarchal, heteronormative or colonial claims to domination can only be fought together with exploitative property relations, and vice versa. By mapping intimate histories of violence, we also make it possible to imagine different constellations of struggle. From the alliance of internationalist feminist*s call for the 8th of March protests 2022, we see the importance to not only stress the intimacies of systems of violence but also the intimacies of struggle: "We are everywhere, we are resisting: in every street, in every occupied land, in the mountain, on the sea, at the border, in working places, at home, in the *lager*, and inside prisons."[30]

Notes

[1] Announcements by the German government: https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/bundesregierung/staats ministerin-fuer-kultur-und-medien/kultur/humboldt-forum; own translation.

[2] The Berliner royal palace used to serve as the main residence of the House of Hohenzollern, the King of Prussia and further German Emperors until 1918. It was demolished by the East German government and replaced with the *Palast der Republik* (Palace of the Republic). In 2002, following a long debate after reunification, the Berlin senate decided to demolish the East German Palace to rebuild the Prussian Palace. The dome, inscription and cross were rebuilt with the help of private funds and under exclusion of the public. See https://www.katholisch.de/artikel/25630-kreuz-und-bibelspruch-das-berliner-stadtschloss-erhitzt-die-gemueter; English translation from relevant passages from the Bible.

[3] This is the main approach from government and international organizations through to liberal feminist scholars, activists, writers and journalists as well as NGOs. Without engaging with these approaches in too much detail here, we can refer for example to popular liberal feminist philosophers like Kate Manne (e.g. 2018, 2020) or Martha Nussbaum (e.g. 2005), celebrated authors like Rebecca Solnit, and many others. Mainstream, liberal and white feminisms have long been critiqued from post- and de-colonial, Black, socialist, Indigenous and other writers. For a recent in-depth engagement with mainstream feminism see Alison Phipps (2020); for seminal decolonial critiques and alternatives see for example (Lugones 2007; Nagel 2000; Spivak 1981)

[4] See Gurminder Bhambra (2020) for an account of engagements with colonialism as the condition of capitalist-modernity.

[5] Sharpe (2010, 3) especially describes the everyday sexualised violence of slavery – everyday horrors that are not acknowledged as such – as constitutive of subjectivities today. We find this 'monstrous

internalization' of violence in our bodies. While this might appear most readable on Black subjects, 'all modern subjects are post-slavery subjects.'

[6] This view has a long philosophical tradition within modern European thought. For example, Hegel describes the self-development of the individual through *his* possession of privacy within the intimate sphere of the family. This property in intimacy was seen as a relevant step towards progress, freedom and self-actualization (Hegel 2013).

[7] I.e., "that which is brought forth follows the womb", law to ensure child inherits the non/status of enslaved mother.

[8] Within transcontinental systems of colonial dispossession, labour regimes, trade and other forms of use and abuse of bodies, 'flashes' of intimacies emerged between people living, working and surviving together, such as enslaved, indentured and mixed peoples in the Americas (Lowe 2015, 33).

[9] Bourgeois and proletarian feminist movements collided strongly around different interpretations of the "woman question". When the main feminist umbrella organization *Bund der Deutschen Frauenvereine* (League of the German Women's Organizations, BDF) was founded in 1894, proletarian women and their (mostly socialist) organizations were excluded on the grounds of being "too political". The Colonial Women's League joined the BDF in 1911.

[10] For example, Susanne Zantop (1997) has long analysed the gendered dynamics of precolonial Germany in the 18th and 19th century.

[11] Fitzpatrick 2017, 215, quoting German press *Die Post* (21 June 1911, 185*): ‚Der samoanische Tragikomödie zweiter Teil'*

[12] The controversy around plantation vs. settler colonial models is often constructed around the characters of Wilhelm Solf and Richard Deeken. The question of Chinese labour also figured into the opposition between different models of the colony. E.g. see Droessler (2015) Steinmetz (2007)..

[13] German original: *„drohenden Lynchjustiz des schönen Geschlechtes"*, in Fitzpatrick 2017, 212, quoting *Fiji Times*, *Berlin Neueste Nachrichten* (April, July 1911)

[14] Around the turn of the century, relations of power changed drastically in the colony. A devastating rinderpest left Herero farmer communities even more economically bereft. Within increasing settler dominance, they were ever more forced to sell their labour to Germans, further entrenching economic dependency and vulnerability to violence. This, among other aggressions by the Germans, led to overall resistance in 1904. Germans engaged in genocidal war culminating in Lothar von Trotha's (in) famous extermination order. Forced labour accompanied the war and the period after (Hervé 1993). Only in the 2000s did Germany recognize the genocide on the Herero and Nama (who later joined the war) but until now is refusing to enact proper reparations.

[15] Whilst its name may at least imply a certain focus on women's emancipation, its main foundational purpose had always been to support settler efforts, to protect men from the supposed sins of the colonised lands and to, explicitly, fight against interracial marriage and for the white collective. The Women's League played a significant role in ensuring that German South West African settler society was and remained white in the beginning of the 20th century and onwards. The first world war, and the subsequent loss of the colonies, at first thwarted plans to expand the program of exporting white women to the colonies to German East Africa. Still, in 1914 the *Frauenbund* counted almost 19,000 members, mostly ruling class women with direct colonial interests (Hervé 1993, 29). From 1924 onwards the Frauenbund continued its work in the colonies to support efforts to "strengthen Germanness" ('*Erstarkung des Deutschtums*') (Walgenbach 2005, 106).

[16] In literary form, South African novelist/writer, André Brink in *The Other Side of Silence*, follows the journey of a poor orphaned girl from Germany to Namibia through the program of the Women's League, her abuse by German soldiers and final vigilante coalition with other violated German girls as well as colonised subjects.

[17] Within this commodified language, another term was *Probesendungen*, 'trial shipments'. Until 1913, about 1500 (1468) women emigrated to German South West Africa/Namibia with the help/sent by *Frauenbund* (Hervé 1993, 30).

[18] For example, Pascal Grosse (2000, 153, 168) explains how the interracial marriage debate in Germany was central to amendments of the German Nationality Law in 1912/13 that led to further ethnicization of citizenship issues. Only in 2000 was the principle of place of birth (*ius soli)* introduced in German citizenship law in addition to the principle of descent (*ius sanguinis*), which had been the only principle applicable until then. But *ius soli* is still only applicable under very specific circumstances. See information by the Home Office (*Bundesinnenministerium*) https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/verfassung/staatsangehoerigkeit/staatsangehoerigkeitsrecht/staatsangehoerigkeitsrecht.html

[19] In European empires, these were quite drastic measures, but a lot of similarity can be found to "miscegenation" bans in the US. After German South West Africa, the bans were also instituted in most other German colonies. German racial anxieties over "miscenegation" ran highest for the African colonies, even though interracial marriage was much more common in Samoa (El-Tayeb 2001, 128).

[20] This just prevented any troubling consequences of long-term sexual relations. Karl Oetker, a medical doctor in German East Africa and a strong opponent of race mixing, makes this point of a racialised and gendered order of property and propriety, of describing how despite the ban men could roam freely in 1907: "I can very well imagine for myself the situation of an unmarried man who buys himself a negro girl for a shorter or longer period of time"(Oetker 1907, own translation).

[21] For example, Governor von Schuckmann explained the reasons for interracial relationships to the German Women's League not only on the basis of supposed sexual or domestic needs of the settler but also by way of their economic benefits: 'Since there are no German girls here, he [the settler] often falls back on the solution of taking a girl of mixed blood or even a native as his wife. The fact that the mixed girls are often wealthy and bring a herd of cattle into the marriage is sometimes tempting' (Schreiber 1909, 95).

[22] From *Kolonie und Heimat*, in Niessen-Deiters 1913, 7, own translation. In another edition, this is reiterated in similar ways: 'The German soldier has conquered the land with the sword, the German farmer and merchant seeks its economic exploitation, but the German woman alone is called and capable of keeping it German.' From *Kolonie und Heimat* Jg. II, Nr. 4, S. 8. in Walgenbach 2005, 119–20, own translation.

[23] As Holger Droessler (2022) describes, Samoans refused and contested colonial wage labour and organized cooperative farming. They also subverted colonial practices such as ethnographic shows and built alliances with other colonised people.

[24] Racial hygienists, like Michaelis or Solf, found a more appreciative audience in Germany than in Samoa. At that time, most other prominent German officials in Samoa did not care much for reinforcing strict racial separation, seeing it as 'imported racial thinking' from the African colonies or unnecessary interference from Berlin (Fitzpatrick 2017, 221). Michaelis repeated and expanded his attack on miscegenation in a 1911 book written from the safety of Canada.

[25] Quoted in Fitzpatrick 2017, 225: Solf to Schultz, 17 Jan. 1912, in BA Berlin, R1004F/75489, pp. 134–5. See also R1004F/75490, pp. 41–4; Verhandlungen des Reichstages, 1912, p. 1725.

[26] For example, Christine Winter (2012) also warns how the analysis of past racialisations can easily lead to assumptions of stability and coherency around concepts of race that avert clearer understandings of how and why these concepts emerge and live on in the specific context of the German colony New Guinea.

[27] See Chris Chitty's 'Sexual Hegemony' (2020, 34–35), where he wants to return 'the history of sexuality to a history of property.' Tracing the connections between social form and sexuality and the relation between the origins of capitalism and sexual repression, he asks, 'whether and how sexuality outside

marriage and property relations congealed into opposition, defiance, or open antagonism toward socially dominant groups and their institutions' (ibid, 25).

[28] The excessive use of violence of colonial official Carl Peters that gave him his nickname, became too much when he killed the lover of the African woman he had held for his sexual congress. Public outrage in Germany was so great in 1896 that Peters could no longer be retained and he was dismissed from his post in 1987. How little lasting such warnings were, however, is shown by the fact that Peters was rehabilitated again as early as 1905 and later honoured with statues and street names in Germany (Grill 2019).

[29] German soldiers of the so-called "Schutztruppe" ("protection troops").

[30] "Lager" is the German word for "camp", that is, refugee/detention/deportation camps. The sentence can be found on the call for the protest on leaflets, posters and sharepics by the alliance.

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Constructions of Families in the Legal Regulation of Care

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Abstract

This article considers the extent to which constructions of care within law and policy continue to privilege the heterosexual family model of care giving i.e., two parents cohabiting in a monogamous, long-standing relationship acting as one economic unit with joint children with one primary wage earner and one primary carer. Taking its focal point in the legal frameworks that surround parental leave, it explores the manner in which 'non-traditional' family forms are conceived in legal frameworks surrounding care, using recent changes to Danish parental leave policies as a case study..

KEYWORDS: Care, parental leave, work and care, social reproduction,

Introduction

The "crisis of care", drawn into stark focus by the Covid pandemic, continues to pose a deepening challenge across the globe (Mahajan et al. 2020; Bolis et al. 2020). Resource-starved health and social care systems have often been a major contributing factor to high infection and death rates (Hick et al, 2021) while the strain felt by those with care-giving responsibilities – caring for children or dependents – while working full time, has been deeply apparent (Pozzan et al, 2020; Wenham et al 2020) As many scholars have pointed out, the realities of the social reproduction crisis revealed by the pandemic can hardly be seen as a shock but should be understood as the culmination of an ongoing erosion of social reproduction by neoliberal forces, characterized by a retrenchment of the welfare state and marketisation of care (Camilletti & Nesbitt-Ahmed 2022; Dowling, 2021). While data is only beginning to trickle in, it is clear that within private care settings existing patterns of inequality, particularly women's disproportionate share of reproductive activities, have only become exacerbated (Charmes 2019; Sevilla & Smith 2020). This is particularly evident among working mothers with school age or younger children, who bore the brunt of additional unpaid care work – along with labour market penalties (OECD, 2020 Lynch, Kalaitzake, & Crean, 2021; Andersen et al, 2022). Despite the issue of unpaid care and domestic work having gained relevance in policymaking in the past decade, leading to a slew of policies aimed at providing better recognition and redistribution of unpaid labour, it is still predominantly women who step in to provide care in times of crisis and austerity.

The role of the family in maintaining these imbalances in unpaid care work has been underlined in the literature (Dalla Costa & James, 1972; Silbaugh, 1996; Ferguson, 2016). Other research indicates that gender norms also affect household care organisation and time allocation to child-rearing (Breen & Cooke, 2005; Zbyszewska, 2016; Lassen, 2021). Although, as Vera Lomazzi, Sabine Israel and Isabella Crespi note, "these arrangements (…) are not simply the result of individual preferences, but of the interplay of individuals' values, partners' negotiations, structural factors, and institutional opportunities" (Lomazzi, Israel & Crespi 2018). Accordingly, one of the approaches taken in tackling the care deficit at state level has been challenging the gendered nature of the regimes of care, by challenging and transforming legal regimes governing family, employment and welfare. Many of these efforts centre upon the redistribution of caregiving responsibilities in the private sphere through the promotion of gender equality and by shifting gendered divisions of labour, which remain deeply embedded in governance regimes. The much-debated endeavor to increase fathers' share of parental leave through the creation of non-transferable quota for fathers, represents one of the most visible examples of legal policies aimed at promoting rights and responsibilities in areas of care. Over the past decade in Europe, moves towards a more equal distribution of parental leave through law reform and social policy has been headed by the European Commission and its initiative to promote female employment and better reconciliation of work and family, culminating in a 2019 EU Directive which included demands for non-transferable leave for fathers to be ratified at the domestic level. However, while these policies have led to incremental gains in the distribution of parental caregiving, research indicate that for the most part family policies have not fundamentally altered existing gender gaps in social reproduction at the private level (Stratigaki, 2004; Leon and Millns, 2007; Shamir, 2010; Duvander *et al*, 2019) Indeed, in countries that have introduced non-transferable parental quotas for fathers, such as Sweden, there is still a considerable gap between men and women in time spent on unpaid care work within the home (Staland-Nyman et al 2021; Björk Eydal et al. 2015)

This article adds to the literature by considering the question of inclusivity by reference to the capacity of parental leave policies to challenge or disrupt prevailing understandings of caregiving and the gendered division of labour. As research has underlined, the design and framing of parental leave in law and policy reflect wider narratives about concepts and practices of care and work,

which may act as barriers to redressing inequities of caregiving by re-embedding gendered regimes of care (Suwada 2017; Busby, 2011). Of these, the most prominent is the enduring binary opposition of paid work—as an economic and productive activity—and unpaid care work—as a non-economic, non-productive activity outside of the formal economy (Doucet, 2021). This is reflected by the fact that most parental leave schemes are articulated in law and policy as employment policy related to the right to reimbursement of labour market earnings while they take on that care work; reflecting the position that parental benefits *should* be attached to employment— rather than based on citizenship (Dobrotić and Blum 2020, 604). Another is the gendered nature of care work and the reinforcement of the role of women as caregivers, prevalent in many maternity leave policies (e.g., O'Brien, 2009; Ray, Gornick, & Schmitt, 2010; Rostgaard and Ejrnæs, 2021). One aspect that has received less attention in the literature, however, are categories and structures of caregiving as they relate to (hetero)sexual constructions of the family. While the "sexual family" (Fineman, 1991 has been central to discourses of care and caregiving in law and policy, the past three decades have given rise to a rapid increase in non-traditional family and living arrangements, intimate partnerships and kinship systems. This includes a dramatic increase in single-parent and multi-parent households (involving more than 2 parents), as well as multi-generational households, but also in queer and family relations of choice, such as communal living situations, which challenge the binary oppositions and divisions of care distribution through varied and diverse care giving arrangements.

The object of the article, therefore, is to broaden the frame of analysis to consider the extent to which constructions of care within law and policy continue to privilege the heterosexual family model of care giving i.e., two parents cohabiting in a monogamous, long-standing relationship acting as one economic unit with joint children with one primary wage earner and one primary carer. Taking its focal point in the legal frameworks that surround parental leave, it explores the manner in which 'non-traditional' family forms are conceived in legal frameworks surrounding care, using recent changes to Danish parental leave policies as a case study. The introduction of a new policy of non-transferable leave for fathers in October 2021 was accompanied by an emphasis on the flexibility of the policy to encompass single and LGBT+ families; it therefore provides a useful object of analysis regarding the question of inclusivity and whether parental leave policies do, in fact, move beyond a heteronormative ideal, to encompass non-traditional family forms.

The structure of the article is as follows. I begin by providing an overview of the changing configurations of market, family and state within the Danish context, which provide a backdrop to recent reforms to the Danish parental leave scheme. I then introduce feminist theorising on care and its related network of concepts, along with queer perspectives, to analyse the framing of care distribution in attendant legal regimes and policies, particularly those relating to non-traditional family forms. I then consider the case of work and family policies in Denmark, to analyse how developments around sexuality and the rise of non-traditional families are shaped and constrained by existing normative divisions surrounding the appropriate organisation of care within the home.

Sharing the Care: Danish Parental Leave Schemes

Nordic states, like Denmark, are considered among the most family-friendly in the world, partly due to their generous family leave policies in terms of length as well as reimbursement levels. With the rise of women's labour participation, state support for working families was channelled through affordable day care, childcare allowances and parental leave, and the hope that men would begin to take on a higher portion of household duties given women's employment responsibilities. A generous 'childcare leave' scheme was introduced in 1994, to meet the rise in birth rate at the beginning of the 1980s. This emerged following the introduction of a Directive by the Council of the European Communities in co-operation with

the European Parliament in 1992 concerning the protection of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. By the mid 1990s, more than 80 % of Danish mothers were in employment. Over the past three decades, the duration of parental leave with economic compensation have been expanded. Up until 2001 parents were offered 14 weeks of maternity leave followed by 10 weeks of parental leave that could be shared between parents. Since 2002, this has been extended to 18 weeks of maternity leave and 32 weeks of parental leave. The system currently combines transferable but relatively low public benefits (average replacement rate is around 50%) with temporary and earmarked wage compensation partly provided by employers. This, together with investments in public day care and other public-funded care services and the general rise in the educational level of women, have ensured that Denmark has one of the highest female employment and fertility rates in Europe (Dahl and Rasmussen, 2012; Kleven, Landais, & Søgaard, 2019).

Despite efforts to improve the balance between family and work life, however, there remains a prominent gendered division of labour both within and outside the labour market in Danish society. While generally seen as a "women-friendly" welfare state women still perform more care than men in relation to formalised care work and care in families. Current estimates put the number of additional care work performed by women at around 9 extra weeks each year (Bonke, 2002). Moreover, inequality and segregation in the labour market is significant both in terms of wage and employment type. Women dominate professionalised caring sectors, which are characterised by lower wages, particularly in the public sector. The gender pay gap in Denmark is still currently between 15–20 percent (Kleven, Landais, & Søgaard, 2019). In particular, the effect of children on the careers of women relative to men are large and have not fallen over time, remaining one of the key drivers of labour market gender inequality (Angelov *et al.*, 2016). Recent research has shown that the "child penalty" in Denmark, by which women fall behind men due to children, equals about 20 percent and increases with each child (Kleven *et al* 2019).

Simultaneously, the past decades have shown that the welfare model of universalism promoted in the Nordic states, where care is seen as a state responsibility, publicly outsourced and state-financed allowing individuals to combine paid and unpaid caring responsibilities, has not made them immune to a rising global care deficit (Hansen, Dahl and Horn, 2020). As recent research has shown, the Nordic welfare state model has been placed under increasing pressure by neo-liberalisation, along with the reverberations of the financial crisis (Dahl, 2012; Poutanen and Kovalainen, 2014; Hansen, 2007). While historically and socially variegated from other national patterns, the dynamics of the Nordic care crisis exhibit many of the same characteristics as in many parts of the globe, where rising needs of care and a decreasing supply creates a deficit of care in the private and public spheres (Hochschild, 1995: 332).[1] In the Danish context, these pressures have impacted commodified regimes of care in the public sector which have been effected by inadequate economic resources and the absence of that, which Fiona Williams terms, "good enough" care (Hansen *et al* 2020). The reduction of state investment in social services and welfare programs has also resulted in an offloading of caring responsibility onto communities, families and individual citizens (UNDP, 1999). Research on the work/life balance of Danish families reveal the inadequacies of institutional care, as well as the costs on families and individual family members in bridging care needs and compensating for deficiencies in the system (Dahl, 2012; Dahl, 2017). Research also underlines the gendered division in the impacts felt, with women assuming a larger responsibility and receiving less support in private care arrangements (Hansen 2007, 2019).[2] Women were also found to have carried out a much larger share of childcare and household work during the COVID-19 lockdown (Andersen et al 2022)

This has spurred an increasing interest in welfare reforms that aim to redistribute caring responsibilities, such as non-transferable parental leave. Efforts, that have been spearheaded at the EU level. Unlike its Nordic neighbours, which have all introduced non-transferable leave for fathers of

between 9-15 weeks over the past two decades, there has been considerable political reluctance in Denmark to introduce a similar policy.[3] Research indicates that Danish women take on average 9 times as much parental leave as Danish men.[4] In 2012 the Government appointed a committee to examine the effects of the proposal for an earmarked period of up to 12 weeks of the leave reserved for fathers, however, despite broad support from trade unions the proposal was later withdrawn. The decision was expressed by the then Minister of Employment on the basis that it would not be right for the government to decide how the parents choose to share the leave. With the adoption of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive in 2019, which aimed at improving families' access to family leave and flexible work arrangements and encouraging a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women, EU states, including Denmark were required to implement a minimum of 9 non-transferable weeks for fathers before August 2022. Public and political debates surrounding the creation of the new scheme followed a similar pattern to earlier arguments concerning the relationship between wage work and care; namely, concern for the rights of individual families to delegate their caregiving responsibilities within the private sphere. A particular area of concern was the economic impact on families where fathers are the higher earner (Høgholm Jørgensen and Egholt Søgaard, 2021). In opposition to this, the issue of extended leave period was framed within an 'equal rights' frame as part of a 'right of fathers'.

The new law was adopted in March 2022[5] According to statements made by the Social Democratic government, its aims were to strike a balance between EU demands and the flexibility of families, both in relation to the organization of domestic care and labour market access. The ruling Social Democratic government expressed support for a greater uptake of parental leave by fathers, which it argued was particularly beneficial for children and would remove barriers to women's labour market participation.[6] Of note was the emphasis upon the scheme's progressive inclusion of alternative families, specifically single and LGBT+ family constellations. The framing of the quota policy, primarily with regards to family and labour flexibility, reflects similar trends in EU parental leave policies which have introduced researched time for fathers (Eydal and Gíslason 2008; Lappegard 2008; Geisler and Kreyenfeld 2011). However, the impact of such policies has been mixed. Research around paternity leave quotas, including in the Nordic context, has shown that while non-transferable quotas have incentivized fathers to increase their leave uptake, they are not effective in prompting fathers to use more than their personal entitlements (Duvander et al 2019). Data shows that only a small minority of fathers take more than their quota of leave (see for example Arnalds et al, 2013). Moreover, although the average number of days is increasing, only some fathers may be reacting to the reform. This is particularly linked to education and income level (Duvander and Viklund 2014). As I will argue, this is also related to the framing of parental leave policies, which often manifest existing attitudes regarding care and work that can act as a barrier to shifting broader social norms and expectations, particularly the gendered nature of care.

Narratives of Work and Care: Situating Feminist Legal Theorizing on Social Reproduction

As has been concluded by decades of interventions by feminist scholars, the status and treatment of care within social and political contexts has been both problematic and precarious (Fraser 2016, Ferguson, 2016; Mies, 1986). Feminist theorists of care have shown that despite being a central aspect of most social and economic systems, care has largely been invisibilised and excluded from economic systems of value (Waring, 1988). This status is sustained through narratives suggesting women's natural predisposition to care work or biological destiny as mothers, as well the division between the spheres of 'production' and 'reproduction'/ 'work' and 'home', as a means to support a gendered division of labour (Cox and

Federici, 1975). The division between paid work and unpaid care work is visible in many aspects, not least the exclusion of unpaid care work from the ambit of GDP, but also in the persistence of analytical categories such as *stay- at-home mother*, *stay-at-home father*, *working mother*, and *working father*, which build on a division between work and care (Doucet, 2021). As Nancy Fraser argues, the care crisis emanates from a boundary struggle between production and reproduction, with capitalism 'freeriding' on activities of provisioning, caregiving and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds, although it accords them no monetarized value and treats them as they were free' (Fraser, 2016, 101).

The increasing concern over matters of care, leading to a rise in regulation and public policies addressing issues of care, is bound up not only with a rising 'care deficit' but also changing gender roles, particularly with regard to the nature and extent of women's participation in paid work. Despite demographic shifts away from the 'male breadwinner' model towards the increased labour participation of women, this has not led to significant changes in the distribution of care work and social reproduction within the home (Bhattacharya 2017). Women have largely continued to assume primary responsibility for caregiving, seeking to 'balance' their work and family responsibilities by assuming a 'dual burden' of work and care, which has arguably exacerbated rather than alleviated gender inequalities. This dependence has only grown under conditions of neo-liberalisation. As Fraser argues:

> *Globalizing and neoliberal, this regime promotes state and corporate disinvestment from social welfare, while recruiting women into the paid workforce—externalizing carework onto families and communities while diminishing their capacity to perform it. The result is a new, dualized organization of social reproduction, commodified for those who can pay for it and privatized for those who cannot, as some in the second category provide carework in return for (low) wages for those in the first. The two-earner household has become a paradigmatic node in this regime (Fraser 2016, 112)*

The move towards policies aimed at reconciling work and family life, including parental leave, which have sought to accommodate the needs of carers, are posited as the solution to ongoing imbalances in care arrangements by aiming at a *redistribution* of care. However, the ability of this approach to deliver greater gender-equality in areas of care has been mixed (Stratigaki 2004; Müller *et al* 2018). Research has pointed to the social, structural and discursive formulation and construction of these policies as critical to their ability to deliver on gender equality (Rocha 2021). This includes not only the variations in length, compensation (and level of compensation) and transferability, among other factors, but also the manner in which policies frame and approach the issues of parental leave and care, and particularly whether they challenge the stereotypical gendered divisions of care. And yet, despite significant regulatory adaptation, feminist scholars have shown, that these efforts have been too often instrumental and limited, rather than transformative, in so far as reconceiving prevailing attitudes towards care work and gendered parenting roles (Suwada 2017; Busby, 2011. Despite the stated aim of 'family-friendly' policies of parental leave and other work/life balance instruments to place unpaid care work at the heart of policy reform and encourage an equal distribution of caring, many remain wedded to the underlying dynamics of the 'production boundary' and its gendered division of labour (Busby, 2011; Conaghan, 2013).

In their comparative study of European laws on parental leave work, Leon and Millns underline that despite the gender neutrality of the provisions on parental leave, generally legal frameworks of maternity rights are much stronger than their parental rights counterpart (Leon and Millns 2007, 343). This, they argue, works to maintain a gendered conceptualisation of childcare, in which greater legal and financial protection is conferred upon working mothers, underscoring the primary role/responsibility of women in caring for children. Even with the introduction of 'daddy days' or 'use

it or lose it' quotas, research indicates that the quota seems to create a norm of how much leave fathers should use, rather than promoting more equal distribution of shared leave between men and women; the sharable part of family leave being often seen as primarily for the mother to take (Duvander et al 2019).

This imbalance is exacerbated by existing social norms and expectations but also frequently by economic factors. The framing of these policies in terms of labour market flexibility for women inevitably centres concerns of economic performance and productivity (the expectation being that if men and women were to share domestic care work in the family more equally, then women would be better able to participate in the labour market), making them susceptible to the realities of economic imperatives, particularly in the private sphere. The criteria of employment to qualify for the earnings-related benefit, moreover, ensures that the scheme remains wedded to the labour market and ideas of productivity by rewarding work before having children. The level of compensation is a decisive factor for the take up of parental leave by fathers (Suwada 2017). As Nancy Folbre underlines, a common characteristic of family leave allowances is that they "defray only a small percentage of the cost of children" (Folbre 1994, 122–123), which often undermines the economic incentives for fathers to take up caregiving responsibilities. The low level of legally guaranteed parental benefit, in an already gendered labour market in which women generally earn less than their male partners, also means that for economic reasons a supposedly gender-neutral policy of parental leave ensures that the burden falls upon women (highlighting the fact that the gender pay gap remains a crucial matter when addressing reconciliation) (Dickens, 2006, 306; Shamir, 2010). If they are already mothers, the chances that the gender pay gap among the couple is even higher increases.[7] The low level of remuneration maintains a division between the productive worker and the marginalized caregiver, whose reproductive activities are largely depicted as an impediment to labour participation. This works to maintain a traditional family policy where gender roles are clearly differentiated between care and paid employment.

Seen in this light, the ability of 'family-friendly' policies to deliver greater equality with regard to the allocation of caring responsibilities is impeded by embedded gendered structures, particularly within the family that shape choices on how to share leave (Duvander *et al* 2019); a situation exacerbated by states' continued practical reliance on informal care arrangements to absorb the care deficit in place of formal, publicly subsided care solutions. That is, care remains undervalued, under supported and under remunerated within policies on care, and more broadly within society and the market, which will lead to a limited impact on shifting the inequalities of distribution within the home.

Non-Traditional Families and Social Transformations of Care

A further dimension of the legal regulation of care has emerged against the backdrop of broader demographic changes, which have seen the rise of a host of new configurations of intimacy and kin-like relationships other than the heterosexual family model. This includes new ways of creating intimate relationships, which include friends, lovers and former partners, and new kinds of family models such as rainbow families, create new possibilities of *redistribution* of care beyond the traditional family model and its gendered "social contradictions" (Fraser 2016 22). As Schacher, Auerbach and Bordeaux Silverstein note, same-sex relationships may challenge gendered roles by, "degendering parenting, reconceptualising family, and reworking masculine [and feminine] gender roles" (Schacher, Auerbach and Bordeaux Silverstein, 2005, 31). These broader relationships of caregiving include creating care arrangements in multiple domestic spaces, creating multiple and separated forms of income, and involving a wider range of individuals in carrying out care activities (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001). This is particularly visible with regards to new forms of parenting arrangements, involving non-biological, adoptive and donor parents.

The embedded "familialism" – to draw on Esping-Andersen categorization of welfare regimes with regard to the extent to which families are held responsible for their members' welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990; 1999) – of family leave policies, against the backdrop of the collapse of the male-bread winner model as the primary solution to in-home family care provision, means that family-based care remains desirable as a means of absorbing and discharging the care burden, requiring stable family forms. This move, away from specific family models towards an emphasis on family functioning, opens a space for the reconsideration of issues of sexuality and non-standard intimacies. However, the extent to which family friendly policies actually reflect and support alternative constellations of the family outside of the traditional nuclear family model varies greatly across different welfare states.

Scholarship has explored the challenges and contradictions of claims for inclusion and recognition of LGBTQI+ families within dominant regimes of social citizenship, not least their disciplining and restrictive potential, as well as their potential to reinforce the "norm of heterosexuality" (Fineman, 1991 Richardson, 2005, Seidman, 2001). Criticism of the emancipatory limitations of the demand for same-sex marriage in particular, has given rise to calls for recognition of more expansive family forms to reflect the diversity of peoples' intimate relations. For example, Judith Butler posits the concept of kinship as a counterbalance to the restrictive conceptual and juridical focus on traditional marriage:

> *If we understand kinship as a set of practices that institutes relationships of various kinds which negotiate the reproduction of life and the demands of death, then kinship practices will be those that emerge to address fundamental forms of human dependency, which may include birth, child rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying, and death (to name a few). (Butler 2002, 102–3)*

However, as Butler also points out, even as these new modes of kinship emerge, their conditions of possibility are dependent on external parameters, including the normative regulation of the state. The demands of legibility within a dominant heterosexual framework indicates that for these relationships to become recognised, they need to be decipherable to the existing normative framework and its accompanying law. That is, these alternative family forms must enter into legitimate subjectivity and, "to be a subject at all requires first complying with certain norms that govern recognition – that make a person recognizable" (Butler 2009, iv). This often precludes the possibility of true subversion to the traditional family form, leading Butler to question whether "kinship is always already heterosexual" (Butler 2002, 123).

The same demands of legibility also extend to legal regimes that structure caregiving. Despite the recasting of family structures to include some LGBTQI+ families, dominant regimes of care enforce a traditional model of intimacy and relationships, which exclude the vast majority of alternative kinship arrangements. The dominant juridical understanding of the family within the societal division of labour continues to privilege "the traditional and increasingly exclusive notion of the legally married, nuclear and economically functional model" (Salford 2002, 411; Diduck 2003). This limited family form not only governs the politics of recognition but also the disciplining responsibilities and expectations, which are associated with the state sanctioned family form. The conferring of rights onto LGBTQI+ families, particularly as carers, is contingent upon their fulfilment of the model of care, which mimics the heterosexual family structure with its gendered divisions of labour (Stychin, 2004; Barker, 2006). That is, while the state has decentered heterosexuality from the family structure, enabling LGBTQI+ individuals to be admitted into its ambit, it maintains a particular form of family functioning.

Ann Barlow's analysis of configurations of caregiving in British family law, for example, demonstrates how the law's recognition of care work normalises heterosexual families to the exclusion of other organizational forms for the

provision of care (Barlow, 2007). In the case of marriage dissolution, for example, she explores how value is placed on non-financial contributions during a marriage, which is not available to those who cohabit (Wong, 2007). Even less value is accorded to non-couple care-giving relationships or state-dependent single parenthood, where paid work is considered to be the carer's primary goal and reproductive labour becomes non-existent at best. Family leave policies, such as those enabling parents to take job-protected leaves from work to carry out caregiving activities, are also largely dependent on the extent to which they fit the legally recognized version of a parent. The biological and heteronormative model of family expressed in welfare and family law regimes also privileges biological parents over other potentially relevant adults (for example, sperm donors or surrogate mothers).

Joanne Conaghan and Emily Grabham employ the concept of sexual citizenship to explore the manner in which rights linked to care and family protection, particularly those stemming from the legal recognition of partnerships, are prefaced upon their ability to fit within attendant heteronormative family forms (Conaghan and Grabham, 2007, 325). Citing the UK Civil Partnership Act 2004, they demonstrate how relationship recognition for lesbians and gay men mirrors marriage in virtually every way and is designed to encourage a particular set of relationship practices. These are primarily centred around maintaining a stable, long-term relationship with similar expectations surrounding financial dependency, particularly as it relates to spousal support (Barker, 2006, 249). The hallmarks of the 'ideal' citizen carer that emerge from these regimes include:

> *She (or he) will be in a monogamous, two-person relationship. She will be cohabiting with her partner. There will be an assumption that one partner earns more than the other, and/or that one partner is more domestically oriented than the other, thereby mirroring the heteronormative gendered division of labour within the home. The partners will act as one economic unit, sharing finances and expecting to take responsibility for or depend on the other partner in the case of illness, unemployment or if the partnership breaks down. (Conaghan and Grabham, 2007, 337).*

They also cite the UK benefits system, where same-sex couples have been treated as spouses, resulting in a large number of same-sex couples becoming financially dependent on each other in a similar manner to the asymmetries caused by the model of traditional marriage. This approach to non-traditional family arrangements is built on a set of normative assumptions about the appropriate from of family intimacy, centred around material concerns such as shared finances and a shared domestic space. The 'citizen carer' also maintains a defined conjugal relationship with the expectation that children will be raised as if part of a two-parent nuclear family model. As Conaghan and Grabham note, "the trade-off for relationship recognition therefore includes adopting sanitised and privatised relationship patterns that are intelligible to the heteronormative mainstream, but which have considerable economic and affective consequences for sexual minorities." (Conaghan and Grabham 2007, 335)

In this sense, the enclosure of non-traditional relationships into the married nuclear family model not only maintains prevailing social norms and institutions of family, gender, work, it also forecloses the possibility of an alternative to traditional model of organising "the reproduction of life". These emancipatory social and legal gains for some LGBTQI+ families, simultaneously strengthen the exclusionary nature of the family form and maintain the contradictions and divisions of caregiving responsibility within the heterosexual family model.

Recognition of Care within Non-Traditional Families in the Danish Legal Context

Mapping these insights onto the accessibility of legally recognized, family-based rights for

non-traditional families in Denmark, the section considers the implications of parental leave policies for non-traditional family forms. By doing so, it aims to draw a link between government policy in the area of care imperatives and reconfigurations of sexuality around concepts of work, family and care.

Denmark has undertaken a number of gender-neutral legal initiatives in the area of work and family life, which might be said to broaden the scope of family-friendly policy to encompass non-traditional family forms and encourage greater redistribution of caring responsibilities within families. Denmark became the first country in the world to legally recognize same-sex relationships in 1989, giving homosexual couples a number of rights which were to be equated with (heterosexual) married couples.[8] In 2012 Denmark recognized same-sex marriage, following the introduction of a law to make marriage legally gender neutral. [9] Despite this, there is still a significant gulf in rights that accrue to alternative family forms. For example, single and lesbian women were deprived of the right to physician-assisted artificial insemination in both public and private settings by law in 1996, with the requirement to 'live with a man in a marriage-like relationship' (§ 3). The ban was not abolished until ten years later in 2006.[10] While joint within-country adoption was made available to same-sex couples in Denmark in 2010,[11] the right has been more of a formal than a practical right, as very few same-sex couples have been able to adopt a child. Instead, second-parent adoption has been an increasingly important avenue to parenthood for male couples through surrogacy arrangements. However, commercial surrogacy (i.e., paying more than medical costs to a surrogate mother) is illegal in Denmark and if the court finds that a couple has used a commercial surrogate, it may result in the adoption not being granted to the non-biological parent.[12] With these restrictions in place, which place heavy emphasis on traditional family models, gay and lesbian couples and singles have increasingly turned to alternative routes to parenthood. Shared parenthood has become increasingly common, where same-sex couples jointly have children with a single mother/father or another couple – a so-called 'Rainbow family'.[13] However, a child can only have two legal parents in Denmark, severely restricting the possibility of non-biological parents to gain the attendant rights and status of a parent. Female same-sex couples who seek medically assisted procreation face similar difficulties. There is no marriage presumption for same-sex couples and the social mother has to go through a process similar to the one cohabiting different-sex couples go through in order to legally verify their parenthood. Trans families face similarly restrictive legislation. Transmen are automatically registered as mothers on their child's birth certificate, while transgender women are registered as the child's father instead of second mother.

These restrictive policies regarding the legal definition of a parent or family also spill over into constructions of family, work and care within legal entitlements surrounding family leave. *Barselsloven* – the legislation governing maternity, paternity, and adoptive leave in Denmark – currently affords birth mothers four weeks of leave before the expected birth of the child. Birth mothers are required by law to take the first two weeks following the birth of their child off from work and are entitled to 12 additional weeks which must be held consecutively. 'Fathers' (a term which includes the same-sex partners of birth mothers and adoptive parents, but not same-sex partners of birth fathers) are entitled to two weeks paternity leave, which must be used before the child reaches 14 weeks. Beyond these earmarked weeks, both parents are entitled to up to 32 weeks of leave from their jobs but each is only entitled to financial compensation up to a total of 32 weeks.

The new law change, which is expected to be implemented in August 2022, will allocate 11 weeks of non-transferable leave to fathers and reduce the number of weeks available for each parent to 24. The proposed legislation also contains a provision, which will first be implemented at the beginning of 2024, that extends the possibility of accessing some parental leave to a) the legal parent's married partner; b) the legal parent's defacto partner if they live together and have been in a 'marriage-like' relationship for 2 years; c) a donor

with a ‘parental like relationship to a child’; and d) the donor’s married or defacto partner with a ‘parental like relationship to a child’, which is expressly directed towards LGBT+ families. The proposal also includes a right for single parents to transfer parental leave to a family member. However, this only concerns the 26 transferable weeks, and not the 11 earmarked weeks which must be taken by the legal parents.

While the law is expressly directed towards gender equality and the redistribution of care within the home, it is apparent that the approach to work and families still largely reflects a heterosexual family model of care, based on a two-parent model of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ caregivers. For example, while single parents are able to share a proportion of their parental leave, this is limited to one single family member, rather than multiple. This approach largely overlooks the rising amount of care that is being provided by grandparents and other extended family members (Hank, K., Buber, I. 2009), particularly within single parent households, which are on the rise in Northern Europe (Esteve & Liu, 2020). Moreover, while the scheme enables parents to hold leave simultaneously, it is largely built on the assumption that one parent will continue to work, normally full time, whilst the other remains at home to look after the child. Given that the compensation rate during the first 24 weeks varies according to sector, with it being up to private employers to decide how much of an individual’s salary will be covered during the period, with some being granted a full salary for all or some of the period, while others are only covered by the state (*barselsdagpenge* – being slightly higher than unemployment benefits), the relatively unregulated financial implications of parental leave means that the economic consequences will likely influence the organization of caring arrangements by families. This position is implicitly acknowledged in explanations and examples of how the scheme can be organized by families in the most recently updated pamphlet issued by the Danish Ministry of Employment.[14] The disparities in accessing leave, coupled with the fact that pension payments are suspended during parental leave, leaves the primary caretaker much worse off financially. In practice, economic considerations as well as social constructions of gendered parental roles play a major role in influencing the division of parental leave in families. A Danish study conducted in 2020 found that the economic reasons and a strong preference that the mother should take leave were the primary motivating factors in the distribution of leave amongst parents.[15] Likewise, early research on the new quota scheme predicts that the introduction of mandatory leave with a low replacement rate will only marginally increase the leave of fathers (Høgholm Jørgensen and Egholt Søgaard, 2021). Given the persistence of a substantial pay gap between men and women, many families are often economically unable to forgo the pay of the higher earner for any substantial period.

While same sex parents were also made eligible to share parental leave (after the Maternity Act was revised in 2009), currently only individuals who are legally recognized as the parents of the child can make use of family leave. As a child can only have two legal parents, non-traditional families involving more than two parents are ineligible to access these rights, further reinforcing the idea of two primary care givers. Furthermore, the registration of same sex parental rights from birth is presently restricted to same sex partners of mothers. Same sex fathers are currently unable to be registered as co-parents from birth. This restricts not only the right of same sex father to access parental leave benefits, but also restricts the possibility of other relevant figures such as surrogate mothers or other members of rainbow families from accruing rights in relation to a child. To be granted parental rights (*medmoderskab*), moreover, the same sex partners of birth mothers must have a civil partnership with the birth mother and be expected to commit to the care and upbringing of the child (*omsorgs og ansvarserklæring*).[16]

In this sense, same sex partners of new mothers are granted parental rights, based on the understanding that they assume responsibility for children in a manner that fits with the state’s normative model of family identity; one in which the burden of care, both financially and practically,

is shared privately with a co-parent within a defined two-person relationship. Similar demands are placed on adoptive stepparents, particularly the requirement that the two parents must have shared a registered address for at least 2.5 years to achieve the required 'stability' to make them eligible for parental rights. Defined as falling within the same category as fathers within family law legislation, moreover, same sex partners of biological mothers are also eligible to fewer weeks of leave than biological mothers, thereby reinstating the biologically determinant model of care divisions. From this it becomes clear that when caring rights are extended to LGBTQ+ and other non-traditional families, it is on the basis that they can be slotted into existing gendered structures rather than pursuing alternative configurations of intimacy and child-rearing.

Conclusion

While inroads have been made into tackling the gendered division of labour through legislation and regulation that promote fathers' uptake of parental leave, there is a still a considerable way to go in ensuring equality in care distribution. Eliminating such inequality entails the social transformation of individual ideals, social norms and financial constraints which structure the nexus between market, family and state in dynamics of care. In particular, the trend away from heteronormative notions of family that emphasize the role of social and economic obligation in relations of social reproduction prompt a reconsideration of gendered dynamics of care. Non-traditional intimacies, particularly those arising from same-sex relations, are advancing the pluralization of relationship forms within the private sphere – pushing politically and culturally contested ideas about "the correct or moral ways in which people should conduct their lives, and the people with whom they should conduct them" (Pine, 2002, 339; Razavi, 2013).

Despite the potential of these non-traditional intimacies to lead the way in expanding approaches to care and creating the economic and social conditions that facilitate better modes of care distribution, however, these approaches are largely conditioned by heteronormative approaches to care contained and enforced by legal structures. As the case of Danish parental leave reform demonstrates, this can be seen more starkly in the manner in which many of the associated care rights and protections for families formed by lesbians, gays, and other non-traditional families are premised on the demand that they approximate traditional heteronormative family constructions, in place of alternative configurations of intimacy and child-rearing.

Given the critical limitations of this model to care, it is clear that if the growing care deficit is to be tackled in a sustainable manner, legal and policy frameworks must adapt to the broader changes in society and gender relations, including tackling the gendered narratives and binaries of work and care, production and reproduction that remain embedded in legal structures regulating care and ensuring that legislative reform allows for a true reconceptualization of care distribution.

Notes

1 As Arlie Hochschild describes in her seminal text from 1995: *In private life, the care deficit is most palpable in families where working mothers, married and single, lack sufficient help from partners or kin. … In public life, the care deficit can be seen in government cuts in funds for services for poor mothers, the disabled, the mentally ill, and the elderly. In reducing the financial deficit, legislators add to the 'care deficit'.*

2 For example, Danmarks Statistik has registered little change in the number of men taking care of their

sick children, with women continuing to use more allocated care provision days than men. https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/nyheder-analyser-publ/nyt/NytHtml?cid=32036.

[3] Norway was the first country to enact such a father's quota into law in 1993, followed by Sweden in 1995, Denmark in 1998 (abolished in 2002) and Iceland in 2000.

[4] See http://bm.dk/da/Aktuelt/Publikationer/Arkiv/2014/Kvinder%20og%20maend%20paa%20arbejdsmarkedet%202013.aspx

[5] L 104 Forslag til lov om ændring af barselsloven. 3 March 2022.

[6] Betænkning Til lovforslag nr. L 104 afgivet af Beskæftigelsesudvalget. 23. February 2022.

[7] According to the European Institute for Gender Equality's 2017 Equality Index the total gender gap in net monthly earnings in the EU stands at 31%, to the detriment of women, but jumps to 48% for couples with children under the age of seven.

[8] Lov om registreret partnerskab (1989).

[9] Lov om ændring af lov om ægteskabs indgåelse og opløsning, lov om ægteskabets retsvirkninger og retsplejeloven og om ophævelse af lov om registreret partnerskab (2012).

[10] Lov om kunstig befrugtning i forbindelse med lægelig behandling, diagnostik og forskning m.v. (1997).

[11] The Adoption Act was changed in 2009; however, in 2008, courts started granting adoptions to lesbian couples who had undergone inseminations at Danish clinics soon after birth in anticipation of the law change.

[12] In Denmark, a woman who gives birth is considered to be the child's legal parent and, if she is married to a man, her husband is considered to be the legal father. Hence, achieving joint parenthood through adoption by a social parent requires the surrogate mother's consent. If she is in a heterosexual marriage, her husband also needs to consent. If none of the parents-to-be are the biological parents, then the couple needs to jointly adopt the child.

[13] In 2018 Danmarks Statistik registered the births of 3.316 'rainbow' children – defined as children who have either two or more same sex parents. This accounts for 5% of all births. Danmarks Statistik (2018): Børn og familier, side 39 f. Tilgængelig via: https:// www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/GetPubFile.aspx?id=31407&sid=bornfam2018

[14] Ministry of Employment, 'Flexible Parental Leave' (2003) available at: https://bm.dk/media/6789/fleksibelbarselsorlov_foraeldre_dec_2003.pdf

[15] Danish Institute for Human Rights, 'Mere ligestilling i de danskebarselsregler' 2020. https://menneskeret.dk/udgivelser/barsel

[16] Bekendtgørelse om registrering af faderskab og medmoderskab i forbindelse med anmeldelse af barnets fødsel (2019).

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Queering Comradeship: Anti-Capitalist Relations in *We Are Who We Are*

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Abstract

This article argues that *We Are Who We Are*'s value lies in its exploration of the radical relationality of comradeship, a concept theorized recently by Jodi Dean. The profoundly queer connection forged and cultivated by the show's dual protagonists, Caitlyn/Harper Poythress and Fraser Wilson, inspiringly models a comradeship that overflows with everyday possibilities for contemporary anti-capitalist praxis. The article begins by tracing the outlines of the material landscape in which Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper's relationship unfolds, namely an American military base which captures the contradictory dynamics of our contemporary social totality, including the intersections of capitalist political economy, imperialism, and gender/sexuality. The article then offers a close reading of the show to illustrate Dean's (2019) four theses of the comrade. Special attention is paid to the relational dynamics between Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser, juxtaposing them with those of others in their immediate lives. The article concludes by using recent sociological research on youth activism to argue that the political legacy left by Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper can, in fact, inspire revolutionary change and promote the everyday subversion of global war capital.

KEYWORDS: Queer comradeship, radical relationality, youth activism, Jodi Dean, *We Are Who We Are*, Luca Guadagnino

Introduction

By the time Prince's "The Love We Make" scores the closing credits in the finale of Luca Guadagnino's 2020 television series, *We Are Who We Are*, audience members cannot be faulted for being left speechless. After all, they have accompanied the show's dual protagonists, Fraser Wilson and Caitlyn/Harper Poythress, for more than 8 hours of emotional catharsis and intense intimacy, climaxing in the two passionately kissing and embracing one another tenderly in what Fraser describes as "the most beautiful place on earth" (an otherwise prosaic archway in Bologna, Italy). Along the way, Guadagnino has lovingly documented a relationship that seems to defy conventional classification, living up to the boldness, clarity, and dynamism of the series title.

Critical responses to *We Are Who We Are* have praised the series. Mainstream journalistic accounts of the show describe it as a "rich exploration of the teenage experience in an especially heightened location" (Soraya 2020), and a "languid, lusty, sun-baked teen drama" (Poniewozik 2020) capturing the "abiding emotional and physical chaos that is puberty" (Weldon 2020). While these laudatory assessments capture some of the show's most important themes, the popular press have yet to provide a deeper and more incisive analysis that such a profound work deserves.

I attempt to remedy this oversight by offering a counterhegemonic reading of a series that challenges not only taken-for-granted modes of social identification but also the nature of political practice itself. My central contention here is that *We Are Who We Are*'s value lies in its exploration of the radical relationality of comradeship, a concept theorized recently by Jodi Dean. The profoundly queer connection forged and cultivated by Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser expands beyond platonic bond, romantic attachment, adolescent commiseration, and/or survivalist solidarity. The two protagonists inspiringly model what I call a "queer comradeship" that can create the affective space and energetic intimacy necessary for effective anti-capitalist praxis to become possible.

I begin the article by establishing the show's production details, dramatis personae, and narrative arc. This opening section also explores how the series' physical setting (i.e., an American military base in Italy) represents a geopolitical context/material landscape with special salience for contemporary Marxist and queer theorizing regarding global war capital and homonationalism. I then use Jodi Dean's four theses about comradeship (2019) to dissect the interpersonal dynamics between Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser, juxtaposing their relationality with those of other characters, whether friends, family, or institutional authorities. The article concludes with a brief discussion of how the queer comradeship in *We Are Who We Are* can effectively respond to possible critiques of its seeming limitations as a political practice. Borrowing from recent sociological research on youth activism, I close the article by suggesting that the radical relationality between Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper provides a model for viewers to subvert their own otherwise mundane lives, and that such everyday openings/opportunities/ruptures can serve as the basis for creating concrete, real, and lasting change in the "right here, right now" (to borrow the title of all the series' episodes).

Setting the stage

We Are Who We Are is an 8-episode miniseries directed by Luca Guadagnino and written by Guadagnino alongside Francesca Manieri and Paolo Giordano. It was produced for HBO in the U.S. and Sky Atlantic in Europe with episodes released weekly on television cable as well as the networks' respective streaming services over the autumn of 2020. Each episode, ranging in length from 45-80 minutes, advances and/or retraces a linear chronology of events of four seasons (almost a full year) on a U.S. military base in Chioggia, Italy. The show focuses most of its attention on chronicling the coming-of-age and sexual/gender identity explorations of Fraser Wilson and Caitlyn/Harper Poythress, two American-born teenagers who live with their respective families next door to one another on the base.

Both protagonists' households, though differing in their respective gender/sexuality compositions, are headed by servicemembers who have leadership roles on the base: Fraser's White American mother, Sarah, arrives to Italy with her family at the start of the series to assume the base commander post, an unwelcome transition in the eyes of Caitlyn/Harper's Black American father, Richard, an incumbent senior officer who had hoped for a promotion. Sarah's Brazilian American wife, Maggie, works as a military nurse and parents Fraser with Sarah; Caitlyn/Harper's mother, Jenny, is a Nigerian American immigrant whose son (Caitlyn/Harper's brother), Danny, is from a different father from her former country. Outside these neighboring nuclear families are several other important characters on the show: Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper hang out with a group of peers with whom they partake in the antics and angst of adolescent life, including a White American woman named Britney, the Black American brothers Craig and Sam (the former is a soldier undergoing basic training on-base, while the latter is Caitlyn/Harper's boyfriend at the show's start), and a pair of unrelated Italian locals named Valentina and Enrico. And of particular significance for Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser's romantic lives are Jonathan, Sarah's Israeli American 20s-something assistant (who Fraser pines for and openly flirts with), and Giulia, a teenage Italian local who actively pursues Caitlyn/Harper.

Having established the network of relations in *We Are Who We Are*, it is helpful now to turn to what is a crucial feature of the show: its setting. The series is not situated in the conventional locations for critical representations of capital, whether the orthodox Marxist venue of an industrial manufacturing factory/mine shaft or the more contemporary milieu of the corporate executive boardroom/tech company office building. Indeed, a U.S. military base in Italy seems an unusual place for portraying the accumulation and composition of capital in the global political economy. However, this backdrop actually offers a useful lens for analyzing present-day capitalist dynamics and identity politics. In the paragraphs to follow, I employ the works of David Harvey, William I. Robinson, and Jasbir Puar to help explore the mutually reinforcing social forces of capital, imperialism, and homonationalism at the core of the show; these are the elements of the current social totality that the queer comradeship of Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper challenges. Specifically, I provide a separate, one-by-one examination of each scholars' relevant ideas as well as exploration of those ideas through their application to specific textual examples from *We Are Who We Are*.

David Harvey's conceptual framework of "accumulation by dispossession" borrows from Hannah Arendt's writings on the contradiction between the geographically limited territorial logic of the nation-state and the limitless expansionist logic of capital (Harvey 2005, 91-3). Capital's need for expansion creates overaccumulation crises which result, in turn, in territorial expansion by nation-states, often for the purposes of quelling antagonisms between imperial state governmentality/legitimation and the ruling class interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie (ibid., 93-6). Harvey further explains these power dynamics by proposing a "dual character of capitalist accumulation": "accumulation through expanded reproduction" (economic 'growth' through the increased exploitation of labor power by capital) and "accumulation by dispossession" (political domination through the increased control of territory by empire) (ibid., 96-7). This sort of multidimensional analysis accounts for the continuing geopolitical hegemony of the U.S. despite its growing vulnerabilities in the capitalist realms of finance and production (ibid., 98). Put simply, U.S. military superiority (and ruthlessness in exercising that superiority) offsets any lost dominance in production. Harvey ultimately describes contemporary world system dynamics as shifting away from neoliberal globalization and multilateral consent for expanded reproduction to a more irrational (from the standpoint of capital) coercion practiced by those nation-states (the U.S., most notably) that stand to lose their dominance in the power configurations of the global stage due to economic weaknesses. The ubiquity of U.S. armed forces presence, including bases, in almost every nation-state reflects what Harvey calls a "frontal military assault" for command of

the primary resources (land/territory being the most primary) of global capitalism (ibid., 98-100).

An encapsulation of Harvey's insights can be found in *We Are Who We Are*'s military base setting, a (figuratively and literally) concrete example of imperialist expansion in the interests of transnational power/control. The specific base in question here is admittedly a complicated case: while the U.S. military is indeed occupying space in another country, that country is Italy, a fellow G8 member and a nation-state that has itself historically attempted to impose itself as an imperial force on the world stage (albeit unsuccessfully, per Italy's failed invasion of Africa during World War II). Following Harvey's analysis to its logical end, however, one can argue that a U.S. military base in Italy reveals a crisis-induced desperation fueling imperial cannibalization within the capitalist core itself. As a recent piece in The Guardian highlights, Italy is being transformed into a "launching pad for U.S. wars," an abdication of territorial sovereignty that is supposedly offset by hefty tax payments made by the U.S. government to its host, among a number of geopolitical considerations (Vine 2013). Hence, the U.S. base in Chioggia may serve as a case study in how globalized dynamics of accumulation by dispossession have facilitated a "deterritorialization of the periphery," such that "peripheral zones" are emerging in core countries (Buechler 2008, 224).

Specific textual elements within the show support such a Harvey-inflected reading of the setting. An air of totalized political economic domination by the U.S. military, common to many such bases (Enloe 2014), pervades over this otherwise ostensibly Italian space, as illustrated by Britney explaining to Fraser during the show's opening episode that the commissary grocery store is organized exactly like all U.S. military bases worldwide, so the American shoppers "can't get lost" while engaging in the consumption habits they are accustomed to back home. Indeed, the entire series features such hints of quasi-settler colonialism with a (Protestant-appearing) Christian chapel as the only house of religious worship, an officer mowing his American suburb-replica lawn, a mall-like food court featuring the most generic of American brands, and even a cineplex showing exclusively Hollywood films (and whose screenings require rising for the U.S. national anthem before the lights go out). Indeed, the Italian name of the base "Caserma Maurizio Pialati" is explicitly contradicted by Maggie, who explains to Fraser in no uncertain terms that "this is America." And when Caitlyn/Harper's family are reassigned to a different U.S. military base in the show's final episode, their next stop is Okinawa, Japan, another possibly "deterritorialized" peripheral zone within a G8 nation-state (like Italy) whose modern history has been characterized by (similarly unsuccessful) imperial ambitions.

Building upon Harvey's work, William I. Robinson posits that today's world system has transformed into a "global war economy" of "militarized accumulation." In this contemporary context characterized by various interrelated and unprecedented crises, Robinson argues that it is "increasingly difficult to distinguish between military and non-military dimensions" (Robinson 2019, 853) of the political economy; this radical shift in society is mutually reinforced by the rise of "21st-century fascism," with its far-right civil society movements and authoritarian state regimes all over the world (ibid., 856). Paralleling Harvey's use of Arendt to help parse the political and economic, Robinson leans on Gramsci's analysis of social control to explain how hegemonic nation-states like the U.S. react militarily to the rising threat of a breakdown in global order. For Robinson, it is the erosion of American dominance on the world stage that compels "particular forms of exceptional" (ibid., 856) imperialist practices meant to delay and/or defer a reckoning with globalized crises relating to capital overaccumulation, surplus populations, and volatile polities.

Robinson's ideas are best understood when applied to *We Are Who We Are*'s off-base environment, as the entire landscape of Chiogga seems circumscribed by a global war economy of U.S. military accumulation. Fighter jets scream overhead throughout the port town, even during the most mundane scenes in the series. Almost all the service labor at the base, including cafeteria and security staffing, is performed by local Italian

residents, including one man who is shown cleaning up an outrageous mess left by the base teenagers after a summer paintball excursion; even a small-scale artisanal seamstress that Fraser stumbles upon in a remote part of the town during episode one is seen sewing uniforms for the American troops. Additionally, the show highlights that the majority of U.S. armed forces servicepersons reside in off-base apartments, potentially occupying/distorting the local real estate market. And the series' temporality, set during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, raises the specter of the ascendant neo-fascism that Robinson posits. The show includes conspicuous signs of Trump's reactionary rise to power, an ever-present specter of authoritarianism that mirrors a totalitarian tone within the show's narrative. In episode three, Sarah makes a fateful choice to deploy an insufficiently trained platoon to Afghanistan against the advising of her fellow officers; in episode seven, when that fateful choice has resulted in casualties among the soldiers (including Craig), Sarah invokes Trump to dismiss all critical reflection: "Have you been watching the news?! The people want a leader who'll make tough decisions!". The series also offers an astute glimpse into one of the more surprising demographic groups that Trump wins over with his hegemonically masculine, 21st-century fascist rhetoric: African-American men, as evidenced here by Richard, who secretly orders "MAGA" hats for he and Caitlyn/Harper to wear.

Lastly, Jasbir Puar's work can help link the analyses of Harvey and Robinson to contemporary identity politics. Specifically, Puar's concept of homonationalism reveals how a "settler subjectivity" and "human security-state system" (Mikdashi and Puar 2016) can create and regulate sexuality and sexual identities worldwide. Specifically, Puar (2013, 337) articulates a framework in which an "assemblage" of geopolitics, neoliberalism, biopolitics, and affect reorient the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality. For her, homonationalism emerges as a project by which Western/imperialist LGBTQ+ identity politics function as both proxies for, and beneficiaries of, the "accumulation by dispossession" and "military accumulation" theorized by Harvey and Robinson. Puar thus understands identity as intrinsically related to the territorial logics of imperialism as well as the expansionist logics of capital, and her "analytics of power" always locate individual-level gender/sexuality within a global war political economy.

Puar's theorizing is reflected by the interplay of capital, empire, gender, and sexuality on display in *We Are Who We Are*. While Fraser's openly lesbian parents represent a token progressivism regarding LGBTQ+ identity in U.S. society, their gender/sexual identities (along with those of all others on- and off-base) are ultimately representative of the homonationalist conditions within which they operate. At the heart of these conditions is a cis-heteropatriarchy that undergirds the global war political economy, including the U.S. military. Indeed, phallocentric hegemony looms large in the show, whether literally (male penises are omnipresent, from a barracks shower shot in episode one to several scenes of men skinny-dipping) or only just slightly more metaphorically (countless conversations among the teenagers on the show about their sexual relations revolve around touching, liking, and/or feeling "it"). Equally homonationalist are Sarah's objectifying/property-based references to Maggie as "hers," as well as her overt displays of institutional power when humiliating and one-upping Richard throughout the series. Sarah even attempts to pry Caitlyn/Harper away from Richard and his supposedly "basic" family; she secretly takes Caitlyn/Harper to the base's shooting range and schedules an unsolicited appointment on their behalf with the base's endocrinologist to discuss gender transition. Not surprisingly, the affair between Jenny and Maggie also features traces of homonationalism, with the former painfully describing legal/social repression in her native Nigeria, while the latter, whose formally recognized marriage to Sarah exemplifies supposed U.S. open-mindedness, patiently listens/supports. Such relationships ultimately mirror the more impersonally violent heteropatriarchal dynamics of militarized imperialism. In the opening episode, during a ceremony honoring Sarah's arrival, the outgoing male commander whispers that under his watch there were 20 brawls and three rapes,

and in the second episode, male soldiers can be overheard grotesquely recounting, complete with laughter and ethnic/misogynistic slurs, their gang rape of a local Italian woman. And Britney shares with the teens the gruesome tale of a neighbor serviceman who attempts to murder his wife.

The setting of *We Are Who We Are* thus provides an ideal backdrop for critiques of capital in its most imperialist, militarized, and homonationalist forms, as theorized by Harvey, Robinson, and Puar. The show's context of accumulation by dispossession, global war economy, and cis-heteropatriarchy offers an ideal stage for the everyday practices Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper engage in to challenge, subvert, and undermine their lived environment. The two protagonists' relational dynamics assertively resist identification with the problematic discourses circulating around them, and as such, enact a radical politics of refusal. Ultimately, then, as discussed in the section to follow, the queer comradeship between Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser not only transforms their own individual identities, but embodies, even in seemingly subtle and immaterial ways, a comprehensive rebuke of the present-day social totality across its various dimensions and layers.

Radical relationality

The previous section introduced the story structure of *We Are Who We Are* while focusing on how the series' setting illustrates scholarship on capitalist accumulation, military imperialism, and identity politics in the current conjuncture. Jodi Dean's theoretical oeuvre also emerges from, and responds to, historical materialist accounts of the present-day social totality. In her most recent work (2019), Dean argues for comradeship as a necessary organizing principle for constructing a communist future. The relational dynamics between Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper in the show can help make Dean's somewhat abstract theses on the comrade more concrete, as the seemingly undefinable intimacy between the two protagonists subverts the alienation of their environment; as such, their queer comradeship provides a model for the everyday practice of anti-capitalist politics.

Dean's first thesis posits that comradeship is a relationality of "sameness, equality, and solidarity" that transcends "the determinations of capitalist society" (Dean 2019, 62). She goes on to explain that comrades embody a "mode of belonging" that is opposed to the isolation, hierarchy, and oppression characterizing bourgeois work and family relations (ibid., 63); this belongingness "engenders new feelings" in the comrades such that they no longer recognize themselves as unequal or submissive (ibid.). Dean explicitly links comrade relations to a "celebratory queerness" that seeks to disrupt heteropatriarchy and binary gender (ibid., 64); she invokes Hongwei Bao's scholarship on the Chinese identity of *tongzhi* to claim that comradeship is "intrinsically queer" in the ways it deconstructs traditional kinship structures and makes public an intimacy that would otherwise be relegated solely to the private domestic sphere (ibid., 65). In this way, Dean's conception of the comrade overcomes conventional identity-based distinctions ascribed to subjects within contemporary capitalism, including but not limited to race, class, gender, and sexuality (ibid., 66).

Over the course of the series, Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser develop queer comradely ties that embody Dean's profound and inspiring description. The show's narrative structure emphasizes the two protagonists' respective aloneness prior to forming their bond, as the first two episodes follow each during the same 24-hour period. In the opening episode, the audience sees Fraser upon his arrival with his family to the base, an alienated experience that includes him forced to share his loathing of life on a "copasetic" base solely through voice memos on his phone. Caitlyn/Harper is the focus of episode two, with their first menstruation simultaneously overemphasized by friends and neglected by their family (e.g., Caitlyn/Harper's "I love you, Daddy" in a moment of extreme vulnerability is met with total silence from the pathologically stoic Richard). However, upon exchanging knowing glances during scenes in particularly authoritarian contexts (e.g., a classroom, their high school hallway, Sarah's base

commandership ceremony, etc.), the prolonged eye contact between the two protagonists establishes an affective foundation for their genesis as comrades.

Indeed, starting with the third episode, Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper develop an interactional dialectic that exemplifies Dean's first thesis, enacting their belonging with one another while simultaneously denying identity labels and transgressing relational limitations. The two go back and forth discussing everything from industrial food production and avant-garde poetry to personal sexuality and existential dreams. At every turn, they engage directly with one another's weaknesses, but always in the service of deepening a collective awareness of their desire for one another's company. In this way, Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser actively practice an intimacy that affirms and supports their collective exile from the stultifying peer pressure they endure in their daily lives. One moment, Caitlyn/Harper holds Fraser's penis while the latter urinates perfunctorily in the bathroom at his house; the next, Fraser is a raucous fan egging on Caitlyn/Harper's performance of a shockingly lurid, memorized monologue in front of their classmates. The two stare at one another through windows facing the yards of each other's family houses, they gaze at one another through their phone screens when falling asleep, and they text one another avidly and lovingly about their respective romantic trysts with other characters.

An especially captivating moment of the queer comradely connection between Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper transpires in episode six. In an extended dream-like sequence, the two are clothed in all-white turtlenecks, pants, and baseball hats and perform their own version of the music video for Blood Orange's "Time Will Tell," a song that features throughout the series and becomes an anthem for them. As the two earnestly lip-synch and choreographically dance to the tune, the anonymizing nature of their attire and synchronicity of their movements emphasize the sameness and equality they have developed; neither is interested in upstaging the other, nor are they seeking to merge into one, but rather represent two persons relating with one another in complete solidarity of queering the otherwise suffocating world they live in. The subversive nature of this performance is heightened toward the end of the sequence, as the camera zooms out to reveal that their performance venue is in fact the on-base cafeteria, with uniformed soldiers gathering food and paying no mind; such dedication to joy and playful expression set against the most violently stoic background possible is precisely what Dean means by the celebratory queerness of comradeship.

A second thesis on comradeship offered by Dean is that "anyone, but not everyone" can be a comrade (Dean 2019, 67). Here, Dean emphasizes how open and inclusive the opportunity is to welcome all prospective comrades, while simultaneously articulating the politically crucial division between "us" (comrades) and "them" (non-comrades). That said, non-comrades are not to be understood as necessarily enemies, but rather as persons "who might later come to be a comrade" (ibid., 69). In other words, Dean describes comradeship as a relationality that is universally available, while also one that is distinct and engaged in struggle; there is a decisive boundary encircling comrades, but this barrier is permeable to all those who seek the (political economic) equality that communism engenders. Ultimately, then, while collective struggle serves as "the condition or setting of comradeship [, …] it does not determine the relation between comrades" (ibid., 68).

Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser exemplify Dean's second thesis, demonstrating openness to the possibility of including anyone as a comrade while at the same time enforcing the exclusion necessary to maintain the integrity of their queer comradeship. In episode three, for instance, Fraser barges into Sarah and Maggie's bedroom in the middle of the night after a nightmare to ask for comfort, a comradely extension of trust bestowed on Sarah that is especially noteworthy given the fact that she had embarrassed him in front of Caitlyn/Harper during dinner earlier that same evening. However, when Sarah humiliates Fraser further by dancing suggestively with his love interest, Jonathan, at an annual Chioggia festival, Fraser severs contact with Sarah, letting her know unequivocally that he will not speak to her for 11 days; beyond

the directness of this statement of intent is a prudent determination of the need for an explicitly specified time period within which Sarah might recognize her wrongs and amend her conduct to be eligible for re-introduction to a comradely dynamic; unfortunately, Sarah does neither, only widening the divide with Fraser in later episodes by overbearingly inserting herself into Caitlyn/Harper's life in a vain attempt at controlling them.

Similarly, Fraser offers both his peers, Sam and Danny, an opportunity for comradely redemption despite their repeated bullying of him. Fraser extends himself in gently waking Danny up on a bus ride to share a bag of chips that has been passed around communally among the friends on the trip. And during the wedding after-party at the Russian oligarch's villa, Fraser makes Sam a cup of hot tea to aid with the physiological maladies the latter is experiencing due to his alcohol over-consumption. As with Sarah, however, these olive branches of potential comradeship offered by Fraser are ultimately rejected by both Danny and Sam, who openly dismiss Fraser in episode seven and purposely leave the base without him to mourn Craig's death. And yet, Fraser still offers comradely solidarity when needed, as he enlists Sarah and Maggie to pick up Caitlyn/Harper and Danny when the latter has a drug-induced psychological breakdown during the mourning party.

Like Fraser, Caitlyn/Harper also makes clear their availability as a potential comrade to all those closest to them. For starters, they too go out of their way to establish comradely terms of engagement with a parent (in their case, Richard). As we discover throughout the first half of the series, Caitlyn/Harper accompanies Richard across a vast array of rituals and routines that includes selling gasoline to Chioggia residents, boxing in the dead of night in the garage, and going to see close circuit broadcasts of baseball on-base. Despite the obvious admiration that Caitlyn/Harper demonstrates toward Richard, reciprocal expressions of appreciation are few and far between, especially as Caitlyn/Harper begins their non-binary gender presentation and spending increasing amounts of time forging their comradeship with Fraser. In a climactic scene of episode five, Richard screams at Caitlyn/Harper for shaving their head full of hair, grabbing them in an attempt to force them to atone for a supposed transgression; Caitlyn/Harper's response to this violence encapsulates perfectly Dean's insight regarding comradeship's openness to anyone, but not everyone: Caitlyn/Harper hugs Richard, weeping while uttering, "Daddy," an extraordinarily disarming act that forces Richard to reckon with his violence. As with Sarah, Richard squanders this comradely invitation Caitlyn/Harper offers him. Accordingly, while Caitlyn/Harper dutifully delivers pizzas to Richard (and the rest of the family) on the day they will be leaving for the Okinawa military base, Caitlyn/Harper still sneaks away with Fraser to the Blood Orange concert in Bologna, an indication that while they will always make available the opportunity of comradeship to their family, they will rightly prioritize those who are actually comradely in return.

Similar dynamics are visible in Caitlyn/Harper's fraught relationship with Britney. From the extremely difficult admission Caitlyn/Harper makes to Britney in episode two about their first menstruation, all the way through the final episode when Caitlyn/Harper humors Britney by going along with the latter's awkward romantic advance, Caitlyn/Harper is clearly up for being comrades with Britney. However, throughout the series, Britney rejects these opportunities, weaponizing Caitlyn/Harper's menstruation secret from episode two to tease them in front of others, choosing a tryst with Sam over an open invitation to join with them and Fraser, and at the last moment pigeonholing her relationality with Caitlyn/Harper into the melodrama of bourgeois love ("It was always you"). All the while, Caitlyn/Harper holds space for Britney's flailing, while explicitly letting the latter know that they see her as a potential comrade "friend," and not a romantic lover.

Ultimately, though, it is in the nuances of the relationality directly between Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper that Dean's second thesis on comradeship manifests most productively. The two are keenly aware that their dynamic is one that both looks and feels fundamentally different from their relations

with everyone else in their lives, and they rejoice in this distinction. The mutual belonging they cultivate with one another is evident by how supportive they are of each other's respective romantic pursuits: Caitlyn/Harper celebrates Fraser's pursuit of Jonathan and excuses obvious distractions like the local girl who kisses Fraser at the villa, while Fraser offers wardrobe advice for Caitlyn/Harper's meetups with Giulia and expresses no animus toward a jealous Sam.

At the same time, the two also hold one another accountable to the fact that comradeship is not a permanent label, but instead an ongoing praxis that requires critical reflection. In episode five, for instance, Caitlyn/Harper misrecognizes Sarah's doting as comradeship, telling Fraser that his mom is "legend" and taunting Fraser that Sarah is "*so* wasted on" him; Fraser retorts with a comradely line of demarcation: "I'm so wasted on *you*." He explains further that the phallocentric activities Sarah is enlisting Caitlyn/Harper in (e.g., shooting guns) are not, in fact, revolutionary. The implication here is that the bond Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser share, while open and available to anyone in theory, is not universal in practice, especially when involving someone who may in fact be acting as an interloper; while Sarah's efforts to cast Caitlyn/Harper in her own image is rooted in a capitalist logic of property ownership, Fraser's comradeship with Caitlyn/Harper needs to be something radically distinct from such hierarchy. On the flip side, in the final episode, when Fraser abandons Caitlyn/Harper at the Blood Orange concert for a random teenage boy who seems almost an Italian doppelganger of the former, Caitlyn/Harper does not simply excuse Fraser's narcissism and neglect inherent in such an act; they instead draw an explicit boundary with Fraser by departing the show and heading back to the train station despite Fraser's frantic texts pleading them to join him back in town. This impasse is the backdrop for the concluding sequence of the series, in which Fraser is forced to demonstrate his comradeship by sprinting a seemingly impossible distance to the train station and then running with Caitlyn/Harper back to the "most beautiful place on earth."

The third of Dean's theses states that comradeship is in direct opposition to individually based identification. The comrade is a generic and impersonal relationality, not a unique or special identity attached to any singularity. The relations between comrades are "outward-facing" (Dean 2019, 71), in that they emphasize the political project at hand and a collectively dreamed-of future, rather than being rooted in personality preferences or idiosyncratic desires. Along these lines, Dean juxtaposes comradeship with other kinds of relations, including kinship, friendship, and citizenship; in contrast with all of these, comrades are "liberated from the determinations of specificity" (ibid., 75) and thus represent a fearsome challenge to the capitalist insistence on individual uniqueness. Indeed, Dean reverses the valence of anticommunist paranoia regarding comradely "sameness," relishing the multiplicity, fungibility, and replaceability of comradeship (ibid., 78). Shared characteristics, labels, and/or experiences are not what produces intimacy among comrades; instead, the "deep political meaning" of comradeship is produced through common work and purposeful engagement (ibid., 80).

The relational dynamics between Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper reflect Dean's "generic, not unique" third thesis in both their synergy and their conflicts. While the two embody highly distinct intersectional identities (Fraser a well-to-do White American cisman, and Caitlyn/Harper a non-binary, middle-class Black American), the series makes evident the impersonal existences that both protagonists share. Indeed, the show highlights that the isolated and alienating solitude they each experience can only be resolved by the two shedding their respective individualities and seeking comradeship instead. The show's first episode begins with an extended shot of Fraser at the Italian airport with his parents, a stationary camera looking up at him from behind as he nervously fiddles with objects and lays his head on a customer service counter. Though the accompanying electronic music score crescendos into a symphonic whirlwind, such sonic excitement is belied by the anxious apathy written across Fraser's bored face and on his languid body; indeed, Fraser is so alienated that he urgently solicits and consumes

a small bottle of alcohol Sarah has stashed from the flight. Similarly, episode two opens with a shot of Caitlyn/Harper from directly behind their head (their twin massive ponytails of hair hidden underneath a green baseball cap) as they travel on the family motorboat at dawn to deliver petrol to the locals with Richard; Caitlyn/Harper is seated at the very front of the boat's bow, a pose that might otherwise symbolize the power of the individual were it not shot from behind, with Caitlyn/Harper faceless and motionless (indicating how mundane and uninspired their solitary/isolated experience is in actuality).

Across both these introductions, the audience is provided ample evidence that the show's protagonists are desperately in need of what Dean describes in her third thesis as "a sameness with another with respect to where you are both going" (ibid., 78). This sameness begins at the conclusion of episode two, when Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser speak directly with one another for the first time; upon following Caitlyn/Harper to an off-base bar, Fraser fires an opening salvo about the former's genderqueer presentation that doubles as an invitation to comradeship: "The stuff you wear is inappropriate for what you're planning on doing." When Caitlyn/Harper retorts that they are just "messing around," Fraser explicitly states the radical stakes of their comradely relationality: "You can't mess around with that kind of thing." Note here the simultaneous clarity and ambiguity of Fraser's challenge, as he offers an invitation to a political project that somehow combines both playfulness and seriousness. The subtext of such a declaration is that the two have much work to do, and that their alienated individualities must give way to the intimacy of shared responsibilities and commitments of critiquing and queering themselves and the world around them.

By the time episode three begins, the two have embarked on their comradely adventure, sharing an afternoon on Caitlyn/Harper's motorboat in a Chioggia canal. In this, and subsequent episodes, a crucial component of their dynamic is to rid themselves of any last vestiges of self-centeredness. When Caitlyn/Harper inquires about how to identify the relationality they share with Fraser given rumors among their peers on-base that the two are dating, Fraser is adamant about the irrelevance of such labels; Caitlyn/Harper goads Fraser by tempting him with the prospect of popularity were they to acquiesce to the cis-heteropatriarchal norms of their social circumstances and claim a dating partnership, prompting Fraser to reply in no uncertain terms: "I don't want to be popular!". The implication here is that adolescent popularity is the quintessential celebration of individuality, singularity, and uniqueness, all of which undermine the impersonal and collective project of queer comradeship the two have at hand. Such calling to account between the two is also directed the other way throughout, as in episode five when Fraser begins pressuring Caitlyn/Harper to mold into a static and limiting notion of masculinity; as Fraser lets out an exasperated, "This is not what I had in mind for you," Caitlyn/Harper warns Fraser about the narcissistic nature of such ego projection: "Surprise! I exist outside your mind."

Despite these warnings, the two protagonists allow the peer pressures and social forces of alienation to individuate them in the latter stages of the series. Fraser's romantic pursuits of Jonathan become mired in self-centeredness, while Caitlyn/Harper, seeking a more stable identity, reunites with former friends and tries out a more conventional trans-masculinity; in both cases, the show emphasizes the emptiness of such developments. In episode seven, Fraser runs out on an unfulfilling quasi-threesome encounter with Jonathan and the latter's cis-woman partner, Malta, and ends up drinking alcohol to oblivion back at his home; he follows this up in the final episode by ditching Caitlyn/Harper and pursuing the bi-curious Italian boy whose kiss proves unfulfilling. For their part, Caitlyn/Harper is visibly uncomfortable with the hedonism on display at the villa mourning party for Craig and ultimately has to make an emergency call to Fraser to rescue Danny from self-destruction. Like Fraser, Caitlyn/Harper also finds a stranger to kiss in the final episode (an Italian bartender at the concert), though the casual and overly presumptuous way the bartender throws around the "trans" and "F2M" labels to try and identify Caitlyn/Harper leads the latter to

walk away. The failures of these respective individualized projects, then, demonstrate with clarity for Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper the void that only their queer comradeship can resolve.

The last of Dean's four theses on comradeship is arguably the most important, as it culminates the progression of the previous three (all of which focus on the relationality between comrades) to reveal what the "outward-facing" anti-capitalist political project of comradeship is: fidelity to the truth of communism. Dean argues that truth is a collective process of "working out and working with" the possibilities created by eruptive breaks with the pre-given world as we know it (ibid., 82). In this sense, undecidability is not anathema to truth, but an inseparable dimension of it, as verification becomes an "infinite procedure" of "multiple experiments, enactments, and effects" (ibid., 83). Such efforts are ultimately undertaken on behalf of the oppressed in society, and an organized struggle is required to emancipate those who are exploited and marginalized within capitalism. As Dean concludes, fidelity to the truth of an open-ended communism is about more than simply a belief or spirit among comrades; it must be "manifested in practical work" (ibid., 85) that comradeship itself allows, requires, nurtures, and reinforces.

As with the previous thesis, the trajectory of the relationality between Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser over the course of the series offers audiences a practical representation of Dean's fourth thesis, especially if disidentification and queerness are the focal points of analysis. What initially sparks Fraser's interest in Caitlyn/Harper, after all, is the latter reading aloud in their English class a love sonnet that subverts conventional gender norms; a then-feminine-presenting Caitlyn/Harper begins, "I am he …," stopping Fraser in his tracks while roaming the school hallways on his first day in Chioggia to snap a photo capturing a moment of genderqueer truth. Later in the episode, Caitlyn/Harper returns a gaze of curiosity back at Fraser, noticing that the latter is the only one seated during the playing of the U.S. national anthem at his mother's base commander ceremony. Both instances can be read as demonstrations of Dean's notion of fidelity to communism when incorporating Puar's insights on homonationalism. Though reading out the seemingly preferred masculinity of life on-base in their classroom (to say nothing of Caitlyn/Harper as the reader), the sonnet Caitlyn/Harper recites is an exploration of romantic passions, which are anathema to the banal violence of militarized accumulation. For his part, Fraser, though a more conventionally neoliberal LGBTQ+ subject, practices an anti-imperialist queer politics that links his refusal to support the American nationalism at the heart of the global war economy with his constant effort at resisting the cis-heteropatriarchal gender/sexuality identities forced upon him by society.

In the episode that immediately follows, a mutually reinforcing loop of queer comradeship emerges between Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser. Fraser sends over a secret package of masculine-coded clothing that Caitlyn/Harper (after a bit of trepidation) tries on; the protagonists ultimately share a knowing glance of camaraderie through their bedroom windows and across the lawns of their families' suburban housing on-base, a poignant foregrounding of political solidarity amidst a most alienating backdrop. The two become inseparable by episode three, exploring the truths that are central to their own relational dynamic while simultaneously questioning and critiquing the various hegemonic discourses operant in their surrounding society. The episode opens with Fraser calling out the commodification of food, fashion, and love using the term "fast" – he bemoans the erosion of meaning in all the ways the capitalist imperative for acceleration and expansion speeds up everyday life. Eventually, the two are in Fraser's bedroom watching videos of transmasculine gender transition, with Fraser offering vanguard-like theorizing on genderqueer as a "symptom" of the "fucking revolution" that is inside their bodies; he insists that paying attention to the eruption of transgression within themselves is the key to discovering "real life." Note here the striking similarity in Fraser's conceptual language to Dean's epistemological ideas in her fourth thesis of comradeship. And true to Dean's emphasis on practical action rather than simply abstract belief, Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper have an incredibly vulnerable

discussion at the episode's end about their respective sexualities, a conversation that ends with the two eschewing conventional identity labels, acknowledging the pitfalls of traditional relational norms ("We're never going to kiss"), and pledging instead to cultivate their respective queerness. As such, they embody fidelity to the truth that they are queer comrades seeking to enact a "fucking revolution" in their everyday lives.

This collective refusal to conform within the world they live in deepens over later episodes of the show, as Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser sharpen their critiques of contemporary capital and the identity politics it engenders. Episode six begins with the two brainstorming fantasies about their preferred methods of committing suicide; what is otherwise a cliched trope of adolescent life (i.e., the hyperbolic angst of teenagers) is itself here transformed into a dizzyingly exhilarating moment of solidarity between the queer comrades explicitly acknowledging their own mortality while also implicitly rejecting the expected appropriation of their future labor power for social reproduction. In the next episode, Fraser creates a stir by speaking fearlessly about the violence of the global war economy, leading Caitlyn/Harper to slap Fraser across his face. While such a gesture reflects an interpersonal squabble over Fraser seemingly besmirching the honor of Craig (a fallen soldier), Caitlyn/Harper's facial expressions during Fraser's comments reveal that they too realize the ruthless nature of militarized accumulation; with that context in mind, the slap can be reconsidered as embodying an exorcism of the specter of political reaction to any incisive anti-capitalist critique.

Not surprisingly, Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper's fidelity to practicing communist truth reaches its zenith in the series finale. On their way to the Blood Orange concert, Fraser discloses that the "Mark" he has been communicating with via voice memos throughout the show is really an imagined friend based on an actual schoolmate from New York who completely dismissed him. The stunning revelation leaves Caitlyn/Harper speechless at first, though Fraser's baring of this secret catalyzes a newfound loyalty that leads into a cathartic display of the queer comradeship the two share. Caitlyn/Harper begins exclaiming a list of all which she once held dear that no longer exists to her (Harper, Fraser, Sam, the base, their parents, etc.); having effectively deconstructed all the elements in their life that anchor them to the status quo, Caitlyn/Harper ultimately erupts, "*We* don't exist!". At this, the two begin to jump around and twirl playfully, giddily shouting at the top of their lungs to the capitalist world they inhabit to "Fuck off! We don't exist!". In a nameless neighborhood of Bologna, two queer comrades thus diagnose with breathtaking precision their non-existence as subjects from the standpoint of militarized capital, while also rejoicing that such complete erasure impels them to assert their political truth to the world without anything to lose. Unsurprisingly, then, when they are asked by the Italian bartender at the concert about their relationship to Fraser, Caitlyn/Harper declares, with a wry smile to themselves, "We're free".

It is this freedom that culminates in the physical intimacy of touching, holding, and kissing that the two share at series end in "the most beautiful place on earth". Harkening again to Dean's epistemological insights, only the event of Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser's collective experience in that moment can verify such an absolute aesthetic judgment, a point that is driven home by the relatively non-descript nature of their actual surroundings. This rapturous moment, then, is nothing less than sublimity for two queer comrades who have journeyed together well outside the spatial and temporal confines of their alienated lives in the global war economy to delight in the truth of their project of emancipation, liberation, and love. Far from a traditional Hollywood happy ending, with all of its politically neutralizing capacity, the conclusion of *We Are Who We Are* is a moment of anti-capitalist triumph, as two comrades who realize they "don't exist" unite in a display of Dean's four primary characteristics of comradeship (ibid.): discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage.

Conclusions

The preceding section parsed Jodi Dean's innovative theorizing on comradeship through a close

reading of how Dean's four theses of the comrade manifest in the queer relationality of Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper. That said, there are a couple of obvious and important challenges that can be levied at the preceding account of *We Are Who We Are* as an anti-capitalist critique. For starters, Dean posits the comrade as a political relation that is ultimately indebted to institutional structures like the party. Indeed, her book on comradeship developed out of a previous work (2018) on the absolute necessity of party formation, in which Dean explicitly argues against the sort of micro-level, spontaneous, and seemingly disorganized everyday struggles that Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper engage in. The other, more general question to be asked is about the overall political efficacy of cultural intervention, particularly television – what possibilities for revolutionary change does a show broadcast on HBO/ Sky Atlantic actually offer? Is this series really a critique of capital, or (cynically) just another example of how capital appropriates representations of radical relationality among fictional protagonists to generate profit for the media conglomerates of the TCC?

While such questions regarding the analysis at hand are certainly valid in presenting possible criticisms, subtler elements of Dean's work itself as well as recent sociological scholarship by Earl et al. (2017) present ways of expanding and conceptualizing politics that are relevant to Dean and *We Are Who We Are*. It is true that Dean emphasizes the central importance of the party structure for directing strategy, promoting orderliness, and ensuring accountability, but her work also allows for a relatively wide degree of flexibility and fluidity in the practice of comradeship. So long as the actions undertaken by comrades are reliable, consistent, and practical, then "expectations of solidarity" emerge that mediate the comradely relationality with "the truth of communism" (Dean 2019, 95). Additionally, Dean imbues comradeship with a "disruptive negativity" that encourages comrades to draw lines and clarify sides within their actually existing dynamics and real-life relational context; far from "a naïve ideological imaginary," which might in fact be more likely to manifest in party machinations, comrades "know whom they stand with and who stands with them" (ibid., 96). Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Dean acknowledges that the praxis of comradeship can produce its own methods and objectives, including those that outstrip the narrow confines of abstract dictates and static mandates from hierarchical authorities like the party. As Dean states explicitly, "comradeship generates new values, intensities, and possibilities" (ibid.) in the process of collective engagement. Ultimately, a redemptive communist disalienation from "the oppressive determinations of capitalism" (ibid.) requires that comrades work together in ways and for common purposes that only they can articulate for themselves through action.

In *We Are Who We Are*, the radical relationality between Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser addresses these openings that Dean builds into her theorizing. The solidarity between the two brings a disruptive negativity to every social context they live in, and their camaraderie engenders projects that they could not have realized were it not for their daily efforts. While each at times falls into the traps of bourgeois comforts, particularly those connected to family commitments and peer people-pleasing, Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper still manage to disalienate themselves from the oppressive determinations that surround them; Fraser is constantly defiant and rebellious toward parental authority (often in ways that are uncomfortable for audiences to witness), while Caitlyn/Harper progressively emboldens their refusal of the domestic ties that bind, culminating in their final episode runaway to attend the concert in Bologna on their family's last day on-base.

That said, a full reckoning with Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper's critiques of capital requires extra attention be paid to how their subversive queer pact intersects with the challenges/obstacles inherent to youth activism, particularly among a demographic like teenage children of military personnel. As Caitlyn/Harper explains in the final episode, base life is an inherently transient one, with only three years before having to move (as their family is forced to do), thus limiting the roots one can establish for the purposes of mobilization. Additionally, throughout the series there is the

constant reinforcement of profoundly patriarchal domestic environments, leading to the silencing and devaluing of the adolescents living in these households. And yet, as a relatively long scene in episode seven demonstrates, these young folks are anything but apolitical: following the news of Craig's death in Afghanistan, students are shown in an English classroom grief processing session discussing the implications of America's 'War on Terror' – not only are the various comments visceral and profound, including those from otherwise unnamed characters, but the teenagers in this scene get at the very heart of political debates within U.S. society regarding its settler colonialist policies and their impact on soldiers as well as civilians.

Hence, while it is true that Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser do not explicitly pledge allegiance to any leftist party or other formal social movement organization dedicated to anti-capitalist struggle, that fact alone should not be grounds to dismiss their queer comradeship as politically ephemeral or ineffectual. Indeed, as Earl et al. (2017, 2) describe with the "engaged citizenship model" of youth political participation, young persons today often embed activism within their everyday lives and as such develop creative, less visible modes of direct action. Such ongoing proclivity for activist practice and innovation is, in fact, a direct result of the ageist structures within many activist organizations that de-legitimize, silence, and otherwise undermine the participation of their youthful members (Earl et al., 8); as with so many spheres of social life, marginalization breeds its own resistance, and in this case, young persons reverse their activist ostracization by sublimating their activism. The queer comradeship forged by Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper is thus so much more than teen drama – it can be reconceptualized as a radical and meaningful struggle within their otherwise stultifying and suffocating environment of ageist, homonationalist, and militarized capitalism.

All of which raises the overarching question of the anti-capitalist utility of popular culture like *We Are Who We Are*, an issue that is directly relevant to the queer comrades at hand. After all, rather than read Marx together, Caitlyn/Harper and Fraser would rather lay side by side listening to music or streaming video content. Here again Earl et al. provide useful insights, especially with their discussion of present-day youth's tendency to engage in "fan activism" (ibid., 7); young persons today "desire to no longer be vanquished from the production of culture," and instead radically democratize social life through their mass self-mobilization as critical consumers (ibid.). In this way, fandom and other modes of youth activist engagement:

> *stress the importance of not considering young people, their relationship to activism, and their political interests as being automatically analogous to adults, or as being a special case of (adult) activism (ibid.).*

To that end, then, the queer comradeship of Fraser and Caitlyn/Harper can both embody a struggle against the status quo political economy and mirror for audience members themselves a form of relationality that inspires their own everyday acts of resistance. The closing shots of the show are crucial in this respect: while it is certainly not universally available for everyone to be able to kiss a queer comrade in the pre-dawn glow of Bologna, viewers are filled with a communal affect of meaningful hope and open-facing desire to transform a world that alienates them all. And while generically distinct from a communist manifesto, *We Are Who We Are* is still a thoroughly revolutionary text that theorizes radically exciting possibilities for relationality while simultaneously offering practical models for political economic interventions in our lives. Returning to the overly-superficial reviews of the show, if these two supposedly "sun-baked" teens in an "especially heightened location" can inspire such impassioned fandom and ecstatic energy simply by bringing queer comradeship into existence on-screen, one can only imagine the radical implications of millions actualizing their own versions of queer comradeship right here, right now.

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Transversing Sexualities and Critiques of Capital

Participants: M.E. O'Brien, Nat Raha, Grietje Baars, Liu Xin and Mathias Klitgård

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This forum has come about through a series of conversations and discussions over a period of time in 2021-2022. Our ambition was to bring together scholars from different disciplines and perspectives, hoping for mutual curiosity and dialogue. We invited the participants to the forum to consider the following question:

"How can we understand the complex and often contradictory ways through which sexualities and capital are related to, shaped by, and constitutive of each other?"

Due to restrictions and exigencies of the corona situation together with time zone obstacles, the conversation had different modes. The first part of the forum consisted of an online video-recorded conversation between M.E. O'Brien, Nat Raha and Grietje Baars. The conversation was moderated by Liu Xin and Mathias Klitgård. Laura Horn provided editorial support. Jin Haritaworn and Lisa Adkins then kindly sent their contributions to this conversation in writing. What you will read in the following is hence a conversation across three continents, which mixes synchronous and asynchronous elements, and which aims to show the strengths but also divergences and open questions in these different engagements.

Video-recorded conversation, 29 June 2021

O'Brien: I'm focusing on theories that explain the transformation of patterns of sexuality in society according to the long arc of capitalist development and capitalist transformation of society. Broadly, I would identify two distinct theoretical projects, both Marxist, that have located sexuality as changing under conditions of capitalist development. And strangely these two projects have very few overlaps.

First, there's a great deal of excellent material often under the term queer Marxism, or gay Marxism. These are theories of sexuality and capitalism that try to understand how capitalism's new relationships to the commodity form, the production and objectification of the self, new modalities of social life and, broadly, proletarianization and urbanisation produce the conditions for consolidated, reified and coherent claims to sexual minority identity. Scholars have explained the specific emergence of gay identity in the twentieth century. They've tried to explain concerns about sexuality in the Victorian era, by considering the ways in which capitalism transforms the social, psychic and material conditions for life, for both proletarian and bourgeois subjects (see for example Chitty 2020; Floyd 2009; D'Emilio 1983, 1998; Drucker 2015; Foucault 1978; Heaney 2017; and Valocchi 1999).

Second, sexuality has been considered as part of the research into the family and its role in the social reproduction of capitalist society. Historically, the best example of this would be Engels. Currently, we point to social reproduction theory. In the Seventies, we had the housework debates and Marxist-Feminist theoretical debates broadly. These are grappling with how capitalist transformation broke up the peasant family, constituted the conditions for the new bourgeois nuclear family, then expanded access to that family. You could look at mainstream theories of fertility decline in the twentieth century. There's all sorts of excellent work that tries to think about the family and the history of capitalism. So for some this is the family as a privatized mode of social reproduction: the unwaged raising of the children, care for the elderly, children who will later constitute society's workforce. But others have considered the family as a site of ideological reproduction. They described the production of particular kinds of gendered and sexualised subjects (see for example Bhattacharya 2018; Chicago Women's Liberation Union 1972; Davis 1981; Dalla Costa 1972; Delphy 1980; Endnotes 2013; Engels 1884; Firestone 1970; Hartmann 1979; James 1975; Jones 1949; Kollontai 1977[1920]; Jaffe 2020; Vogel 1983; Zetkin 1920[1996]).

We need more research that effectively incorporates and bridges these two theories. The family, on one hand, and sexual deviancy, sexual minority identities, sexual rebellion, on the other, are necessary counterparts to each other in the history of capitalist society. The heterosexual family has always been a counterpart to sexual deviancy since the rise of capitalist proletarianization. It is in the dynamic tension between these two processes that we can understand the particular sexual logics of capitalism, as they have evolved over time. I think there is often a missing piece in queer Marxism in thinking effectively about the family. And a missing piece in social reproduction theory of really thinking about the dynamics of proletarian sexual rebellion and sexual deviancy.

In my own research, as one example of this, I've grappled with this link through the question of family abolition. In each era of proletarian rebellion, over the last two centuries, revolutionaries have challenged and attacked the family as a way of evoking and pursuing ideas of gender and sexual freedom. But interestingly, what they meant by the family has transformed repeatedly as the role of the family has changed in capitalist reproduction. And as the meanings of the family have changed the roles of sexual deviancy, the dynamics of sexual rebellion have also transformed.

So what they meant, what they imagined, by the critical demands to abolish the family, or challenge the family, continued to transform as the role of the family in capitalist society changed. In one era, as we see in Marx and Engels, the family specifically refers to the bourgeois, property owning,

inheritance based family. Family abolition meant destroying bourgeois society. Meanwhile, the conditions of early industrialization were undermining the ability of proletarian people to form any sort of stable families. In the Americas, we see the conditions of slavery similarly attacking the kinship relations between enslaved people (see for example Davis 1972; Hartman 1997; and Spillers 1987).

Later in the nineteenth century, we see the rise of a workers movement that is able to win material gains to enable an expansion of the single wage-earner household to a broader section of the working class in the United States, in England and in Germany. The family becomes the primary site of this social conservatism of the workers movement that distinguishes legitimate working people from the rabble, the lumpenproletariat, the criminal element and sexual deviancy of sex workers. Where previously many working class women would move in and out of sex work prior to marriage, this turn towards respectability separates sex workers from legitimated working-class women. This corresponds to a distinction between the queer proletarians and legitimate, working-class family life. The legitimacy gained through this family form aided in pursuing franchise, in asserting that the worker's movement could legitimately rule society. Some socialists used the turn towards normative family forms as an argument to elites that the representatives of the working class should be welcomed into legislatures. Others used to assert the viability of a workers' state, and future revolutionary society.

Later, through the twentieth century a growing number of white women entered the workforce. Women of color already worked in large numbers throughout the United States. In the 1960s, there is a rebellion against a particular vision of the family: the family as a form of social atomisation, alienation, and social isolation. These struggles of the 1960s and 1970s targeted the houselife. Black women challenged white family norms through the national welfare rights movement. Black feminist organising, challenging the family as a heterosexual, white normative institution (Beal 1976; King 2018; Sherwin 2019; Spillers 1987; The Combahee River Collective 1977). Throughout all these periods, the horizon of sexual freedom is constituted by the proletarian struggle up against the family. What they mean by family is shaped by class struggle, capitalist development and racialized inequalities.

We need to grasp the dynamic and particular contradictions of the role of the family in our current era. What is the family today? We've seen such a fragmentation of the single wage earner family. We've seen the massive expansion of commodity products available to people that enable a form of market-based household reproduction. A household now can get by on fast food take out, drop-off laundry services, delivered groceries, childcare care centers, senior citizen residences, and many other commercial services not long ago restricted to the home.

But we've also seen a reinscription and intensification of the family as welfare services and social support services are stripped away. The labor of reproduction has become more atomized and privatized inside of family structures. We've also seen an expansion and intensification of the family as an ideological rubric for the right in really fighting against sexual and gender freedom and the centrality of the family for various kinds of ethno-nationalisms and fascisms around the world. All of these dynamics have transformed the role of families, chosen kinship, obligatory kinship, couple forms, all the many forms that the family takes. To understand the dynamics of sexual and gender rebellions in our current moment, what that means for people materially in their lives, we have to situate this in trying to make sense of the dynamics of the family in the current era.

Raha: I would like to outline the theoretical strands of my work, which I think speak to the need that M.E. O'Brien just addressed, to bridge the discussion about queer Marxism that considers how capitalism has produced the conditions for coherent minoritisation in terms of gay and queer sexual identities, and the discussion about the relationship between social reproduction and queerness. My doctoral thesis, completed in 2018-19, was primarily trying to bring together strands of queer theory, how they had addressed Marxism,

and how Marxism has been picked up within queer theory. Initially, queer Marxism responded to queer theory's turn away from materialism in the 1990s. The work of Kevin Floyd (2009) and in particular Rosemary Hennessy (2000) was really important to my thinking, for my understanding of racial and gendered divisions of labor under capitalism, and the devaluation of certain kinds of bodies and identities, lives and people. In her last two books (2000; 2013), Hennessy talks about the interphase between the cultural and the economic and how that coheres into the division of labor in the workforce. I was interested in how the dynamics of the neoliberal cultural assimilation of queer life was playing out, how it was transforming material grounds and how that was creating cultural transformations within LGBT culture. I was also interested in how Marx could be returned to in a way that could retool queer Marxist theory to reground it in a critique of political economy.

I was thinking about the dialectic between the qualitative and the quantitative that manifests in the famous example in the first chapter of *Capital* volume 1: how 20 yards of linen equals one coat leading to the theory of commodity fetishism. Capitalism invents new forms of abstraction that absorb queer life, absorb queer bodies in certain ways, whilst also spitting us, our bodies and lives out at the same time. Use value is transformed in terms of the kind of objects that capital gets behind and wants to produce in service of profit. I was thinking about the quantities and objective forms of how LGBTQ cultural life is playing out in the pride month – rainbow flags on everything, gay ATMs, LGBT sandwiches etc.

I was also interested in thinking through a queer historical materialist methodology – looking at scenes and examples of history, either political or rooted in labor organising, or in political resistances that represent the gendered and racialised division of labor, to examine how forms of queer life have emerged. For example, Allan Bérubé's (1991) work on queer work and labor, especially the historical accounts of men working on cruise ships in the 1930s on the West coast of the United States, raises important questions concerning what creates social reproduction and what trans social reproduction entails and looks like. Why have those histories been marginalised within the canon of Marxist feminism, particularly in the 1980s onwards, and even being marginalised now in the revival of social reproduction theory? I am interested in a trans archive history of people thinking directly about queer forms of housework, or lesbian forms of housework in terms of Wages Due Lesbians (1991). I'm also thinking about more popular ideas of trans and queer liberation and activity that have enabled our lives, that are rooted in the politics of liberation that comes from the gay liberation movement, as tools by black and brown and third world liberation movements in the 1970's. In a recent essay (Raha 2021), I focus on the devaluation of queer and trans lives within in the racial and gender division of labor, and within institutions such as the family, as well as how these forms of devaluation compound the possibility of our lives and what forms of life we need to create for each other. This comes back to some of what M.E. O'Brien was talking about regarding the inaccessibility of single-family units and how those forms of survival become really impossible through the arbitrary distribution of wealth, which links to issues of property ownership and gentrification.

I am also a poet so I am really interested in the question of affect; thinking about how the material can really smash the possibilities of life and thinking about the forms of life that we can create in resistance. That was one of the central points that I was trying to bring together under this banner of what queer Marxism could actually be, especially if we are approaching it from a Marxist-feminist and transfeminist standpoint. And I should say that I am really interested in these questions as experiential, lived, embodied questions. The social demarcations of identity and subjectivity are less interesting for me. Capitalism is ultimately interested in undercutting the ground on which we might even build identity. It definitely comes back to embodied forms of life and what emerges from that.

Baars: My work is on the material and ideological structures of capitalism that produce the

particular hyper-exploitative, racialised, gendered and disabling reality that we live in today. The two main questions throughout my work are very simple: Firstly: "Why do we put up with it all?" And the second one is, as of course you might guess: "What is to be done?" I'm a legal scholar and my recent book is on the relation between law and capitalism in the global economy, using the legal form of the corporation and how it sits within (or without) international law as a case study to illustrate this relationship (Baars 2019). I use Marxist theory of law, specifically Pashukanis' commodity form theory of law (Pashukanis 1978; Miéville 2006; Knox 2012), and historical materialist method, to see where law, law as we know it, where the universalised legal system we know today comes from and where the corporation, and the corporate legal form, corporate legal subjectivity come from and what function they both have in structuring the global economy – global corporate capitalism.

The corporate legal form has been capitalism's main motor from the very beginning. This is my starting point, that the corporate *legal* form is the main vehicle through which capitalist accumulation occurs, capitalism operates, imperialism manifests. In the transition to capitalism, the Dutch and British East India Companies (then novel legal-organisational forms) and several dozens other such companies, violently exported and imposed global corporate capitalism *and capitalist law* around the world. I call this law's capitalising mission, a notion that's recently been further elaborated upon by Tzouvala (2020). The exploitative nature of capitalist relations of production finds its nadir in the corporation, on the one hand through the wage relation and on the other the peculiar legal characteristics of the corporate form. These include the unique legal personality (subjectivity) of the company itself, separate from and shielding its directors (and also, shielding the company's assets from the directors), the limited liability of shareholder-owners and the directors' legal obligation to operate the company so as to to maximise shareholder return as its primary objective. These key characteristics are now part of company law around the world, giving companies worldwide a common basic structure and purpose. The clever thing is that *through law* corporate capitalism manages to conceal, normalise, even legitimise its exploitative characteristics. Partly this is because we tend to ascribe to law a neutral, regulatory function at least, but more commonly we equate law with order, rule of law, and 'justice' as positive values. It is also because in 'liberal democracy' we conceive of ourselves as citizens, legal subjects within a system of relations governed by law. If we look at law materially however we can observe its part in shaping (changing!) social relations so as to create 'market society'. The capitalist firm emerged in the transition to capitalism when what Weber called 'calculable law' (Weber 1982) enabled *literal* accountability of risk within the now *legalised* relations between members running what once was a family engaged in domestic production. This is also the moment ME describes above, where the bourgeois family is created with its particular heteronormative roles/subjectivities. While manufacturing is moved out of the home, and novel financial schemes are invented to 'crowdfund' global treasure hunts (Petram 2014), the corporate legal form enables capitalists to quantify and minimise (externalise) risk exposure while maximising surplus value extraction. Risk of course is viewed by the corporation as purely financial, but we should understand it as the financial*ised* relation between the corporation as a subject/entity in itself and the rest of the world. Risk includes debtor default but also 'market risk', the risk of an 'exploratory' or colonial trading mission returning empty-handed, a ship carrying enslaved captives sinking (or being sunk – such risk can be lucrative (Balai 2013) workers and captives falling ill, dying or revolting, extraction polluting or depleting ecology, and what insurers now call 'political risk' (war/conflict). In other words, the corporation is constructed as a profit maximising, risk externalising machine: a structure of irresponsibility (Glasbeek 2010) and an amoral calculator (Neocleous 2003). The corporation limits the liability of those who pocket the profits, the shareholders, but externalises as much as possible the cost of harm associated with surplus value extraction to broader society and the environment. The corporation is imperialist by nature: it is driven by its mandate to

forever scour the world hungry for more resources and new markets. At the time of the Berlin Conference, what I call the 'corporate scramble for Africa' two thirds of the globe was colonised and ruled by companies – and it is interesting – if we think of the span and reach of today's mega-multinationals – to imagine how that picture might look today (see e.g. Manahan and Kumar 2022).

The main theme I started with in the book is this idea of corporate complicity in conflict and the various human rights and international humanitarian law violations that appear there: a big theme in the early 2000s when the International Criminal Court was just starting its work. There was and still is a loud and widespread call for companies to be held to account in international law, but also a clear failure of that actually happening. Why do we continue to call for this accountability, and why is it not working? My conclusion is that it is precisely because of laws' relationship to capital that law cannot categorically be successfully employed to prevent, or remedy, the many negative effects of corporate capitalism around the world. Capitalism *produces* those effects and it is law that makes that possible, and profitable (Baars 2016).

What does that have to do with gender and sexuality? On the one hand, corporate capitalism determines the often dire material circumstances of queer and trans people and particularly of racialised queer and trans people. On the other hand, as we know for example from the work of M.E. O'Brien (2020) and others such as Chris Chitty (2020) and of course Hortense Spillers (e.g. 1987), the material and ideological structures of corporate capitalism also *produce* those relations, values, and categories of identity that we understand to exist today and according to which resources are distributed. And yet, law is often considered as one of the main vehicles for emancipation; the notion of the rule of law is one factor in why we put up with it all. My work seeks to shatter this illusion. I argue that law and capitalist legal systems are part of the structure of capitalism that is rotten at its core and inherently destructive of freedom, community, ecology. The law and the legal form enable (even force) modes of relating that hyper-exploit especially black and brown working class, queer and trans bodies. I show that queer and trans liberation is by necessity anti-capitalist, and to use a currently very hot term, abolitionist (e.g. Wilson Gilmore (2006), Purnell (2021), Olufemi (2020), Lewis (2019), and also Baars (2019)). Abolitionist of the police, prisons, the state, capitalism, and all that comes with it – including the heteropatriarchal concept of the family, and binary gender – and of course corporations – and indeed *law*.

But let's pause here for a moment and not get ahead of ourselves just yet. As Dean Spade suggests (2011), in today's 'in-capitalism' life, law is essential, and asserting one's rights and claiming one's legal space in it are crucial for many for our survival on an everyday level. We do need law for – as the Black Panthers put it – "Survival pending revolution" (see e.g. Narayan 2020). There are limited possibilities for non-reformist and disruptive litigation and there will always be a need for movement lawyering (e.g. arrestee support) (e.g. Cerić 2020, Brabazon 2022). However, beyond that, capitalist law cannot bring us liberation and it's that revolution that we need to set in motion.

The explicit connection between the violence enacted on queer and trans bodies and lived experience within capitalism we can see vividly described and analysed in the exciting flourish of new queer and trans marxist work at the moment. *Transgender Marxism* for instance is a really exciting collection of essays collected by Jules Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke (2021). The urgency of, and desire of/for our liberation is palpable in those essays. In tandem with this work we also see a new turn to the archive in search of tools for today and beyond, this includes M.E. O'Brien's work, C. Riley Snorton's *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (2017) and Chris Chitty's posthumously published *Sexual Hegemony* (2020) – which could be read alongside Silvia Federici's *Caliban and The Witch* (2004). These important works investigate the creation of racialised, gendered and sexualised subject categories within (and for) capitalism, with a view to their undoing. A massive gap in academic scholarship still is how such understandings, behaviours or subjects were and are created or imposed and understood historically and presently elsewhere in the world

– outside of Europe and the Americas. What we do have is a growing collection of critical, decolonial scholarship that examines law's constitutive role in racial capitalism: colonialism and the trade in enslaved people upon which our present system of international trade, finance and global governance is built (Anghie 2007, Mutua 1995, Gathii 1999, Bishara 2017, Mawani 2018, Bhandar 2018, Park 2019, Yahaya 2020).

Altogether these works build a picture of the legally *racialised*, *gendered*, *sexualised*, corporate capitalism that produces the long-term crises we are in today.

So where are we going and what is to be done?

A really fantastic array of poetic works including Marquis Bey's *Black Trans Feminism* (2022), Lola Olufemi's *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise* (2022), Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Change Everything* (2022), help us imagine what the world beyond the current horizon might look like and realise that this world is actually within our reach. ME's and Abdelhadi's science fiction novel *Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune* (2022) will be an exciting addition to this.

Moreover, out in the streets there is an upsurge of queer and trans people organising within broader anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles – queers at the helm of Black Lives Matter, Trans people leading Black Trans Lives Matter marches in various countries, Queers for a Free Palestine at the New York pride march, Arab Queers for Gaza at London demos. For some time now, queer and trans people have been at the forefront of political mobilizing, the type of activism aimed at transforming economic relations, workplace organising, the 'great resignation' and degrowth/alternatives (see e.g. M.E's broader work). For most the connection of our struggles is obvious (Raha and Baars 2020), for others, the readings cited here will help them on their way. In sum, good queer and trans scholarship is anti-capitalist. And all good anti-capitalist work, in the academy and on the street, is necessarily queer, trans and anti-racist.

Liu: I am interested in the relation between bodies, affects, materialities and abstraction that Nat Raha mentioned. For example, Nat, you made the observation that the claim that the figure of the human in Marx as a social relation is already queered, for it is 'an effect of emancipated and intimate desire and connectedness in the world' which universalises and abstracts the queer Marxist abject figures in removing the embodied labors and lives. From a slightly different perspective, Jin Haritaworn also cautions against the ways in which queer- and trans organising have become institutionalised and therefore risk losing their radical transformative potentials. M.E. O'Brien also observes the 'structural dependency, that is distinguished from direct capture and control, expressed in the ways in which the funding coming from certain privileged white gay men influenced a social movement. Could you elaborate on what you see as good strategies, or different methodological approaches, that could be used to resist this displacing, dispossessing and abstracting tendencies in both theorising and in organising.

O'Brien: I was interested in a comment Nat made a moment ago, that you are more interested in trying to think about affects and material embodiment than identities, in part because capitalism undermines our abilities to produce identities. One of the things that Marxism contributes to queer theory, and trans studies, is recognising that abstraction is a material process. Abstraction is a production of capitalist society. Capitalism as a mode of production is historically relatively unique in producing concrete abstractions that rule over social life. While various concepts, obviously, are integral to feudalism and other class societies, they operate through a system of belief, such as people believing in the legitimacy of the king or the church.

In capitalism the rule of value as a system of abstraction does not depend on belief. It is materially substantiated through the force of the market and market dependency. And that is a phenomenon that various Marxists, particularly in this value form theory school, have spent a lot of time talking about. Queer Marxism, I think, has done a pretty

good job in thinking about the implications of that for queer theory. Kevin Floyd (2009) will probably be the best and a really rich example of it. A lot of gay Marxism, queer Marxism, like John d'Emilio (1983, 1998) and Peter Drucker (2015), treat the sort of emergence of sexual minority identities as a historical product of the dynamics of capitalism.

There are significant implications of that for how we think about what it means to organise and struggle. We are trying to make sense of the dynamic of abstraction through this production of identity categories and its ramifications for the people who are organising. But there is another subtle thread there: how the reproduction of abstraction is a generalised phenomena of capitalist society. The move to refuse to fully embrace identity, in favor of bodies or subjects of struggle or material realities of reproduction, is really interesting given the decades of engagement with identity in queer theory. It is compelling to sidestep identity as a sole form of struggle, even as it comes up over and over again despite our attempts at eluding it.

Baars: I think it is also interesting how we are enticed into making identity, the self, the center of our life, to strive for authentic self-actualisation above all else. I have an article in which I talk about the constitution of the legal subject – specifically about the role of law in constructing, defining, and limiting the legal subject as the gendered legal subject and also by consequence delineating the nature and shape of our bodies, lives, the family and ultimately society (Baars 2019). Research has shown that in the UK the current impossibility for trans men to be legally recognized as the father of the child they give birth to stops many trans men from having children. You might say this is the objective of the legal rule in the first place: it delineates permitted lives, relationships and experiences. It shapes society in a certain way, and determines the immediate objectives of our struggle.

This reminds me of *Cruel Optimism* by Lauren Berlant (2011), who sadly passed yesterday. She said, 'a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing'. In the book she so crushingly yet generatively explored how we are made to want what isn't good for us, what is not liberating for us, how we are made to want the next best option to freedom.

This connects with what we have seen in the last five years or so in the UK (and much longer in north America), namely, that the discomfort with the gender binary has been channelled into the desire for legal recognition – non-binary legal recognition – that's now a campaign that has led to court cases that have so far not been sucessful (e.g. R (Christie Elan-Cane) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2021]). Legal recognition might aid our survival (for instance through availability to non-binary people of medical transition through the National Health Service, which currently is patchy at best). And yet, do we really want to be 'recognised' by the system that so exploits us? Marx (1844) discussed a similar conflict in *On the Jewish Question*, where he argued that legal emancipation was not the same as human emancipation. By human emancipation, he meant, emancipation not within but *from* the system, from the state, law and capitalism. Human emancipation is revolution, and real human flourishing.

At the same time as non-binary legal recognition is sought through the courts and through Parliament, we are disrupting and destroying the binary as a political act with our bodies rather than as identities, in everyday gender (or no-gender!) performance and in living and in creating life and community outside the cis-heteronormative binary. When we seek to destroy or disrupt at least a key structuring logic of the system, the system will seek to ensure it is captured or channelled into something very narrow that actually is not what we want. It will seek to assimilate us into a legal system, which is the thing that is holding us down – not the only thing of course – but as part of global corporate capitalism it is holding us captive as it were. Our fight for liberation and against (or beyond) co-optation is, as Angela Davis said, a constant struggle (Davis 2015).

Raha: For me it always comes back to this dialectic between the qualitative and the quantitative in terms of this question of what strategies are useful

and helpful both in terms of theoretical and practical approaches. It is really interesting to compare these approaches in light of certain reformist modes of law, specifically in trans rights organising in the UK context but not alone, as Grietje has just described. They become the means to try and leverage some type of social change which feeds into the reproduction of trans normativity. I am interested in approaching histories as examples of means to organise. Whilst identity might be a means to organise something around, quite often it is practices and material conditions, such as S&M sexual practices or being queer and homeless youth, that drive the desire to organise or produce some sort of social change or subcultural space. I think we need to create spaces of liberation even without, well not without, but before capitalism has been abolished maybe. Because you still need to be able to dream, you still need culture to make the worlds we want to exist in.

We cannot escape the overarching expansion of capital as a mode of abstraction. Capital is always going to try and expand. Even in its mode of contraction and crisis, it is still going to try and find new ways, new markets. It is going to build its new markets where it can. I think since the 1990's there has been LGBTQ cultural politics that capitalism is interested in and wants to draw into its aura and its glow.

There are modes of abstraction which our bodies and our lives, the things we do with our lives and our bodies, and the things that we need and the resources that we need to survive get found within and sucked into. Social assimilation is part of that process. The site of resistance is always some form of embodied life or some form of relation and material relation. This embodied form becomes abstracted or is existing within some form of abstraction that is unlivable, impossible, difficult, oppressive, repressive or alienating. The site of resistance is always concrete and material. That is what for me queer Marxism helps us think through. That does not necessarily give us an answer but it does give us a theoretical framework for understanding what is happening. Historical materialism allows for the rewriting and reinterpretation of history, in which we might find some inspiration for practices in cultural politics, organised workers resistance, in ways that collectivise the domestic or turn social reproduction of labor towards the care and support of our own bodies rather than the reproduction of our labor power for capital's sake.

Baars: Building on what Nat said, it is interesting to see how queer and trans people are already creating new and different worlds in so many ways as a means of survival. Instead of the traditional family, we have queer families. Instead of perhaps traditional ways of living, we have collective ways of surviving – by necessity. Having to engage in creative types of "world making" also forces us to think more practically and also to dream more, envision more. To reach beyond the present conditions to what is possible and realisable. In that sense it is also a very hopeful practice.

Liu: I am thinking of a sentence you wrote, Grietje: 'Proposing a radically new approach requires going to the root of the problem' (2019, 10). It seems to me that much of what we have been discussing today concerns the question of the root of the problem. I think this is made very explicit in Grietje's work on corporate capitalism, in Lisa's work on the asset economy and the logic of assets, as well as Jin Haritaworn's critique of the figure of (hu)Man. I don't mean to suggest a 'simple cut' between the human and the post-human – as Spivak would say the human is not something we can simply abandon but must be continuously negotiated with (see for example Spivak 2009). I would like to steer the conversation towards questions of decoloniality and anti-eurocentric epistemologies, that challenge the logic of whiteness as property. In so far as the logic of property structures corporate capitalism, and the asset economy as well as issues such as sexual contract, the family unit and kinship, how might the rethinking of the figure of (hu)Man and the logic of property afford new insights into the question of sexuality and capital?

Raha: I mostly approach these questions through a queer of colour critique. There is critique of both property and the concept of the human as part of

the production of racial capitalism. The critique of racial capitalism ties into some of the anti-colonial/decolonial responses to the anthropocene. I am thinking of for example Françoise Vergès' (2017) and Kathrin Yusoff's (2018) work on the issue of racial capitalocene. Afropessimism has also produced important critiques of the processes of dehumanisation and objectification that have taken place through slavery.

To answer your question, I suggest thinking through forms of commoning, commons and communising as forms of abolition. I do not want to say communisation but I am thinking of commune, as in the Paris 1871 Commune. How do we practice the abolition of property, the abolition of legal relations or the abolition of the state, the abolition of capitalism, in a way that might begin to operate reparatively? That is, operate in reparation towards the historical violences that have been enacted on black and indigenous people in particular and people of color more broadly, as well as the ecological harm that has been enacted into the planet. I think the concept of racial capitalocene might allow for an analysis of these interrelated dynamics.

In terms of sexuality, whilst I do not want to return to ancient forms of sexuality, I think it is about how forms of sexuality that exist now, that have existed, influence or inform the kinds of dreaming and world-making and world transformation that we need, and need to see. I think that is where theory is not so helpful, although I do think theory can also do certain kinds of imaginative work. In the past 24 hours after Lauren Berlant's passing, people are saying: 'Berlant's work is so important for me to believe life is possible, believe some kind of theory is possible'. So maybe there is something in theory that can help us do that. Imaginative work of the imaginary that comes with the commons. Kristin Ross' work on the commune is really important for my thinking of this, about how we continue to practice commoning, how we dream of practices like that, how we maybe enact them (Ross 1988).

O'Brien: The human and its relationship to property can refer to multiple registers. In this discussion we are moving rapidly back and forward between different levels of abstraction, different modalities of discourse, different ways of thinking about these terms.

I find it helpful, occasionally, to go back to Marx. In his critique of Proudhon, Marx is quite clear that it is a mistake to locate private property as the locus of the problems of capitalist society. Private property is the *product* of the alienated labor and the social relations of capitalist labor. This can refer to the exploitation of labor and the extraction of surplus value, but also the dispossession of people and the production of surplus populations. Private property is the product of these material dynamics of massive, racial, global violence of colonialism, of capitalist domination that is then reproduced continuously both in the labor relation and in the exclusion from the wage form.

This gets into some of our discussion of legal categories. These categories are the *product* of material dynamics that are immensely violent. There is a lot of excellent critique about the human as this European subject, a product of the Enlightenment and Colonialism. Then there is also a major debate on the role of the human as a category in Marxist thinking.

When I read Marx, I understand the human is something that we have yet to discover. The human is something that we see hints of in the course of rebellion and struggle. We see hints of it in people's work to try to survive in this nightmare world that we have created. The human is a utopic possibility of transformation and struggle. This is evident in reading Marx' early work in *The German Ideology* and *Theses on Feuerbach*. The human is not a category through which information is sorted and parsed, in the way that it is often understood in the Enlightenment tradition. The human is a site of potential transformation, a horizon of freedom. I think that this element of Marx in relation to the human is really worth reclaiming and reconnecting to.

What it means to be human is something that we have yet to create fully; the place of that creation is precisely the commune. It is the overcoming of class society, the overcoming of class domination and class relationships, the structure

of racial violence, of the state and the family, that undergirds and reinforces the capitalist relation. The human is something, if it is to mean anything, which will emerge in the course of that overcoming.

Baars: In this sense the human is a relation, and I would add a relation not just between human animals but also between people and animals, a relation to ourselves, our surroundings, other creatures and matter in our ecosystem. This is also the human I was talking about above in the context of 'human emancipation'. This notion of 'human' is very different from the Enlightenment human of 'human rights', the individual of neoliberalism, and the identity bearer of 'identity politics'. Perhaps it would be easier, less confusing indeed if we talked about the common, the commune and communism, precisely because this human does not exist in isolation, on its own.

What human emancipation and communism are going to look like is definitely a favourite topic of mine and my queer family at dinner conversations. We cannot have a very detailed and concrete picture of this as of yet, although it is fun to dream about and it is definitely a vision that keeps us out on the street, that motivates us to keep struggling. On the notion of private property and how that is then a product of, or rather a factor in, the development of racial capitalism, K-Sue Park has done amazing work on that in law (e.g. Park 2019).

Raha: The human is created as a legal status and the human is always this enlightenment category, it is always a racialised and ableist enlightenment category. The human has been responsible for the extraction and the theft of the whole planet and the lives and life on it. It is put to serve the accumulation and reproduction of capital. I was beaming when I heard O'Brien talk about that the human yet to be discovered. That point in early Marxist thought is really what began my relationship with Marxism to begin with.

Klitgård: I want to move to this last part of our talk by reflecting on the queer worlds you talked about, Nat, concretely and particularly living out family and gender abolition. These worlds appear in the creation of our communities and become the basis for thinking a world beyond capitalism. I was inspired by Grietje's story about the Camilles[1] and how they in adopting the same name gathered under a queer umbrella that allowed them the safety of anonymity at the same time as the strength of collective action. Their queerness is what gathers them and from which political involvement on a variety of issues can evolve.

I am interested in what a critical examination of contemporary capitalism can tell us about the role of the queer politics, of the queer subject and of queer critique in capitalism in today's society. Where do we find these today? Where do we go from here?

O'Brien: In closing, I want to focus on the understanding of capital and sexuality through the commitment to imagining a horizon of overcoming class society, of communism. Notions of sexual and gay liberation have fallen out of favour in recent decades and much of queer theory emerges in response to, or in critique, of certain kinds of utopic ideas around futurity. I would situate this turn against futurity as a result of an unravelling of the particular logic of the worker's movement as a coherent glue of global proletarian struggle. This unravelling since the 1970's has left many different movements adrift, struggling to imagine the link between the present and the revolutionary future.

Recent years, however, have seen a return to talking about utopia, to thinking about the overcoming of class society. We've seen new thinking about what a profoundly different world could look like, emerging out of the contradictions of current struggle. This is most starkly evident in recent years in the Black Lives Matter uprising, and the uprising against police brutality. Here abolition has gained traction as a way of thinking about the overcoming of police and prisons, and the destruction of the racial state as an organising principle of capitalist society. It is these current dynamics of struggle that are enabling us to return to thinking about the revolutionary horizon as a relationship between our current modes of struggle and the

future—to fighting for some futures above others. There are glimmers of such utopian thinking in the midst of mass rebellions, in the numerous attempts, which are inevitably failures, to prefigure some alternative modality of collective life and care and love for each other in the midst of capitalist society. We find this different sense of the utopian horizon in queer erotics, queer relationships and queer movements.

This utopian impulse can be a way of reopening the question of the communist horizon, to identify how the current dynamics of struggle suggest lines of flight towards the overcoming of class society. Family abolition, work abolition, prison abolition, police abolition—these are all different political and conceptual modes of trying to again think about revolution, about the meaning and content of communism.

In other words, we need science fiction, to be imagining revolution. Current rebellions are creating modes of being able to think in speculative terms. Science fiction is a register through which current struggles are reintroducing questions of communism. Investigations in sexuality and capital have a particularly intimate and necessary relationship to this speculative turn in thinking about the future and thinking about the horizon of what is possible. The best current examples of this are activists talking about what a world without prisons and without prisons could actually like.

Baars: I get a lot of hope and excitement and energy and inspiration from the current organising that I see around me and that I'm involved in. I'm involved for instance in the London social centres network and in running a radical social centre called The Common House. We had a meeting on the weekend where we started working on building a broadly carried transformative justice practice. These discussions and practices have been growing massively in the last years exactly as, and because, the abolitionist movement is really taking hold. What I see in the social centres network is not a specifically queer/trans project, rather it is a collection of projects that are all 'queer and trans' in that they're not about gender or sexuality but foreshadow a world where queer and trans are no longer needed as terms to assert our existence, perspectives or needs. These are the kinds of projects where everyone, in that sense, is queer and trans whatever their gender or sexuality or lack thereof. That is the amazing thing about it. In London we have for instance now a new queer and trans POC squat which will be starting a social centre as well. And we have the House of Shango, the black liberation squat in Loughborough Junction, that is directly building on the shoulders of the giants like Olive Morris, the black queer squatters of the 1970s who had a whole street of squatted social centers in Brixton. Those things give a lot of hope, inspiration and energy.

Raha: Grietje, why do you think the social centers and movements are so heavily organised by queer and trans people? Does this have to do with the material conditions?

Baars: Oh yes! For instance, if you think about Palestine organising in the UK or in the US, in New York for instance. It is mostly queer people – Black Lives Matter being initially queer led, the Stonewall riot being led by Black trans women, and The Combahee River Collective (1977) which was a group of Black lesbians, and the movements that you (Nat) wrote about in your thesis as well, such as the STAR – and indeed those that you, we are involved in and lead. Those on the margins of the system are rendered invisible or ineligible, materially hyper-exploited (and I know I am on the privileged side of the scale, being a white European academic). As queer and trans people we are the ones fighting and struggling and leading also because by necessity we are already living our lives differently and that enables us to understand the world differently and understand that different lives are possible. Because we have to. Because we are forced every day to have a different kind of life than, say, the cis-het mainstream.

One thing to watch out for though is to view social change as a move from a certain specific 'here' to a new and better 'there' in the future. Looking at change this way risks mimicking settler

colonial practices, erasing what exists, declaring 'terra nullius', the future as our 'blank space utopian frontier' where we build our own vision from scratch. E. Ornelas, Scott Branson and Kai Rajala in a recent podcast discussed precisely this connection between queer utopian visioning and the settler colonial project[2]. Such visioning forgets that everywhere in all places around the world people are already doing, making, acting, relating, worlding otherwise – or elsewise – a word I heard S.A. Smythe use recently (Smythe 2021). Some of those practices and ways of relating have survived the European white supremacist corporate capitalist imperialist onslaught and some had to be generated anew as acts of resistance and survival, in the cracks of the everyday present or the present every day. The point is to center, celebrate and build up, nurture and grow those practices. That's not to say there won't have to be some 'creative destruction' and, of course, abolition along the way.

I wanted to end with a quote from Alyosxa Tudor from a recent article (2021: 251). Alyosxa uses the term "transing" on the final page of their article that really well encapsulates what I've been trying to say about queer and trans liberation in this conversation today. It also echoes what earlier authors have said about 'queering'. '"Transing" is going beyond a category. Deconstructing a category can do the work of creating solidarity while challenging borders and boundaries with respect to the nation and migration. Moreover, trans-gender calls for trans-nation—for fiercely antinationalist, anticolonial politics and knowledge productions." I would add to that, of course, anti-capitalist politics and knowledge production.

Raha: I can really relate to that, thinking about the queer and trans folks who are going to still continue to be institutionally marginalised. The material conditions may continue to be against us. The heteronormativity, homonormativity and transnormativity of capitalism promise uplift that in practice never happens, because the class structure of society remains the same. We need to continue reproducing life outside of institutions and create an alternative to live in. The role of theory – how it might service the social movements against capitalism and forms of oppression that we live in and are trying to resist – will always remain part of the conversation we've been having today. For example, it seems that trans studies is really playing catchup on the ways in which we have been living and doing and organising in and around for decades. It could be said, in an albeit rather simplified way, that this has partly to do with trans studies' complex relationship to academic institutionalisation and the knowledge production practices that they support. Theory does have a role that it can play towards some of the emancipatory visions that M.E. O'Brien has described, that I think is really eloquent and beautiful. All the theorists I work with are often people who are also involved in creating art in some form. It is really great to see queer Marxists and trans Marxists thoughts coming together in the way that they have in the recent months and years, to service the communities that we need and that exist for us today.

Notes

[1] In Raha and Baars (2020), Baars cites an queer activist interviewee who introduced themself as 'Camille' – which is a code name all activists in the group CLAQ use when talking to the media. Who the original Camille is or if there even is or was such a person remains a source of fond speculation.

[2] In 2021, the UNC Queer Studies Conference called "No Blank Slates: A Discussion of Utopia, Queer Identity, and Settler Colonialism" featured occasional Final Straw host, Scott Bransen alongside E. Ornelas and Kai Rajala. This audio first aired on Queercorps, on CKUT radio in Montreal. Accessible through https://www.sjbranson.com/thefinalstrawradio or https://archive.org/details/palestine-and-challenging-settler-colonial-imaginaries.

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From the Kitchen Table to the Streets: Queer of Colour Reflections on Racial Capitalism

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I have been thinking about gender, sexuality, race and capitalism in relation to several conjunctures, from the war on terror and the backlash against multiculturalism to neoliberal urban development and, most recently, COVID-19. I have done so in conversation with a promiscuous array of theorists, who situate themselves in a range of formations, from queer of colour and critical ethnic to Black and Indigenous studies, and who work with a range of concepts, from post- and anticolonial takes on biopolitics and necropolitics to racial capitalism (e.g. Combahee River Collective Statement 1983, Coulthard 2014, Ferguson 2004, Haritaworn, Kuntsman & Posocco 2014, Melamed 2015, Pulido 2016, Robinson 1983, Simpson 2013, Thompson 2021). This article revisits some of my projects related to this and concludes in what I propose as a specifically queer engagement with racial capitalism.

My earlier work (Haritaworn 2012, 2015; Haritaworn, Kuntsman & Posocco eds. 2014) was set in Britain and Germany, in two Northwest European liberal democracies, in the 2000s and 2010s. The contexts I explored prided themselves in the melancholic remains of their welfare state but actively embraced neoliberal policies that are premised upon more abandonment of poor people and people of colour. These projects interrogated the valorization of certain minoritized figures, including the mixed-race Londoner, the *multikulti* Berliner, the queer lover, and the transgender victim of hate crime. They sought to shed light on moments when white supremacy, in order to manufacture consent, (still) needed to disguise itself as care, protection and love of minorities.

I describe these as figures rather than identities or necessarily even locations because those thus interpellated can only ever perform themselves in proximity to them (Skeggs 1997). We may be liberal democracy's "exalted subjects," in Sunera Thobani's (2007) words, but our belonging is conditional upon the eviction of Others. It is often fleeting, always shaky, and never taken for granted. Our performances frequently fail, as our embodied lives regularly spill beyond these moulds. For example, many mixed-race people disappoint expectations in our perfect bilingualism, as neoliberal multiculturalism (Melamed 2011) turns out to be assimilationist: it erases the very differences it claims to valorize (Haritaworn 2012). Similarly, the queer lover, that pet child of neoliberal multiculturalism since the mid-2000s, often fails to be lovely,

especially in hir gender non-conforming varieties. Under cis-heteropatriarchy, disgust, neglect and eviction have remained the knee-jerk responses to our bodies and intimacies, even while imagined communities at various scales – from city, nation, Europe to the West – were busily inventing new traditions of LGBT-friendliness (Haritaworn 2015). While certain racial and sexual figures, then, have risen in appreciation, the value that capital is able to extract from our embodied life force dwarfs whatever dividends we are situationally able to gain for ourselves.

Crucially, these trade-offs ghost those whose difference is not considered valuable. In *Biopolitics of Mixing* (Haritaworn 2012), I discussed this in relation to a mixed-race subject whose hybridity has Others in those who do not mix enough. The case studied in *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others* (Haritaworn 2015) is the queer lover who comes to life in the gentrifying inner city in Berlin, and in the shadow of hateful Others who are profiled, policed and displaced as the descendants of labour migrants, more recently refigured as Muslims (Yildiz 2009). The cultural tale of queer love and protection thus manufactures consent for practices of punishment and displacement that refigure racialized disposability in the registers of progress, rights, care and protection.

I describe these situationally desirable figures, whose occurrence is specific to their particular conjunctures in the liberal democracies that I have studied, as transitional objects. They are transitional since they urge, however incompletely and subject to mounting resistance, a turning of pages from one chapter of capitalism to the next – from a neoliberal multicultural regime that (however briefly) spoke the language of welfare, albeit in a symbolic 'diversity' discourse that is anathema to redistribution, to a regime that outrightly abandons and dehumanizes without needing to resort to a *minoritarian* register of care. My concept of transitionality is a tongue-in-cheek spin on childhood psychologist Winnicott (1953), who discussed how transitional objects help children fall asleep with less and less parental involvement (akin to the withdrawal of the neoliberal state) (Haritaworn 2015). In the end, the child can sleep by themselves and the teddy bear gets thrown out. I argue that something similar may be happening to the figure of the rescuable LGBT subject. After helping cis-heteropatriarchal subjects, including progressives who like to 'do the right thing,' – to accept and get used to policing and abandonment as signs of care –, the queer lover's value has dropped. As indicated by the current wars over trans people's pronouns, trigger warnings, callout culture and identity politics; the attacks on sex education and reproductive rights (including gender affirmative health care); and the backlash against critical race-, gender-, migration-, and post-colonial studies in media and political debates, the regime we are now transitioning into is an unselfconsciously oppressive one. White supremacy no longer needs its teddy bears but is happy to throw them under the bus.

In the era of COVID-19, the irreconcilable contradictions of racial capitalism are increasingly plain to see, making some dents in the universal claims of both neoliberal, welfare and, in those contexts where they are available, public health discourses. Corona has laid bare the necropolitical distinctions between the properly alive (Foucault 2004/1978) and the living dead (Mbembe 2012), between those who are recognized as vulnerable to the virus and deserving of home offices, vaccines, ventilators, ICU beds and categorization as high risk or 'priority', and those who are *a risk* – whose greater morbidity and mortality is acceptable and must be managed so that the economy can go on. My current research (Haritaworn 2021) on the transformation of safety at the conjuncture of protest and pandemic explores how working-class migrants, Black people, Indigenous people and people of colour are once more banished from the fold of those whose lives are prioritized for safety and care. In Germany, my current site, this manifests as a refusal to even acknowledge the structural vulnerabilities of non-white people to the virus. Here, race and class are not considered in the definition of priority groups to be vaccinated, or in the design of data on the population's morbidity and mortality from the virus. Like others, this is a context where public health research and policies are race evasive (Afrozensus n.d.). And as

so often, this evasion claims to right past wrongs while punishing mention of their reverberations in the present. Thus, in Germany, collecting ethnic data is not acceptable since it echoes National Socialism – yet leaving racial Others to die apparently does not. At the same time, non-white people are once more hyper-visible as deviant folk devils, in Hall et al.'s (1978) terms, that can be scapegoated in times of crisis (Haritaworn 2015) – this time as infectious vectors of the coronavirus.

Queer of colour frameworks are helpful in explaining how the disentitlement from care of racialized subjects and communities is produced culturally. As I argue based on amy recent analysis of the German media and political debates of COVID-19 (Haritaworn 2021), rising numbers nationwide were at key moments in the pandemic explained through the established tropes of failed (cis-)genders and (hetero-)sexualities that queer of colour theorists have long drawn attention to (Cohen 1997; Ferguson 2004; Haritaworn 2015): from large amorphous families that congregate during weddings or iftars, to reckless border crossers who import variants through visits 'back home', to protestors who refuse to stay home, to disaffected youth who hang out on street corners and pick fights with police, to overcrowded ghettos, where whole housing blocks can be put under quarantine if they are portrayed as spaces of Roma or Muslim residence. In contrast to these degenerate intimacies, whose dysfunctional reproductivity has now gone viral, the white cis-heteropatriarchal family and its nostalgically figured members – the child who suffers from school closure, the grandparent awaiting vaccination in the nursing home – have claimed near-exclusive airtime as vulnerable populations in need of protection. In this straightened landscape, minoritarian subjects do not count as worthy of protection. While queer support networks and chosen families have been recloseted and recriminalized under the household rules, poor racialized subjects have been disproportionately declared 'essential workers'. Their chronic daily risk of contracting COVID is accepted as an inevitable factor to be managed for the sake of the economy (see Haritaworn 2021).

Despite the heightened visibility of the unequal conditions of working and living that render social distancing and other safety measures impossible for many, the actual contradictions that produce environmental racism and structural abandonment remain obfuscated (Gilmore 2002; Pulido 2016). Again, a queer of colour framework that actively converses with theories of racial capitalism is conducive here. The term racial capitalism emerged in various geographic sites in the late 1970s and early 1980s,[1] as part of transnational debates within the Black radical tradition (Kelley 2002). In *Black Marxism,* the book that is frequently cited to explain the term, Cedric Robinson (1983) defined capitalism as always already racial. To prevent any misunderstandings, racial capitalism, according to Robinson, is not a stage or variation of 'regular' capitalism. Rather, as Melamed (2015) and Pulido (2016) each explain, capitalism has, since its early European origins, relied on racialized distinctions. Indeed, capitalist accumulation requires the prior cultural production of degenerate and devalued populations that can be displaced, dispossessed, incarcerated, put to work, or prematurely killed, depending on capital's current requirements. While historically this occurred through conquest and enslavement, the same logics pervade contemporary regimes of border imperialism (Walia 2012), resource extraction, urban development and other forms of land grabbing, as well as the prison industrial complex (Gilmore 2007; Coulthard 2014; Pulido 2017). Queer of colour theories are again helpful in explaining how these exploitable differences are produced through notions of improper and inferior genders and sexualities – from the welfare queen, to the Black mugger, to the hateful Muslim/Arab/Turkish homophobe, to the criminally infectious rulebreaker who is scapegoated for COVID-19 (Cohen 1997; Ferguson 2004, Hall et al. 1978, Haritaworn 2015; Haritaworn 2021).

Beyond the important and often devalued work of critique, queer of colour methodologies – both organic and academic – help us rehearse ways out of this and other crises. In my current empirical research on community responses to COVID-19, which is grounded in interviews with

queer and antiracist activists, I explore transformations of safety that are happening outside of the system in marginalized communities in Berlin and Toronto. Examples for this include the pods, bubbles and care collectives that are being forged in queer communities, often in direct transgression of the official household rules, as well as the mass organizing that has happened throughout the pandemic. In Germany in 2020, thousands took to the streets to demonstrate for Black Lives – at least 15,000 in Berlin in June alone – and to commemorate the victims of the racist mass murder in Hanau on February 19, 2020. Labelled superspreader events by media and politicians, these protests were themselves sites where abolitionist models of care and relationship building were developed. Importantly, they rehearsed safer modes of collectivity, at a time when conservative notions of domesticity, privacy, and isolation were still presented as the main solution to the pandemic. While irreducible to a single-issue queer politic, safer sex and other queer methodologies of safety and protection in the face of a virus that will never go away were crucial in these transformations of justice, safety and care (Haritaworn 2021).

In this, I join other writings by queer and trans Black, Indigenous and people of colour that dedicate themselves to the task of prefiguring alternatives to racial capitalism and settler colonialism (e.g. Brown 2019; Dixon & Lakshmi-Samarasinha eds 2020; Million 2013; Thompson 2021). These prefigurations are characterized by a creative engagement with the palimpsestic counter-archives of the past (Alexander 2006). They bypass dominant identity debates, hangovers from late 1990s queer, postmodernist and other theories that, however important in their historical contexts, treat identity as something that is pre-modern, pre-theoretical and incompatible with change (and whose strawperson has suspiciously often worn the face of a Black lesbian). They forge utopian temporalities that are decidedly pro-future, pro-past and pro-revolution, and refuse an end of history. Much of this intense dreaming (Million 2013) takes place in science fiction and other creative genres (Brown & Imarisha eds. 2015; Gossett in Gossett, Stanley and Burton 2019; Simpson 2013). I recently co-edited two anthologies on queer and trans Black, Indigenous and people of colour spaces and histories in Toronto as part of a research team that we called *Marvellous Grounds* in commemoration of the Afrosurrealism of Suzanne Césaire (Kelley). Césaire argued that we need art in order to get us ready for the marvellous (Haritaworn, Moussa & Ware 2018 a, b, MarvellousGrounds.com). The same leap into a better future was invoked in the famous Combahee River Collective Statement in 1977 by Black lesbian feminists in Boston, who actively embraced a revolutionary left-wing politic, while also distancing themselves from the racism and cis-heterosexism of the white left establishment (Combahee River Collective 1983).

In short, theories of racial capitalism give us not just diagnostics, but roadmaps for winning against Capital and the racial state. This is a moment when many are gaining clarity that things cannot continue this way, thanks in no small part to the labour done and risks taken by Black people – including in white-dominated queer spaces themselves. A well-known example is the Black Lives Matter intervention into World Pride in Toronto that resulted in a commitment by Pride Toronto to march without the police in the future (Black Lives Matter Toronto 2016). However, it also resulted in a witch hunt against the activists that should caution us against non-consensually claiming BLM for a single-issue queer movement, Marxist or otherwise, that has yet to reckon with its anti-Black and other violent exclusions. As Rodney Diverlus of BLM-To stated in the short film *Black Trans Lives Matter. Black Queer Lives Matter*:

> *We have never faced as much vile, spewed hate, threats, as what we get from the queer community from last year's actions (Black Lives Matter Toronto 2017).*

In contrast, writers on racial and colonial capitalism have long located themselves in revolutionary genealogies – from the Black Radical Tradition to Indigenous decolonization to prison abolition. These legacies of unfinished revolution resist competitive binaries between activism and

scholarship. They prefigure alternatives to the murderous present, alternatives to the state even. Queer and trans Black, Indigenous and people of colour worldings, with their capacity to embody the impossible, desire the unrealistic, and dream big in small spaces – from the street corner to the kitchen table, the ballroom, the self-organized shelter, or the trans and non-binary clothing exchange – have a particular role to play in these transformations.

Notes

[1] In particular, Robinson's theorizing was indebted to South African debates about the relationship between racism, colonialism and capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Neville Alexander's (1979) *One Azania, One Nation.* This preempts an understanding of theories of racial capitalism as parochial to the US, or of Black European thought as foreign to Europe (Thompson, Facebook update, 13 May 2022, see also Thompson 2021).

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The Asset Economy and the Politics of Life

By Lisa Adkins

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The current resurgence of interest in the links between the organization of sexualities and the logics of capitalism, as well as the broader recovery of institutional and materialist analysis across the social sciences and the humanities, must surely be understood in the context of the 'return' of economic inequalities. Over the past four decades, Anglo-capitalist societies have seen sharp rises in economic inequalities and especially inequalities of wealth (Piketty 2014). While the rise of wealth-based inequalities has prompted comparisons to the pre-welfare state era, including to the gilded age, such analogies inevitably gloss over the distinctive circumstances, institutional arrangements and policy settings associated with them. They gloss over the double dynamic of asset price inflation and wage stagnation that has fuelled the rise of wealth-based inequalities and emerged as one of the distinctive features of Anglo-capitalist economies from the 1980s onwards (Adkins et al. 2020; Konings et al. 2021).

Understanding the dynamics of these inequalities is, however, further clouded by a widespread supposition that asset price inflation benefits and consolidates the position of the already rich. Thus, analyses abound of how asset price inflation has powered the emergence of an ever more influential super- and ultra-rich class (see e.g. Atkinson 2020), the return of a rentier class (see e.g. Standing 2011), and an increasingly property-less and rentier dependent mass, scratching a living either from directly or indirectly servicing the rich, or worse, living an entirely wageless life (see e.g. Neel 2019). This framing, however, misconstrues the workings of the neoliberal economy and society, and particularly how the neoliberal project actively promoted asset ownership and the promise of capital gains to whole populations, and did so especially through the promotion of the prospect of capital gains through homeownership (Adkins et al. 2020). Cheap and democratized credit, low interest rates and organized reductions in social housing made this promise a reality for many, with homeownership rates rising and asset price inflation translating into gains in wealth for residential property owners well beyond the 'one percent'. Inevitably, however, the logic of asset price inflation has meant that across Anglo-capitalist societies rates of homeownership are now declining, with increasing segments of populations – even for those in 'middle-class' jobs – now locked out of property ownership and from its 'wealth effects'. Asset ownership and asset inflation have then set in place a new material politics of life and it is this asset-based life politics, including the embedding of a speculative rationality into everyday life, that should surely be at the forefront of any interrogation of the relationship between present-day capitalism and the organization of life.

Central to this interrogation must be how asset inflation and wealth inequality have been historically conterminous with neoliberalism, as well as with the project of queer theory. Queer theory, of course, often took neoliberalism as its object. Yet as Liu (2020) has recently observed, queer theory as a field habitually positioned itself

as a corrective to materialism and was often shaped by a desire to dissociate studies of gender and sexuality from material concerns. One consequence of this disassociation is that queer theory was not always able to identify and engage with rapidly emerging inequalities of asset-based wealth (or indeed the emergence of asset-based capitalism *per se*), let alone with the ways in which asset logics were choreographing a new politics of life. Even when inequalities or other material concerns were identified, they often could not be synthesized into queer theory's analytic frames, leaving them as unexplained, exterior phenomena, serving as background or context rather than as a key contributor to the dynamics of the object or objects under investigation.

To be sure, and as already noted, queer theory did tackle neoliberalism as an object. Lisa Duggan's interventions (2002, 2003) stand tall here for tracking how the rise of neoliberalism, and especially the third way political project, had sexual politics not as a sideshow but as a central pillar. Critical here was the emergence and institutionalization of homonormativity as the sexual politics of the neoliberal era. Yet even here in this more materially inflected analysis, the dynamics of capital was largely missing, even as Duggan's analysis traced how homonormativity fuelled economic inequalities within LGBTIQ communities and set in play a new hierarchical ordering of LGBTIQ populations, one in which cisgendered, same-sex cohabiting couples were accorded a new-found legitimacy and visibility through a host of economic, legal and social measures. The relationship of these measures to the dynamics of capital in such analyses (see also Willse & Spade 2005) tended, however, to remain muted, as did the centrality of the double dynamic of asset inflation and wage stagnation to the neoliberal project. This meant ultimately that the criticality of the dual waged – including the cisgendered dual waged – mortgaged household to asset-based capitalism and to the viability of the financial system also went unnoticed. In other words, what went unrecognized were the critical links between homonormativity and the hierarchies it installed within the asset economy, including how the democratizing of finance, and the enrolment of cisgendered, same-sex cohabiting couples into mortgaged homeownership that this involved, enrolled such couples into lifetimes of payments and an asset-based, speculative life (Adkins 2019).

While analysts of the sexual politics of the neoliberal era certainly registered how poor members of LGBTIQ communities were increasingly subject to precarious wages, housing stress and reduced social assistance, the links between these phenomena and asset logics were also overlooked. Reductions in welfare payments and new modes of welfare assessment characteristic of the neoliberal era, for example, have been governed by a logic that has attempted to activate financial obligations and bonds between members of households. In Australia, for example, welfare-dependent cohabiting LGBTIQ couples had their relationships legally recognized, but their welfare payments were reduced and their couple status redefined in terms of 'financial interdependence' and 'enduring financial commitments'. In the neoliberal era, welfare regimes have, in other words, been active in formatting households with capacities for leading a speculative life even though paradoxically such households own no assets upon which to base such a life (Adkins & Dever 2021).

What is clear is that to come to grips with and to animate the links between the organization and governance of sexualities and the dynamics of present-day capitalism requires placing the asset economy, asset inflation and asset logics centre stage. Such a project requires asking some potentially difficult and confronting questions regarding the convergence and correspondence between the experimental temporality celebrated by many queer theorists and other progressives, and the non-chronological, event-based speculative time of the asset economy (Adkins 2018). As Elliott (2019) has observed regarding this correspondence, if the arguments advanced by left theory in the last thirty years have turned out to describe not the time of radical practice but the time of financialized accumulation, then this is an outcome that merits urgent consideration. Such a project will also necessarily require a movement

away from understanding the dynamics of capitalism and its material politics through the logic of the commodity, to one that focuses on the distinctive logics of the asset, including the demands for liquidity and speculative position taking. Indeed, such practices must take centre stage if we are to understand just how the asset economy has fashioned a new politics of life.

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Two Accounts of 'Fetish' in Marx and Freud

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Can one not find among one's own circle of acquaintances people who will ascribe the little mishaps and accidents of the day to their having got out on the wrong side of the bed? The spilling of salt, the sailor's objection to sailing on Friday, and many other analogues, may be found in the superstition of our own people…(But) for fetishism proper, in the sense in which it is now commonly accepted, one must look to Africa, and particularly to the West Coast.

— Charles Dickens[1]

Desire is not an ahistorical urge, and it in itself won't — can't — save us...Capital begins with the fetish, it goes on to say a lot of other things, and at the end of 900-odd pages, the fetish is untrammelled by analysis. What was true at the beginning is true at the end. There is no way to take apart the fetish with logic.

— Jordy Rosenberg

Both Marx and Freud used the word 'fetish' in ways that have enjoyed unmatched impact on subsequent social theory's conception of objects. This apparently overlapping term of art was key to attempts at merging these intellectual traditions into a twin-headed 'Freudo-Marxism'. These accounts twin objects as produced by capitalist political economy and as sexual targets, respectively. But in light of recent studies of Marx, it's no longer clear that this merger is fruitful, or even sustainable. To put it bluntly, Marx's approach to fetish helpfully avoids the bend towards pathologisation found in Freud, with ease. This is because Marx doesn't concern himself with the psyche, or care for distinctions between conscious and unconscious. Instead, his use of 'fetish' features a subversive bite, lost in much of today's reception.

Rather than providing a guide to either the psychological or spiritual impact of commodities onto proletarian lives, Marx's *Capital* instead uses the term to provide a witty appropriation of earlier bourgeois anthropology. As the quote from Dickens exemplifies, the conventions of 19th century anthropological writing were openly racist in their

reasoning. They urged readers (presumed European men) to 'look to Africa' to understand the primitive origins of fetish-worship. Marx aimed to provide a different view of fetish: rather than belonging to another continent, and distant practices found there, everyday commodities straddled the mundane account-keeping of shopkeeping, and 'theological' truths that closer examination would quickly reveal.

Rather than absorb this challenge to European chauvinism, today's social theory is prone to adopting a Freudian approach to the question of 'fetish'. In this view fetishes *are* to be found throughout the western world, but only in the form of pathological psychic or cultural developments. (In this way, Freud's writings stick more closely to the original externalising approach taken by anthropologists contemporary to him — who were mostly still unperturbed by Marx's satire.) This common understanding threatens to rob Marx's usage of any subversiveness found in *Capital*.

Grasping what Marx meant when he referred to the commodity's 'fetish character' requires some detachment from our own commonplace uses of the term. Distinguishing between Marx and Freud's approaches (fetish-character versus fetish as pathology) is necessary both to retain this stylistic distinction, and to capture their respective satire versus rearticulation. This account of commodities as fundamentally mysterious (whoever observes them) contrasts against Freud's more minoritising understanding of fetish as a developmental quirk. The *formal* mode of thought taken by Marx has implications for sex that have not yet been addressed. An overly hasty merger with the *clinical* investigations of Freud has instead resulted in a lasting confusion around the true concern of *Capital*'s opening sections on commodities: the sensual and super-sensual.

For Marx, commodities do not exert a mysterious hold over our lives due to a pathological breakdown, and they are not the corrupting articles of 'consumerist' cultural decay. Their power is not simply ideological, or a quirk of spiritual eccentricity, but instead founded in how commodities have a distinctive *twofold* face. They are at once sensual items that can be interacted with immediately, and by-products of grand social forces that can only be apprehended 'super-sensually'. It's this illuminating distinction between sensual and super-sensual that Freudian accounts of fetish (instead focused on relation of conscious to unconscious) have come to eclipse.

This situation between the sensual and super-sensual is shared by sex acts and desires, which is exactly why analysts of these features of human life have been so quick to turn to overarching terms (patriarchy, hetero-normativity) to account for their form. The best of psychoanalytic theory has firmly resisted reducing humanity to an asymmetrical division of the sexually well-ordered and depraved fetishists. As Jacqueline Rose has put it, the tradition offers solace of a universalist flavour:

> *"It's axiomatic for psychoanalysis that no one is demeaned by the unconscious...The things you're ashamed of, don't be ashamed: because we're all in this, together."'* (Rose, 2013)

But these accounts often move overly hastily, losing along the way both the sensual content that provides an equally mysterious (or queer) enmeshment to commodities, and also the profoundly *particular* focus Freud's developmental account of fetish provides.

Until this distinction in purpose between 'fetish character' and 'fetishism' is understood, any merger of Marxist and Freudian theory threatens to be a lopsided one — with Marx's distinction between sensual and super-sensual registers fully submerged into Freud's psychologising account of fetishism as the wake of a personal journey into civilised life.

Uniquely, the original sense of 'fetish' found in Marx's *Capital* provides us with an insight into the *sensuousness* of human activity. While the distinction between sensual and super-sensual (which the commodity was taken to straddle) was crucial for Marx, this point remains somewhat undigested by current social theory. The pathological sense of 'fethishism' has become a grand detour into the psyche, a decades long journey away from grasping the commodity as a *form*.

If sex can be grasped meaningfully, we'll need the best possible account of the sensuousness that fills human life. This essay provides an attempt at translation towards that end, to be used playfully. Let's return the word 'fetish' to a true double entendre.

I. Commodities 'at first sight' vs. closer inspection

The term 'fetish' appeared late in Marx's career. Michel Heinrich notes that the term 'fetish character' is missing even from *Capital*'s forerunning exposition *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Heinrich 2016, 104). In other words, it is with 'fetish' that *Capital* seeks to finally redress the lack of regard for 'sensuousness', that Marx had years before characterised as hindering previous attempts at philosophical materialism (Marx 1845). In *Capital*, Marx begins with this meeting place of the sensual and super-sensual (as Rosenberg's opening quote observes):

> *A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.*[2] *(Marx 1990, 61)*

Laura Mulvey has argued, that the 'alchemic link' between Marxist and Freudian thought which appears around fetish, at first glance can be deceptive given their marked divergences (Mulvey 1996, 2). Here I will instead offer caution, that confusion between Freud and a *non-psychological* conception of commodities is best avoided. To put it more provocatively: *Capital* does not advance any view of the unconscious, and that's for the better.

Rather than guiding us towards an austere or stripped back 'materialism' to serve as the counterpart of explorations of sexuality as 'superstructural' dalliance, *Capital*'s account of commodities' fetish character instead playfully highlights the difficulty observers have in making sense of them.

After sections exploring both the two forms of value present in commodities, and 'The Two Forms of Labour Embodied in Commodities', Marx closes chapter one of *Capital* with a section promising to introduce the commodity's 'secret':[3]

> *"...This fetish character of the world of commodities arises from the peculiar social character of the labour which produces them."*
>
> *"It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire a socially uniform objectivity as values, which is distinct from their sensuously varied objectivity as articles of utility". (Marx, 1990, 63)*

While derisory towards the many political economists it works through, *Capital* clearly absorbs classical political economy's perspective of situating apparently personal choices within grander reproductive chains of social process, as recently noted by Kyle Baasch:

> *"...From Adam Smith to Marx, is concerned with the way in which individuals contribute, through seemingly self-interested economic decisions, to the reproduction of a social process that takes place behind their backs and beyond their comprehension, and the way in which this same social process consequently directs or diminishes the individual capacity to act". (Baasch, 2021)*

This sense of unwitting ramifications of actions serves much of the role played by the unconscious in the later developed tradition of psychoanalysis. Rather than a narrative of personal development, this 'reproduction of social process' is what Marx argues class actors find themselves locked into. While bearing a family resemblance to accounts which focus on Freud's 'unconscious' (in that they explore the limits of intentionality as governing human action), Marx's concern was form, rather than psyche.

Actions taken 'behind the backs' of economic actors are related to the demands of overarching processes (which are typically not easily grasped fully for anyone immersed in participation with them). The result is that even a sybaritic,

headlong pursuit of the sensual does not leave anyone beyond the reach of their supersensual context. Leisure, rest and enjoyment are each embedded in the needs of Capital for a productive (and *reproductive*) workforce.

Marx did not explore how the imperatives he sought to identity played out for any *personal* participant, instead bringing into view the overarching *logic* that had arisen around commodity production historically. Using a metaphor drawn from the natural sciences, Marx would refer frequently to his approach as identifying the respective 'laws of motion' of each historical epoch. In *Capital*, he focused more specifically on the naturalisation of capital's logic.

The commodity's fetish-character appears not with reference to Marx's interactions with specific commodities, but one aspect of that logical picture. As Beverly Best has it:

> *Unlike the diversity and expansiveness of the social formation, Capital's object of analysis is exceedingly narrow: an immaterial but objective, historically emerging social compulsion that comes to function in capitalist society like a force of gravity…But which allows for a range of expression, thereby creating the appearance that no such gravitational force operates at all. (Best, 2021)*

In short, identifying the fetish-character of commodities granted a sense of the historically contrived ways they came to appear as natural kinds. Marx used 'fetish' to highlight the conjuncture of the everyday and devotional, which each of us is obliged to live along.

II. 'A particular and quite special penis'

Today, the successful dissemination of Freudian psychoanalysis into popular thought is such that any talk of 'fetishism' threatens to bring to mind pathological eroticism, first and foremost.

For his part, Freud first introduced 'fetishism' to address the question of castration anxiety, a developing focus of his thinking since the start of the previous decade.[4] Despite this longstanding fixation, Freud introduced fetishes as castration hesitantly, and with little exuberance:

> *When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost…It should normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and - for reasons familiar to us - does not want to give up. (Freud 1927, 152)*

As this origin suggests, fetishism in this account was introduced as a particular experience and effectively serves as the glove to the hand of trauma. The repetitive yearnings of the fetishist are shaped around the continual returns of traumatic experience. As Mulvey has it: 'The fetish acknowledges its own traumatic history like a red flag, symptomatically signalling a site of psychic pain.' (Mulvey 1996, 12).

Freud's use of terms corresponded to his clinical practice, with either particular figures (such as Little Hans or Dora) or clusters of experiences (as with sadomasochists in 'A Child Is Being Beaten'). As such, Freud's 'fetishism' was always intended as a means of honing a personal judgment and refining an etiological accounting of irregular compulsions. The 'special penis', that usually would have been divulged, instead found itself sustained through the repetitive actions of fetishistic thoughts and actions.

This account of fetish stresses the *repetitiveness* of fetishistic attachments. In the same manner that African totem-worship was counterposed to the 'rational' operation of civilised nations, the fetishists' sexuality is implicitly cast against a relatively more orderly and resolvable identification of 'sexual object'. Specifically, fetishes are identified

most readily where orientations are directed away from 'conventional' heterosexual sex. While broadly sympathetic towards his fetishising patients, Freud's 1927 introduction of the term claimed that his (male) patients consistently display:

> *an aversion, which is never absent in any fetishist, to the real female genitals (which) remains a stigma indelible of the repression that has taken place. (Freud 1927, 154)*

In other words, fetishes, trauma and repression are a closely linked triad or knot for psychoanalytic thinking. Each repeats, and so the grip remains tight.

Contrastingly for Marx, this repetition of views appears as a revolutionary necessity. A sensual view is not deceptive but only ever partial. Commodities must be combed over to be fully understood, their immediate appearance neither possible to set aside, nor ever fully relied on. To be grasped, the commodity must be passed over once and then again, each glance revealing differing features, and indeed the limits of the gaze itself.

Strikingly Marx does not attach the fetish-character to any one order of society, true to his *relational* view of classes (which are always taken as mutually defining, and co-operative, rather than 'stratified'). The fetish-character belongs not to any one fraction of society, but is a character of the capitalist commodity itself.[5]

Engaging with fetishised objects for Marx is simply a necessity of living in the context of a society dominated by capital. Fetish from this view is not a psychological quality at all. Marx calls neither the proletarian labourers nor bourgeois managers 'fetishists', reserving this term of judgement for the items they see produced together. The 'fetish' is not the tell-tale sign of an under-developed culture or a malformed psyche. It's simply an upshot of articles that bear several kinds of weight at the same time, making them difficult for any of us to grasp decisively. Their fetish character is true for anyone who lives in a society dominated by their production, and circulation.

Capital introduces this more elevated aspect of commodities quite mockingly, with the super-sensual aspect being referred to as 'metaphysical subtleties' and 'theological niceties'. At this point, Marx is satirically treating *himself* as much as anyone: the exercise of unfolding the fetish-character can quickly appear farcical. Could close examination of a Tupperware container, an apple, a coat or a trash film really yield spiritual or philosophical revelations?

That Marx not only believes this to be possible but *necessary* to grasp the logic of Capital, reveals that his talk of mysterious or queer commodities does not lead to any straightforward condemnation of our current circumstances. Rather than this approach to Capital being reducible to simply a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' alongside Freud (and Nietzsche), Marx offers an unmistakable rationalism alongside his critical bite.

Marx and Freud therefore both diverged in method and target. Freud offers us an account of an atypical formation in his clients' erotic landscape, while Marx's agenda is so broad as to be total. While Freud aimed to trace an unusual developmental pathway that forked his clients from normative (heterosexual) development, Marx hoped to identify fetish as a characteristic of the commodity. The commodity's two-facedness was relevant, not to those who had developed any particular fixation, but to all obliged to interact with them.

III. Fetish-character within commodity's 'Dual Character'

Recent research into scholarly racism has identified 'fetish', along with 'taboo', as a key term in the formation of European bourgeois self-identification, especially through the discipline of anthropology. In this context, Marx's deployment of the term 'fetish' has been convincingly presented as a satirical ploy, in his broader critique of the bourgeois intellectual style. Just as Marx treated earlier political economy playfully, teasing out the absurd implications in its own terms, he appropriated the term 'fetish' exactly in resistance to the *spirit* of bourgeois cultural (comparative) investigations.

The late Christopher Chitty's history of sodomy explored how exposure to public sexuality sensationalised 'scandalised' bourg identity formation in France. Popular post-Revolution narratives centred on the perfect Parisian wanderer who, passing unsuspectingly through a park, ends up gasping over a cruising ground or public trade (Chitty, 2020). Just as the bourgeois wanderer, through public spaces, defined himself against the debauchery he happened across, the example of West African object worship was deployed to grasp the self-understanding of western rationalism's progress.

Keston Sutherland's essay "Marx in Jargon" (2008) presents the case that Marx's choice of the term 'fetish character' was quite calculated (a choice preserved in the French translation he approved but typically replaced with 'fetishism' in English translations). In situating this relation as a characteristic of the *commodity itself*, the typical externalization of anthropology was undercut. Through setting Marx's use of the term (applied to the commodity) along Freud's (applied to the psyches of his clients), we can see still more clearly the limits of 'fetishism' and 'fetishists' as found in Freud, which Marx's earlier work escapes. It's exactly the *universal* claim Marx makes concerning the fetish as capitalist worship-object that gives his work a lasting bite, and which has caused the double entendre of fetish to become slurred into a single, psyche-oriented sense of the term.

Today's exegetes of Marx have stressed that Marx's use of the term 'fetish' was in a quite different context to that which 21st century readers are familiar with. The meaning of the term distinctive to *Capital* requires some contextualisation, given the proliferation of 'Marxist' cultural theory across the 20th century. As Michael Heinrich puts it:

> *Using the terms "fetish" and "fetishism" is widespread today. One speaks of "brand fetishism" if somebody only buys a particular brand, or speaking of certain sexual practices as "fetishism." This general usage of fetish to mean "something of exaggerated importance" was not usual in Marx's time....Fetishism was regarded as something primitive and irrational, from which bourgeois society—which understood itself to be completely rational—sorely wanted to take distance. (Heinrich 2021, 143)*

While Heinrich's contextualisation of the term is welcome, if anything this *understates* the extent of the problem. Following from Sutherland's reading, Marx's intention in deploying 'fetish' was satirising the search for a lewd, mystified and barbarous that had defined more refined attempts at bourgeois self-fashioning. When we consider Marx and Freud's concepts of fetish in this light, the distinction between them becomes clear. What Marx slyly derided, Freud had mostly absorbed. Freud's presentation of 'fetish' refers a pathological population, and lacks the satirical bite of Marx's work on commodities. Freud's first essay featuring the term attributes fetishism as especially evident in Chinese foot-binders, who he referred to as sweepingly castration-anxious men alleviating their dread through (further) disfigurement of female appendages:

> *Another variant, which is also a parallel to fetishism in social psychology, might be seen in the Chinese custom of mutilating the female foot and then revering it like a fetish after it has been mutilated. It seems as though the Chinese male wants to thank the woman for having submitted to being castrated. (Freud, 1927).*

Here Freud strayed well beyond his own (European) client base, to pass a wider cultural judgement.[6] The pathological view of fetish Freud applied clinically here, extended across foreign "civilisations" in exactly the style Marx had earlier sought to subvert.

If we're to escape sweeping assertions of fetishism as particular pathology, the merits of a non-psychological conception of fetish become clear. Taking fetish to be a personal and developmental set of compulsions is not the only way to approach the topic (nor even the best approach). *Capital*'s distinctive ambition was that through commodity analysis we can unlock 'metaphysical

subtleties' and 'theological niceties', which invariably make *each of us* a fetishist. Through surveying the super-sensual, we can better grasp how the sensual captures each of us.

What I've aimed to show so far is the clear water between Marx's introduction of the commodity as a 'trivial thing'—requiring repeated examinations to unveil as mystified—and Freud's treatment of fetishes as a pathologically focused fascination—developed out of a 'special penis' serving as grit for developing psyches. Fetishes are usually taken to be quite particular things, so let's consider one case in point.

IV. Mysterious Piss

The 2019 documentary *Piss Off* (Baker 2019) provides us with a heroic distillation of the fetishist at work. The film's protagonist Athleticpisspig used work trips as a means to film group urination scenes at locations around the world. Filmed repeatedly drenching his own wiry frame and those of other men with urine, pisspig shares freely his singular fascination and organising nous. These gatherings of like-minded gay guys were filmed and uploaded to various fetish sites, until Athleticpisspig was finally outed to his workplace (leading to a hasty mass deletion.) In the wake of this, the documentary serves as a resistant trace of an underground legend.

At the time of filming, our protagonist pisspig seemed unperturbed by any nation's law enforcement (who he never so much as mentions), instead explaining enthusiastically how he pioneered the use of pre-prepared plastic bottles to extend the length, intensity and mess of his clandestine gatherings. While keeping his face out of frame, throughout *Piss Off* pisspig is filmed working out or clad in revealing tank tops — remarking that some men who'd otherwise have no interest in piss suddenly become willing upon seeing his lean physique. Also interviewed are pisspig's fans (more willing to show their faces), who admiringly remark on his tendency to both perform and upload more daring feats of public urination than they'd ever seen before. These admirers praise his warm inclusiveness as his travels took them to their cities, with the documentary following these meet-ups across continents.

While the film is light on anti-capitalist (or even anti-state) flourishes, it's clearly implied that pisspig's unspecified corporate post enables his globetrotting passions, flows of Capital guiding another variety. For their part, his fans seem to take little interest in his 'true identity' — unmasking the man behind the pig — welcoming him instead to their hometowns as a distilled persona.

So intense was pisspig's fanbase's enthusiasm for his work, he took to selling athleisurewear soiled during productions. This one-pig business faced challenges such as storing the items until they were sufficiently heady in their stench, without leaving his apartment uninhabitable — and packaging them securely for postage. At one of his many single purpose meet-ups, a fan appears wearing a garment pisspig had saturated in a video shot months before.

At first, we might see this film as reflecting a sketch of the fetishist in the Freudian sense of the word. *Piss Off*'s protagonist shows the lasting salience of Freud's 1927 remark that few fetishists approached him with a mind to banish their key desire:

> *For though no doubt a fetish is recognized by its adherents as an abnormality, it is seldom felt by them as the symptom of an ailment accompanied by suffering. Usually they are quite satisfied with it, or even praise the way in which it eases their erotic life.*[7] *(Freud 1927, 152)*

Athleticpisspig displays both the creativity and circumscription that define the 'fetishist' as popularly understood: honed around a singular fixation that allows for variations, but rarely true alternations. This type of fetish is a psychological mechanism that consumes more or less attention, reiterating and emphasising itself, demanding incessant revisiting in ways that appear to resist lasting satiation and often enough can ruin friendships, reputations, careers.

A 'fetishist' in this sense of the word (at this point, clearly the best understood use of the term)

is animated by a precise loop of sensual responsiveness. The fetish comes to fill their mind, demand their attention even at the most inconvenient moments, and compel their actions to the outer limits of social acceptability. Their fantasy lives (and in advanced cases, their actual waking hours) become filled with honed moments of intensity that seem at once precise (in their content), and unbounded (in their demands on the fetishist's overall cognition).

In the case of Athleticpisspig, this presented itself in a continual hunt for new locations: abandoned public urinals, elevated bridges, new countries, and constant networking with like-minded men.

But from another view, that celebrations of their internet icon from the piss enthusiasts captured in this documentary towards its world-straddling protagonist resolved so quickly in the production and distribution of drenched sportswear, shows us equally the pervasiveness of fetish-character in Marx's sense.

Sexual expressiveness is one place that interactions between the sensual and super-sensual will play out. While Freudian accounts present solace in the shared plight of those directed by their unconscious (all of us), Marx's account instead directs us towards a development of *consciousness*. A rational understanding of why it is commodities mystify and confound us, why our senses can never be fully relied upon to make clear sense of them, and why the most gnarled prejudices (against the practices found in Africa, China, and wherever else) apply with equal severity to any location dominated by commodity production.

And returning to Athleticpisspig once more, why was it that the highest expression of devotion his fanbase could think of was purchasing his by-products — turning tracksuits and tanktops into gold, spinning value from waste?

We can watch *Piss Off* and see at first sight a study in psychological compulsion, before another viewing reveals a piss devotee turned producer — a leader whose followers (almost without realising) make from their carefree hero an alchemic labourer.

Notes

1 Quoted by Morris (2018), 248.

2 'Eine Waare scheint auf den ersten Blick ein selbstverständliches, triviales Ding. Ihre Analyse ergiebt, daß sie ein sehr vertracktes Ding ist, voll metaphysischer Spitzfindigkeit und theologischer Mucken.' (MEGA 1991, II.8: 100) As *Capital* continues Marx later uses the same formulation of 'first sight' versus closer examination to discuss various features of Capital, including exchange value, and money (Marx 1991, 108, 185). Marx in this way instructs the reader to look, and then look again.

3 Marx's argument concerning commodity's fetish-character corresponds to *Capital*'s view that labour power has a twofold character. The introduction of fetish precedes two chapters exploring the commodity's formative trajectories (in exchange and money/circulation).

4 My treatment of Freudian 'fetishism' here will be rather more brief and primarily establish him as a counterpoint, given his definition is surely more widely understood in its own terms among sexuality scholars than Marx's 'fetish-character'.

5 The first references to specific class actors interacting with commodities appear in the subsequent chapters on money-form and circulation, strikingly beginning with capitalists, merchants, usurers and 'misers', rather than proletarians. The fetish-character, by contrast, is for everyone.

6 For broader context on orientalising themes across Freud's career, see Said (2003).

7 (By contrast, the film seems to provide decisive proof that Freud's claim in the same lecture, that fetishism allowed men to avoid becoming homosexuals, was unfounded…)

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Abortion is legal!

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Introduction

On 30 December 2020, the National Senate of Argentina passed the "Ley de Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo" (The Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Law). This legalization of abortion is a decisive element in the history of women's struggles in Argentina. In this paper, we theorize this historical victory in order to think about the limits of and conditions for women's emancipation in this context. In doing so, we shall offer a genealogical account of the women's struggles in question and look at how they reflect differences between individual rights and social emancipation.

Women's labor and desire have historically and structurally been made invisible. Since the beginnings of capitalism, women have had a socially assigned duty regarding the reproduction of the labor force. The structural nature of the workload required from women made their work, their lives, and their everyday struggles invisible. Today, the tasks of childcare and reproductive labor are generally still carried out by women in the Western nuclear family. Income inequality between men and women—and the sense of ownership of men over women—continue to render women's wage and domestic labor invisible.

In the long history of women's emancipation, the struggle for legal abortion is one of the most interesting themes for several reasons. On the one hand, it is a struggle that concerns both motherhood and the family structure more broadly. On the other, it relates to what women want for themselves in their own lives. Finally, in Argentina, struggles over the legalization of abortion appealed to a broad, "green" mass movement, showing in turn that women truly make up half of society.

In what follows, we aim to provide a short history of abortion rights struggles in Argentina. In doing so, we show the different approaches that Marxist and liberal feminisms take to the path ahead.

Women and political struggles

As Silvia Federici (2003) argues, women's struggle for emancipation started long before capitalism was consolidated. During the French Revolution, Olympe de Gouges argued in the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* (1791) that women are equal citizens and should have the same rights and benefits as men. Women and men ought to be equal before the law. Since then,

many women have fought for the legal recognition of equal rights concerning the right to vote, rights of shared parental authority and so on.

In Argentina, the Criminal (Penal) Code was passed in 1921. Articles 85 and 88 of this law introduced, with some variation, prohibitions and penalties for abortion practices. In 1926 "La Ley de Derechos Civiles de la Mujer" (The Women's Civil Rights Act) was adopted to give women parental authority over children from any previous marriage and rights to work without the husband's legal authorization. However, it is important to point out that married women were not yet legally independent, remaining subordinated to their husband's legal representation (Giordano, 2014). For this period, as Barrancos argues (2014), women's emancipation struggles can roughly be divided into two traditions in Argentina: One that centered liberal feminisms and which fought for legal recognition and equal rights, and another which centered communist and Marxist movements that understood women's liberation as part of a broader project of working class emancipation.

After the second world war, on the initiative of Eva Perón, the 1949 Constitution specified that parental authority was to be equally shared between both parents. Though many civil rights were instituted during Peronism (1946-1955), none linked to reproduction were included. In 1951, universal suffrage was enacted, while divorce became possible as of 1954. Such laws worked towards legal equality for women inside the nuclear family and supported women's capacity to make their own decisions. However, once again, these advancements did not question the axiomatic role of the nuclear family in organizing social reproduction. As a consequence, issues relating to abortion, family planning, sexualities and reproductive rights were not on the agenda. Moreover, whatever progress had initially been made was soon reversed after the military coup in 1955, with only universal suffrage remaining.

During the 1960s and 1970s, women's participation in social and political conflicts in Latin America was extended to all aspects of class struggle. Significantly, women's activism[1] during the surge of mass struggles in the 1960s and 1970s introduced into these struggles the importance of female emancipation as inherent to the project of human liberation. Women participated in the parties' and movements' decisive organs, although in lesser proportion than men. In 1971, the leader of the Communist Party (PCA), Fanny Edelman, organized the publication a report to be presented to the National Conference of Communist Women, which detailed PCA women's participation in the movements of workers, students and university staff, peasants and the professional classes, such as doctors, teachers, psychologists and so on. The report also brought to light gendered inequalities in working and living conditions. However, despite its critique of the bourgeois family, the report did not engage with issues of family planning, abortion or sexuality.

Women create a Campaign

The Argentinian dictatorship and genocide of the late 1970s drastically changed social relations in general and women's activism in particular. After the dictatorship, groups of women began organizing themselves either under the umbrella of feminism (Self-consciousness Groups, as named by Maffia, 2011) or in collaboration with other organizations (such as those of housewives, women's unions, communists, popular nationalists, popular liberal parties and various kinds of leftists). These struggles led to several outcomes. In 1985, a law on the sharing of paternal authority was passed. In 1986, women from different traditions and parties, unions and other organization summoned the first "Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres" (ENM, National Women's Meeting), and in 1987 the law on divorce was reinstated.

In 1990, certain women from the leading group of the ENM put together a special committee called "Aborto como Derecho" ("Abortion as a Right") and proposed that the 28 September be remembered as the "Día Latinoamericano y Caribeño por el Derecho al Aborto" (Latin America and Caribbean Day for the Decriminalization and Legalization of Abortion) (Tarducci, 2018). In 1992, they presented a draft for the legalization

of abortion to the National Congress for the first time. In the midst of an economic crisis, the "Aborto como derecho" committee was formed in 2001 as an assembly of women's fractions from all leftist political organizations. In 2003, the assembly organized a weekly abortion workshop as part of the ENM, bringing together more than 300 people. On this occasion, green scarves were established as a symbol for the fight for legal abortion. One year later, at the ENM, the "Campaña Nacional por el Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito" (National Campaign for Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion) was born with the following slogan: "Educación sexual para decider, Anticonceptivos para no abortar y Aborto legal para no morir" (Education to decide, contraceptives to not abort, legal abortion to not die).

The Campaña, as it is now commonly known, developed a handful of initiatives to show the impact of clandestine abortions. They introduced new slogans including: "legal abortion in hospitals". At the beginning of the Campaña, there was another slogan that has since been left behind: "keep your rosaries away from our ovaries". Taken together, these three slogans highlight three crucial aspects in the struggle for legal, safe and free abortion:

1) The need for comprehensive sexual education and the distribution of free contraceptives. The women's movement proposed these initiatives against those who argued that if abortion was legal, all women would want to abort. This was a very common argument from those who opposed the legalization of abortion.

2) The importance of the State in supporting a public healthcare system. Middle- and upper-class women could always abort, but working-class women did not typically have the means to access it. Clandestine abortions were very common in Argentina: there were many "clandestine clinics" (typically apartments where a doctor and *sometimes* a nurse would carry out the procedure. In certain other cases, where woman were wealthy or held an important role in society, they could abort in a clinic (where medical doctors would then report the incident as a spontaneous abortion).

3) The need to problematize the division between the Catholic Church and the state, at least regarding reproductive health issues and family planning. In Argentina and in Latin America more generally, the Catholic Church plays a significant role in issues concerning sexualities and family relationships.

Although the Campaña proposed the legalization of abortion to the parliament a total of eight times during the 2000s and 2010s, it was not until 2018 that the law was passed for the first time in the National Congress. That day almost one million people wore green scarves. Despite their different agendas, various feminist struggles united on the issue of abortion and femicides to form what became known as the #NiUnaMenos movement.

Finally, on the morning of the 30 December 2020, the senate approved the "Ley de Acceso a la Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo" (The Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Law), which legalized free and voluntary abortion as carried out by public healthcare providers until 14 weeks of pregnancy.

The individual, society and the family

The struggle for legal, safe and free abortion has a long history. People who can become pregnant, irrespective of their gender, have always faced various kinds of social pressure regarding pregnancy and childrearing. As this article has sought to demonstrate, the women's movement in Argentina—known today as the feminist movement—has walked a long and arduous path over the years, but it has garnered mass support.

The struggle for legal abortion became a point of convergence for many related struggles, such as those against the state, against the Catholic Church or for other groups whose objectives were more typical of the traditional women's movement. In general, we can say that the struggle for legal abortion focused on two main subjects. The first was that of abortion as a healthcare right. This proved particularly important for poor and working-class women. As mentioned above, the

role of public healthcare was a subject of much debate. Some anarchist and liberal women opposed any kind of state intervention and proposed instead that abortions be carried out along the line of self-organization. This would involve the administration of the drug misoprostol by "socorrista" (lifeguard) organizations. Conversely, contemporary left-wing and popular nationalist parties claimed that the state should be the guarantor of rights. It was typically these fractions of the women's movement that rallied under the slogan "legal abortion in hospitals".

Secondly, the feminist movement focused on the individual's freedom to make their own sexual and reproductive choices. On this point, we can observe an interesting debate that resonated across the left. From an individual rights perspective, it is important to criticize submission and subjugation to both state and church. Any person who can become pregnant should have the right to choose if and when they wish to be a parent or not. However, this individual decision must engender a discussion of the family and which kinds of family society should nurture. In short, a narrow focus on abortion rights as mere individual choice forecloses a broader critique of the institution of the nuclear family.

It is precisely in this sense that the discussion of legal abortion within the current feminist movement diverges from central Marxist-feminist critiques of the family as an entry point to a revolutionary critique of capitalist society. There are, to be sure, many nuances and contradictions at play in this issue. For example, gender and class oppression are important elements that link together various issues such as the "women's strike", union participation, and the recognition of class inequality in feminist movements. However, it is important to note that liberal feminism—including its punitive and carceral aspects—gained ground in the movement through the issues of abortion, femicides, gender violence and sexualities.

It is important to demonstrate these tensions as family planning and sexualities are still commonly perceived as individual matters. This is, of course, not entirely true. It is a position that has been inherited from liberal feminists and can shown to be untenable by way of three arguments. First, the (neo)liberal idea that we can somehow freely choose our sexuality or our sexual practices dramatically contrasts with the reality of everyday struggles and with the elevated number of femicides. In the current era of the COVID pandemic, this liberal illusion reveals itself as farcical given the overwhelming evidence that no one can survive alone.

Second, the abortion law has not resolved any of the other gender-related social inequalities. There are still millions of unemployed women whose wages are still lower than those of men. LGBT+ persons are still discriminated against in the workplace, in the health care system and so on. There is a need for structural accounts rather than the idea that family planning is an individual decision.

Third, the social organization of capitalism needs a family system based on non-waged, feminized labor. To produce anything (goods, services, knowledge) capitalism needs workers. These workers need to be raised and fed. While private property remains at the core of the capitalist organization of society, these tasks are all carried out privately, i.e. inside the family, or bought as care services. Therefore, to discuss the concept of the family is, in a sense, to discuss the totality of capitalist organization, which includes sexualities, desire, nourishment, education, housing, clothing and leisure.

In many ways, the growing feminist movement in Argentina is democratic and horizontal, and in many cases it is also self-financed and self-managing. It is truly of the masses, and follows a trajectory of its own. It provides fertile ground for the discussion of sexuality and gender politics as part of a broader political project toward human emancipation. In this sense, and in the search for a world where we are socially equal, different and free, Engels wrote: "With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not." (1884: 81).

In this essay, we have given a genealogical account of the movement that fought for abortion, and we have provided an account of its liberal limitations. Women have always been organized in Argentina, whether the struggle for abortion rights were in focus or not. At times, it was the idea of women as both workers and as members of the working class that took precedence. At others, the focus was on equality in terms of individual rights. In this text, we have shown that with the historical victory of legal abortion, we have been presented with an historical opportunity to discuss the institution of the family in a wider societal perspective for the purpose of human emancipation.

Notes

[1] The development of feminism as a mass movement in the United States had no echo in Argentina during the same period (Bustamente, 2016).

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The politics of queer precarity: queer resistance to rentier-capitalism

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Housing precarity governs how we live, how we can socialise, how we can have sex, and ultimately determines who has a secure roof over their heads. It is a queer issue precisely because it often dictates whether we can live openly as queer and love without reprisals. It is at the heart of a 'u accom' culture, whereby access to space for sex is often closed down or narrowed by housing environments in which queer people do not feel able to have the sex they want. What can queer people do about the housing crisis? Taking cue from Christopher Chitty's *Sexual Hegemony*, I suggest that an avenue forward within sexual politics can be resistance to rentier-capitalism, as "part of a wider social movement responding to the worsening conditions of life, further cuts to public expenditure, and hostility towards the ruling elite" (Chitty 2020, 191). I concentrate on the housing crisis in Ireland and Britain, both because of my own political organising experience within these settings. Disparity in access to housing, rent struggles, and household instability form part of a broad set of demands which include claims on healthcare and welfare – what is here termed a politics of queer precarity (Hollibaugh and Weiss 2015, 19) – which is aware of and rejects the implications for queerness that the financialization of housing has helped reconstitute.

Centring the housing crisis at the apex of a rejuvenated sexual politics raises possibilities of counterhegemonic organising which contests how capital governs our own sociality. Across Ireland and Britain, tenant and community unions such as CATU, Acorn, Living Rent, London Renters Union, Greater Manchester Tenants Union, among others, challenge landlordism. Tenant unions resist the financialization of housing and understand the need to build community power. They seek to end the private expropriation of housing as an asset – as a means of capital accumulation – in much the same way as the renters in Berlin who recently won a city-wide referendum on expropriating the city's largest landlords (Vasudevan, 2021).

This essay offers one insight into how the current conjuncture of rentier-capitalism has come to structure queer life, in particular its sexual sociality, in a housing system that gentrifies and privatises urban space and forces queer people into hostile and unstable housing. Neoliberal financialization created fluidity and instability in the housing system and reconstituted aspects of queerness. Alongside neoliberal financialization have emerged mobile and fluid sexual and gender identities, some of which have then been widely embraced by many fractions of the bourgeoise for whom diversity is both profitable and

hegemonic– perhaps the most garish contemporary face of this has been property consultancy firms declaring their support for Pride Month (Allsop, 2020). The current housing crisis grew from the transformation of older property relations that already harmed queers, and yet the diversity-attuned face of *en masse* housing financialization has engendered newer form of queer proletarianization. This will feed into an exploration of how CATU, my tenant union, have organised around such politics. Broadly, this essay accounts for the restructuring of aspects of queer life through the financialization of housing and is, consequently, suggestive as to how new forms of queer resistance may offer emancipatory horizons.

Rentier-capitalism and queer sociality

How then has the avalanching financialization of property since the 1970s – a component part of rentier-capitalism – restructured queer life as housing crises increasingly dominate sexual relations? One way they have done this, is through changing forms of gay sociality by altering the availability of queer access to safe and comfortable housing, that is, precisely the proliferation of 'u accom' culture. The decline of the Fordist-style nuclear family, detailed as by ME O'Brien within a 'broader crisis of capitalist profitability' (O'Brien, 406), combined with increasing crises and securitisation of public space through rentier-capitalism destroyed institutions already ostracising and harming queer people whilst simultaneously instituting new forms of precarity and proletarianization. Public and private spaces for queer people to meet and have sex are often increasingly rare, leading to a spreading of 'u accom?' forms of gay sociality. Chitty documented the birth of a fluid and mobile proletarian sexuality (Chitty 2020, 135) which was intertwined with the history of property and family relations. Urban policing of sexuality, and ensuing moral panics about the phallus in public, was brought on with the emergence into the public sphere of bourgeois women; Chitty cites the growth in public urinals as evidence for the growth in influence of bourgeois sexual mores which cast displays of sexuality, or the body, as 'public indecency' – in Manchester these urinals were quickly moved out of middle-class areas after they became centres of sodomy (Chitty 2020, 126). What brought stability and pushed sex and sexuality out of the public sphere, through a partial and constructed adoption of bourgeois familial and sexual mores, Chitty posits, were the introductions of sanitation and housing reforms, and the winning of wage increases (Chitty 2020, 135). These were the foundations upon which bourgeois sexual morality, articulated through the mass of newly emerged nuclear families, had been built and intertwined within a Fordist-capitalism by the mid-twentieth century.

Partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales (1967), Scotland (1980), and the North of Ireland (1982) was so restricted that for many years it was technically illegal to have gay sex in a tenant's own council flat. My own experiences of growing up in a small town in the North of England, as a pre-university teenager negotiating access to space for sex, chime with this. Very few people whether my age or older could 'accom', some had cars and used them for cruising, but doing this outside of the quiet country lanes with no CCTV and very little police presence would likely have been impossible, even late at night. Comfortable access to space for sex eluded me – it was secret, it was dark, it was often quick, and it was situational. For many queer people, this precarity in access to comfortable space in which they can express sexual desire continues out of their teenage years, through to university halls, moving back in with their parents post-university, and living in shared housing. Marx describes rent as the "shameless exploitation of poverty" (Marx 1991, 908), and with 34.4% of renters living in deprivation in Ireland, and adults in low-income poverty in the private rental sector in Britain rising to 42% (Kenny 2020; Bailey 2020), it is not hard to see why many queer people are forced into housing situations in which they can feel uncomfortable or supressed.

Property relations are fundamental in the structuring of queer life under capitalism, and have structured that life in different ways as new articulations of capital accumulation come to the

fore. It was in these terms that Chitty understood the history of sexuality to be a history of property (Chitty 2020, 39), with Chitty's thesis on homosexuality within a regime of world systems drawing heavily from Arrighi's writings of systemic cycles of accumulation (Arrighi & Moore 2001, 56). One of these cycles of accumulation, exploding since the 1980s, has also been referenced as a form of accumulation by dispossession by David Harvey (Harvey 2005, 145), whereby class fractions of landlords and investment portfolios have participated in highly unpredictable waves of financialization within the housing sector. These housing speculators act as a mobile yet entrenched class fraction in mature neoliberal capitalism, which creates 'new, and often more violent, instabilities' (Soederberg 2018, 121). The privatisation of social housing by the Thatcher government was fundamental to gentrification processes in cities like London and formed part of the accumulation by dispossession process (Harvey 2005, 158); tenants were slowly expelled from particular areas, before the land and housing could be released "into the privatised mainstream of capital accumulation" (Harvey 2005, 149). That by 2016 40.2% of houses privatised under Thatcher's Right-to-Buy scheme had fallen into the hands of buy-to-let landlords, renting the homes at twice the rate of local councils, is indicative of a process of accumulation by dispossession (Foster 2016; Collinson 2017). So consolidated have fractions of the finance-property class become that in the two years up to 2021 a quarter of all donations to the governing UK Conservative party came from property interests (*Financial Times* 2021). The speculation of housing and public land through processes of capital accumulation constantly narrows the spaces in which queer people sexually socialise.

Writing a biographic history of gay bars, Jeremy Atherton Lin, noted the importance of the toilet to gay sociality, as places of "consummation" (Atherton Lin, 7) which function as both openings to new opportunities and operate as a means of barricading out the rest of society from the deviancy within (Atherton Lin, 204). In the public domain, the sight of freely accessible toilets in Ireland and Britain has become increasingly rare. Jack Sheehan bemoans the closing in the late-twentieth century of most of Dublin's good public toilets (sanitation improvement schemes from the Victorian era), under the guise of public decency, leaving the city with a lack of public facilities – "There is nowhere to take a shit in Dublin" (Sheehan 2021). Owen Hatherley has written of a similar problem in London, where "Public toilets are a joke; in London they barely exist. It amuses me to imagine that there are people who actually take street signs pointing to a 'Toilet' seriously…Most often there is no longer a toilet there, or it has been permanently closed" (Hatherley 2019). He admonishes that half of all council-run toilets in Britain have now closed – principally victims of cuts to local authority budgets who sell the land to raise funds instead of paying to maintain provision. New toilets are often designed to deter rough sleepers, automated, fit with timers, likely charge for entry, or, as in Galway, Ireland, have gained commodity value of their own – with basic care for the facilities being sold as luxury for €3.50 (Mannion 2021). The result of this has been to push established, if diminishing, patterns of gay sociality – cruising for sex in toilets – into more heavily policed toilets within privately owned shops. In Dublin's M&S, which became a hotspot for gay sex, five men were arrested in 2021 for public sex acts, after the store's toilets had been put under police surveillance targeting gay men cruising (Wakefield 2021) – a move concerningly reminiscent of mid-twentieth undercover policing tactics used to jail gay men for both acts of sodomy or attempting to 'solicit' sex in public. Southwark Council in London have secured court injunctions against gay cruising in Burgess Park, threatening huge fines and lengthy custodial sentences to disrupt gay sex outside of private bedrooms (Reid-Smith 2020). The privatisation of public space combined with carceral approaches to controlling a principal form of gay sociality – cruising – is, though, a symptom of a housing crisis which is forcing queer people to look for, and engage in sex, outside of paradigms acceptable to post-Fordist bourgeois sexual mores which, whilst changing, are still consumed with the notion of sexuality as innately private. More importantly, the securitisation of cruising spaces such as parks

and toilets, on the pretext of stopping gay sex, has serious implications for those who have a right to these areas of the city without having to first become consumers– paying for the right to use the toilet with dignity.

Another important driving feature of a 'u accom' culture is the increasing numbers of younger adults living with their parents, carers, and others for longer periods. An increasing number of 20 to 34 year olds in the UK now live with their parents. This figure was 26% in 2018, has gone up 6% in twenty years, and is likely even higher through being exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mayor of London 2019). For those not living with parents or relatives, a typical private rental household in London now spends 37% of their monthly income on rent – a figure which rises to 40% on average when members of the household are accounted for individually (Ministry of Housing 2019). And whilst younger people are more likely to rent than older people (25 to 34 year olds make up 35% of the private rental market), the average age of those living under private landlords is increasing (Christiansen and Lewis 2019). The effect of this is both fewer queer people living alone, more living with parents, and others who may have previously been able to afford living on their own having to house-share, often not with friends, as the burden of rent gets too high. An important caveat here, with awareness that 'young renters' and 'queer people' are not synonymous, is that the housing crisis impacts everyone, queer or not, young and old. Housing crises do impact us all, but through my experience in tenant union organising, I have some anecdotal experience that activism against housing precarity has high engagement from younger queer people at disproportionate rates– CATU's first caucus, touched on below, is an LGBTQ+ one.

Rentier-capitalism has reconstituted the housing market as a site for the constant reproduction of this precarity – housing has become more fluid, mobile, and insecure. In this process a financialised housing model has replaced the Fordist-based, family-centred, heteronormative, nuclear family-oriented suburban domesticity. Such a domesticity damaged queer people and resulted in direct challenges from gay, lesbian, and queer squats and communes (Cook, 2014; Egan, 2014). The neoliberal financialization of housing which has replaced a heteronormative suburbia, however, instituted its own forms of queer proletarianization, and one expression of this is that queer people within the housing crisis can have more limited sexual relations. The securitization and gentrification of cruising spaces, and an inability to live alone, or with comfort, in housing which can safely allow people to accommodate sex means shifting property relations have restructured queer sexual sociality. With many people on apps like Grindr unable to 'accom' for sex, and (often privatised) public space increasingly policed, having sex becomes more difficult for the new queer proletarians of rentier-capitalism. This has happened alongside a proliferation of privatisations of public facilities which marginalises and ostracises those already most vulnerable and in need of such spaces to be able to exist in public with dignity. Of course, there are other ways in which rentier-capitalism has restructured queer life – through gentrification (Haritaworn, 2017), queer work (O'Brien, 2019) and the explosion of homelessness across Ireland and Britain (Bhandal and Horwood 2021). I have concentrated on the question of sociality here, teasing out why it too has important ramifications for human dignity past the desire of organising a hook-up.

How we organise

This shifting queer sociality shows precisely how the change in property relations under a rentier-capitalist financialization of housing has restructured queerness itself. It is because the housing crisis does not only negatively impact queer people, but that rentier-capitalism and the financialization of housing has reordered queer life around further exploitation and surveillance, that queer resistance is imperative.

It is important, however, that this resistance does not dwell nostalgically on the brave and fun forms of collective gay living arrangements that arose in the 1970s and 1980s in co-ops, communes

and squats. There have been drastic and unignorable structural changes in housing provision and the wider political economy since the late-1970s which have fundamentally changed the landscape for precarious queers. There are no longer dozens of empty council houses, which squatters can access and maintain. Council housing provision has collapsed over the last forty-years as the private rental market has extrapolated its growth. In this same period, there have also been changes in dominant narratives of queer politics. Christopher Chitty spoke to this very issue, writing that the breakdown of bourgeois sexual hegemony – accelerating after the Second World War – necessarily closes the radical and transformative potentials that homosexuality had in the 1960s and 1970s. Chitty goes onto write that "these radical potentials have been worn out by a neoliberal multicultural politics of recognition, preserving the hegemony of this formation" (Chitty 2020, 180), with legal equalities and crises of social norms diminishing the emancipatory potential of homosexuality as a form of sexual politics, or indeed as "the basis for any future politicisation of sex" (Chitty 2020, 191). Rather than looking to homosexuality itself, or forms of political organising simply no longer practicable, we should build a politicisation of sex which seeks to negate austerity and financialization, instead centring human dignity.

These worsening conditions of life are corollaries of rentier capitalism's pressure to work more and longer for rents which keep rising. We cannot remove ourselves from these cycles of accumulation without removing everyone. Not only do landlords extract huge sums of income from renters, often pushing them into house-shares and poverty, but they also routinely evict for no fault, make tenants homeless, fail to deal with hazardous faults in homes, and let unhealthy infestations (such as mould and mildew) fester and immiserate, making homes uninhabitable – let alone suitable for sex. Into this obligation to oppose rentier-capitalism steps the tenant union.

Tenant union organising has been rapidly growing in Ireland and Britain over the last ten years, responding to a rapidly deteriorating housing crisis. As unions for renters, and more generally for outside the workplace, they utilise collective community organisation, direct action, and solidarity to "protect and further the right and interests of the members" (CATU What is a union good for? 2021, 2). CATU, the union I organise in, was founded in Ireland in 2019 and despite the pandemic has grown rapidly north and south. CATU (the Community Action Tenants Union) wants "to take the basic ideas of membership, collective direct action, and grassroots democracy from where people work to where they live" (CATU About 2021). CATU membership is open to all who are not landlords or act as state or private security forces. The union orients membership building to build direct action in working class communities, targeting those who can affirm demands which are concrete and achievable (CATU What is a union good for? 2021, 7). With direct action the primary organising tactic of CATU, we aim to build strength of numbers to "directly target those people who can give in to our demands" (CATU What is a union good for? 2021, 7). Expropriating all landlords and dismantling rentier-capitalism is a long struggle, but doorstepping landlords, disrupting council meetings, speaking to tenants about everyday issues, and even rent strikes are levers of working class tenant power we can use to both achieve member demands and build community power.

What can CATU do to build solidarities between precariously housed queer people and wider community union activism then? And what do the strategic implications of this look like? Solidarity here means joining another's struggle against deteriorating conditions they may face in life and offering that support unconditionally. This is key because it means that commitments to join in struggle with queer people does not premise upon them joining the union and should be a process of continued liaison, not simply an event. Whilst this may have some immediate implications for building the union, gaining the trust and political friendship of queer communities in Ireland, showing how CATU can physically express solidarity by being present in direct action over simply building paper members who are queer ties the tenant movement to other oppressed communities

in much deeper ways. In late 2020 CATU Belfast members joined a picket of queer people from across the city against homophobic, transphobic, presbyterian hate preachers who regularly hold moral majority rallies with no audiences, shouting about sin to the shoppers of Belfast. Members of CATU Belfast, including myself, are planning to join these demonstrators again in the beginning of 2022 when they next take to the streets against hate preachers. When Pride marches are held again in Belfast, local branch members have also raised the possibility of joining the march. A key part of any tenant union is member defence, and CATU members in Dublin have also been active in protesting the eviction of a queer tenant by a gay landlord.

I was also part of a working group within CATU which set up a process for caucuses to form within the union. A caucus, in CATU, is defined "as a group of people…belonging to a systemically oppressed minority" (CATU Caucuses 2021). Our first caucus is for LGBTQ+ people (CATU Working Groups 2021). This working group was established following a vote at the 2021 Annual General Meeting of the union, with 89% voting in favour. Since this, the LGBTQ+ caucus has launched and began garnering interest and involvement from members, before a vote on a committee officer is held. It is my hope that this caucus can function as a means of organising queer people against our own precarity, and also as part of a movement where our struggles fold into wider questions of attacks on our collective welfare through punitive measures and cuts to social infrastructure. For other renter organisations thinking of following CATU in establishing an LGBTQ+ group or caucus I would, humbly, offer some insights: delegate responsibility to members within the caucus and away from the union's national executive body; make the roles of officers in the caucus as transparent as possible; focus the caucus' energy on growing the union both where queer members live locally, and more broadly through both LGBTQ+ spaces and a concentration on campaigns the caucus can wage, both leading them and joining in solidarity.

The fluidity and instability of the housing crisis is part of an adaptive neoliberal agenda of capital and the state which has similarly restructured gay sociality, queer interactions with public space, access to private sex, and more importantly the general right to the city. It is through a CATU wide caucus, local committees and branches that queer people can both organise around elements of housing precarity which ail queer communities (for example, the disproportionate impact of homelessness on LGBT+ people (APPG 2020)) and be part of a wider movement which rejects endless work for endless rent. Collective welfare of queer tenants is our rallying cry. This joining of solidarities between queer people and renters matters structurally too— it provides an avenue of resistance within a movement which seeks to dismantle a system that has restructured important elements of queer life and sociality and inflicts almost constant precarity for so many. The politics of queer precarity must be a politics of our collective welfare and our collective dignity.

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Friends against capitalism: Family abolition as a politics of friendship

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Imagining alternatives to capitalism entails drastically rethinking how we live together and care for one another. Capitalism is not only a mode of production, but a particular way of meeting people's needs for food, shelter, and comfort. These needs are currently often satisfied within small social units, symbolically united by marriage, genetics, and inheritance. The nuclear family has been the dominant unit of care in capitalist society. But alongside the family, there are other social forms and ways of looking after one another. People are not only cared for by their family members, but also by friends and acquaintances in their communities and workplaces, as well as waged care workers in the service industry.

Care and sociality outside the family can be articulated as part of a politics that dares to imagine beyond capitalism. In recent years, there have been renewed calls for the abolition of the nuclear family. Queer analyses of capitalism, such as those of Jules Joanne Gleeson and Kate Doyle Griffiths (2015), Sophie Lewis (2019), M.E. O'Brien (2020), and many others, have articulated a politics that seeks to overcome privatised family arrangements as the basis for survival. This also means articulating alternative social forms capable of meeting people's needs. In this essay, I want to highlight how friendship could form a basis for more collective forms of care, pleasure, and flourishing. Exploring friendship as a form of care could point towards hitherto unexplored potentials, but it could also call attention to the fact that the family, while dominant, is not the only relationship of care that exists in the present. This could help us overcome some of the limitations inherent in the nuclear family form.

The problems of the nuclear family have been widely debated within feminist and queer theory (see for example Barrett and McIntosh 2015, and Cooper 2017). Not only is the family exploitative for those who have been made responsible for caring for others, it is often also dangerous for women, children, queer, and trans people. But leaving the family is not always an easy choice, even when it is harmful and violent. Society is structured around the family in such a way that those who leave – or are excluded – might struggle to access care, emotional support, housing, and money.

Within the spheres of romance and family, emotional intensity is usually related to exclusivity. Feeling becomes a zero-sum game. One can only have one mother, only one true love, only one family. 20th century writings on parenting emphasised the need for a primary caregiver – a mother who was supposed to meet all the needs of her

children (Rose 1990, 182ff). Of course, most people are not exclusively cared for by their mothers. Children are nurtured by day care workers, nannies, grandmothers, fathers, relatives, friends, and neighbours. Yet the idea that mother-child bond is an emotionally unique relationship persists.

This idea is related to the politics of domestic labour, as it emerged under capitalism. As the domestic sphere became increasingly separated from the formal workplace, domestic labour became increasingly privatised and seen as the exclusive responsibility of one person. Mothers have an overarching responsibility for the work of attending to their family members' needs. This involves a lot of work, although white, bourgeois women have been able to outsource some or most of this work to other (usually migrant, working class, black, and brown) women. The family, despite being supported by a myriad of other forms of sociality and work, has retained an almost mythical position as the only right place for love and care. It therefore excludes other forms of sociality and shapes the world in a way that obstructs other ways of caring for oneself and others. The family has a kind of monopoly on the care created by reproductive labour – the work that goes into ensuring people's wellbeing. Cooking, laundry, child care and elder care are supposedly the responsibility of the family, as is the emotional support that people need in order to keep going to work each day.

Family abolition is the movement to overcome the present state of things – overcoming the social dominance of white, bourgeois values that reserve access to care to those who are part of family relationships. Family abolition is inherently queer, in that it seeks to overcome familial sexual regulation. Such regulation aims to produce appropriately heterosexual and cis gendered subjects with the correct desires – not only for heterosex but for the reproduction of the family form and its attendant forms of property. Abolition is a form of immanent resistance, stemming from the very violence and exclusion of the family itself. It is the movement to undo the family by creating a world where the family is no longer necessary as a site of care and resource distribution. This means that family abolitionists are not so much aiming to take away the care that some people access through their families, but to create more expansive and collective ways of caring for one another. As such, it is the creation of a new world rather than merely the destruction of the current one. It involves the creation of new types of sociality and desire – ones that we cannot yet know.

But there may be some social forms that exist today that we can use in a family abolitionist project. Family abolition could be a politics of friendship.

Our relations with our friends have an ambiguous position in capitalist societies. Friendship, Alan Sears notes, is less explicitly integrated in market relations than for example dating, marriage, and parent-child relationships. Furthermore, friendship emphasises pleasurable interactions in the present – a phenomenon which becomes increasingly impossible as people have less free time as a result of the squeeze between precarious employment and increased levels of domestic labour (2007, 36-37). Time poverty means that we often do not have time for pleasure or the present. We must invest all our time in securing a future for ourselves. As Sears writes, it is the unstructured time of friendship that is the first to go when the demands of paid work and family increase (2007, 36).

There are aspects of friendship that can be used for radical political ends. Friendship can sometimes function as a real alternative to heterosexual romance and family, rather than merely being their supplement. The connection between friendship and the unstructured time of pleasure makes it a form of relationship more amenable to an anti-capitalist politics. Unlike the family, friendship has the potential to be a genuinely expansive form of relationality, which is not marked by the emotional zero-sum game of romance and family but can include a multiplicity of relationships and degrees of intensity. Rather than the work associated with the family, friendship can offer a space and time for play.

That is not to say that friendship as a social form is unproblematic. It is not always a free relationship between equals. Enlightenment ideology idolised friendship as a deliberative social form,

free of economic interest and the right type of relationship for rational discussion. In fact, these relationships were almost exclusively a space for white, bourgeois men to create bonds that shored up their own power and sense of importance. Sometimes these relationships involved a sexual component, but they were hardly a threat to the status quo. Today, friendships between white, heterosexual men can contain some sexual pleasures and still shore up their identity as properly heterogendered subjects. As Jane Ward shows in her book *Not Gay* (2015), in homosocial contexts such as frat parties and the military, homoerotic play is ritualised in a way that serves to reproduce white, male, heterosexual domination. Ward points out that these men can engage in homoerotic activities together while still retaining an 'authentic' heterosexual identity, as these sexualised rituals are understood as a form of male bonding rather than an expression of desire.

Heterosexual women's friendships can also serve to preserve the dominance of heterosexuality, even when they seemingly provide an arena for critiquing heterosexual romance. Tamsin Wilton has argued that these relationships function like battlefield hospitals – providing immediate relief from some of the harm caused by heterosexual relationships but not addressing the causes of that harm itself. Instead, female friendship functions as an essential supplement to heterosexuality. Wilton writes that while heterosexual women tend to complain about men to their friends, and that this can be a source of comfort and solidarity, these conversations also naturalise men's behaviour towards their female partners as 'that's just how men are'. When coming out as lesbian, Wilton found herself excluded from these social bonds, because they are based on complaints about men and heterosexual romance but cannot tolerate lesbianism as a realistic alternative form of life (1992).

Despite these ambiguous rituals, friendship is less overburdened with cultural meaning than family and romance. Although some types of friendship are the site of strict codification and exclusion of those who do not fit, friendship itself can take a multitude of different forms. It is usually more reciprocal in terms of emotional support than parent-child relationships and heterosexual romance. These more pleasurable and non-hierarchical aspects of friendship can be built upon to create relationships that are less integrated in forms of capitalist reproduction.

In her classic 1991 book *Families We Choose*, Kath Weston argues that for queer people, there have generally been less symbolic differentiation between family bonds, romantic relationships, and friendship. While the absence of institutions and rituals can sometimes make it more difficult to sustain long-term and mutual relationships, this also means that queer relationships are more open and multiple (1991, 113 & 206). This can counteract the idea that we should get all our support from the nuclear family. Instead, multiple forms of relationality open a space for relationships that are more inventive and responsive to the needs of the participants, even as those needs change over time. They are more oriented towards pleasure, safety, and support in the present than an investment in a future which looks remarkably like the past – a future of marriage, children, and home ownership – in other words, a future of capitalist reproduction.

Because of this relative lack of social codification, and because friendship does not fit into neat models for sociality and the private household, it is often either made invisible or stigmatised. While friendship and pleasure are seen as appropriate for teenagers and young adults, there is an expectation that these bonds will be replaced by the more substantial relationships and responsibilities of work and family once we have reached a certain age. There is something slightly sad about no longer being young but still having friends as the most important relationships in your life. Friendships do not matter much in the normative story of a good life – a story based on career progression, romance, marriage, property ownership, and childbirth. Friendships become superfluous in this future-oriented narrative of what a life should look like. Queer people's life stories are harder to fit into this narrative, both because their romantic relationships are often understood as 'just friends' and because

friendships often continue to matter throughout queer lives.

However, queer modes of sociality not the only ones that are stigmatised for their failure to reproduce properly. Racialised forms of kinship, black families in particular, have often been pathologised for their supposed failure to live up to white, bourgeois family norms (Cohen 1997). As Luke de Noronha writes, this has increasingly led to the criminalisation of young black men's friendships in the form of the moral panic around 'gangs'. According to this narrative, it is the failure of the black family to reproduce properly (absent fathers, feckless mothers) that leads young black men to join criminal gangs. But as de Noronha points out, these so-called gangs are often groups of black men who grew up in the same area and have cultivated relationships outside of the family form. These relationships are not always legible to the state or wider white, bourgeois culture, and are therefore not seen as relationships that could offer emotional support and joy. Instead, they are assigned more sinister motivations, which leads to anxieties around 'organised crime' and a desire to surveil and suppress these relationships (2020). Even though these friendships are probably not experienced as political, they are nonetheless politicised as threats to the state and the reproduction of the status quo.

Another form of sociality, related to friendship, explicitly threatens the state. Comradeship is based precisely on opposition to the world as we know it. If the nuclear family is oriented towards a future that looks the same as the past, comrades build pleasurable relationships in the present that are based on a shared desire for a different future. It is a form of relationship that works against the unquestioned and naturalised privatisation of care within the family by creating bonds of solidarity that stretches beyond the private sphere, out towards the world. We can be intimate strangers with comrades in other countries, whom we have never met. Comrades also often become friends in the more traditional sense of the word – people with whom we share the joys and difficulties of our daily lives and build reciprocal bonds of care and support. And friends can turn into comrades as we become part of political struggles together.

Queer, racialised, and anti-capitalist forms of sociality thus exist outside the nuclear family form. As such, they are often made invisible or stigmatised. We can draw on people's everyday experiences of being supported by their friends as a way to build more expansive networks of care. This would challenge the symbolically and materially privileged status of the family as the social unit that has a seeming monopoly on care under capitalism. By thinking friendship politically, we could also seek to preserve its emotionally expansive and liberatory potential, against tendencies of cliquishness and privatisation. From the figure of the comrade, we learn that even strangers can become part of emotional intimacy – an intimacy that is no longer tied to the zero-sum game of 'true love'.

Analyses of capitalism must be against the family. Being on the left precisely involves a commitment to a world in which people have access to what they need outside of privatised family bonds. Since the purpose of the family is to reserve those resources to the sphere of private family responsibility, the left must be family abolitionist, and being pro-family is inherently reactionary.

If we think of family abolition not only as a negative project, but one aimed at creating other and multiple forms of sociality in order to render the family superfluous, we can begin to see all the little ways we are already reproducing ourselves outside of and against the family form. While the joys we share with our friends might not appear political, they can become part of a political project that centres pleasure and care. These interactions are firmly rooted in the present moment but can also point to a different future and a broader horizon of feeling. Instead of striving for queer inclusion in traditional narratives of familial and romantic love, we can affirm friendship against romance and family. The figures of the friend and the comrade can become fertile ground for political thought, and friendship can provide the emotional support we need in the struggle for a different world. In that way, our political movements can also include more attention to the emotional

aspects of politics, and the joys and sorrows of the present, as well as the long-term aims of political struggle. We can struggle together to reclaim time from our paid work and family responsibilities and make time for making friends.

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Rethinking Feminism: From Critique of Capital to Decolonial Analysis

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The process of writing this paper has been like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In a certain sense it is a very personal puzzle, composed of pieces of text I have read through decades of feminist thinking and writing. Nevertheless, I hope that my jigsaw puzzle exercise will make sense also to other feminists dissatisfied with the way in which feminist struggle is often reduced to issues of gender equality in terms of women's equality with men in the context of an otherwise unchanged capitalist society: 'corporate feminism' as this kind of feminism has been named by Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser in *Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto* (2019). The puzzle is about how to conceptualize gender and how to think feminist struggle in anti-capitalist ways, combining feminist and anti-capitalist struggle. Such combination of struggles was at the heart of the Danish New Women's Movement in the 1970s. However, as the 1980s unfolded with neo-liberal economy, New Public Management and all, the anti-capitalist spirit evaporated. The task of figuring out conceptions of gender fit for anti-capitalist struggle was left undone.

In the 1970s several of us in the Danish Women's Movement worked with these issues. It was a taxing task. Marx, eloquent on class, was (almost) silent regarding gender, and Simone de Beauvoir (1949) did not offer concepts of struggle beyond women's equality with men within the framework of capitalist society. Some feminist authors did go further – but still we did not manage putting things together in convincing ways. Over the years daily life and other kinds of feminist thinking took us elsewhere. Old feminist books spent decades on dusty bookshelves, like the volumes of Marx' *Capital* (the Danish 1971 translation from Bibliotek Rhodos), still there but never touched. Until now, when ideas from these old feminist books, along with Marx, re-emerge as pieces of the puzzle I'll try to put together in this text. An important piece in the puzzle is Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* (2004). This book (which I read only last year) has helped me decisively in getting the puzzle together – even if the design of my puzzle also goes beyond Federici's book.

The oldest puzzle piece is Marx' *Capital*, which I read in the summer of 1970. The New Women's Movement (in Denmark called *Rødstrømperne*, the Redstocking Movement) had come to Copenhagen in the spring of 1970. I joined the following year, and since then I have been a feminist. In 1980 I went to Mozambique, a country newly liberated from Portuguese colonial power and with a socialist government. I worked in the National Women's Organization, where one

of my tasks was to do an anthropological mapping of women's conditions in town and in the countryside. In later research work in Mozambique, I have focused on sexualities, struck by the remarkably different structuring of sexualities compared to what I knew from back home (Arnfred 2011). Back in Denmark at Roskilde University I worked as a teacher in International Development Studies; as years passed by, I became greatly dissatisfied with the 'Gender and Development' lines of thinking – such as expressed for instance in *The Gender & Development Reader* (1997) or in *Reversed Realities* by Naila Kabeer (1994) – however not being able to figure out what exactly was wrong. Unsolved theoretical issues were piling up: how to think about gender and sexuality in an African setting, how to combine feminist and anti-capitalist thinking … Questions such as these are the context and the content of this jigsaw puzzle exercise.

My puzzle pieces are of several generations, which is to say that I met these texts at different points in time. After Marx, the next generation is the feminist books of the 1980s, the ones on the dusty shelves: Carolyn Merchant: *The Death of Nature* (1980), Maria Mies: *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) and Grethe Jacobsen: *Kvindeskikkelser og Kvindeliv i Danmarks Middelalder* (*Women and Women's Lives in Medieval Denmark*) (1986). I read these books in the 1980s, and I liked them very much. I felt that they were saying something crucial, but I wasn't able to apply their insights to my own thinking at the time. Now, at long last these old and cherished books have found their spaces in my newly laid puzzle. The following generation of puzzle pieces is the books by African feminists, Ifi Amadiume: *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987) and Oyèrónké Oyéwùmí: *The Invention of Women. Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997). I read these books in the late 1990s, while struggling with the analysis of my data material from Mozambique; they helped me a lot. In the context of my reading of the last generation of puzzle pieces in the paper, the work of Maria Lugones (2007, 2010, 2020) and other decolonial thinkers, I realized to which extent Amadiume and Oyéwùmí actually think along decolonial lines. A final puzzle piece is the *Feminist Manifesto* (2019) mentioned above.

In the paper I am faithful to the jigsaw puzzle idea, providing many quotes, but put into context. In order to facilitate your way through the puzzle, I'll here give an overall view – somewhat like the picture on the lid of the cardboard box with all puzzle pieces inside: What the puzzle is all about is how to think about gender, sexuality and power, acknowledging that our usual way of thinking about this is a product of a very specific European history – a history of the development of capitalism – and that the resulting concepts are not universal. By focusing on the European "war against women", the witch hunts (roughly the 16th and 17th centuries) and seeing this as an aspect of the origin, the basic condition of capitalism, Federici indicates that capitalism and subordination of women go together. Patriarchy existed before, and patriarchy exists elsewhere, but not of this calibre. Philosophers of the time, founding fathers of 'modern science', provide lines of thinking legitimizing capital's exploitation of nature, and of women. Protestantism further limits women's worlds to just the household, as wife and mother. All way through this European history of thinking and of women's subordination, it has to be kept in mind, first how colonialism, slavery, racism and subordination of non-European people have fomented capitalism as an economic system, and second how most of these processes are still ongoing, and how lines of thought legitimizing and supporting this economic system are proliferating also today. Decolonial thinkers aim to show these connections and also to suggest alternative lines of thinking about women, gender and sexualities.

Primitive Accumulation in a Global Context

In her 2004 book: *Caliban and the Witch*. *Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Silvia Federici takes her point of departure in Marx' 'Primitive Accumulation', one of the last chapters in *Capital* volume 1. Marx here deals with the beginnings of capitalist economy, rooted in "conquest,

enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly: force" (Marx 1887/1990, 620). Peasants were removed from access to the land, on which they had grown the crops and kept the animals that gave them subsistence. In England this process took place in the last part of the 15th century and the first part of the 16th century, the so-called 'enclosure of the commons'. The expropriation of peasant's land transformed peasant producers into 'free labourers', 'sellers of themselves', or rather: sellers of their labour power: wage-workers. "The history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (Marx 1887/1990, 621). Another aspect of primitive accumulation, and a precondition for the establishment of capitalism as such, was – as noted, but not analysed by Marx – "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting for black skins … These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation" (Marx 1887/1990, 651).

Federici reiterates the processes described by Marx in great historical detail and with a focus on the implications for women, a focus which is nowhere present in Marx' work. "What would a history of capitalist development be like if seen not from the viewpoint of the formation of the proletariat, but from the kitchens and bedrooms in which labour-power is daily and generationally reproduced?", she asks (Federici 2018, 473). Seen from this vantage point, the process of primitive accumulation was not only about expropriation of peasant producers from their land; what simultaneously took place was also expropriation of women's bodies.

Anibal Quijano, founding father of the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality school of thought, describes the process of primitive accumulation from a Latin American position and with a focus on race (also not present in Marx' work): This "new pattern of world-Eurocentered colonial/modern capitalist power … was based on the idea of 'race' and the 'racial' social classification of world population." 'Race' as "a new mental category to codify relations between conquering and conquered populations … as biologically structural and hierarchical differences between the dominant and the dominated. So those relations of domination came to be considered as 'natural'" (Quijano 2000, 216-218). Capitalism, modernity and coloniality are interlinked: "Modernity refers to a specific historical experience that began with America … But it was Western Europe that, since the 17th century, formally and systematically elaborated the new intersubjective universe in a new knowledge perspective. And it was Western Europe that termed that knowledge perspective 'modernity' and 'rationality'" (Quijano 2000, 220-221).

Man of Reason and Death of Nature

Marx was critical to the ruthless force applied in capital's 'primitive accumulation', but he took 'nature' for granted as a resource for humans to exploit. Marx' thinking is a product of modernity, standing on the shoulders of people like Francis Bacon and René Descartes, to be introduced below. Caroline Merchant is critical to this whole line of thinking. In her book *The Death of Nature* (1980) she describes how in pre-capitalist Europe 'nature' was perceived as a living organism, a nurturing mother with inherent creative power. In the 16th and 17th centuries however, the dominant metaphor binding together cosmos, nature and society changed from the organism to the machine. Previously "the image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother had served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body … " (Merchant 1980, 3). But commercial mining would soon require exactly that.

Thus, new ideas were needed, ideas of nature as a resource to be exploited, legitimizing technological developments and enhanced production. Merchant discusses in fascinating detail the development of these ideas and the emergence of 'modern science'; an entire chapter is devoted to one of the celebrated fathers of this thinking, Francis Bacon (1561-1626). In *The Masculine*

Birth of Time (1603) Bacon presented a program advocating the control of nature for human benefit. From having been conceived as a creative and life-giving power, to be treated with reverence and respect, in Bacon's thinking 'nature' is a resource to be mastered and controlled. At the same time male dominance is emphasized. Men are the ones to enact the mastering and control of nature – including women, who are categorized as close to/part of nature. René Descartes (1596-1650), another important thinker of this era, emphasises the supreme importance of rational thought. "Cogito ergo sum" is spoken from the position of a male ego, the Man of Reason (male, white, European). The world is organized in terms of *hierarchical dichotomies:* mind/body, human/nature, man/woman. Mind is human, masculine, body is nature, feminine. Man is master of nature and of women. As pointed out by Quijano: "after Descartes 'body' was simply forgotten as a necessary component of the idea of human or person … 'body' was installed in rational knowledge as a lower status 'object' of study" (Quijano 2000, 221).

At this point in time, patriarchy as such was not a new phenomenon, but in the thinking of people like Bacon and Descartes patriarchy was cemented and reinforced. The idea that 'nature' should be mastered by Man had been around for a long time. Actually, this is what God says to Adam in Genesis, chapter 1 of *The Holy Bible*. Likewise in classical Greece, patriarchal ideas were afoot, as expressed by Aristotle, who contributed gestation to men, while women giving birth only supplied raw matter. Thus: Patriarchy as such was nothing new; what is at issue is the form and shape of patriarchy, and to which extent it is socially dominant or not. Even under conditions of patriarchy, in the pre-capitalist, pre-scientific era in Europe, there was a parallel line of women's knowledge, particularly connected to healing, procreation, midwifery, birth control. Knowledge about giving birth and how to prevent pregnancy, knowledge about sexuality was female knowledge. During the European witch hunts – "the state sponsored terror campaign against women" (Federici 2004, 63) – women with this kind of knowledge were particularly targeted.

The European Great Witch Hunt ca 1450-1750

"The rise of capitalism was coeval with a war against women" (Federici 2004, 14). The European witch hunts took place during the same centuries as the initial processes of capital accumulation, and the object was the same: subordination, control and exploitation of nature for the benefit of capital accumulation. Supported by thinking in terms of hierarchical dichotomies introduced by 'modern science', women's bodies were classified as 'nature', and categorized, along with 'nature' in general, as objects to be expropriated and controlled by men. In this process also women's knowledge was destroyed. In the witch hunts women's control of reproduction was labelled 'reproductive crimes' and women guilty of such knowledge/such crimes were seized and burned at the stake. The witch hunts were a campaign – waged by the church and by the upper classes – against this knowledge, and against women's relative autonomy.

Capitalism, as Federici points out, is deeply dependent on women as producers of the most important commodity for capitalist production: labour power. For this very reason women and women's fertility must be controlled. To Federici the witch hunts signal the decisive subordination of women to capital, and to men, "the equivalent of the historic defeat, to which Friedrich Engel's alludes in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884)" (Federici 2004, 102). This was the process through which women became subordinated to men in ways they had not been before.

Women historians and activists of the New Women's Movement in the 1970s started re-interpreting the figure of 'the witch' and re-writing the history of the European witch hunts (Mies 1986, among others). Federici builds on this work; she stresses the value of being a Marxist, seeing capitalism as the bottom line, the basic condition of our society, but she also criticises Marx: "Marx' under-theorisation of domestic work [implies that he] ignore[s] the largest activity on this planet and a major ground of divisions within the working

class" (Federici 2018, 471). Marx' shortcomings in this respect are not oversights, she says, but signs of limits his theoretical and political work could not overcome. "But ours must" (Federici 2018, 474). This is exactly what I am trying to do in this text: Major areas beyond the limits of Marx' thinking are gender, race and nature. I focus on gender, also looking into ways in which *the very concepts of gender* as used in the Western world today date back to early modernity thinkers at the rise of capitalism.

Women's Work and Women's Knowledge

Re-reading Maria Mies: *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) I was surprised to see to which extent she actually develops insights regarding the connections between subjugation of nature and subordination of women. She also notes the role of the witch hunts in this context, pointing to the fact that "the persecution of the witches was a manifestation of the rising modern society and not, as is usually believed, a remnant of the irrational 'dark' middle ages" (Mies 1986, 83). She expands on the implications of this for conceptions of 'work' and 'knowledge', criticising the way in which 'modern science' has divided the human body itself into "truly 'human' parts (head and hand) and 'natural' or purely 'animal' parts (genitalia, womb etc.)" (Mies 1986, 46). For women, however, this division does not work: "Women can experience their *whole* body as productive, not only their hands or their heads." Furthermore, it is of crucial importance "that women's activity in producing children and milk is understood as truly *human*, that is conscious social activity. … [Thus] the activity of women in bearing and rearing children has to be understood as *work*," (Mies 1986, 53). Writing from a black feminist point of view Patricia Hill Collins (1994) coins the term *motherwork* for this type of work. "It is one of the greatest obstacles to women's liberation," Mies continues, "that these activities are still interpreted as purely physiological functions, comparable to those of other mammals, and lying outside the sphere of conscious human influence. This view … has to be understood as a result of the patriarchal and capitalist division of labour and not as its precondition" (Mies 1986, 54). This is the crux of the matter: the fallacy of defining the production of human lives as 'nature', and the importance of acknowledging women's work in this context.

This whole thing of seeing women as active and conscious producers of new lives is connected, of course, to the kinds of women's knowledge, which were targeted and demonized during the witch hunts, but which feminists like Mies see in a different light: "In the course of their history, women … acquired through observation and experiment a vast body of experiential knowledge about the functions of their bodies, about the rhythms of menstruation, about pregnancy and childbirth. … They were not helpless victims of the generative forces of their bodies … Women in pre-patriarchal societies knew better how to regulate the number of their children and the frequency of births than do modern women, who have lost this knowledge through their subjection to the patriarchal capitalist civilizing process" (Mies 1986, 54).

Protestantism, Housewifization, Heterosexuality

In Denmark, the witch hunts may be seen as a direct implication of the introduction of Protestantism by royal decree of 1536. Protestantism again linked to emerging capitalism and the alliance of the King with the bourgeoisie, against the old powers of the nobility and the Church. With the Reformation the land and the riches of the Church fell to the Crown. The first witch execution/burning in Denmark took place 1540; the last took place some 150 years later, 1693. In this period an estimated 1000 persons, 85-90% of them women, were burned at the stake in Denmark.

Grethe Jacobsen's book: *Women and Women's Lives in Medieval Denmark* (1986, in Danish) turned me into a sceptic regarding the blessings of the Reformation, from women's points of view. Protestantism made life more difficult for women, in many ways. The pre-Reformation religion

had been full of women. There had been, first and foremost, Virgin Mary, Heavenly Queen and powerful mother, as a figure of identification for women. There was also Saint Anna, Mary's mother; in many Danish churches Saint Anna is pictured along with daughter Mary with grandchild Jesus in her lap: "Almost like a female Trinity" (Jacobsen 1986, 127). In addition, there was a multitude of other female saints: Saint Birgitta, Saint Catarina, Saint Barbara, etc. With the Reformation Christianity became all male: God Father, God Son and the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost might not be a man, but certainly is not a woman. Thus, when in the 16th century Protestantism was implemented in Danish church life, "the first casualty was the female aspect of religion" (Jacobsen 1986, 128). For Martin Luther a woman's place was in the home, as a wife and mother. The emphasis was on marriage. Marriage was the institution established by God for the expression of sexuality. No other form of sexual relation was permissible. Patriarchy depends heavily on marriage and heterosexuality. Men's access to offspring goes through women; thus, women and women's sexuality must be controlled. In patriarchal Christianity heterosexuality is taken for granted, extra-marital sex is strongly condemned. Other forms of sexuality were even more strongly policed and forced into hiding.

The Reformation took place in the 16th century, but housewifization is still ongoing in Africa – and elsewhere in the Global South, along with expanding capitalism. The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which in the 1980s and 1990s were rolled out over Africa promoted by IMF/the World Bank, may be seen as yet another round of 'primitive accumulation' (Federici 2012). The UN World Conferences on Gender, from Mexico 1975 to Beijing 1995, made sure that conceptions of gender were adjusted accordingly, producing a standard conception of gender as global discourse (Amadiume 2000). In processes starting with Christian missions and European colonialism, previous family structures – in Africa often with old women in key positions – are being replaced by modern nuclear families with a man as the household head. The family with a breadwinner (man) and a housewife (woman) is a colonial invention, nevertheless also strongly advocated by a socialist party like *Frelimo* in Mozambique and perpetuated by current development policies. The male headed nuclear family as a core institution of gender relations in terms of male dominance/female subordination seems to be an icon of modernity and a shared ideal of post-independence socialist (*Frelimo*) and capitalist (World Bank) development alike. Heterosexuality as a strongly policed norm is likewise a colonial invention, generally embraced by African governments. The irony of this is that nowadays among Africans, homosexuality is often believed to be un-African, introduced to Africa by vicious Europeans (Epprecht 2008) while in actual fact historically in many places same-sex relations were quite frequent and not very keenly policed: as long as men and women fulfilled their social duties in terms of procreation/securing offspring, they might conduct their sexual lives as they pleased (Murray and Roscoe 1998). This at a time when in Europe homosexuality was strictly closeted and/or outlawed. Thus, regarding sexuality, North/South positions have shifted. Many Africans now insist that 'homosexuality is un-African' (Horn 2006), while UN/World Bank and development aid pave the way for acceptance of queer sexualities.

The Coloniality of Gender

In a series of articles (2007, 2010, 2020) Maria Lugones has presented her thinking on what she calls 'the coloniality of gender'. 'The coloniality of gender' refers to particular European notions of gender, imposed on non-European societies in the process of colonization. Lugones shows how notions of gender, race and heterosexuality are interlinked, all tied up with capitalism and colonialism. 'Race' presents itself as biology, thus indicating a 'natural' hierarchy of power. Actually, it works the other way round: power constructs 'race', the claim of 'biology' hiding the construction. Likewise, 'gender' is presented as biology, as nature. But also, ideas of male/female as a hierarchical dichotomy are constructed by power: "Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender. Both are

powerful fictions" (Lugones 2007, 202). The idea of gender defining 'man' as 'human' and 'woman' as 'nature' is very specifically tied to European history; there is no reason to presume that this – actually very peculiar – conception of gender should be universal. And in actual fact, it is not. As argued by African feminists Ifi Amadiume (1987) and Oyèrónké Oyéwùmí (1997) in pre-colonial African societies a fixed category of 'woman' as 'the second sex' simply did not exist. Female human beings did exist, but not 'women' as a category of people subordinated to men. Man/woman was not a dichotomy, gender boundaries were changing and floating, and gender was *not* a dimension of power. Gender was perceived as situational, i.e. not dichotomized, not hierarchical – and often not important at all. Social hierarchies followed other dimensions, such as seniority and lineage. Women could be rulers as well as men, "there were no legal, linguistic or cultural gendered specifications for access to given offices and positions," (Oyéwùmí 1997, 115). But along came the British, and things would change. "The very process by which females were categorized and reduced to 'women' made them ineligible for leadership roles. … [Thus] for females colonization was a twofold process of racial inferiorization and gender subordination. … The creation of 'women' as a category was one of the very first accomplishments of the colonial state" (Oyéwùmí 1997, 124). This is exactly what Lugones refers to as "the coloniality of gender": the very idea of 'women' as a category, and as a category subordinated to another category: 'men'. Applying this European conception of gender in African settings distorts existing realities. Male power is everywhere presumed, female power and social importance remain unseen. This is how European concepts work on a global scale. 'The coloniality of gender' did not stop with colonialism. On the contrary: Today, in the present post-colonial era, this same colonial conception of gender is promulgated even more widely through international and national development programs and UN development goals.

My suggestion in this paper is that instead of imposing Western gender constructs on Southern realities, feminists might learn and take inspiration from different notions of gender and sexualities elsewhere. Here decolonial thinking may be helpful. Decolonial thinking focuses on knowledge and conceptualizations; how things are understood. Regarding colonialism it is a key point that "Western expansion was not only economic and political, but fundamentally epistemic" (Mignolo & Walsh 2018, 137); conceptualizations are crucial. Marx' merit is his analysis of capital: the focus on capitalism, the inequalities of power on which it is based and which it perpetuates. Also important is however a focus on *the limits* of Marx' thinking. The shortcomings in his analysis of capitalism, such as a lack of adequate conceptualizations of 'nature', of 'race' and of 'gender', and – connected to gender – of 'social reproduction' (Bhattacharya 2017). Another shortcoming is his limited focus on epistemologies; how ideas are not just produced by, but also co-producing socio-economic realities.

In this regard 'gender' and 'sexuality' are fertile fields for analysis, for decolonial insights – and for reconceptualizations. Things look the same – men and women are everywhere – but how gender and sexuality are understood: dichotomous or not, hierarchical or not, heterosexual or not, fixed or floating; to which extent identification of gender is fixed to bodies – all of this may vary greatly. According to Oyéwùmí male and female are relational categories, depending on social positions not on bodies. Ifi Amadiume highlights similar aspects in her 1987 book *Male Daughters*, *Female Husbands*, and later books. Under certain conditions a daughter may be designated as a son, and a woman may take another woman as her husband. In the case of woman-woman marriage the issue is not one of sexual relations, but of children and inheritance. In the African contexts, with which I am most familiar, I have found that marriage and sexuality are two very different things: Marriage regulates offspring, but not necessarily sexuality (Arnfred 2011). The husband will be considered the father of children born by his wife, even if the biological father might be somebody else. Lineage and inheritance are important issues, non-normative sexuality less so, particularly not if the men/women practising extra-marital or same-sex relations also take care of

their obligations as married wives/husbands; very often same-sex relations will not be alternatives to marriage, but supplementary. This also means that seeing lesbian/gay as identities often does not match realities.

Rethinking Feminism?

A decolonial analysis shifts the terrain for feminist struggle. The notion of gender often taken for granted: gender as a relation of power, with men in privileged positions – this particular version of patriarchy emerged in Europe from the 15th century onwards, under violent conditions related to the establishment of global capitalism. This notion of gender is part of a capitalist/patriarchal worldview, which persists in understanding *motherwork* as non-work, as 'nature'. In the New Women's Movement of the 1970s we struggled against patriarchal power relations, but we did not manage to reconceptualise the very idea of gender. Important critiques of the lack of attention to race have emerged, initially by feminists of colour in the West, now increasingly from the Global South. At the same time, however, the increasingly dominant neo-liberal mindset has reduced the scope of feminist struggle to issues of equality – even if struggles for 'gender equality' within this paradigm cannot possibly get further than to a very limited edition of equality with men of the same class and race – at the expense of other women of subordinated/lower classes/races. Nevertheless, this notion of gender is currently being universalized through so-called 'development work'. Inspiration for alternative ways of structuring gender and sexuality may however still be gained from listening to and learning about other conceptualizations, from struggles of anti-colonial resistance in the Global South (Lugones 2010, 2020) and from contemporary anti-capitalist feminist struggles in different parts of the world (e.g. Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019).

The putting together of my puzzle was helped in the first place by Silvia Federici. Her analysis of women and women's bodies subjected through the European witch hunts to the 'blood and fire' of capitalist primitive accumulation made sense: subordination of women and exploitation of nature are part and parcel of capitalism; radical change cannot take place without a radical change of this economic system. I presume that this is what I have felt ever since the days of the New Women's Movement in the 1970s; only I was not able to conceptualize it properly. My writing of this puzzle paper has been a step in the direction, I want to go, also pushed and promoted by my experience of fieldwork in Mozambique. This helped me being open to radically different ways of conceptualizing gender, beyond the standard Western hierarchical dichotomy of male dominance/female subordination. This is where the decolonial feminist puzzle pieces fit in. This part of the puzzle of course is open-ended. Many more pieces may turn up, completing the picture; the picture itself may change. What is still lacking are activist components – what will be added by the continuations of the women's strikes in Poland, Spain, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Peru and other places? The strikes giving the impetus to Arruzza et al's 2019 *Feminist Manifesto*, but then halted again by the global Covid pandemic. What will be added by further feminist movements in the Global South?

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Towards a Queer Realism

Christopher Chitty:

Sexual Hegemony: Statecraft, Sodomy, and Capital in the Rise of the World System

Max Fox ed. Duke University Press, 2020, 222 pages. Price: 25,95 USD.

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Unfinished before his death, the work that would become Christopher Chitty's *Sexual Hegemony* (2020) traces the history of bourgeois regulation of homosexuality under capitalism along with the particular social formations of male intimacy that shifting hegemonic centres of capitalism enabled and were partly constituted by. Max Fox has done an excellent job in bringing together Chitty's work and editing the texts into a coherent volume that (I have no doubt) will go down as a classic in queer history and political theory.

Chitty introduces many useful theoretical tools, including 'sexual hegemony', which exists whenever the sexual norms of dominant social groups shape the sexual conduct and understandings of other groups. Similarly, Chitty introduces the framework of 'queer realism', the thought that the *normal* is not a free-floating regulative ideal, but a status that under particular socio-economic conditions, accrues advantages to those who have it. Fundamentally, he is concerned to undermine the claim that sexual oppression is ultimately to be explained only by religious intolerance and moralistic disgust to the exclusion of material explanations. Rather, for Chitty, queerness is defined by a particular dispossession: the precarious lack of the status provided by the institutions of marriage, property, and the couple-form (26). In this he provides a useful rejoinder to those who would define queerness in a way divorced from the material realities of sexual and gender minorities. Chitty and the framework of queer realism attend to the details of queer life: not the abstract idea of play, deviancy, or disorientation that allows, for instance, drone warfare to count as queer (see Daggett 2015), but rather the ways in which certain economic, social, and legal arrangements promoted and restricted different types of (male) intimacy. Such an approach, whilst certainly materialist and Marxist, does not reduce to a crude economism – instead, to be a queer realist is to engage with a variety of social formations to understand how sexual hegemony is formed and maintained, how sexuality is employed in intra- and inter-class

conflict, and how particular moments of capitalist accumulation gave rise to and were shaped by different forms of intimacy.

Chitty argues that at various moments, primarily those identified by Giovanni Arrighi as moments of world-systemic crisis, we saw (in addition to the traditionally recognised features of these moments such as financialisaton and the destabilisation of the global balance of power) an increased politicisation of male homosexuality. The heart of the book is Chitty's case studies of three such moments: late medieval and early modern Florence; the 17th and 18th century Dutch Republic; and revolutionary France.[1] Each case study looks in detail at the queer lives made possible by different economic, political, and social arrangements, the variation in attempts by the state to enforce political power over queer life, and the use of social relations of queer life in intra- and inter-class conflict. Of note is the interesting discussion of the varied approaches to the regulation of sodomy in Florence, especially the so-called 'Officers of the Night' and the role that cross-class homosexual relations played in maintaining and extending the hegemony of the ruling classes.

The last fifty pages of the book turn to historiographical and political issues of the 20th century and beyond. Chapter 5 contains a call for a dialectical approach to homosexuality and queer intimacy, one which attends to how social forces in conflict produced particular forms of life and rejects simplistic narratives of both continuity and discontinuity regarding the nature of 'homosexuality'. This chapter also features Chitty's most extended critical discussion of Michel Foucault – a figure to whom Chitty is undoubtedly indebted, but whose work he nonetheless supersedes in important ways, not least in his contention that Foucault "proceeds by assuming bourgeois sexuality to be hegemonic, rather than rigorously accounting for how it came to be so" (156). The final chapter turns to contemporary queer struggles, and in particular an analysis of the rise of the hegemonic American vision of sexual expression and liberation. This sees Chitty engage with another of Arrighi's centres of capital accumulation, the United States, attempting to wrest understandings of the formation of the dominant forms of homosexuality away from an inappropriate focus almost solely on cultural objects. Instead, Chitty turns towards the social relations and technologies that emerged over the course of the past 70 years, not least the internet, which, rather than the family, now serves as the primary transmitter of sexual norms, and the destruction of the welfare state and stable employment under neoliberalism. Chitty ends the book by lamenting the market capture of once counterhegemonic forces via a neoliberal politics of recognition, and the continued use of repression and force by elites (including lesbian and gay elites) to maintain power. Here, lesbian and gay elites are precisely *not* queer in the sense of queer realism – they find themselves in a position to (collectively) dictate some of the norms that constitute American sexual hegemony, and have access to the security of various legal and economic institutions.

One might, upon finishing the book, be left with the sense that though Chitty has pointed out important phenomena at historical junctures of economic upheaval, a more substantive explanatory thesis is missing. That is, can we say anything systematic about what social mechanism(s) tie economic crises to state regulation and repression of queer life? Is it that during times of economic upheaval there is a general trend of elites spotting an opportunity to productively manipulate the charge of sodomy in such a way that allows them to attempt to maintain power? Or is the repression of queer life a specific instance of the (putative) general case that repressive laws more generally are instituted during crises? Chitty's analyses tend (for better or worse) to elide answering these sorts of questions, tending instead to give us concrete examples of the changes in queer life wrought at times of economic change. This sort of socio-historical speculation regarding broad explanatory generalisations might also lead us to wonder about the predictive capacity of Chitty's observations – if we take Chitty to be correct in his observation that homophobic repression and/or regulation tends to accompany economic upheaval, the queer community would be well-advised to keep an eye on the economy, not merely

for material concerns, but also as a bellwether for state repression.[2]

The book already covers a great swathe of historical ground, and it seems indulgent to exclaim 'I wish there were more!'. However, this is precisely what I want; Chitty's book is excellent, and I would have loved to have seen it cover other historical moments and other queer peoples.[3] Insofar as there are any particularly striking omissions, I think that the absence of queer women, and relative lack of focus on rural England in the 16th century stand out. But this is just to point to future directions for fruitful engagement with Chitty's work – whether that be applying the framework of queer realism to lesbian history, or political Marxists using Chitty's work to look closely at queer life in the agrarian origins of capitalism in England. One further area that I am keen to see developed from this book is an application of queer realism and sexual hegemony to our current milieu. I believe that a fruitful engagement between Chitty and contemporary trans Marxisms (see Gleeson and O'Rourke 2021) is possible and may provide an insightful framework for critiquing bourgeois anti-transgender legislation and activism around the world.

Notes

1. London, another of Arrighi's central examples, does not see a chapter of its own, but is referenced throughout the book.
2. Here I eye nervously the ongoing economic crisis deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic, and repressive legislations being considered by legislatures around the world, not least the UK's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021.
3. The foreword references essays by Chitty that did not make it into Sexual Hegemony, which I hope will emerge one day.

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