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Anarchafeminist Manifesto

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The Ongoing Collective

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May 17, 2020

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Urgent times call for urgent means and manifestos are a cry of that urgency. But the latter should be conceived as a ladder that we may well abandon once we have reached the top. Indeed, it is implicit in the very process of embarking in such an anarchafeminist project, that we should strive toward a world beyond the binary opposition between men and women and thus also, in a way, beyond feminism itself.

Therefore, in contrast to other manifestos, an anarchafeminist manifesto cannot but be, and remain, open and ongoing, as ongoing as the transindividual ontology that sustains it. This current text is already the result of a transindividual process of collecting, thinking and writing. We hope that all of you who can find within themselves even the smallest anarchafeminist impulse, even the tiniest bacteria ready to scream with us, will join the effort and continue fighting with us. The process is unstoppable, and this time we will go all the way to the end, until the last debris of the menocratic order will collapse upon itself, and all and every woman will be free! Not one less! *Ni una menos!*

The Ongoing Collective is a gathering of all the intra-, inter-, and supra-individual bodies who contributed to shaping the present text as well as those who will write its future. We invite you to join us by leaving a comment below. The above text, written after the first call for an anarchafeminist manifesto, is only the beginning. Every idea, comment, reaction, is most welcome.

We live under a global menocracy. Women are oppressed all over the world and all over themselves. In a time when the world has become a global village, when information and capital and viruses travel instantly worldwide, we cannot pretend we did not know, and so we know. What do we know? We know that women are politically, economically, socially and sexually oppressed. No matter which sources of oppression one will focus on, race, class, gender, empire, women are always at the bottom.

There are many tools by which men exercise their privilege, but a useful, although temporary, list includes the following: death, the state, the capital, and the imaginal. Death because women are the object of a worldwide gendercide, the state because the sovereign state is an instrument of the sovereign sex, capital because its economics exploits women more than men, and the imaginal because the global menocratic imaginary constantly produces and reproduces images that are detrimental and oppressive for women.

1. Women gendercide

There is a war going on globally and that war is waged against women.

Why are there more men than women on the planet, despite the fact that women tend to live longer? Where are all the missing girls? The “missing girls” are not counted in the hundreds, or thousands, but in the millions. As of today, there are somewhere between 126 to 160 millions of girls missing from the global population as a consequence of sex-selective abortion, infanticide, and inequalities of care. But violence against women bodies does not stop after birth: one in every three of us know it, and she knows it because she has experienced it herself — in the form of physical or sexual violence, or, very often, a combination of both. Not only women but all feminized and

queer bodies in general are object of violence, which can take different forms according to the different intersections, but it is always gender violence.

Rape is the most common form of sexual violence against women. The United Nations statistics say that 35 percent of women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence, and 70 percent of women have experienced physical/sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Women and girls together are 72 percent of human trafficking victims: girls make up three out of four child trafficking victims, and four out of five trafficked women and three out of four trafficked girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Too, there are 650 million women and girls who were married before the age of 18, leading to no more schooling, meaning fewer opportunities and autonomy, but a greater risk of domestic violence. Homes are not safe for women as the coronavirus pandemic confirmed: as the lockdown goes on, gender violence goes up.

Where are men in all these numbers? Where are men in all these acts of sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, child marriage, rape, human trafficking & female homicides? When they are not beating up women, are they joining the feminist cause, carrying our banner, screaming with us, are they just, in the best scenario, remaining silent? Most of the time they remain silent and thereby contribute to making sure the “first sex”¹ will remain the first for quite some time to come.

Against women gendercide and all forms of violence against them, we anarchafeminists call for the liberation of all women. Not one less! *Ni una menos!* Either all, or none of us will be free.

¹ The implicit reference is to Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York, Vintage Books, 2011. In contrast to her, we are using the term “second sex” to include all those excluded from the “first sex”, that is, all those who are not perceived as men.

most importantly, rebellions are not mutually exclusive: resist gender norms, play with them, refuse to comply, disobey, boycott, fight capitalism, practice radical democracy, be a “gender pirate”⁹ in a different way. Even in way that has not been invented yet. If you cannot build an anarchafeminist society in your country, build it in your neighborhood. If you cannot build it in your neighborhood, build it in your household. These actions are not simply “individualist strategies,” as some have labeled them. They are prefigurations of a different world. They are political acts per se, which are the other side of collective projects, such as the increasing examples of mass mobilization, grass root organization, general strikes, occupations, communal and queer living that are proliferating around the globe and aimed at abolishing capitalism and the authoritarian state. Because local acts may be necessary but clearly not sufficient. Global is the oppression, so global has to be the fight.

7. The end is the means

There cannot and should not be any definitive fully-fledged program for an anarchafeminist manifesto, because freedom is the end and it is an outright contradiction to think of reaching it through anything except freedom itself. This does not mean that there cannot be any site-specific and time-limited program. There can and there should be many of them. In the same way in which bodies are plural and plural is their oppression, plural must also be the strategy to fight such an oppression. But if freedom is both the means and the end, then one could also envisage a world free from the very notion of gender as well as the oppressive structures that it generated. Because gendered bodies are still the worldwide objects of exploitation and domination, we need an anarchafeminist manifesto here and now.

⁹ Paul Preciado, *Testo Junkie*, New York City, The feminist Press, 2013, p. 55.

girls? Can we greet everybody and politely walk away from this menocratic order?

Probably not that quickly. From traditional foot binding to modern high heels wearing, the control of women feet is yet another tool for disciplining our bodies. Whether prevented from their natural growth, because small feet were said to be particularly attractive, or seduced into walking over painful high hills, because by walking on pointy little penises we are said to be particularly dressed-UP, women feet never seem to be in their right measure. Why can men be masculine when wearing perfectly comfortable shoes, while women have to be in pain in order to be truly feminine? How have we come to accept this systematic association of our sex with pain and suffering?

Against menocratic technologies of the self, we anarchafeminists call for a global liberation of women — literally head to toes. We pledge to fight: state fascism and plantar fasciitis, rape and osteoarthritis, phallocracy and metatarsalgia, sexual harassment and bunions, brain wash and pump bump, unpaid housework and hammer toes, denial of abortion rights and bone spurs, gender pay gap and ankle sprains, feminicide and foranimal stenosis, gender mutilation and stress fractures, lower back pain, cramps and spasms....

In sum, we want women to be able to walk — free.

And to feel sexy while doing so.

6. Just do it.

Begin your revolution now. No site is ever too small to start, because the worst tyrant is not outside of yourself but inside. Aiming to seize state power first, or asking for recognition from it, means reproducing that very power structure that needs to be questioned in the first place. On the contrary, “just do it” means that at least a little bit of freedom is within everybody’s reach. No rebellion is ever too small or too big, and

2. The Sovereign State is an instrument of the Sovereign Sex

Men are the sovereign sex because, like sovereign states, they do not have to recognize any (sex) superior to themselves. The world is currently divided into states, meaning there is not a single piece of land where we can escape. So we are forced to live under state rule which, in turns, also means we are forced to live under men’s rule: Across 149 states assessed in 2019, women head of states were a meager 11%, while, on average, just 21% of ministers and 25% of parliamentarians were women. In sum, it is largely men who decide what is legal and what is illegal, who/how and when taxes have to be paid, who/how and when employment is to be given, marriages made, property inherited, healthcare assured, kindergartens built, and abortion legalized — or not. Given that we live under men’s rule, are we surprised to hear that, globally, women are paid in average 63% of what men get²?

No, we are not surprised.

Does this mean that we should fight to have a woman president?

No, this means we should fight to have no president at all. (Although, admittedly, if there really has to be a president, we would not mind a change of the guard).

We should not entertain any illusion: There cannot be a feminist state because feminism means liberation of all women and the state is the tool whereby a minority of people rules over the vast majority of them. But feminism cannot mean the liberation of just a few women. We have another name for that: it is called elitism. “When a few women in power dominate the majority of powerless women, unequal class differentiation is

² The data are from the Global Gender Gap report published on 16 December 2019 by the World Economic Forum. (<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2020>; http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf).

brought into existence. If the majority of women do not want to be controlled by men, why would they want to be controlled by a minority of women?"³ Instead of competing with men for power, women should strive for overthrowing men's rule and anarchafeminism is the best tool to do so because it is the best antidote against the possibility of feminism becoming simply elitism or, even worse, white privilege.

In an epoch when the election of a single woman as president is often presented as liberation for *all* women, when women such as Ivanka Trump can claim feminist battles by transforming the hashtag *#womenwhowork* into a fashion brand, when the mark of liberation is having other women do the elite's "women's work" of housecleaning and childcare, the fundamental message of anarchafeminists of the past is more urgent than ever: "Feminism does not mean female corporate power or a woman president: it means no corporate power and no president".⁴ Freedom is indivisible and every act of women oppression and exploitation, every denial of women rights, wherever they happen, every single act of violence against women, or whoever plays that role, contributes to the subjection of all women as a gender.

Against the violence perpetrated by sovereign states in order to maintain the sovereign sex in its privilege, we anarchafeminists call for the liberation of all women. Not one less! *Ni una menos!* Either all, or none of us will be free.

3. Capital sins

If we liberate ourselves from the intellectual yoke of state boundaries and take the entire globe as our framework, the

³ He Zhen, "Women liberation", in *Anarchism. A documentary history of libertarian ideas*, Vol 1, edited by Robert Graham, Black Rose Book, 2005, pp.341.

⁴ Peggy Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," in *Quiet Rumors*, (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2012), 25.

Why do women sexual organs need so much more "check-ups" than men's? Are we assuming that something must have gone wrong just because... they are women?

The discipline of women sex does not stop at the gynecologist's door. There are currently at least 200 million women who have undergone female genital mutilation, quite often at such a young age that they do not even know things could be different. When it comes to rituals of circumcision, women have to endure procedures such as clitoridectomy, labial removal, infibulation, severe health complications, and loss of pleasure, whereas men can get away with a very superficial cut that does not imply any of that. Why so much pain on the one side and so little on the other?

And why are women sexual organs mainly spoken of in terms of the vagina, which, as the Latin etymology reminds us, only means the scabbard? The Christian God created the world by giving names, and, since then, name-giving has remained the sovereign act par excellence. Who and why naming all that variegated space just a mere "container for the sword"? Where have the clitoris, the vulva, the pubis, the uterus, and the labia gone? All into the "Vagina". The whole is reduced to the part: the part that is destined to give pleasure to the penis.

This is not just a form of terminological reductionism: precisely because female genitalia are named as incomplete the way they are, women more compliantly undergo constant rituals of adjustment that may vary enormously across space and time, but are relentless in their disciplining effect. For instance, whereas men rarely undergo genital depilation women are increasingly expected to have all hair stripped from their pubis in order to be clean, desirable, and sexy. But why do we need to have pre-pubescent vulvas in order to be acceptable? If it is true that hair appears on genitals when we reach puberty, what is this visual order of things that expect our vulvas to look like we never reached maturity asking from us? That we remain children forever? That men should want to have sex with little

Women bodies are everywhere the object of a process of disciplining whose very purpose is not simply to govern bodies but to instill in us the idea that our bodies need to be governed. Images and rituals of health, beauty, and care change a lot from one context to another but they are everywhere one of the most powerful site for the exercise of menocratic technologies of the self. This is how docile subjects are created: not (only) through the imposition of rules from the outside, but through the voluntary and, at times, even joyful participation to one's own submission.

Since the 19th century, that is the time of the emergence of factories and compulsory military service, European men have undergone their "great masculine renunciation"⁸: they gave up all the colors, laces, and fusses, to wear the sober color two-piece suit that is worn today by any important men, from the college student going for his first job interview to the head of state announcing a war. This has certainly increased their functionality as well as their solemnity, particularly when the jacket, which directly derives from military uniforms, opens up in the middle of the chest to reveal that "thing" hanging down, called a "tie". By renouncing all other adornments, men made it clear that they did not need any of them, precisely because they are already so important by themselves, whereas women, who constantly need to prop themselves up, carry all the burden of colors, laces, and fusses.

They also carry most of the burden of care, in all senses of the term, from childcare to bodycare to healthcare. Women bodies and sexualities are indeed medicalized and pathologized to a degree inconceivable in the case of men. Why are women supposed to visit a gynecologist once a year, while most men can lead an entire life without ever having seen an urologist?

⁸ John Carl Flügel, "The great masculine renunciation" from *The Psychology of Cloths* (1930); reprinted in Purdy, ed. *The Rise of Fashion. A Reader* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2004), pp. 102–108

first striking datum emerging is that people have not always been doing gender, and, moreover, even if they did it, they did it on very different terms. It is only with the emergence of a worldwide capitalist system that the rigid gender binary became so hegemonic worldwide. This does not mean that sexual difference did not exist before global capitalism, nor that capitalism invented patriarchy from scratches. It simply means that capitalism reoccupied previous forms of patriarchy, eradicated matriarchy where it existed, thereby giving menocracy a new strength and a new formidable impetus. Capitalism needs "women," because it needs the assumption that women are not "working" when they wash their husband's and children's socks and make their meals: it needs them to believe that they are just being good wives and good mothers. If a capitalist had to pay wages for all the cleaning, cooking, feeding, caring, baby-sitting and child-raising labor that "good wives" and "good mothers" do for free, then there would be no capitalism because there would be a limit to the limitless expansion of profit that defines capitalism as an economy. Women are not just the object of capitalist exploitation, but also the object of "super-exploitation",⁵ that is of the appropriation of the work they do through the very denial of the status of work.

But along with the extraction of free unwaged labor from women, capitalism also needs to extract free natural resources from the environment and create mechanisms to regulate the flux of labor. This is the reason why, from the very beginning, capitalism has gone hand in hand with colonialism, land occupations, and natural catastrophes. As a system devoted to the endless accumulation of profit, capitalism relies on boundaries to regulate the movement of labor force and the extraction of natural resources, but it also relies on racism to make sure that some bodies are more exploitable than others. This is where

⁵ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale. Women in the International Division of Labour*, 1986, London, Zed Books

intersectionality is most evident, because being a woman of color means being exploitable in a way that cannot simply be explained by the quality of being a woman *plus* being a person of color, and being an indigenous woman, whose environment has been destroyed and waters poisoned, means being exploited to such a degree that no monthly check can ever pay back. Something very peculiar happens in those intersections of capital's sins, and that is where "the coloniality of gender"⁶ thrives.

Against this systematic intertwinement among capitalist depletion of natural resources, racial classification of bodies, and gender oppression, against this boundary drawing that separate women from each other in order to make them more exploitable, while destroying the environment we live in, we anarchofeminists call for the liberation of all women. Not one less! *Ni una menos!* Either all, or none of us will be free.

4. Another woman is possible.

At this point our enemies may object: why insist on feminism and not just call this anarchism? If the purpose is to dismantle all types of oppressive hierarchies, should we not also get rid of the gender binary, which opposes "women" to "men," and thus imprisons us in a heteronormative matrix?

By drawing insights from an ontology of the transindividual, we respond that bodies in general, and women's bodies in particular, must not be considered as individuals, as objects given once and for all, but rather as processes. Women's bodies, like all bodies, are bodies in plural because they are processes constituted by mechanisms of affects and associations that occur at the *inter*-, *intra*- and the *supra*-individual level. Our bodies come into being through an *inter*-individual encounter, they

⁶ Maria Lugones, "The Coloniality of Gender," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Development*, London Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016.

are shaped by *supra*-individual forces, such as their geographical locations, and they are made up by *intra*-individual bodies such as the molecules we breathe, the hormones we englobe, or the images we ingurgitate every day.

Properly speaking we are not, and never have been, individuals: we are, literally, transindividual processes, accidental sites of a process of becoming that takes place at different levels. We are relations, not substances. Processes, not things. Only if we consider skin boundaries as the boundaries of those things, can we classify bodies as males and females, but if we look beyond those boundaries and consider the totality of the cells comprising human bodies, as well as the relations between them, we find out that 95% of them escape that dichotomy.⁷ If, and only if, we adopt this transindividual perspective, can we speak about "womanhood" outside of any heteronormative framework, and thus use that very term in order to include all types of women: feminine women, masculine women, transwomen, female women, male women, lesbian women, bisexual women, intersex women, ciswomen, asexual women, queer women, and so on and so forth. All the way up to ways of being woman that have not yet been invented because another woman is not just possible: it has also, always, already began.

Against the violence perpetrated in the name of gender binarism, homo-phobia and trans-phobia, we anarchofeminists call for the liberation of all women. Not one less! *Ni una menos!* Either all, or none of us will be free.

5. Technologies of the self

But the imaginal apparatus that sustains the global menocracy has infiltrated even the very process of becoming woman.

⁷ Myra Hird, M. 2004, "Naturally queer", in *Feminist Theory*, Vol 5 issue, 1, pp. 85–88