Anonymous
War on Patriarchy
Autumn 2020

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The question of domination is central to anarchist reflections. Certain specific issues such as gender-related violence are thus regularly addressed. For some, the issue is incidental, for others it is essential (because it affects different aspects of our lives in a comprehensive manner).

Gender and sexuality related oppressions are nowadays still so established that it is impossible to think about them without trying to name them. And I don't see how to fight around this issue without analyzing the social relationships, different positions and power struggles that stem from us. Many have things to lose by moving the lines (even if only a certain intellectual comfort). It is thus very difficult to discuss without provoking defensive reactions, or without bad faith, or without being called upon to respond to caricatures (which also exist in so many other situations and struggles: power feuds, dogmatism, manipulations, conflicts of egos and so on …) put forward to ridicule a fight that is nevertheless attacking certain dynamics and their particularly recurrent, harmful and sometimes dramatic effects.

Sometimes, people who develop meticulous reflections on a lot of subjects, end up finding easy (and awful) answers to a difficult

subject, such as: “All you had to do was put your fist in his face!” brushing aside the complexity of situations and relationships, such as the mechanisms of subjugation, of shock, shame, paralysis, denial, dependency or emotional need and more. Some out of ease, stupidity, others out of pettiness, or to reaffirm one’s superiority (and one’s so-called physical or mental strength). For me strength lies elsewhere. Among others, in tackling uncomfortable subjects, putting oneself in danger, addressing harmful situations, calling into question your status and certainties, or even certain friendships.

To speak openly about patriarchy in a world and in a “milieu” where the culture of the “hard-boiled” is very present, entails a risk of not being taken seriously or of repeating certain roles, such as that of the mediator or the nurse. I would prefer that in many instances certain people would confront their mates directly on their attitudes; but this is something we see too little of, partly because of a certain fear of conflict, of losing one’s position but also because this issue remains (sadly) of secondary importance for many. It is, however, in my opinion, an inevitable passage if one sincerely seeks to be as coherent as possible in ideas that we value and practices …

The issue of gender-based violence and gender dynamics is inherent to a system based on hierarchy and competition, subordination of others and coercion. This implies to fight against many representations but also to attack a world in its entirety. It is not enough to simply wanting to defect to get rid of a certain number of conditionings. These are set up through mechanisms that are more often underhanded than obvious and considerably impact the quality of our relations. Hence there is sometimes the need to break with these relationships to better know what to do next and how.

When we talk about individuals we often forget that they exist “in all their complexity”. It is not my body, my sexuality or my “identity” (whatever it may be) that makes me into what I am but my history, my desires, my choices and the perspectives that flow

could to get guys to accept me. Only their "recognition" was important to me. I despised other girls because, in my opinion, they were still confined in the their role as victims. I thought I was just like them, but in fact no; because when I am no longer with them, I go back to being a girl, and for guys who are not, or less, my buddies I return to the same status as a chick, potentially nothing else than fuckable, gee that stings a bit… So you, girl, who's holding a speech of "I don't see what the problem is blah blah blah blah blah", please ask yourself, sincerely, what is your interest in being more dominated than you already are. And yes, there are certainly some things that don't touch you, or you have decided that they don't touch you; just accept that there may be girls out there who are less armed, less conciliatory, or who have paid more dearly than you and/or who want to do something other than defend guys at all costs." - Excerpt from the VOMI brochure (Lille, 2015)

from them. Thus I cannot be defined by a single word or adjective. This is also why I want that no part of me is denied. I don't want to deny this reality because it is also the anger that comes out of it that built me up. I don't want it to be annihilated by erasing my history, my experiences (good or bad) and my background.

"*Imposing a gender on us, an identity even, can only stifle us at best and destroy us at worst. Attempting to define us will always fail. No category can fully contain us; any identity will necessarily restrain, and so we must oppose identity. However, we'd be foolish to deny the material consequences of the myths of identity – these myths are, after all, amongst the foundations of oppression. Anyone who is told they are a woman will be treated "like a woman," despite the fact that women share nothing other than the myth of womanhood and the societal violence that accompanies this myth."* - nila nokizaru, *Against Gender, Against Society*, in Lies Journal II

Words and symbols are incapable of representing the complexity of life. I cannot be summarized by an identity. However, it is often necessary to find ways (not necessarily formal) to do so in order to be able to put a lived experience into words. Nevertheless, it remains important for me to say and do things with my own words and my own self, and not with a vocabulary imposed on me, by force or by law, or by any other social conditioning. I don't want to support new norms. This is also why often the collective dimension, the pre-established rules crush me, because I smell too often a whiff of old authoritarism in it. Freedom cannot arise in the shadow of norms and codes (even social ones). By systematizing methods, there is a risk of setting new standards, which risk in turn to establish a new power relationship. If we want to exist as we are, we must make ourselves elusive.

Domination exists in all spheres of society; the suffering and the experience of oppression are not in themselves synonymous with virtue, even if they can provoke shared anger. In fact, to experience and/or reveal oppression (more or less visible) should in no way penalize, nor enhance, nor create an ad hoc social status or

role for that person. It is precisely the wish of this society to confine everyone to a status, which would relieve us of all responsibility and would erase any singularity. But this question deserves to be approached with a minimum of finesse and consideration, taking into account the limits and desires of each person, without entering into the logic of idealizing a "subject" or a "acting-together" devoid of meaning. In some cases, oppression leads to inhibition, inaction or reaction, sometimes it inevitably pushes towards rupture, explosion and revolt. It is precisely this which makes the unpredictable character of the human being, because we cannot assume any presupposition as to human "nature" (hence the obsolescence of the term) and its destination. Our life history and our sufferings do not necessarily enclose us, we can always look for margins of choice and decision.

Voltairine de Cleyre opposes the accepted formula of modern materialism *Men are what circumstances make them,* with this proposition: *Circumstances are what men make them.* This is in order to get out of a deterministic reflection about circumstances, maintaining a feeling of powerlessness. On the contrary, the latter puts the individuals forward, as active agents at work, acting on their environment and transforming circumstances, sometimes slightly, sometimes considerably, sometimes - although not very frequently - entirely. In my opinion, the question of "privileges" is based on an incorrect analysis, because it puts too often forward a social status instead of a whole prism (of interdependence) to be taken under consideration. Power mechanisms are sometimes visible, other times they are less easily detectable. Also because one is only rarely in a position of dominance or dominated at all levels. Different dimensions come into play: our knowledge, our fragility and our abilities (for dialogue, banter, or the ability to assert oneself), our known or supposed "victories" in the "milieu", too often also charisma, our friendships, our associations (in terms of social "connections") and so many other things, not necessarily understandable at the first approach.

Revenge involves a multitude of choices and instances. Everyone is free to choose its terms. Where the use of force is necessary, it is particularly important to never lose sight of our aspirations and principles. It is not just a question of responding to the blows but to open up all possibilities. One can also decide to take revenge on those who dictate and reproduce the limits of this world on a daily basis, in attacking their institutions and nodes directly.

This world that has declared war on us will not collapse with mere declarations of intention, taking a stance and well-thought-out discourses. This struggle cannot and should not be reduced to the sole analysis of the internal dynamics of the "militant" "milieu", putting aside the existing, its structures and its powerful. Because there is an outside that continues to advance and sharpen its claws. This involves fighting while articulating questions of ethics and practices. To get out of partial visions without also denying lived oppressions. Without a hierarchy between struggles, oppressions, and means of action, so that finally principles and practices are one and the same. In a perspective of freedom for all, by attacking the enemies of freedom wherever they may be, as well as the mechanisms of essentialisation and normalisation which have been present for too long in our struggles. In order to create a total break with this world, through a conflict open on all fronts, with an infinite number of variables and angles of attack.

There is nothing else to exalt but our rage and determination.

"*How do you think it makes me feel to notice that within our collectives, all that is needed is for someone to repeat what I just said with a more virile voice so that, suddenly, it becomes worthy of interest?*"

"*I have friends that I love but who sometimes behave like roosters in a farmyard. If I introduce them to a female friend, they are very pleasant. Much less when it comes to a guy…*"

"*I had to fight to get my place in groups of guys. Why in the end. Just to be recognized as an individual. Because alone, without guys, I didn't really exist. As a result, I had managed to convince myself that I was better than the other girls. Because I had done everything I*