



NOTES ON
MILITANT FOLDS

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hostis
pamphlets

*Here
is
the
pre-
mise*

Weigel and Ahern¹ missed: the feminism informing *Tiqqun* does not want to get in on systems of validity and value on an equal footing with men. Why would they? Nor does their critique, as Weigel and Ahern worry, amount to sitting around waiting for the final apocalypse while we stew in our nihilism. The opposite: the actually-existing conditions that behooves women, *Jeune-Fille-identifiable*² or otherwise, to break at this unbearable limit are the ones that constitute the entire abstract system of value that currently makes patriarchy concretely possible insofar as patriarchy depends on that system for its own reproduction. The authors rely on a *brand* of feminism that takes symmetry for

¹ Moira Weigel and Mal Ahern. “Further Materials toward a Theory of the Man Child.” *The New Inquiry*. <https://thenewinquiry.com/further-materials-toward-a-theory-of-the-man-child/>

² Ed: “Jeune fille” is the original *Tiqqun* title, which roughly translates to “young girl” in English.

“fairness,” “equity” for “equality,” as though those were not already part of the metrics on which our contemporary social relations are founded. “What these wretches are up to however, is no coincidence, they want to make us play the one dimensional game of identities and differences.”³ We are supposed to find our place, as good citizens, in the immense system of equivalence posing as equality.

This means that I, as one of we-the-feminists, don’t need to rehearse the translator’s apologia, that the misogyny is sickening.⁴ It means I don’t need to defend *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*.⁵ But it

³ Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*. Trans, Alexander Galloway and Jason. E. Smith. Semiotexte. Los Angeles, 2010. p. 29.

⁴ Ariana Reines. “Translator’s Notes.” *Triple Canopy*. https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/preliminary_materials_for_a_theory_of_the_young_girl.

⁵ Tiqqun. *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*. Trans, Ariana Reines. Semiotexte. Los Angeles, 2012.

also means that as a feminist, I reject shoring up, *in the name of feminism*, the capitalist patriarchal system of abstraction (the logic of subsumption in an expanded cultural field, the space of the subject)—the exact system that Weigel and Ahern purport to attack.

Tiqqun’s Young-Girl, performing her role of “living currency,” specified a broader expectation: that it was up to feminism to locate a way out of capitalism. Young-Girl embodies the negative dialectical counterpart to the feminist analysis founded in the historical interval between Operaio and Autonomia (1961-1972), namely that women are structurally compelled to guard the subject-to-labor relation insofar as they are structurally tasked to oversee the reproduction of “life” under the dictates of capitalism. As Jean Genet notes in what appears on the surface a flourish of classical misogyny in *Our Lady of the Flowers*, women’s hands weave the warp and weft of the social nets in which libidinal transgression is

caught.⁶ But as The Bologna Collective of the '70s noted, the only option historically open to women to refuse capital was also to refuse biology; the only way to refuse biology was to refuse capital.

If we strike, we won't leave unfinished products or untransformed raw materials; by interrupting our work we won't paralyze production, but rather the reproduction of the working class. And this would be a real strike even for those who normally go on strike without us... This type of strike that interrupts the total mobilization to which we are all submitted and that allows us to transform

*ourselves, might be called a human strike, for it is the most general of general strikes and its goal is the transformation of the informal social relations on which domination is founded. The radical character of this type of revolt lies in its ignorance of any kind of reformist result with which it might have to satisfy itself. By its light, the rationality of the behaviors we adopt in our everyday life would appear to be entirely dictated by the acceptance of the economic relationships that regulate them. Each gesture and each constructive activity in which we invest ourselves has a counterpart within the monetary economy or the libidinal economy. The human strike decrees the bankruptcy of these two principles and installs other affective and material fluxes. Human strike proposes no brilliant solution to the problems produced by those who govern us if it is not Bartleby's maxim: I would prefer not to.*⁷

⁶ “Replacing the dowry with unpaid domestic labour contributes to the regularization of behavior in a domestic space where the social economy consisted of giving a new foundation to patriarchal power by subjugating the entry of women into the labour market under male control but also by encouraging surveillance of men (and children [and other women]) by domesticating women in the household,” Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato. *Wars and Capital*. Trans, Ames Hodges. Semiotexte and MIT Press, Cambridge 2018. P. 119-120.

⁷ Cited in Claire Fontaine. “The Ready-made Artist and the Human Strike.” http://www.clairefontaine.ws/pdf/ready-made_eng.pdf Web. See also Claire

This they called the General Strike. And there has never been a general strike. “They” are frustrated with “us” because “we” hold the last best hope out of capitalism if only we’d stop getting distracted by the trinkets used to trap us at the makeup counter.

On the other hand, speaking of that make-up counter and suspending for a moment the billion dollar cosmetics and beauty industry: gender trouble, if not the general strike, has been available on an individual basis, or just available enough under acute duress and struggle, to refute the constraints of a ready-made life dictated by capitalism. In other words, we can imagine the end of gender before we can imagine the end of capitalism.

Fontaine. “Human Strike in the Field of the Libidinal Economy.” <http://petroleusepress.com/post/1566615636/the-term-human-strike-was-forged-to-name-a-Web>. This artist collective may [or may not—for What is an Author?] have “authored” Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl as part of a collective of students who collectively wrote under the sign of “Tiqqun.”

But what if we could see them both crash and burn – together?

For as an identity determined by capital—the cis het hidden abode of social replication appointed to the body determined by socially necessary labor time masked as “biology”—women become nothing but the condition for possibility for the reproduction of labor, we are nonetheless *and* therefore overcoded—sexualized, *fetishized*⁸—to keep the system going while occluding its machinic ugliness. Feminitude and Youthitude, as Tiqqun put it, are not simply the biological conditions for the reproduction of future labor-power. This particular synthesis of youth and femininity, at least since the 1980s, is itself a reproduction of a vision of womanhood that can be directly traced back to the market’s appropriation of underground ball culture and refashioned in the glamour of the

⁸ Recall that the commodity fetish is congealed social relations frozen in the objectification of labor time. Recall also that for Freud it masks lack, and the threat of lack, with the promise of false plenitude.

80's most iconic cis-hetero-female, Madonna.⁹ We are pretty especially when we are not in so many visual exchanges in an indifferent flow of simulacra masking vacuity; we have learned to put a smile on and [value]-add a little frisson of drama to keep boredom at bay, to make sure we deliver (the labor, the product) tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Our smile is promising: we promise either the ongoing machinery of production or an excuse for it.

Speaking of that machinery in Academia, the arena of the Man-Child, what better way to answer to the post-production era in which we make nothing and do nothing besides sit around theorizing than to “chop and screw” the authority of the text? Weigel and Ahorn insist that *PMTJF* is already masculinist at the level of its language, not only

because of its blatant misogyny, but via its debt to “theory”:

The prestige of the theoretical vocabulary that Tiqqun's members have mastered bolsters their credibility... Publishing anonymously is only a backup measure for evading responsibility. Lift out any one line to object to it—‘Wait a minute, how has all the concreteness of the world taken refuge in my ass?’—and you would be sure to look foolish, even if you did know whom to ask.

Tiqqun remixes everything from Kraucauer to Clastres to Klossowski, and this is already an attack on the politics of textual propriety, the law of the copyright and of the father. This is already answering to the French feminist attack on the authority of the word (cf. Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva). Anyway, to find out about your ass, you don't need to read anything. Look at the pix in Cosmo. Go to the movies. See the adverts on TV. Your ass is your face whether you want to read about it or not.

⁹ See Rosalind E Kraus's discussion of Madonna as the symbol of originality for whom fans set themselves into simulacral reverence, thereby recoding her as the ultimate generic *thing* in *Optical Unconscious*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1994. P. 277.

The Young-Girl is an attempt to put a face—brave or not—on the split subject of capital. As Marx, notes in a passage from the *Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts*, notes:

The transcendence of self-estrangement follows the same course as self-estrangement. Private property is first considered only in its objective aspect—but nevertheless with labor as its essence. Its form of existence is therefore capital, which is to be annulled ‘as such’ (Proudhon). Or a particular form of labor—labor leveled down, fragmented, and therefore unfree—is conceived as the source of private property’s perniciousness and of its existence in estrangement from men.

As a figure for this foundational self-alienation under capital in which we, as women, are simply place holders for their frustration and impotence, la Jeune-Fille holds out the chance of turning this self-estrangement against itself, not to beat a retreat to pre-modern times, but to drive the logic to its breaking point. Endlessly exposed, isolated, objectified, punished, fetishized,

the Jeune Fille stands for the universal prostitution of the human in the interest of objectified profit. She is the fold where “crisis” opens onto everything capitalism withheld and withholds still, which ostensibly would include intimacy, proximity, community. The fold is inclusive of the negative remainder that capitalism has not fully penetrated and replicated in its own logic: filiation, the last traces of that mysterious thing Marx called “species being,” creaturely warmth mixed with “emotional” suffering, that irreducible nexus of potential-within-attachment that gets called love. Tiqqun’s flaw is its tone, as though “her” destruction, which hurts men and women alike, were to be projected back on to her for having failed to resist much less survive, for being so terribly disappointing. They call this “blaming the victim.” But the way out is not to construct an equivalent avatar to blame better; the whole point is to exit this geometry of rationalization (capitalist accounting) entirely.

Tiqqun collapses the etiology of social pathology it diagnosis onto the object of its analysis, as though the abolition of gender as a crucial pivot of the value-form and therefore of toxic capitalist social relations were the exclusive duty of women, cis-women or trans-women; as though cis men and trans men were somehow "free" of the problem. This burden placed on cis and trans women reifies a capitalist totality in which all subject positions are not only implicated but in which until all are free, none are free. Reification along these lines contributes, paradoxically, to the misogyny the collective purports to wish to blast asunder. The raging hatred righteously militated against capitalism's imposition of binaries instrumental to its replication spills over into a new form of misogyny, suggesting that women (cis and trans) were to blame for our incapacity to exit this air conditioned nightmare.

Yes, this is a double bind, one that drives itself toward some future vanishing point. It is our "privilege," as women, to

precipitate the crisis every chance we get. Jouissance.

In other words, the problem with PMFTYG is not its analysis, nor its metaphorization, but the way in which it presents the problem itself and the problem's insolubility as tautological. This may mask ambivalence. I'd wager it's more pernicious. Tiqqun can't quite self-abolish. The circular misogyny in the interest of shattering instrumental bourgeois sexism is perhaps itself a form of self-preservation [of patriarchy] that nonetheless recognizes, as anti-capitalist, that feminism *is* the way out of capitalism. We might say, using Marx's remark on the inability of bourgeois political economy to grasp the whole:

In both forms communism already is aware of being the reintegration or return of man to himself, the transcendence of human self-estrangement; but since it has not yet grasped the positive essence of private property, and just as little the human nature of need, it remains captive to it and infected by it. It has, indeed, grasped its concept, but not its essence.

Weigel and Ahern's solution is to up the ante, to enhance the competition, *to gain equity* by approaching the situation with a little more cleverness, a little more panache, and to call that revolutionary. This is just part of the circuit, another turn of the screw.

Separate but equal disses. A formal equality under the law that masks equivalence, a symbolic economy that assigns value to some bodies at the immiseration of others. Short the Jeune Fille. Let's flood the Man-Child stock:

The Man-Child has two moods: indecision, and entitlement to this indecisiveness.

The Man-Child tells a racist joke. It is not funny. It is the fact that the Man-Child said something racist that is.

The Man-Child wants you to know that you should not take him too seriously, except when you should. At any given moment, he wants to you to take him only as seriously as he wants to be taken. When he offends you, he was kidding. When he means it, he means it. What he says goes.

The Man-Child thinks the meaning of his statement inheres in his intentions, not in the effects of his language. He knows that speech-act theory is passé.

And so, in answer to the notion that the Jeune Fille is superficial, we are told that the Man-Child is ambivalent—as though there were any subject position unstructured by splitting, by structural ambivalence, under capitalism, as though we were not all played against ourselves a priori by the mesh of value that guarantees us to ourselves by breaking us.

Weigel and Ahern ask what a *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of Motherhood* might look like. It might look like something that can't properly look like anything, that is, it couldn't even appear, given that the visual register demands that everything that appear, appear marked by symmetry, equivalence, interchangeability in the logic of the count. The last thing "motherhood" needs—whatever this term does or does not

mean—is a score-keeper.¹⁰ Who needs scores in the absence of value? What mother needs to be scrutinized any more, if even for better counts?

Note the claim to *symmetry* between Young-Girl and Man-Child.¹¹ In *Introduction to Civil War*, Tiqqun addresses this kind

¹⁰ See Maya Andrea Gonzalez’s “The Birth of Motherhood” in the same issue of *The New Inquiry*. See also Gonzalez’s crucial essay in *Communization and Its Discontents* [Claudius here links to PDF]. The author notes the asymmetry of woman and men in relation to the labor market, an “uneven development” founded on differential relations to time (embodied time and clock time, the wage-clock). The text’s research into and analysis of the specificity of women’s subjugation in the subject-to-labor relationship reproductive of capitalist systematicity shows the nuanced ways in which social problems coded as “gendered” – vulgar discourse around “the biological clock for instance,” are not only a function of ideological interpellation, but part of a system of valorization that cannot account for the incommensurable temporalities of historically situated *bodies*.

¹¹ It’s like a nastified version of Aristophanes’ myth in the Symposium.

of thinking as foundational to the liberal politics of the last century that preserve the foundational rationalist machinery of capitalism by always deferring, always substituting this with that in a way that fortifies the playing field beneath the terms. On the replacement of one term for another as though that *exchange* could challenge or even effect the system supporting *both* the original and its “replacement:”

*Rousseau thought he could confront Hobbes on how “the state of war springs from the social.” In doing so, he proposed The Noble Savage in place of the Englishman’s Ignoble Savage, one anthropology to replace another, but this time an optimistic one. But the mistake here was not the pessimism. It was the anthropology, and the desire to found a social order on it.*¹²

A game of substitutions, replacements, exchanges... this fortifies “the system” of false equivalence on which capitalism

¹² Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*. 98.

and its protective form of government of social relations, “representation,” are founded.

“Autism for two” (“love for the young girl is just autism for two”¹³) will not destroy existing conditions, and this autism for two would include the empty game of *j'accuse*, the demand to [self] criticize better and better, to keep strict accounts, to measure the inequities. Equality, liberty, and justice failed us already in 1789. The pétroleuses knew this; Charlotte Corday knew this. She slaughtered Marat for it. In other words, while it may be true that men take advantage of the system of privilege and entitlement to ward off the burden of everyday life under capitalism, while it may be so that their “postures spring from a fearful refusal to take a position, to make a choice among alternatives that feel compromised,” (Ahorn and Weigel) we might remember that positions don't *feel* compromised; they *are* compromised. Why pretend otherwise? Why insist on playing in the same game just

because we have been allowed some token entry? Why not go for broke and assist in dismantling the metric of substitutions that subjugates us first, subjugates us to the point of always valorizing being better mates, better workers, better slaves, better value makers? Why not try to forge relationships that surf *their* crisis in ways *we* like?

“Tiqqun resembles the mainstream Man-Child to the extent that everything that it does is a delaying tactic, a way of putting off the future.”

One of Tiqqun's central critiques, from *Theory of Bloom* to *Introduction to Civil War*, is the way in which modernity facilitates capitalism through the imposition of clock time, clock time submitted to by workers who in turn submit labor to value. From that vantage, it would be hard to separate the future from the present. The kind of “future” expected of good mates is the temporality of debt.

“The bourgeois Man-Child who refuses to “grow up,” refuses to mate, and refuses domestic labor

¹³ Tiqqun. *PMFTYG*. 30.

resembles the radical who wants to bide his time until capitalism collapses from within. Doing so, Man-Children overlook the fact that social reproduction—the work of having and raising kids—is not mere replication. It can be *creative*.”

Creative? In a global reticulation of value that has long usurped creativity in a saturation of commodity-spectacle that drowns meaning in an excess of signs, in a global reticulation of debt and the unequal value of human lives masked by the ideology, or worse, the idea of “identity and difference,” creativity as such becomes a miracle more than a willful act. How are you gonna will your creativity? How is creativity anything other than self-valorization? Might we not experiment a little with what that “non-replication” might look like? In *our* laboratory might not a little luxuriant indecision be also *our* right? A room of our own in which to navel-gaze or look out the window at the stars—on our own time? (That’s what I for one want; am I secretly a post-partum Man-Child?)

Could it not be that after centuries of being pressed into objectification as placeholders for men in the social order, bound by exchange, that we too want the luxury of pure expenditure without reserve – subjectivity in excess of systems? Could it be that rather than resenting this luxury of “his” (as if he had this, as if his “posturing” didn’t also symptomatize his own incapacity to *act*), we might seize it precisely in order to “imagine” another consistency of everyday life for ourselves? A conspiracy; an other matrix?

Weigel and Ahern bring up motherhood. Why this category? After all, there’s more to me than my own dominant matrix, aka my womb, fun and all as it was to have my baby. And that enjoyment, if it is to be enjoyment and not task performance, must be disarticulated from any coded body. It must be queered, and this queering must and will surpass gender binaries to cross new and unforeseen limits. For while it is true that, as Donna Haraway says, “The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the

illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism,” it is also the case as she says that “This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion...the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction and imagination.”¹⁴ My particular imaginary around maternity, my “dreams,” more or less continue to come true every day in the ongoing process of parenting, but surely I am not reduced to this? Surely this [bio-politically determined maternity] cannot be made to be self same in a definition imposed by “them.”

In this bio-political class war, the proletarian is always already “queer,” gender an assignation of property and its replication.

“And yet, we look at the female faculty who seem to participate in

¹⁴ Donna Haraway. “The Cyborg Manifesto.” (1985) *Manifestly Haraway*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991 and 2016. p. 6-7.

every committee and conference and supervise over half the dissertations in their departments, and we feel afraid.”

My sentiments exactly!

Wouldn't the better process be to get inside this space of crisis? Not the “inside circle” whatever it is, that, as the authors are right to point out, reconstitutes men's monopoly of the discursive field. Can't we find processes (rather than words) that undermine valorization, for we (women) already do that, even and surely especially when we are “living currency” and being that currency is not what we wanted or asked for. What we need is *not* a program, especially one of equality when equality in the face of the uneven history, of women under patriarchy and capitalism, has served to subjugate us ever more under false promises of wealth and legal juridical recognition. Look at Carly Fiorino. Look at Melinda Gates. Look at Oprah. Look at Hillary and now, tragically, Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez... She put up with a Man-Child on the condition that the whole wide world

recognize that he was/is a Man-Child. All she got was pity and lots *and lots* of power. This is, on a grand historical scale, not so different than setting up a chore grid on the fridge and policing your man to be sure he takes out the rubbish. It's just more work, really.

“In place of indecision and irony, a praise song and a program.”

I'm always down for a song; programs, not so much. Women have been the ground of pogroms, oops I mean programs, since at least the 15th C. Me, in the absence of any plan (when my ex-husband proposed after 2 weeks of knowing me, he called it his Five Year Plan—had I only heeded my indecision!), I plan on playing the fold (not the field) on the inside of this “crisis.” This doesn't mean I want to ward off the onerous burden of commitment that comes with embodiment. To the contrary. It's a delicate dialectic, more like lace than machinery, more labile militant fold than vaginal biological theater, ultimately.