



# **F LETTER**

**FOOTNOTES**

**A FOREWORD BY  
AMIA SRINIVASAN**

fn. 1

I was on my knees  
in front of him he was drunk I had  
his dead cock in my mouth Koka kept  
saying suck it suck it don't stop keep  
sucking more more come on suck it  
suck it in a mean voice full of despair  
and impending doom eight months  
later he was killed in Afghanistan

Lida Yusupova

'The law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women,' Catharine MacKinnon wrote in her 1983 essay on the relationship between feminism and the state.<sup>i</sup> The law sees, for example, a woman's short skirt as a come-on, a woman's domestic labour as a gift of love, a woman's pregnancy as her biological destiny, a woman's love for another woman as an aberration. It follows, for MacKinnon, that women are in a bind. They can turn to the state, trying to make their case as abstract persons with abstract rights, knowing all the while that the state will

have little interest in overturning the structures of sexual subordination that gave rise to their complaints. Or they can abandon the state and place their hope in civil society, 'which for women has more closely resembled a state of nature'.

But to say that the law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women is not to say that the state is on the side of men. The state is on the side of the ruling class. The worker is sent to die in the factory, but he can be allowed the satisfactions of beating his wife and children when he gets home. The soldier is sent to die in a war, but, first, he can demand that his dick be sucked. The wages of masculinity are paid out as compensation for the deprivation of political power. Women, who have always worked for free, receive no such wages.

## fn. 2

now there's someone to look up to  
now there's plenty to pick from—the new  
seriousness of buttons and peaked caps  
the subtle irony of collaboration  
so die for us, black sun of the pig's uniform

Elena Georgievskaya

**Anti-carceral feminists dream of a world without prisons, without police. In response they are often asked: what will we do with the the rapists, the murderers? We might begin by responding: which rapists, which murderers? The police and prison guards, or the other ones?**

### fn. 3

there's no-one closer than family  
their thesaurus full of snakes  
b is for bestiary  
glossary: mother means a beast  
who doesn't exist,  
a serpent swallowing her own tail, a food  
chain,  
daughter—that one, there at the end

Daria Serenko

What is to be done with the family? It is perhaps in regard to the family that the men of the left most converge with the men of the right. Men have found it difficult, on the whole, to give up the fantasy of the family (by which I mean the bourgeois, straight, nuclear family) as a place free of the alienation of the market, of the domination of the state. When I was taught Marx as a first year undergraduate, my professor asked: weren't we already acquainted with a working communism, an institution in which each gave according to his ability, and took according to his need—

the family? I did not at the time think to ask: in the family, whose needs are served, whose abilities nourished, and who gets to decide? Who in the family is free?

Too often men on the left talk about ‘saving’ the family from the logic of market capitalism—from the encroachment of ‘neoliberalism’—forgetting that this distinction, between the perversity of market relations and the integrity of familial relations, is a false one. First, what could be more perverse than the alienation from mind and body that the family demands of women? Second, market relations depend on the non-commodified relations of the family.<sup>ii</sup> Silvia Federici wrote: ‘By denying housework a wage and transforming it into an act of love, capital has killed many birds with one stone. First of all, it has gotten a hell of a lot of work almost for free...At the same time, it has also disciplined the male worker...by giving him a servant after he himself has done so much serving at the factory or the office...In the same way as god created Eve to give pleasure to Adam, so did capital create the housewife’.<sup>iii</sup>

**At the level of logic, the market and the family stand in tension; at the level of politics, they form an organic whole.**

## fn. 4

mama says: grandma needs a good hand  
cream, no,  
she needs a different world  
where grandfather doesn't chase her with a  
dog's chain across the garden,  
where food and things create themselves,  
a world of different labor.

Galina Rymbu

One day men will hunt in the morning,  
fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the  
evening and criticise after dinner. Who,  
meanwhile, will hang out the laundry,  
wash the dishes and wipe the baby's  
bottom? Or are those, too, forms of la-  
bour to which we can, suitably freed  
from the strictures of distributed pro-  
duction, have unalienated relation-  
ships? Is human flourishing realised  
in the reflection of a shined sink?

## fn. 5

I'M SENDING YOU SOMETHING  
ON CHAT, IF THEY FIND IT  
THEY'LL SHOOT

Elena Kostyleva

How much hope to place in technology: in the power of automation to free us from the doldrums of labour, in the power of the internet to radically democratise politics, in the power of new technologies to take us beyond the tragic confinements of biology – from birth, from death? I am instinctively inclined to pessimism. I want ‘a world where food and things create themselves’. But all the technologies that were promised to bring about this world have not materialised. Instead, we have technologies that have brought ecological disaster, repressed wages, strengthened the surveillance state, collapsed our free time and stolen our attentions. And still the kitchen sink must be scrubbed.

I am not a luddite. I like it when Paul Preciado talks about hacking the body

with hormones, when the activists of the Arab Spring describe their subversive use of Facebook and Twitter, when the Xenofeminists revive Shulamith Firestone's observation that the natural is not the necessary, when Aaron Bastani imagines a fully-automated luxury communism. I suppose I am a 'techno-realist', if that means believing that an emancipatory technology presupposes emancipation; that it cannot be straightforwardly produced by it. What I oppose is the idea that the emancipatory power of technology can itself can be automated.



As a child myself I loved nature but detested humanity, which seemed to me clearly nature's enemy. I was instinctively a deep ecologist and an anti-natalist. My parents expressed some concern about this—I remember their line was 'how can you care so much about plants and animals when there is so much human suffering?' Later I learned from ecofeminists that the target of such anti-natalist thoughts is inevitably (if only sometimes intentionally) poor women and women of colour. Deep ecology anti-natalism presupposes that the needs of humanity and the needs of nature must be antithetical. Ecofeminists counter that women have long known how to live in equilibrium with nature: Malthusian crises betray masculinist assumptions. Vandana Shiva writes of the rural Himalayan women who knew how to sustainably lop oak trees to produce fodder for livestock, in turn increasing the productivity of their communally tended forests. But the ecofeminist vision has no place for me or others like me: urban, deracinated, wandering. There is nothing I know about the earth except what capitalism

has taught me. This is perhaps the sole premise shared between ecofeminism and right-wing nationalism: that life, in its proper state, is a wholly local phenomenon. Perhaps that is right. From a certain view, the impulse to theorise—that is, the impulse of the intellectual—is itself a sign of alienation, of homelessness.

## fn. 7

I looked online in all the name dictionaries  
couldn't find it

Nastya Denisova

What is it about feminism and poetry?  
Audre Lorde writes that it is 'through  
poetry that we give name to those ideas  
which are—until the poem—nameless  
and formless, about to be birthed, but  
already felt'.<sup>iv</sup> In her poem 'Planetari-  
um', Adrienne Rich writes:

I am an instrument in the shape  
of a woman trying to translate pulsations  
into images for the relief of the body  
and the reconstruction of the mind.

## fn. 8

a poem  
is a place you lick raw that's what a  
poem is

Oksana Vasyakina

**Audre Lorde also writes, in a different essay, that 'Of all the art forms, poetry is the most economical. It is the one which is the most secret, which requires the least physical labor, the least material, and the one which can be done between shifts, in the hospital pantry, on the subway, and on scraps of surplus paper...A room of one's own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a typewriter, and plenty of time.'**<sup>v</sup>

**fn. 9**

**thin trees of reason  
bear not the burden and bend.**

**Yulia Podlubnova**

**Of course, a poetess has plenty of time  
in prison.**

## fn. 10

Oh! and is my writing sufficiently feminist

Oh! and is it sufficiently activist

Oh! and is my writing sufficiently

political

is it relevant to the here and now or am I

hurtling into eternity

or am I hurling into a damned distant

despairing infinity

and does my writing mirror history's

specificity

...

Oh, will it be understood will it be loved

Stanislava Mogileva

Sometimes, we are trying to preserve those things that make human life, should it survive in something like its current form, worth living. We go on not in the hope of saving anything, but so that there might be something worth saving. Is this enough?

## fn. 11

you are the mirror of your ancestors, the  
greatest shame of your people,  
the dying tongue of those at the feast

Egana Djabbarova

Participation in a tradition is a condition of intelligibility. If I am to be understood, I will have to use words—make signs, sing songs—as my ancestors used them, as ‘my people’ use them. They will not understand that I am rejecting them unless I do so in their terms. They will not understand that I am trying to change their ways of speaking unless I speak mostly like them.

But can I not have my own private language, one that makes sense only to me? To this Wittgenstein famously replied: what purpose could such a thing possibly serve?<sup>vi</sup>

How about this: because it is only when I speak nonsense, when my ancestors disown me, my people deny me, that I am free.

fn. 12

slitting open the night, slitting open the night  
of discursivity

...

*Dilige et quod vis fac*, my love, my dear

Lolita Agamalova

What is that unruly thing that cannot be named, that cannot be brought to heel by words? It would be foolish to try to say. But sometimes the poets slit open the night, and give us a glimpse.

—AS

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- <sup>i</sup> Catharine MacKinnon, 'Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State'.**
- <sup>ii</sup> Nancy Fraser, 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode'.**
- <sup>iii</sup> Silvia Federici, 'Wages Against Housework'**
- <sup>iv</sup> Audre Lorde, 'Poetry is not a Luxury'.**
- <sup>v</sup> Audre Lorde, 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference'.**
- <sup>vi</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations**