



# Gender at the Barricades: The Politics and Possibilities of the Riot

TAMMY KOVICH

York University, Canada

---

## Introduction: From the Ashes

Rioting is a paroxysmic attempt to make and unmake society at the same time and has become the pinnacle of the political socialization process for many... (Truong 2017: 574)

The relationship between destruction and creation is a classic preoccupation of revolutionary thought. Mikhail Bakunin, for instance, is arguably best known for his assertion that: “The passion for destruction is, at the same time, a creative passion.” (qtd. in Leier 2009: 111) As tumultuous events that by their very definition include destruction, riots epitomize this adage. Stephen Shukaitis observes that eruptions of overt political antagonism, such as riots, create circumstances “[i]n which other forms of social life emerge”. (2009: 223) While often conceptualized in terms of negation and futility, they can also represent moments of affirmation and possibility. However fleeting and volatile, riots can present openings, creating moments of exception in which the normal rules no longer apply and liberatory potentialities emerge. This widening of possibility is particularly significant in regards to the organization and operation of gender. Reflecting on contemporary uprisings in the Arab world, El, Said, Meari, and Pratt note that: “[g]endered and sexual norms and identities are malleable in general and *particularly* in periods of socio-political upheaval”. (2015: 8; emphasis added) They contend that moments of upheaval provoke socio-political transformation not only in terms of changes to institutions and women’s participation in them, but also changes in “[w]omen’s self-formation, including their bodily performances”. (El, Said, Meari and Pratt 2015: 12) Simply put, periods of riotous activity can provoke changes across various fronts – the effects of which are not limited solely to the realm of formal institutions and arrangements. As the contours of everyday life are expanded and city landscapes are remade, political institutions, cultural norms, social relationships, and people themselves can be transformed. With this in mind, it is the central contention of this paper that riots can have the effect of providing openings to challenge preexisting gender expectations, and encourage subversive practices at both the individual and the collective level.



As defined by Heckert, gender is “[a] system of categorizing ourselves and each other (including bodies, desires, and behaviours) running through every aspect of culture and society, and intertwining with other categories and hierarchies (race, class, sexuality, and so much more”. (2012: 1) Conceptualized broadly as pertaining to how bodies are experienced, categorized, and inscribed with meaning, it fundamentally shapes our world. It produces and reproduces regulatory ideals concerning behaviour, roles, and social organization, and shapes individual and collective life accordingly. The Pinko Collective elaborates: “Gender is imposed, stabilized, and reproduced through a material infrastructure distributed across the social, in private places like the family or sexual intimacy and public places like the street, and in moments like access to the labour market and in relation to sexual violence”. (2019) In sum, gender exists as a materially grounded, social construction. Gender operates at many different levels, and can be conceptualized in terms of the structural/the material; the collective/the relational; the ideological/the discursive; and the individual/the self. Throughout this paper, I consider the various ways in which riots interact with and in some cases change, the operation of gender on each of these fronts.

Commencing from a position that approaches the riot as a valid (and important) expression of social contestation and political revolt, this article explores the significance and transformative potential of the riot with an emphasis on gender relations. Rooted in the contention that the riot marks a valuable site of gender struggle, I ask: What can a riot do to gender? How do riots affect gendered bodies? Do gender norms shape a riot or vice versa? What impact(s) do riotous events have on the social organization of gender? And, how do rioting participants experience gender? In order to answer these questions and to frame the article, I begin with a consideration of the riot as an innately political occurrence, and discuss its defining characteristics. Before turning to a discussion of the liberatory potential of riots, I first outline a short (and admittedly incomplete) history of the relationship between women and political violence, and related feminist critiques. With a foundation thus established, I explore the ways in which riots can produce ruptures in the social organization and individual experience of gender. Looking at an eclectic sampling of the case studies drawn from the early 2000s and into the present, I examine the transformative potential of the riot in relation to four interrelated phenomena: a) the weakening of the public/private divide, and the building of new relationships; b) social reproduction and the emergence of alternative economies of care; c) the breakdown of stereotypes, and the reworking of expectations, norms, and roles; and finally, d) personal transformations and the development of new political subjectivities. From there, I conclude with a brief consideration of the riot as a site of gender abolition.



## Reading Riots Politically: Gender in the Age of Riots

The riot, then, is not a hindrance to ‘real’ struggle or well-intentioned accident where people’s ‘understandable’ anger gets ‘out of control’. Getting out of control is the point, which is precisely why the riot is the foundation from which any future worth the name must be built. (Neel 2014)

At a time when riots have been spreading across the globe, it is appropriate now more than ever to consider the specific role and potential of the riot. Reflecting on obstinate rioting in their home country of Greece and elsewhere, the theoretical collective Blaumachen insists that we have entered into “an era of riots”. (2011) In a similar vein, Joshua Clover in *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings* argues that we are living in an ‘age of riots’ in which the riot has supplanted the strike as the fundamental form of class struggle in our time. (2016) From Hong Kong to Chile, Iraq to Catalonia, Haiti to Ecuador, and many locations in between, riots have become an undeniable force. Before delving into any sort of substantive examination of the riot, it is useful to first define some terminology and contextualize riots as political phenomena. Riots are notoriously difficult to define. As a general rule, riots are not something that can be planned or predicted – they break out for a variety of complex reasons, can be comprised of a diversity of actors, and may or may not make any type of demands. That said, a broad definition is still possible. For the purpose of this paper, I understand riots as forms of disruptive action in which participants reject (for a fleeting period of time) the authority of state forces and established norms. They may or may not entail violence, but the key is that they take place outside of and often in opposition to institutionalized channels for registering grievances. More specifically, they may or may not include activities such as: taking over the streets; property destruction; looting; vandalism; the occupation of public space; and physical confrontation. The illusive and often anti-institutional character of a riot creates a context in which the dismissal of riots as a serious political form is widespread. In the media, in academic literature, and even in activist circles, it is not uncommon for riots to be written off as non-political occurrences defined by irrational ideas, directionless activity, and reactionary impulses. Thus, in order to consider the political relevance of the riot in relation to gender, it is useful to first provide an account of what makes a riot political.

Examining the evolution of the concept of disobedience, Raffaele Laudani argues that in modernity the condition for conceiving of disobedience as political is created by “[u]nderstanding it as an act of agency expressing a clear political intention”. (2013: 3) Related to the question of disobedience, Laudani outlines two distinct trends for understanding political conflict in Western thought. According to Laudani, from the French Revolution and onwards political conflict has been and continues to be predominantly conceptualized “[i]n terms of constituent power, as the activation of a creative energy that gives rise, *ex nihilo*, to a (new) institutional order where human relations are disciplined and organized (constituted power)”. (2013: 4) Political struggle



is framed as a matter of “[t]he acquisition of rights, freedom, and better living conditions that, to be guaranteed, should necessarily be established in an institutional framework” (Laudani 2013: 4). In addition to this orientation, Laudani acknowledges a second modality for understanding political conflict. This articulation conceptualizes political conflict as a matter of destituent power, defined “[a]s a process of continual and generally open-ended withdrawal from legal, political, economic, social, and cultural stumbling blocks developed little by little...”. (2013: 4) For Laudani, both articulations “[a]re an expression of a potency, a power (and will) to be something new and different from what already exists”. (2013: 4) Of the two approaches, it is asserted that the first is dominant, while the second belongs to a minority position. Within this context, the yardstick by which an event or action is gaged to be political concerns a) the extent to which it articulates clear political intentions, and b) the extent to which it is motivated by an institutionalizing end or at the very least, acknowledges the “[i]neradicable presence of power and its institutions”. (Laudani 2013: 4) For the most part, riots do not meet these criteria. They rarely articulate a singular political intention and are often an anti-institutional phenomenon. Unable to meet the criteria of proper political action, unruly forms of disobedience such as riots are deprived of any intrinsically political element and confined “[a]s a specific material object of criminal and judicial law”. (Laudani 2013: 79) In sum, riots are seen as a matter of crime and not of politics.

Departing from the work of Laudani, Christian Scholl provides an alternative approach for delineating what constitutes political action. According to Scholl, social control is maintained through the managing of protest such that dissent is channeled into existing institutions and through that process made largely invisible. (2012: 4) It is argued that liberal democracies and by extension much of Western political thought is plagued by an intrinsic limitation in that it is unable to come to terms with the reality of politics as antagonism. He explains:

Whereas dissent is formally guaranteed in liberal-democratic constitutions, institutionalized forces constantly aim at the elimination of dissent as constituent practice. Albeit recognizing conflicting interests, liberalism is predicated on the idea and practice of reconciling them into a sociopolitical consensus. Ultimately, this means to eliminate visible dissent. (Scholl 2012: 4)

The antagonistic character of the political and the politics of social conflict are thus “[r]educed to the art of administration”. (Scholl 2012: 4) As a counter to this understanding of politics, Scholl evokes the imagery of a barricade. For him, the erection of a barricade speaks to the reality of politics as conflict – it clearly demarcates two positions and demands that people take sides. While the state attempts to channel the conflictual character of the social world into contradictions resolved through mediation, the barricade alludes to an antagonistic relationship defined by irreconcilable positions. Choosing one position necessarily implies the negation of the other. For Scholl, the



barricade thus acts as a conceptual tool for thinking about politics outside of existing institutions. He argues: “Through asserting ownership of conflict in an autonomous action, barricades transcend mediated forms of political representation ...Negating the negation of dissent... protestors on barricades assert that the political, and that the current order is contested”. (Scholl 2012: 5) In this framework, the crux of politics is not institutions, but antagonism.

From this standpoint, riots are absolutely political and in many ways represent politics par excellence. Riots by their volatile nature are difficult to neatly manage and fold into any refined political consensus. When a riot erupts the existence of social conflict becomes difficult to deny – economic, cultural, and political fault lines are made glaringly evident. Furthermore, a riot as an occurrence that transgresses the law often elicits a violent response from the state and as a result reveals the foundation upon which political rule ultimately rests. Returning again to Scholl, he elaborates: “Through the interrelation of the state, violence, and the legal order, a political reading of riots uncovers their politicizing effects on the organization of the social world in general, and of social control, in particular”. (2012: 201) A riot reveals the conflictual nature of politics, as well as the tenuous grounds upon which our social order is built, including those upon which gender rests. Specifically, through women’s participation in riotous events the possibility of calling into question many of gender’s defining features is unleashed. As such, the riot exists as a necessarily political happening with potentially far-reaching gendered implications. In the spirit of not wanting to overly glorify or uncritically conceptualize riots, it is first useful to consider related feminist debates and critiques.

### **Feminism Armed: Debates on Gender, Militancy, and Political Violence**

The combination of a circumscribed constituency, self-righteousness, and the concept of an abstract higher good introduces manhood as the real issue. Manhood identity now depends on waging the struggle... “turf”, tools and weapons, uniforms, become fetishes of that manhood identity... The result is a dead end – the shift from living for a cause – e.g. fighting to enhance quality of living – to dying for a cause now locks into place. Violence... A politics of hope has become a politics of despair. The goal is now too abstract to be attainable, nor can manhood be satisfied by less. (Morgan 2014: 70)

Contrary to popular conception, political violence, including but not limited to rioting, is not new to feminism. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the women’s suffrage movement in Britain was known for its militancy. The Women’s Social and Political Union (WPSU) in particular, became infamous for engaging in activities such as organizing confrontational demonstrations, disrupting political party meetings, destroying government and private property, vandalizing art in public galleries, smashing windows,



and even arson. (Mayhall 2000: 341) This is only snapshot. Jill Richards notes that the retrospective labeling of this period as first-wave feminism “[t]ends to sever the demand to vote from other feminist concerns and international politics more widely”. (2018: 534) In doing so, the designation casts first-wave feminism as a reformist movement of middle-class women seeking parliamentary rights and in turn, severs suffragettes “[f]rom contemporaneous leftist, anticolonial, and avant-garde movements from the same period”. (Richards 2018: 534) While frequently excluded from feminist histories, women who were politically active at the time but critical of the struggle to vote, are still worth consideration and, I would argue, part of the legacy of feminism. Though many did not identify as feminist (seeing feminism as bourgeois), socialist, anarchist, and communist women of the era were concerned with a range of issues that in current parlance would undoubtedly be labeled feminist, such as marriage, birth control, and autonomy. Many of these same women were proponents of and in some cases participated in political violence, including property destruction, armed insurrection, and even assassination. Beyond the impact of the particular historization outlined above, additional factors have contributed to the exclusion of political violence from feminism. For example, the association of certain bodies with reproduction and the framing of women’s identity as that defined by motherhood (or at least its potential) and its corresponding traits (e.g. life-giving, nurturing, caring etc.). (Melzer 2015: 16) Additional factors include the history of women’s role in antimilitarism and their relationship to pacifism, as well as the rise of violence-against women campaigns and its related paradigm “[w]hich positioned women as victims/survivors of male violence and which declared violence as the major structuring force in society, demanded radical (social and political) changes in gender relations for any social justice to become attainable”. (Melzer 2015: 18) It is important to acknowledge the critical role that such things have played in the women’s movement, as well as to acknowledge their broad societal contributions. That said, it is of equal importance that the vibrant diversity of feminist politics is not overlooked and flattened out to be conceptualized as exclusively non-violent.

Feminism’s relationship to political violence did not end with the militant suffragettes or the anti-capitalist revolutionaries, but rather continued on well past the turn of the twentieth century and arguably came to a head in the late 1960s through until the early 1980s. As the 1960s came to a close, the movements of the New Left continued to grow and evolve, with some segments embracing the philosophy of the urban guerilla and taking up arms. This turn was undertaken by both men and women alike, and sparked extensive debate within the women’s movement during this period. In the United States, the Weathermen (later the Weather Underground) and its offshoot the Women’s Brigades, encouraged women to secure guns, promoted violent street demonstrations, and engaged in several bombings. (Lee 2007: 36) Reflecting fondly on a particular riot, one member of the group attests: “The nights of rioting and fighting together had made bonds among the women that years of talking had not done ... Nothing but action, running





in the streets, actually fighting with the pigs could have released such a pent-up force. We were tasting the macho strength that characterizes men, but we felt it keenly as women.” (Stern 2007: 79) The Weatherwomen sought to combine anti-imperialism with feminist politics, and “[s]aw an embrace of militant, aggressive action as liberating and as necessary for smashing male privilege”. (Rocha 2020: 112) This position was not uncontroversial and was critiqued by many within the feminist movement. Some argued that in embracing militancy the weatherwomen were advocating an approach to struggle that reproduced that which feminists were fighting against (i.e. machismo, aggression, and gratuitous violence), and others insisted that the weatherwomen were creating an oppressive situation in which a woman could only be recognized as worthy “[w]hen she is a tougher, better fighter than the men”. (Rocha 2020: 112)

Concurrently, women involved with the Black Panther Party<sup>1</sup> and later the Black Liberation Army, also advocated political militancy. Revolutionary black women saw violence (or the threat of) as necessary for self-defense, combatting sexism, and black liberation. Laura Browder elaborates: “Women’s participation in revolutionary violence became the means of gaining freedom both from the oppression of the dominant culture and from the internalized oppression that manifested itself in the sexism of many black men. Often black feminists invoked women’s potential for armed struggle in calling for equality with black men”. (2006: 151) Such tendencies and the debates that they engendered were not isolated to the U.S. Before exploring this further, it is worth explicitly highlighting that women’s relationship to political violence (as with everything) is not universal. Patricia Melzer elucidates this point:

[B]lack Panther activists, such as Elaine Brown and Assata Shakur, evoke the presence of a violent state and racist environment that create confrontations that the activists can only mitigate with counterviolence [...] white activists, on the other hand [...] encounter state violence primarily through seeking the confrontation with the state. The state’s violent response then radicalizes them. The relationship to violence as either an immediate or a latent presence is often shaped by race,

---

<sup>1</sup> The tendency to view militant tactics as inherently misogynistic, has led to the Black Panther Party being singled out as such. However, this is untrue. While undoubtedly plagued by sexism, up to two-thirds of the Black Panther Party membership were women and their lot was certainly no worse than that of others with whom they shared a common struggle. Reflecting on the civil rights movement in the United States, Osterweill in her topical book *In Defence of Looting: A Riotous History of Uncivil Action* argues that the politics of non-violence which dominated that movement often functioned to silence and exclude women. Osterweill elaborates: “[b]etween the Birmingham riots and up to the March on Washington, during the very height of nonviolent organizing, a number of Black women in the movement, many of whom had been at the forefront of militant, radical efforts, found themselves silenced...nonviolence is actually a collaborationist and misogynist affair”. (2020: 183) She explains further: “Patriarchy and anti-militancy are part of the same political program...The fact is, the non-violent wing of the movement was most pronounced in its misogyny, most middle class in its leadership, and most complicit with the state”. (Osterweill 2020: 185) Just as there is nothing innate to militancy that makes it misogynistic, so too is there nothing innate to non-violence that makes it feminist.



ethnicity, and/or nationality (racism), as well as by class (poverty, foster care, etc.). (2015: 308)

Violence, political or otherwise, is necessarily relational and women's experiences of/with violence are influenced by the specifics of their identity and social location.

Looking to a different continent, relatively similar dynamics were playing out in Western Germany during this same period. Part of the wave of anti-imperialist struggles sweeping the globe, women played central roles in urban guerilla groups such as the Red Army Faction (RAF), the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June Movement, and Revolutionary Cells. (Melzer 2015: 46) As part of their involvement, they advocated political violence and undertook activities that included bank robberies, bombings, kidnapping, and prison breaks, amongst others (cf. Melzer 2015: 49). Against this backdrop, an independent women's guerilla group emerged. The group Red Zora engaged in confrontational protests, arsons, bombings, and physical attacks in support of feminist campaigns against an abortion ban, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and the oppression of women abroad (cf. Karcher 2017: 63). Members of Red Zora "[i]nsisted that it could be liberating and empowering for women to use violent means to fight against male perpetrators of violence and authorities who abused their power [...] and tried to convince other women of the worth of militant tactics". (Karcher 2017: 8) The politics and actions of these groups sparked extensive debate within the women's movement of West Germany. Many were critical of the idea that political violence could be feminist and used as a tool liberation. Seeing a foundational connection between violent action and masculinity, some argued that political violence was "[a] masculine response to a patriarchal system that inherently upholds the destructive role of masculine violence". (Melzer 2015: 66) It was argued that women's use of violent tactics threatened to discredit feminist organizing more broadly, and even worse, was complicit in the perpetuation of patriarchal behaviour.

Turning to more recent examples, debates about political violence (framed as 'diversity of tactics' debates) were present throughout the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the text *And After We Have Burnt Everything*, the anonymous authors offer a critical reflection on riots of this era. One author describes her experience: "Or maybe it is because beneath my black hood, and behind my mask, I am still a woman. And, like it or not, as a woman I worked hard for my militant credentials, said the right things, and proved myself time and time again through trial by fire." (Anonymous 2009a) Thinking back on her "trial by fire", she notes:

For me it was exciting to be on the streets with the boys from the banlieue, racing about on their motor-scooters, given strength by our presence to take back streets that should have been theirs from the start. It was a rush to confront the cops together. Violence can (and in that case, did) unite us and help to build relationships [...] Nevertheless, from time to time I was disturbed by an edge I felt to the atmosphere. It was present on the street, and even more so in the camp, where





sharpened by drink and drugs, it broke out from time to time into small macho dog-fights to establish the hierarchy of the day [...] I struggle with the contradictions in this. (2009a)

Troubled by these reflections, the author problematizes the connection between certain activities with masculinity and raises concerns regarding how violence impacts (and potentially changes) those who wield it. Following the era of the anti-globalization movement, riots and the discussions they inevitably engender continued.

Based on experiences in and around events that took place in the later 2000s, the author of “Why She Doesn’t Give a Fuck About Your Insurrection” presents an analysis riotous politics and patriarchy. Purposefully careful not to suggest that violent struggle is necessarily macho, the author argues in favour of bridging the divide between insurrectionism and identity politics – of “[r]euniting barricades and unshaven legs, bonding riot and grrl” – while critiquing current tendencies within insurrectionary politics (cf. Anonymous 2009b). She argues:

[w]hile you can say all you want about the emotional aspects of the riot [...] there is a simplistic masculine nihilism based on a lack of emotion at play in blind and mindless destruction. This is the macho part: the lack of subjective sensitivity. This nihilism: smashing the windows of non-luxury cars parked on the street.

Rioting in and of itself is not a problem, however the propensity of those involved who have been shaped by male socialization to repudiate emotion and embrace a destruction for the sake of destruction attitude, is. Moving away from North America and back to Europe, during the 2011 Tottenham Riots both commentators and feminists alike had much to say about the participation of women in the events. In the mainstream media, the participation of women and girls in the riots became front page news and was heavily sensationalized. Media outlets focused disproportionately on non-male participants, and placed front and center stories of ‘riot girls’ and ‘London riots chav girls’. (Ringrose 2012: 39) Responding to this moment, feminist theorists sparked dialogue on the gendered nature of the events and sought to interrogate the underlining dynamics. Members of the discussion forum *Rotis not Riots* saw the riots as inextricably linked to hegemonic masculinity and part of “[t]he production of gender capital.” (Kelly and Gill 2012: 69) Within this framework, they argued that the participation of young women was an example of them doing “[g]ender by drawing on the modes of masculinity available to them” in order to establish their presence ‘on the streets’. (Kelly and Gill 2012: 68) The riots thus acted to push/encourage women and girls to perform gender by replicating an aggressive and destructive macho masculinity. With a consideration of some potential critiques laid out it is now possible to move to a discussion of potentialities.



## The Public vs. Private Divide: Out of the Home and Into the Streets

Whatever power we exercise derives from our capacity for organizing collective experience. (Pinko Collective 2019)

A bourgeois notion, the gendered division of society into separate private and public spheres was infamously solidified by the French Revolution of 1789 (cf. Godineau 1998: 28). Despite their dynamic participation in the events, women were excluded from the resulting *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. Denied the rights of active citizenship and banished from the realm of politics, women were enclosed to the domestic sphere to focus on fulfilling the roles of wife and mother (cf. Godineau 1998: 28). This relegation of women to the private sphere was not unique to France, nor is it exclusively a relic from the past. One of the central mechanisms through which gender is produced and reproduced, is the division of people into categories. Within capitalist societies, a key axis upon which gender rests is the division of the social world into distinct realms, such as the separation between the public and private sphere. According to Endnotes, gender is best understood as “[the] anchoring of a certain group of individuals in a specific sphere of social activities”. (2013: 78) This anchoring process then acts to produce and reproduce two separate genders. Once anchored to a specific sphere, “[g]enders concretize themselves as an ensemble of ideal characteristics, defining either the ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’”. (Endnotes 2013: 78) These characteristics may change over time and vary from one part of the world to the next, however they always exist as a relational binary. The distinction between spheres can be framed in a variety of terms, including public/private, production/reproduction, waged/non-waged, or social/non-social. Regardless of the terminology used, the key is the fixing of sexed bodies to specific spheres. Within this framework, the category of woman is delineated by a relegation to the private sphere. Women come to be defined in relation to the activity that most (although not all) can perform – the reproduction of people, and by extension the reproduction of labour power. While production for the purpose of exchange occurs in the public sphere, the reproduction of producers is assigned to the private sphere and falls predominantly on the shoulders of women. To be clear, this is not to claim that women exist solely in the private sphere, but to highlight that this is their overarching positionality.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Of course women engage in wage-labour, however, this engagement is highly gendered. The wage labour of women “[i]s organized in specific forms – particular sectors, managerial hierarchies (the glass-ceiling) and wage levels”. (Riff Raff 2011: 160) Women typically engage in flexible, part-time labour, and are concentrated in specific industries. Gonzalez explains: “Women often perform domestic services in other people’s homes, or else in their offices and airplanes. When women work in factories, they are segregated into labour-intensive jobs requiring delicate hand-work, particularly in textiles, apparel and electronic assembly.”(2011: 228) The specific nature of women’s participation in wage labour does not, as such, signify “[a]n incursion into the public sphere since it does not challenge the existence of that sphere.” (Riff Raff 2011: 160) Women’s wage labour is disarmed and “[c]onfined to a section of the public sphere that thereby becomes a sort of annex to the private sphere.” (Riff Raff 2011: 160) Under these conditions, it is only in



Under these conditions, the organization of gender is challenged in instances like a riot where women break through the divide and erupt into the public sphere. With the breakdown or at the very least the weakening of the public/private divide, a variety of prospects are unleashed. Specifically, women's entrance into the public sphere has two distinct, yet related, consequences. First of all, there is an expansion of the roles and activities available to women. New spaces are opened up in revolt that allow women to access positions and places that may have otherwise been closed off to them. Rowbotham contests: "It is only in the abnormal circumstances of political revolt that it is possible for women to take uncustomary actions". (2014: 204) Examining the Oaxaca Uprising of 2006, Barucha Peller describes how the event created a situation in which women were able to abandon (albeit temporarily) the domestic sphere where they were otherwise beholden to their husbands and family. During the uprising, it was common to find women leading occupations, fighting the police, making Molotov cocktails, and erecting barricades (cf. Peller 2012: 129). Women took over the state radio and television network, produced and broadcasted programming, held workshops, and organized amongst themselves. At night they patrolled and kept watch, passing long hours talking with each other and sharing stories. The informal space created by the uprising granted a certain level of autonomy and allowed for discussions that otherwise never happen. For Peller, the dialogue that took place between women "[w]as perhaps one of the most important results of the takeover". (2012: 133) She explains: "What was before 'private' and 'personal' became a site for resistance. It was during these conversations that women for the first time experienced a space [...] in which they could organize freely and relate experiences, and talk to other women". (Peller 2012: 133) As women had more and more opportunities to talk openly with one another, they began to realize "[t]he true extent of the exploitation they experienced, and the nature of the political struggle at hand". (Peller 2012: 133) The uprising created moments of encounter in which participants could meet others, and in that process begin to see their shared struggles.

In addition to women engaging in new forms of activity, the second consequence of their engagement in the public sphere thus concerns the development of new socialities and relationships. Discussing political action in our world today, The Invisible Committee theorizes the riot as something capable of producing new forms of life. They argue:

The organized riot is capable of producing what this society cannot create: lively and irreversible bonds. Those who dwell on images of violence miss everything that's involved in the fact of taking the risk together of breaking, of tagging, of confronting the cops. One never comes out of one's first riot unchanged... In the riot there is a production and affirmation of friendships, a focused configuration of the world, clear possibilities of action, means close at hand. (Invisible Committee 2017: 14)

---

instances which "... the walls surrounding this annex are broken through (for example, in a strike), that working women erupt into the public sphere." (Riff Raff 2011: 161)



As women took to the streets in Oaxaca, they found each other, and many began to realize “[t]hat their life experiences of abuse in the home through economic hardship and structural oppression were echoed in the voices of other women and they found a common understanding of gender and identity from the public to the private sphere”. (Peller 2012: 134) Women talked to each other of their experiences of violence and subordination, and came to see that they all shared similar stories. Eva, a participant in the uprising explains: “We found we all had the same story, of being abused by husbands, brothers, raped by bosses [...] What we had in common was wanting to take down the system in order to change society into one where women are empowered”. (Peller 2012: 133) Through the process of revolt and building new relationships, women were able to de-mystify their social position to realize that their struggle against capitalism and the state was inextricably connected to “[t]heir rebellion against their husbands and families in the domestic sphere”. (Peller 2012: 128) In other words, the uprising enabled the women involved to constitute (or at the very least conceptualize themselves as) a collective force and act accordingly.

More recently, at protests against gendered violence in Mexico women have very much stepped into the public domain. Women have taken over the streets, fought with police, engaged in vandalism, property destruction, and in the words of one participant “[b]urned what we could”. (Anonymous 2019) Reflecting on these actions, that same participant explains the motivation behind them as follows:

I was born with this body which marks me across history and across lands as something which they call woman, and they have created me to be submissive, stepped-upon, assaulted, to be a mother, to be a caretaker, to wait on others, to put up with anything, to be quiet, to serve the servant of the boss and the boss as well and that’s why it was all of us there, that’s why we don’t leave behind a single one and we celebrate the actions of us all. (Anonymous 2019)

The riotous event brought together those who share the experience of living in a body marked as such, and provided space for women to find each other in struggle. In a communiqué referencing events that took place August 2019, the author explicitly touches upon this dynamic. She talks about recognizing herself “[i]n the glances of another”, and describes this further, stating: “Yesterday’s events allowed for us to see and recognize each other with complicit glances, with bodies covered in glitter, naked & vibrant bodies that we are not alone [...] And we do not want to continue hiding and perpetuating a social system of death, neither as women, nor as human beings”. (Anonymous 2019) In the same vein, an anonymous participant in several Parisian riots speaks of such moments openings for women to find each other and overcome the limitations placed upon them. They explain: “Even if we would like to destroy gender, it still does us good to come together with those who share the same feelings, who feel in their bodies what it means to be designated as woman and who also want to escape these



confines". (Anonymous 2017: 1) For the author, riotous events present the opportunity for women to "[l]ash out at their place in the world in order to escape it, while acknowledging that they are marked by the social categories from which they emerged". (Anonymous 2017: 2) By means of their participation in the public sphere of revolt, women are able to challenge their relegation of the private sphere and destabilize the division of society into distinct realms of activity. This process occurs on a broader societal level as an external development that triggers a re-ordering of social relations and the development of new bonds, as well as an internal process in which women come to question their previous position in general.

Riotous events can create the space for new forms of social interaction and facilitate the blossoming of new relationships. However, such moments are fleeting. The question then becomes, how can such developments be sustained? In the words of Jackie Wang: "Rioters know that co-conspirators can easily become snitches. But under what conditions do we remain friends? Bonds are not formed automatically in the *now*, but in the *duration*, in the creation of new rhythms of being rooted in the reproduction of everyday life. What forms of life support the building of bonds across time?" (2018) A can riot unleash liberatory potential, but it must be cared for and nurtured after the event and beyond.

### **Social Reproduction: From Looting to the Commune**

I think riots and militant violent action in general get slandered as being macho and bro-y, and lots of our male comrades like to project that sort of image. That definitely happens, but I actually think riots are incredibly femme...It is about pleasure and social reproduction. You care for one another by getting rid of the thing that makes that impossible, which is the police and property. You attack the thing that makes caring impossible in order to have things for free, to share pleasure on the street. Obviously, riots are not the revolution in and of themselves. But they gesture toward the world to come, where the streets are spaces where we are free to be happy, and be with each other, and care for each other. (Osterweil 2020)

Very much related to the division of society into different spheres of activity, one of the ways in which gender functions is to delineate who is (and who is not) responsible for social reproduction in our society. This entails not only the physical reproduction of humans, but also the provision of both material and emotional care. Silvia Federici describes social reproduction as "[a]ll the activities that produce our daily life and at the same time, in a capitalist society, also reproduce labor-power [...] On the one hand it reproduces us as people, and on the other it reproduces us as exploitable workers". (2018) Within this context, Federici insists that a key question for feminists "[i]s how to turn reproductive work into a reproduction of our struggle". (2018) Relegated to the private sphere, women are disproportionately responsible for birthing, raising, and caring



for children into their adulthood, as well as for providing care for any others in their household. In practical terms, this means things like managing a home, cooking meals, cleaning, nurturing, and looking after sick or elderly family members, amongst other things. Against this backdrop, moments of political upheaval can offer a different answer to the question of social reproduction – one that moves away from the family and towards the communal. By no means do riots represent a lasting solution to resolving this dynamic. However, in some circumstances they present alternative possibilities for addressing material needs and organizing care. Dylan Taylor elaborates: “The potential of the riot lies not in what it immediately is, but in what it might become: an impulse that opens onto non-capitalist forms of social reproduction. The riot is a politics of becoming”. (2019: 84) Riotous outbreaks create a situation where unique opportunities emerge to address the question of social reproduction. These opportunities include the acquiring of material goods through looting, and the collectivization of basic reproduction in encampments or occupations.

First and perhaps most obvious, riots present opportunities to acquire material goods. Looting is a standard feature of a riot, creating opportunities that don't otherwise exist for the appropriation of goods. Clover notes: “[riotous] activities are first and foremost practical: located in community defence, in the meeting of needs, and in an attempt to break the power of immiserating sites and apparatuses”. (2019) The promise of capitalism – of access to endless commodities goes unfulfilled for most people. Luxury goods remain trapped behind glass display windows, and many cannot even afford basic material necessities. In what Endnotes refers to as “proletarian shopping”, the looting made possible in a riot can act as a great equalizer in which people can just take what they are otherwise denied. (2013: 148) Reflecting on the Watts Riots of 1965, Guy Debord in *The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy* suggests that the act of looting can function as a challenge to the very logic of capitalism. He argues:

Through theft and gift they rediscover a use that immediately refutes the oppressive rationality of the commodity, revealing its relations and even its production to be arbitrary and unnecessary [...] Once it is no longer bought, the commodity lies open to criticism and alteration, whatever particular form it may take. (1965)

Even within the context of a riot devoid of any explicit political content, such as sports-related outbursts (e.g. 2011 Vancouver Stanley Cup Riot), looting is common, challenging the sanctity of the commodity form and by extension the very logic that defines and reproduces our economy.

Beyond being considered in relation to the commodity form, it is important to understand looting in relation to race. Property and material wealth are built on and reproduce the social, economic, and political organization of race, and are crucial to the history and ongoing functioning of white supremacy. Raven Rokia clarifies: “Since





colonization and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, white wealth has been and continues to be built off the backs of black labour, off the exploitation of African resources and bodies.” (2013) Instead of waiting for formal institutions to grant reparations, black people who loot take them (admittedly on a small scale), and thus looting facilitates a direct redistribution of wealth. Vicky Osterweil explains in simple terms: “[w]hen people of colour loot a store, they are taking back a miniscule proportion of what has historically been stolen from them, from their ancestral history and language to the basic safety of their children on the street today.” (2014) This is even more true for black women whose “[e]nslavement and underpaid and undervalued productive and reproductive labour” underlie white supremacist capitalism, and who “[a]re doubly and uniquely exploited on the basis of their blackness and their womanhood.” (Samudzi and Anderson 2018: 79)

From the transition to capitalism and onwards, riots and in particular food riots, were commonplace throughout Europe and on occasion North America. It’s worth noting that such revolts were often initiated by, and largely comprised of, women. (Thompson 1971: 115) Women alongside men took part in riots against enclosures, and led participants to pull down fences, dismantle gates, and light bonfires, amongst other activities. (Neeson 1984: 129) Following this period, food riots slowly became the new norm and the presence of women was so conspicuous that many even dubbed them “women’s riots”. (Federici 2004: 80) While some historians have debated this fact on the basis of a lack verifiable sources, none have disputed the claim that women took part in such events. (Malcolm and Thwaites 1982: 32-4) To the extent that there is disagreement, it more or less relates to the question of how mixed crowds were (i.e. was it predominantly comprised of women, or was it predominantly comprised of a combination of both men and women), as well as the question of whether or not women took on leadership roles (cf. Bohstedt 1988). In any case, women were, to varying degrees, active participants in such events. Due to their role as family caretakers, and as a result of having less money and less access to employment than men women “[despite] their subordinate status, [...] took quickly to the streets when food prices went up, or when rumour spread that the grain supplies were being removed from town”. (Federici 2004: 80) In the height of the American Civil War, particularly in the Confederate states, women led riots were widespread. (Williams and Williams 2002: 51) As the war dragged on, Southern planters continued to prioritize cotton production over grain and produce farming, leading to food shortages and substantial price hikes. Facing destitution, women rioted in cities throughout the confederacy. During so called “female raids”, groups of women ransacked stores, government warehouses and depots, and even rail cars, as well as attacked wagons filled with food. (Williams and Williams 2002: 69) Armed with knives and pistols, they looted items such as flour, sugar, rice, and corn, and on occasion burnt storehouses to the ground. (Williams and Williams 2002: 78) Throughout WW1 and up until the eve of the February Revolution, subsistence riots were a regular occurrence in Russia.



Part and parcel of the broader crisis that eventually brought down the Tsar, these events were frequently instigated by women. With the drafting of fathers and husbands into the war, women's relationship to the public sphere and the state was no longer mediated in the same manner and thus "women had no choice but to act on their own behalf". (Engel 1997: 708) Given this context, it is not surprising that in the majority of subsistence riots "in which the gender of the rioters can be ascertained, lower-class women predominated". (Engel 1997: 707)

Delving further into the twentieth century, in the midst of the Great Depression food riots were widespread in many places. Al Sandine attests: "Though most hunger riots went unreported for fear that such news could encourage additional acts of food vigilantism, the organized looting of food was a nationwide phenomenon". (2009: 26) During the era of the Civil Rights Movement in America, riots in major cities (and elsewhere) were commonplace and frequently included acts of looting. Following the now infamous Los Angeles riots of 1992, a news article featured in *The Washington Post* tells the story of four women who took advantage of the moment to engage in looting in order to provide for their families. The article elaborates:

Their mission was to find supplies for their families. The mothers became looters. Vanessa Coleman carried stolen diapers, potatoes and canned goods in her laundry bag. Sylvia White filled her car with beauty supplies, hot dogs and more. Janet returned home with potato chips and junk food for her frightened children. And a quarter-century after her grandmother looted in Watts, Patricia Ann took her 14-year-old daughter with her to steal milk and other essentials. (Duke and Escobar, 1992)

Referencing these events, one observer describes her feelings: "It makes a Black woman like me, I was so proud, these were our children, and we had raised them correctly [...] I think that 500 years of free labour is supposed to be paid for by any means necessary, and they were taking Pampers and stuff, who can blame them for looting for their babies." (Fiske and Hancock 2016: 200) Looting was both political and practical to the extent that helped to meet real and pressing materials needs. Moving to more contemporary examples, the 2011 London Riots which broke as the result of the police murder of Mark Duggan became infamous for the amount of looting they entailed, and many observers commented on the visible presence of women within the riot. It is worth noting that in the case of this example and so many others, it is difficult if not impossible, to get anything approximating an exact gender breakdown of rioters and as such, to know specifically how many women participated in the event. The nature of a riot (i.e. people engaging in criminal activity and/or violence, and purposively trying to conceal their faces and bodies) makes individual identification both difficult and undesirable. Furthermore, gender ideology and gendered assumptions cloud people's observations, shaping their perception and interpretation of events. Liz Kelly and Aisha Gill explain: "Moreover, the



fact that women and girls were involved is far from unprecedented; however, it was considered newsworthy because crime and the use of violence still lie outside most normative constructs of femininity”.<sup>3</sup> (2012: 219) While important to highlight, none of this detracts from women’s engagement with riots in general or in regards to specific instances. As such, we can now return to a further discussion of women’s looting during the London Riots and more.

Throughout the London Riots, looting was widespread and women partook in the festivities. An article in *The Guardian* notes that women were witnessed “[t]aking nappies, baby food, and bags of rice”. (Topping, Diski and Clifton 2011) Within the same article, a participant interviewed speaks of seeing a woman looting a large box of laundry detergent. She recalls: “I said to her, ‘Why did you take soap powder?’ and she goes, ‘Because I need it,’ and I just looked at her and I couldn’t even be bothered [to] laugh or say ‘Have some pride,’ because I could understand.” (qtd. in Topping, Diski and Clifton 2011) At yet another anti-police riot, this time in Ferguson, Missouri and in response to the murder of Michael Brown, looting was common. One participant recounts: “People came out carrying diapers, food, other shit they needed to survive – not to mention the alcohol, cigarillos and other things they needed to celebrate. A ten year old girl carrying a large sack full of food said ‘we’re gonna eat good at school tomorrow’ as she passed by.” (Anonymous 2014) More recently in the United States, riots responding to the 2020 murder of George Floyd by police created similar openings. Looting was extensive and played a notable role in the riots. A participant in the Minneapolis Uprising elaborates:

First, it liberated supplies to heal and nourish the crowd [...] Second, looting boosted the crowd’s morale by creating solidarity and joy through a shared act of collective transgression. The act of gift giving and the spirit of generosity was made accessible to all, providing a positive counterpoint to the head-to-head conflicts with the police. (Anonymous 2020a)

Explaining further, they situate all of this as part of “[t]he emergence of communal social life in riots”. (2020) In one example, they recount a moment with friends: “We saw a woman walking a grocery cart full of pampers and steaks back to her house. A group that was taking a snack and a water break on the corner clapped in applause as she rolled by”. (2020)

Above and beyond the simple acquisition of goods, moments of revolt can open up possibilities for the reorganization of social reproduction. Particularly when riots extend into prolonged (or at least somewhat prolonged) periods of upheaval, opportunities can

---

<sup>3</sup> The women’s magazine *Marie Claire* provides a particularly glowing example of this dynamic. In an article entitled “Girls Gone Wild: London’s Female Looters”, the author describes detailed scenes of women looting and frames these activities as the most shocking and arguably most disturbing element of the riots. To conclude the piece, the author muses: “Perhaps as alarming as the rise in gun crime is the rise in girl crime”. (Knight 2011)



arise to develop new and more communally oriented approaches to social reproduction. O'Brien explains:

When large numbers of people directly confront the state and capital in forms that bring them into a shared location for multiple days, they often develop practices for collectively procuring food, cooking, and shared eating; for sleeping arrangements in proximity to each other; for sharing child rearing responsibilities and aiding disabled comrades. All work to share the work of care, to enable diverse participation, and to protect each other against harm. (2019)

Instances wherein revolt leads to the ongoing occupation of particular public areas, for example the Occupy movement, can result in the creation of alternative avenues for providing for the needs of those involved. Returning again to the example of Oaxaca, women involved developed strategies to and essentially acted to collectivize their reproductive work. Peller elaborates: "Resources such as food, water, gasoline and medical supplies were re-appropriated and redistributed, and in the same way, reproductive labour was re-appropriated from the specialized sphere of the home and became the underscoring way to reimagine social life and collective bonds". (2016: 72) During the 2011 Indignados movement in Spain, participants came together under the slogan "The square is our home!" and within their occupations established everything from community kitchens to nurseries, from gardens to libraries and theatres, and much in-between (cf. Sevilla-Buitrago 2014: 97). A participant in the riots in Minneapolis describes people "[s]etting up mutual aid tents all over the streets for redistributing looted water and snacks" and notes that people also took over a hotel to provide housing for those who needed it (Anonymous 2020b). Examples of such occurrences are plentiful, and often play an important role in maintaining and caring for people through moments of upheaval.

### **The Discursive Terrain: Political Violence, Identity, and the Riot**

Female violence is what happens when politics breaks down into riots, revolutions, or anarchy, when things are out of control. (Elshtain 1995: 170)

As a system of social categorization, gender divides bodies into distinct identity groupings and is utilized as a regulatory mechanism of social control. Part and parcel of this operation, is the perpetuation and enforcement of a strict gender binary and relatedly, the association of men with masculinities and women with femininities. Our bodies are the vehicle through which we experience and engage with the world, and are inscribed with meaning. Men are presumed to be masculine, women presumed to be feminine, and each are to be treated accordingly. These categories are prescriptive in that they dictate the specific characteristics, traits, and attributes an individual is expected to embody, as well as outline the specific types of activity an individual is expected to participate in.



Masculinities and femininities thus entail “[b]ehaviour expectations, stereotypes and rules that apply to persons because they are understood to be members of particular sex categories”. (Gentry and Sjoberg 2015: 5) Put plainly, at the level of discourse and ideology gender tells us what a man or woman should/could be and what a man or woman should/could do. Gender stereotypes, tropes, assumptions, and norms, serve as an evaluative framework through which people try to make sense of themselves and the world. However, and this is of particular relevance to this section, idealized gender stereotypes and established gender norms are not immutable – they can be unsettled and ultimately transformed. Eruptions of revolt such as riots, present opportunities to reshape the social and cultural landscape of everyday life. In such moments, there is often an expansion of the kinds of activities people can engage in (e.g. women taking on roles traditionally coded as masculine), as well as a reworking of other gendered societal conventions. Mary Nash explains:

Gender-appropriate behaviour, which subscribes to expected social norms of respectable femininity, embodies patterns of beliefs, customs, values, and rules of conduct. Male-defined social conventions are embedded in social structures and cultural norms. Moments of social upheaval and unsettlement facilitate a breakdown of such norms and legitimize changes in behaviour. (1995: 53)

Established societal customs, dominant norms, and even entrenched cultural values can be affected. To explore this more thoroughly, this section considers how riotous events can challenge restrictive gender norms and corresponding stereotypes, as well as challenge rigid identity categories and corresponding social divisions/separations.

Those who engage in confrontational, destructive, or otherwise violent activities (fairly standard in a riot), do so in a gendered world. The experience of, and significance assigned to, such activities is impacted by gender. In both popular culture and the public imaginary more broadly, violence is most frequently conceived of as something *done* to women, but not something that women *do*. Whether interpersonal or in relation to a political conflict, violence is predominantly treated as something done to women by men, and more often than not it is framed as masculine. Of course, the corollary of this is the association of non-violence and passivity with femininity. Gender informs the types of agency readily available to a person, as well as delimits the legitimacy of types of practices and actions, including the use of violence. Laura Shepherd elaborates: “[t]he cultural matrices of intelligibility that constitute and govern the limits of sex/gender are themselves constituted by, and constitutive of, specific idea(l)s about agency and violence”. (2012: 6) In other words, the capacity or lack thereof for violence is foundational (amongst other things) to the normative working of gender. Men who engage in violence define and are defined by masculinity through their embodiment of idealized gender norms. In the words of Patricia Melzer: “Masculinity and femininity become parameters of political actions that are embodied by men and women,





respectively, and transgressions of these alignments produce a moment of cultural crisis”. (2015: 20) Women who embody violence challenge idealized norms, and threaten to redefine femininity. A.K. Thompson elaborates:

Women’s possibilities for asserting political power have diminished in inverse proportion to men’s historical efforts to encapsulate politically powerful practices within a normative and coherent masculine identity [...] Consequently, laying claim to the capacity for violence is not only about expanding women activists’ arsenal of available tactics. It is, more pressingly, about provoking a breakdown in normative male/female gender designations and relations themselves. (2012: 112)

On the streets and at the barricades, when women engage in militant practices they embody their gender in a manner that provokes a breakdown in violent male/non-violent female gender categorizations. Their performance of gender fails to adhere to and thus can call into question, ingrained gender stereotypes, norms, and expectations.

In the collaboratively written pamphlet *Who is Oakland?*, the authors discuss their involvement in what was arguably the most confrontational occupy encampment to take hold on American soil, *Occupy Oakland*. In addition to the standard occupation of a city park, its participants engaged in widespread property destruction, building occupations, fighting with police, and even the blockade of a local port. Reflecting on these events, the authors highlight the refusal of many participants to accept and act in accordance with stereotypes concerning gender, militancy, and violence: “We refuse a politics which infantilizes us and people who look like us, and which continually paints nonwhite and/or nonmale demographics as helpless, vulnerable, and incapable of fighting for our own liberation”. (Anonymous 2012: 21) The authors note that while it is not their desire to participate in violence, it is sometimes necessary and does not fall solely within the purview of certain identities (i.e. men). Operating with a similar ethos, from 2007-2011 the queer anarchist network *Bash Back!* took part in countless confrontational demonstrations and several riots throughout the United States. Comprised of women and queers, the project thoroughly rejected victimhood, unapologetically advocated vengeance (i.e. “bashing back”), and challenged certain perceptions regarding identity and militancy. Looking back on *Bash Back!*, one member describes the activities of the network as part of “[a] small attempt to address a fallacy in popular conceptions of insurrection – that insurrection is ‘macho’, ‘masculine’, or that it reinforces gender norms”. (Baroque and Eanelli 2011: 290) For those involved, riotous events could be “[a] force that acts upon gender normality”. (2011: 290)

Echoing these assertions, the anonymous author of the zine *God Only Knows What Devils We Are* describes riots as moments that enable participants to interrupt the processes that make us into gendered subjects, as well as to cast off assumptions about our bodies and “[r]e-inscribe them as a source of power”. (Anonymous 2017: 24) In a communiqué from the organization *The Black Women Movement*, members describe riots





as opportunities for women to challenge their allegedly passive nature. They argue: “It is up to us to remind those who doubt our ability and strength that we are just as capable. We can be tender, so can men, we can smash a window, so can men, we can cry, so can men, we can throw a brick, so can men. In short we can smash the state in heels if we choose to!”. (2011) There are many such examples. Returning again to Thompson, in *Black Bloc, White Riot: Anti-Globalization and the Genealogy of Dissent* he discusses women’s involvement in the anti-globalization movement. Reviewing activist communiques and interviews, Thompson surveys the experiences of women who participated in black bloc riots at summit protests, and notes that for many, such events marked moments in which they felt liberated (or at least more free) from the constraints of gender. He quotes one participant:

Blocking up to become the Black Bloc is a great equalizer. With everyone looking the same – everyone’s hair tucked away, our faces obscured by masks, I’m nothing less and nothing more than one entity moving in the whole. Everyone is capable of the same. And the politics of ‘nice girls don’t throw stones’ is suspended, and I’m free to act outside of the traditional ‘serve tea, not Molotov cocktails’ rules. (quoted in Thompson 2010: 46)

It is argued that “[m]oments like the riot (in which people choose to reject, or fail to approximate, established norms), representational certainties begin to unravel”. (2010:118)

In the midst of ongoing rioting in Hong Kong in 2019, many commented on women’s participation and, relatedly, on the evolution of gender stereotypes across the region. Previous to the uprising, the standard stereotype was that of “kong girls” – similar to the North American “basic bitch” stereotype, a kong girl is “[m]aterialistic, apolitical, high-maintenance, and temperamental”. (Steger 2019) However, observers and participants alike speak of this shifting as more and more women have taken to the frontlines to join the ranks of “brave fighters”. In the words of one protester: “We can see a different side of Hong Kong girls. Some of them might display ‘Kong Girl behavior’ to their boyfriends or family before the protests, but (at the) frontline they are brave, courageous, and resourceful. Some females even go further than the guys”. (Steger: 2019) Another protester observes that “[w]omen have become more daring as the movement evolved” and mentions that through her participation she “[r]ealised that women can do more”. (Carvalho 2019) The riots have created an opportunity for participants to go against established norms to step outside of gendered limitations and relate to the world in a different way. This is not the first time such a dynamic has played.

Contemplating their involvement in the 2005 Banlieues Riots in Paris, some women have discussed their involvement as something that helped to challenge the predominate conception of women in the banlieues. Generally viewed (and treated) as submissive and subordinate to men, women nonetheless “[p]layed a role in the events which was



anything but secondary” and their actions were “[f]ar from embodying and accepting the role of grim subordination to male power”. (Quadrelli 2007) According to one rioter, the events functioned “[t]o crack open a conceptual framework generally regarded as unassailable”. (Quadrelli 2007) The conceptual framework being the concept of a gender hierarchy in which women are seen as less capable than, as well as subordinate to, men. Moving to another example, some of those involved in the 2014 Ferguson Rebellion have talked about experiencing a brief reprieve from societal gender expectations during the events. One participant notes: “Any time people were trying to [...] enforce strict gender roles that men should be the combatants and women should go home, people would actively refuse it, shout at them, tell them to go home, say “fuck you, this is our struggle”. (Anonymous 2014) In the heat of the events, people felt more capable of pushing back against and moving outside of pre-existing gender expectations.

Above and beyond the question of gender norms and expectations, riots can furthermore create spaces capable of challenging pre-existing identities more broadly. Alain Badiou in his exploration of contemporary uprisings argues that the riot creates moments capable of challenging the construction and operation of identity. According to Badiou, central to the ruling logic of the state is the generation “[o]f an imaginary object that is supposed to embody an identitarian average”. (2012: 73) He explains:

For example, let us call F (for ‘French’) the set of distinguishing features that authorize the state to refer all the time to the ‘French’ – what identifies them and their particular rights, which are entirely different from those who ‘are not’ French – as if there existed a completely identifiable ‘being-French’ [...] The main thing is that one can make reference to this purely rhetorical ‘French person’ as if he or she existed. (Badiou 2012: 74)

This artificial object is used by the state and those who obey it as “[a] means of accessing what is normal and what is not”. (Badiou 2012: 74) An individual who deviates from this identity is suspect to the state and public opinion. In addition to constructing an idealized identity object, this identitarian formulation also creates a corollary in the creation of ‘separating names’ to define collectivities of suspects. (Badiou 2012: 77) Examples of such separating names would include ‘Arab’, ‘black’, ‘the poor’, ‘woman’, ‘queer’ etc. In response to this reality, Badiou asserts that justice today must be understood as that which lays bare the fiction of the identitarian object and eradicates separating words (cf. 2012: 77). And for Badiou, this possibility can be found in a riot. The riot is seen as an event that can challenge identitarian separations as people break away from prescribed roles and come together in the streets: “When an emancipatory event is in fact rooted in an historical riot, we straightaway observe the disappearance of, or at least a considerable reduction in, separating names”. (Badiou 2012: 77) Individual identities are absorbed by the moment, as diverse people participate and are accepted across identitarian divides. Put simply, “[r]iots, like other forms of political action, can build solidarity. They can



create strong feelings of common identity”. (Stephens 2014) A riot can create a situation (however fleeting) in which the power of the identitarian fiction is thrown into crisis by the emergence of a generic power.

Drawing again on the Ferguson example, a participant in the riots attests: “[i]n these moments of rupture, identities start to break apart and collapse [...] being in this uprising was the closest I’ve ever felt to people taking real steps to breaking apart identities based on race, gender and class”. (Anonymous 2014) They continue: “Obviously these identities weren’t actually gone, and there were still many dynamics at play based on them, but they started to weaken”. (2014) In a similar vein, a participant in the 2008 riots in Greece asserts: “The men and women rising up comprised a mixture of politically conscious individuals, university and high-school students, migrants, unemployed, and precarious workers who threw their identities into the melting pot of the rioting streets”. (Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou 2011: 29) They explain further: “Although people repeatedly gathered under pre-formed identities, new identities arose through the December conflicts and everyday presence on the street: those of the struggling subjects, who meet and act together, creating a new collective”. (Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou 2011: 29) In the thick of a riot, identities and their corresponding restrictions can begin to fade.

The riot presents opportunities to overcome pre-existing divisions and can aid in the bridging of difference. That said, this is neither eternal, nor limitless and all encompassing. New collectivities can emerge and identities can be transformed, however the underlining realities of separation do not disappear and bridges are more often than not temporary. K. Aarons sheds light on this reality:

We overcome the *whatness* of our constructed identities, the socio-institutional categories designed to reinforce our separation, by becoming a *how* together in the streets, when our bodies interact by means of a shared gesture of conflictuality (e.g. acting together while rioting, building barricades, looting, fighting the police, defending neighbourhoods, etc.). Yet what doesn’t always accompany this is an attentiveness to the different *orders* and *registers* of dissatisfaction that animate these conflicts [...] What is forgotten is the fact that being willing to throw down alongside others in the streets doesn’t mean that the characteristic or paradigmatic form of suffering that pushed one to do so is *analogous* to that of others next to you. (2016)

Difference can be overcome and solidarity built in the flush of a riot, however this is not the same as long-term or even fundamental change. Riotous moments and “[t]he process of liberating provides for a common goal that more or less overrides the need for recognition of singular identities, when the moments pass, it is exactly those ties between singular identities which allows the fires to continue to burn.” (Anonymous 2019) Even if



the goal is to abolish identity as such, that does not change the fact that it structures one's experience of, and is often the impetus of struggle.

### **Emboldened Bodies and Personal Transformations: There's No Turning Back**

In the surreal, utopian nonsense of it all, and at the heart of riot, was the anarchy of coloured girls: treason en masse, tumult, gathering together, the mutual collaboration required to confront the prison authorities and the police, the willingness to lose one-self and become something greater. (Hartman 2018: 485)

Discussing the participation of women in moments of revolt, Kelly observes that even in instances where neither material nor institutional gains are achieved, women may nonetheless achieve important, intangible gains. (1987: 157) Riff Raff attests: "Going out changes one's life in the strongest sense. That women go out into the struggles changes both its form and content". (2011) In the process of their participation, women may experience (in some cases for the first time) their power to change events and in doing so, come to be changed themselves. The experience of riotous events, however brief, can be a transformative one. In addition to destabilizing social norms and cultural values, through such events "new community and revolutionary subjectivities are produced". (Meari 2015: 82) For Fabien Truong, riots are best conceptualized "[a]s a situated and situating biographical moment, a personal experience which is both signifying and significant. (2017: 546) As mentioned above, through struggle new collective and individual identities may emerge, and those involved may come to understand themselves and their place in the world differently. In all of the examples discussed throughout this paper, women engaged in actions and behaviours that crossed long-standing societal and individual boundaries. Through their participation in revolt women rejected their socially assigned passivity to become political actors capable of impacting history. This is a necessarily formative experience. It not only disrupts preexisting social conventions, but also disrupts an individual's sense of self – of who they are, what they want, and what they are capable of. In this context, women's subjectivities and political consciousness can be profoundly altered.

Reflecting on the riots that broke throughout Argentina in 2001, Barbara Sutton observes that "[w]omen's political participation can change women's perceptions of their own embodied power." (2007: 153) Based on interviews with participants, Sutton recounts story after story of women overcoming both fear and internalized sexism to participate in various antagonistic activities including blocking roads, confronting police, and taking part in the occupation of factories. According to Sutton, these various accounts underscore the extent to which "[w]omen's embodied resistance in causes they care about may open unimagined possibilities about their bodily capacities". (2007: 153) Through their participation in the uprising, women developed (or in some cases further developed)



a critical consciousness and in turn, expanded their capacity to conceptualize themselves as political actors and to take action. This process produced a sense of empowerment and political possibility that became a palpable feeling in women's lives. For many, these changes became permanent, however (as always) women's experiences were diverse. Women's experience of/in a riot is shaped by a variety of factors in addition to gender and sexuality. Discussing recent dynamics of American protests, Jessica Watters notes: "Where Black Lives Matter protesters have been met with SWAT teams in riot gear armed with tear gas and rubber bullets, [disproportionately white] Women's March protestors were welcomed by cheerful officers willing to take selfies and march alongside them." (2017: 205) While referencing particular examples, the overall take away from this observation – that race matters and fundamentally shapes the experiences of women – is broadly applicable. With this in mind, the last point of this section considers the transformative potential to the riot in relation to race.

When thinking through the experience of rioters, particularly in regards to heavily racialized anti-police riots, it is worth briefly touching on the work of Frantz Fanon. While practicing as a psychiatrist in Algeria in the 1950s, Fanon became engaged with the anti-colonial struggle taking place around him. According to Fanon colonialism was founded by and maintained through violence, and this violence has a profound effect on those living under its rule. It impacts the body, the psyche, and the culture of the colonized, and acts as a dehumanizing spectre – destroying their spirit and sense of self, and stripping them of dignity and agency. (Nayar 2012: 71) This is not exclusively an overseas phenomenon. Majid Sharifi and Sean Chabot elaborate: "Colonial violence occurs in the periphery as well as the center of the contemporary world-system [...] poor Black people in American cities also often live in occupied territories that are reminiscent of *The Wretched of the Earth*." (2019: 268) Within this context, the only way to challenge colonial violence is to break the colonizer's monopoly on violence. Counter-violence allows the colonized "[t]o experience and struggle for freedom" and it is through "[f]reedom that the colonized begin recognizing themselves as humans endowed with agential power, right to self-determination, and self-respect at the individual and community level." (Sharifi and Chabot 2019: 260) David Austin et al. explain further: "Revolutionary violence restores humanity in the abused [...] returns dignity and sense of self which the oppressor's violence had destroyed. When a person says 'I am not putting up with this 's...'. s/he ceases to be the animal s/he has been reduced to..." (2013: 141) Violent acts can be transformative, functioning as a "cleansing force" that "[r]ids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passing and despairing attitude." (Fanon 2007: 51) Turning to a concrete example, a participant in the 2020 Minneapolis riots reflects:

In a lot of ways, the repression we experience can only be healed through the process of revolt [...] It can be an opportunity for the release of a freedom that is always struggling to break through the hopeless daily façade we call "normal" –



liberation from racialization, patriarchy, capital [...] The uprising in Minneapolis after the murder of the George Floyd was such a release. An exit from this reality, from the hopelessness that history imposes on us. It represents the possible return of the repressed as actors against the various levels of invisibility that are imposed upon us. (Anonymous 2020c)

For the participant and those around them, their involvement in the uprising was healing – the actions that they took broke through their despair and sense of powerlessness, and in doing so, allowed them to conceptualize themselves as actors in history. The author explains further: “Seeing a police precinct burn is a much-needed release for all those who have been forced inside one, for everyone who has been beaten inside it, for everyone who loves someone who has been murdered by the police. Seeing cops run scared from a righteous crowd is a release. It’s healing.” (Anonymous 2020c) This is not the solution to oppression and exploitation, but a move in that direction. For Fanon and this case, violence is not an end in and of itself, but a first step in the long struggle towards liberation.

## Conclusion

Rioting is no final remedy for the problems of the unheard. But it is not to be discounted, either. It is a sometimes-potent tool in the repertoire of political resources at their disposal. (D’Arcy 2013: 157)

Riots can present openings for the transgression of dominant gender ideologies and related expectations. As eruptions of innately volatile politics, they engender moments in which established social boundaries, political arrangements, and cultural customs become more malleable. Throughout this paper I have argued that in the context of such moments, opportunities present themselves and practices emerge that can impact and in some cases even rupture preexisting gender identities, relationships, and norms. Looking at a variety of case studies and drawing on academic, activist, and media sources, the question of riots and their interaction with and impact on gender was explored in relational to several interconnected dynamics: women’s increasing involvement in the realm of the public sphere and the development of new relationships based in shared struggles; the development of unconventional approaches to addressing social reproduction; the breakdown and reworking of gender stereotypes; and the personal transformation of individuals. In the course of uprisings, however brief, possibilities emerge for women to subvert existing norms, take on new roles, and in the process challenge existing concepts of sexual difference. Women’s engagement in riotous events can mark a challenge to social, cultural and material underpinnings of gender. This is significant, but also not something that should be overstated or uncritically glorified.





Women are not a homogenous group; they do have universal interests or share a singular existence, and gender is only one relation of power amongst many that shapes lived experience. Beyond these considerations, it is important not to fall into the trap of romanticization. While riots can create liberatory spaces and possibilities for women, such events also come with specific gendered risks, dangers, and repercussions. For better or worse, “women’s bodies in protest situations are viewed as cultural markers that defy normative forms of femininity, and they are closely pursued and monitored as a result.” (Monk, Gilmore and Jackson 2019: 70) It is not as if patriarchy magically disappears during riotous moments, and women taking part frequently need to contend with the ingrained prejudices of others (particularly men) involved. Patriarchal ideas and ideals, concerning gender are carried into political uprisings, creating a context in which women must fight on two fronts – against both external and internal enemies. In this context women often find themselves in positions where they must engage in the dual challenge of a) struggling against a targeted system of oppression (for example, the state, capitalism, colonialism, etc.), and b) struggling against the sexism and misogyny held by other participants. Furthermore, as women step outside of the home and into the public sphere it is not uncommon for husbands to respond negatively. Angered by what they perceive as women’s abandonment of their rightful role (understood in terms of performing domestic duties), husbands may react with violence. (Peller 2012: 142) Unfortunately, this is not the only place where women face potential violence – this threat is present both inside of the home and outside on the streets.

Women frequently have to contend with state violence, and may even face particularly harsh treatment on basis of their double transgression – against acceptable forms of political engagement, and against acceptable forms of gender presentation. Monk, Gilmore, and Jackson note that women frequently experience intensified police brutality that is intended to operate “[a]s a disciplinary function to regulate acceptable forms of protest *and* acceptable forms of femininity.” (2019: 66) In addition to threat of arrest and imprisonment, women also face the threat of being beaten and sexually assaulted by state forces. Speaking about recent events in Chile, Murillo notes that women have faced much abuse at the hands of military officers and the police, and observes that sexual violence is a key weapon used against women in times of political revolt. (2019)

That said, even in the face of such threats, riotous events do present openings that allow for the transgression and in some cases the transformation of, subjugating gender norms at both the collective and individual level.



## Works Cited

- Aarons, K. (2016). "No Selves to Abolish: Afropessimism, Anti-Politics and The End of the World." *Mute Magazine*. <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/no-selves-to-abolish-afropessimism-anti-politics-and-end-world>>. [accessed 30 May 2020]
- Anonymous (2009a). "And After We've Burnt Everything? Correspondences about Revolutionary Strategy and Emotions". *Anarchist Library*. <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/a-few-rioters-and-after-we-have-burnt-everything/>>. [accessed 21 October 2020]
- Anonymous (2014). "An Eye for an Eye Makes Our Masters Blind: One Account of Last Night's Anti-Police Riot." *Anti-State STL*.  
<<https://www.antistatestl.noblogs.org/2014/08/11/an-eye-for-an-eye-makes-the-masters-blind-an-account-of-an-anti-police-riot/>>. [accessed 10 June 2020]
- Anonymous (2014). "Car, Gun, Autonomy: On the Finer Points of the Recent Revolt in Ferguson." *Avalanche: Anarchist Correspondence* 3:18-24.
- Anonymous (2017). *Breaking Free of Gender Through Friendship and Attack*. Hamilton: The Tower Inprint.
- Anonymous (2020b). "Dispatch from the Rebellion in Minneapolis." *Ill Will Editions*. <<https://illwilleditions.com/dispatch-from-the-rebellion-in-minneapolis/>>. [accessed 12 June 2020]
- Anonymous (2020c). "Snapshots from the Uprising: Accounts from Three Weeks of Countrywide Revolt." *Autonomies*. <<https://autonomies.org/2020/06/snapshots-from-the-uprising/>>.
- Anonymous (2020a). "The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis: An Account and Analysis." *Crimethinc*. <[https://crimethinc.com/2020/06/10/the-siege-of-the-third-precinct-in-minneapolis-an-account-and-analysis](https://crimethinc.com/2020/06/10/the-siege-of-the-third-precinct-in-minneapolis-an-account-and-analysis/)>. [accessed 20 June 2020]
- Anonymous (2019). "We Burned What We Could: Anti-Police Revolt in Mexico City." *It's Going Down*. <<https://itsgoingdown.org/anti-police-revolt-mexico-city/>>. [accessed 20 August 2019]
- Anonymous (2012). "Who is Oakland: Anti-Oppression Activism, the Politics of Safety. State Co-optation." Libcom. <<https://libcom.org/library/who-oakland-anti-%09oppression-activism-politics-safety-state-co-optation>>. [accessed 02 Nov. 2019]
- Anonymous (2009b). "Why She Doesn't Give a Fuck About Your Insurrection." *AnarchaLibrary*. <<http://anarchalibrary.blogspot.com/2010/09/why-she-doesnt-give-fuck-about-your.html>>.
- Austin, David, Aziz Choudry, Radha D'Souza and Sunera Thobani (2013). "Reflections on Fanon's Legacy." *Interface* 5.1: 128-150.
- Badiou, Alain (2012). *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*. London: Verso.



- Black Women Movement (2011). "Women in the Black Bloc." *La Haine*. <[https://www.lahaine.org/english/international/women\\_bloc.htm](https://www.lahaine.org/english/international/women_bloc.htm)>. [accessed 12 Nov. 2019]
- Blaumachen Collective (2011). "The Era of Riots has Started." *Libcom*. <<https://libcom.org/library/era-riots-has-started%E2%80%A6>>. [accessed 08 Nov. 2019]
- Bohstedt, John (1988). "Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots 1790-1810." *Past & Present* 120: 88-122.
- Browder, Laura (2006). *Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Carvalho, Raquel (2019). "#ProtestToo: the women at the forefront of Hong Kong's anti-government movement." *South China Morning Post*. <<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3025146/protesttoo-women-forefront-hong-kongs-anti-government-movement>>. [accessed 11 Nov. 2019]
- Clover, Joshua (2019). "Total Riot: The Other Side". *The Sociological Review*. <<https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/total-riot-the-other-side/>>. [accessed 09 Nov. 2019]
- Clover, Joshua (2016). *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings*. London: Verso.
- D'Arcy, Stephen. (2013). *Languages of the Unheard: Why Militant Protest is Good for Democracy*. Toronto: Between the Lines Press.
- Debord, Guy (1965). "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy." *Situationist International Online*. <<https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/decline.html>>. [accessed 08 Nov. 2019]
- Duke, Lynne and Gabriel Escobar (1992). "A Looting Binge Born of Necessity, Opportunity." *The Washington Post*. <<https://washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/05/10/a-looting-binge-born-of-necessity-opportunity/9d781dfc-3886-4bdf-a315-19586869cfce>>. [accessed 2 Nov. 2019]
- El Said, Maha, Lena Meari and Nicola Pratt, Nicola (2015). *Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance: Lessons from the Arab World*. London: Zed Books.
- Elshtain, Jean (1995). *Women and War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Endnotes Collective (2013). "A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats." *Endnotes* 3: 92-172.
- Endnotes Collective (2013). "The Logic of Gender on the Separation of Spheres and The Process of Abjection." *Endnotes* 3: 56-91.
- Engel, Barbara (1997). "Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War 1." *The Journal of Modern History* 69: 696-721.
- Federici, Silvia (2004). *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia.
- Federici, Silvia and Marina Sitrin (2018). "Social Reproduction: Between the Wage and the Commons." *Roar Magazine* 2: 34- 43.
- Fiske, John and Black Hawk Hancock (2016). *Media Matters: Race & Gender in U.S. Politics*. New York: Routledge.



- Frantz, Fanon (2007). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fray, Baroque and Tegan Eanelli (2011). *Queer Ultra Violence: Bash Back! Anthology*. Oakland: Ardent Press.
- Gentry, Caron and Laura Sjoberg (2015). *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking About Women's Violence in Global Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilje, Paul (1996). *Rioting in America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Godineau, Dominique (1998). *The women of Paris and their French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hartman, Saidiya (2018). "The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 117.3: 465-490.
- Heckert, Jamie (2012). *Lexicon Series: Gender*. Brooklyn: Institute for Anarchist Studies.
- Johnson, Marilyn. (1998). "Gender, Race, and Rumours: Re-examining the 1943 Race Riots." *Gender & History* 10.2: 252-277.
- Karcher, Katharina (2018). "Deeds Not Words!: A Comparative Analysis of Feminist Militancy in Pre- and Post-1968 Europe." *Gender, Emancipation, and Political Violence: Rethinking the Legacy of 1968*. Ed. Sarah Colvin and Katharina Karcher. London: Routledge.
- Karcher, Katharina (2017). *Sisters in Arms: Militant Feminisms in the Federal Republic of Germany Since 1968*. New York: Berghahn.
- Kelly, Linda (1989). *Women of the French Revolution*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Kelly, Liz and Aisha K. Gill (2012). "Rotis not Riots: A Feminist Dialogue on the Riots and their Aftermath." *Safer Communities* 11.1: 62-72.
- Laudani, Raffaele (2013). *Disobedience in Western Political Thought: A Genealogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, Choonib (2017). "Women's Liberation and Sixties Armed Resistance." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11.1: 25-51.
- Leier, Mark (2009). *Bakunin: The Creative Passion*. New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Malcolm, Thomas and Jennifer Grimmett (1982). *Women in Protest, 1800-1850*. New York: Routledge.
- Makrygianni, Vaso and Haris Tsavdaroglou (2013). "Athens Urban Space Riots: From December 2008 Revolt to Mobilizations in the Era of Crisis." *Quaderns-E* 18.2: 22-39.
- Mayhall, Laura E. (2003). *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meari, Lena (2015). "Resignifying 'Sexual' Colonial Power Techniques: The Experiences of Palestinian Women Political Prisoners." *Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance*. Ed. Maha El Said, Lena Meari, and Nicola Pratt. London: Zed Books.
- Melzer, Patricia (2015). *Death in the Shape of a Young Girl*. New York: New York University Press.



- Monk, Helen, Joanna Gilmore and William Jackson (2019). "Gendering Pacification: Policing Women at Anti-Fracking Protests". *Feminist Review* 122:64-79.
- Morgan, Robin (2014). *The Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Murillo, Celeste (2019). "Protestors Report Beatings and Sexual Assault by Military and Riot Police". *Left Voice*. <<https://www.leftvoice.org/chile-reports-of-abuse-and-threats-of-rape-against-imprisoned-protesters>>. [accessed 21 October 2020]
- Nash, Mary (1995). *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War*. Denver: Arden Press.
- Nayar, Pramod (2012). *Frantz Fanon*. New York: Routledge.
- Neel, Phil (2014). "Why Riot?." *Ultra*. <<http://www.ultra-com.org/project/why-riot/>>. [accessed 12 Oct. 2019]
- Neeson, J.M. (1984). "The Opponents of Enclosure in Eighteenth-Century Northamptonshire." *Past & Present* 105: 114-139.
- Osterweil, Vicky (2020). "Burning Down the 3<sup>rd</sup> Police Precinct Changed Everything." *The Nation*. <<https://www.thenation.com/article/activism/police-precinct-minneapolis/>>. [accessed 14 June 2020]
- Osterweil, Vicky (2014). "In Defence of Looting." *The New Inquiry*. <<https://thenewinquiry.com/in-defense-of-looting/>>. [accessed 10 June 2020]
- Osterweil, Vicky (2020). *In Defence of Looting: A Riotous History of Uncivil Action*. New York: Bold Type Books.
- Osterweil, Vicky (2020). "Stealing Away America." (Zoe Samudzi Interviewer) *Jewish Currents*. <<https://jewishcurrents.org/stealing-away-in-america/>>. [accessed 16 June 2020]
- Peller, Barucha (2012). "Women in Uprising: The Oaxaca Commune, The State, and Reproductive Labour." *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism* 1: 125-144.
- Peller, Barucha (2016). "Self-Reproduction and the Oaxaca Commune." *Roar Magazine* 1: 70-77.
- Pinko Collective (2019). "Manifesto." *Pinko*. <<https://pinko.online/web/zine>>. [accessed 30 Oct. 2019]
- Quadrelli, Emilio (2007). "Grassroots Political Militants: Banlieusards and Politics". *Mute Magazine*. <<http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/grassroots-political-militants-banlieusards-and-politics>>. [accessed 11 Nov. 2019]
- Rakia, Raven (2013). "Black Riot." *The New Inquiry*. <<https://thenewinquiry.com/black-riot/>>. [accessed 16 June. 2020]
- Richards, Jill (2018). "The Long Middle: Reading Women's Riots." *ELH* 85.2: 533-565.
- Riff Raff (2011). "The Suspended Step of Communization." *Sic Journal* 1: 147-169.
- Ringrose, Jessica (2012). *Postfeminist Education? Girls and the Sexual Politics of Schooling*. London: Routledge.





- Rocha, Mona (2020). *The Weatherwomen: Militant Feminists of the Weather Underground*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Rowbotham, Shelia (2014). *Women, Resistance, and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World*. London: Verso.
- Samudzi, Zoe and William C. Anderson (2018). *As Black as Resistance: Finding the Conditions for Liberation*. Chico: AK Press.
- Sandine, Al (2009). *The Taming of the American Crowd: From Food Stamp Riots to Shopping Sprees*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Scholl, Christian (2012). *Two Sides of a Barricade: (Dis)Order and Summit Protest in Europe*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Sevilla-Buitrago, Alvaro (2015). "Outraged Spatialities: The Production of Public Space in the #spanishrevolution." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14.1: 90-103.
- Sharifi, Majid and Sean Chabot (2019). "Fanon's New Humanism as Antidote to Today's Colonial Violence." *Frantz Fanon and Emancipatory Social Theory*. Ed. Dustin Byrd and Seyed Javad Miri. Boston: Brill, 251-271.
- Shepherd, Laura (2012). "Introduction." *Rethinking Political Violence: Gender, Agency and Political Violence*. Ed. Linda Ahall and Laura Shepherd. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1-15.
- Shukaitis, Stevphen (2009). *Imaginal Machines: Autonomy & Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.
- Steger, Isabella (2019). "How Hong Kong's female protesters are reclaiming the 'basic bitch' stereotype." *Quartz*. <<https://qz.com/1716703/hong-kong-female-protesters-challenge-pampered-stereotype/>>. [accessed 09 Oct. 2019]
- Stephens, Robert (2014). "In Defense of Ferguson." *Jacobin*. <<https://jacobin-mag.com/2014/08/in-defense-of-the-ferguson-riots/>>. [accessed 16 June 2020]
- Stern, Susan (2007). *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of a Revolutionary Woman*. Chicago: Rutgers University Press.
- Sutton, Barbara (2008). "Poner el Cuerpo: Women's Embodiment and Political Resistance in Argentina." *Latin American Politics and Society* 49.3: 129- 162.
- Taylor, Dylan (2019). "Riots, Strikes, and Radical Politics in Aotearoa New Zealand." *Counterfutures Journal* 7:75-115.
- The Invisible Committee (2017). *Now*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Thompson, A.K (2010). *Black Bloc, White Riot: Anti-Globalization and the Genealogy of Dissent*. Oakland: AK Press.
- Thompson, E.P (1971). "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century." *Past & Present* 50: 76-136.
- Topping, Alexandra, Diski Rebek and Helen Clifton (2011). "The Women Who Rioted." *The Guardian*. <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/dec/09/women-who-rioted-english-riots>>. [accessed 10 Oct. 2019]





- Truong, Fabien (2017). "Total Rioting: From Metaphysics to Politics." *The Sociological Review* 65.4: 563-577.
- Wang, Jacky (2018). "Trauma Monsters and Feminist Forms of Life." *Critique & Practice*. <<http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/praxis1313/jackie-wang-trauma-monsters-and-feminist-forms-of-life/>>. [accessed 05 June 2020]
- Watters, Jessica (2017). "Pink Hats and Black Fists: The Role of Women in the Black Lives Matter Movement." *Journal of Women and Law* 24.1: 199-207.
- Williams, Teresa and David Williams (2002). "The Women Rising: Cotton, Class, and Confederate Georgia's Rioting Women." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 86.1: 49-83.