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From critique of capital to decolonial analysis

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Rethinking Feminism: From Critique of Capital to Decolonial Analysis

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The process of writing this paper has been like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In a certain sense it is a very personal puzzle, composed of pieces of text I have read through decades of feminist thinking and writing. Nevertheless, I hope that my jigsaw puzzle exercise will make sense also to other feminists dissatisfied with the way in which feminist struggle is often reduced to issues of gender equality in terms of women's equality with men in the context of an otherwise unchanged capitalist society: 'corporate feminism' as this kind of feminism has been named by Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser in *Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto* (2019). The puzzle is about how to conceptualize gender and how to think feminist struggle in anti-capitalist ways, combining feminist and anti-capitalist struggle. Such combination of struggles was at the heart of the Danish New Women's Movement in the 1970s. However, as the 1980s unfolded with neo-liberal economy, New Public Management and all, the anti-capitalist spirit evaporated. The task of figuring out conceptions of gender fit for anti-capitalist struggle was left undone.

In the 1970s several of us in the Danish Women's Movement worked with these issues. It was a taxing task. Marx, eloquent on class, was (almost) silent regarding gender, and Simone de Beauvoir

(1949) did not offer concepts of struggle beyond women's equality with men within the framework of capitalist society. Some feminist authors did go further – but still we did not manage putting things together in convincing ways. Over the years daily life and other kinds of feminist thinking took us elsewhere. Old feminist books spent decades on dusty bookshelves, like the volumes of Marx' *Capital* (the Danish 1971 translation from Bibliotek Rhodos), still there but never touched. Until now, when ideas from these old feminist books, along with Marx, re-emerge as pieces of the puzzle I'll try to put together in this text. An important piece in the puzzle is Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* (2004). This book (which I read only last year) has helped me decisively in getting the puzzle together – even if the design of my puzzle also goes beyond Federici's book.

The oldest puzzle piece is Marx' *Capital*, which I read in the summer of 1970. The New Women's Movement (in Denmark called *Rødstrømperne*, the Redstocking Movement) had come to Copenhagen in the spring of 1970. I joined the following year, and since then I have been a feminist. In 1980 I went to Mozambique, a country newly liberated from Portuguese colonial power and with a socialist government. I worked in the National Women's Organization, where one

of my tasks was to do an anthropological mapping of women's conditions in town and in the countryside. In later research work in Mozambique, I have focused on sexualities, struck by the remarkably different structuring of sexualities compared to what I knew from back home (Arnfred 2011). Back in Denmark at Roskilde University I worked as a teacher in International Development Studies; as years passed by, I became greatly dissatisfied with the 'Gender and Development' lines of thinking – such as expressed for instance in *The Gender & Development Reader* (1997) or in *Reversed Realities* by Naila Kabeer (1994) – however not being able to figure out what exactly was wrong. Unsolved theoretical issues were piling up: how to think about gender and sexuality in an African setting, how to combine feminist and anti-capitalist thinking ... Questions such as these are the context and the content of this jigsaw puzzle exercise.

My puzzle pieces are of several generations, which is to say that I met these texts at different points in time. After Marx, the next generation is the feminist books of the 1980s, the ones on the dusty shelves: Carolyn Merchant: *The Death of Nature* (1980), Maria Mies: *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) and Grethe Jacobsen: *Kvindeskikkelser og Kvindeliv i Danmarks Midaldaler (Women and Women's Lives in Medieval Denmark)* (1986). I read these books in the 1980s, and I liked them very much. I felt that they were saying something crucial, but I wasn't able to apply their insights to my own thinking at the time. Now, at long last these old and cherished books have found their spaces in my newly laid puzzle. The following generation of puzzle pieces is the books by African feminists, Ifi Amadiume: *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987) and Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí: *The Invention of Women. Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997). I read these books in the late 1990s, while struggling with the analysis of my data material from Mozambique; they helped me a lot. In the context of my reading of the last generation of puzzle pieces in the paper, the work of Maria Lugones (2007, 2010, 2020) and other decolonial thinkers, I realized to which extent Amadiume and Oyèwùmí actually think

along decolonial lines. A final puzzle piece is the *Feminist Manifesto* (2019) mentioned above.

In the paper I am faithful to the jigsaw puzzle idea, providing many quotes, but put into context. In order to facilitate your way through the puzzle, I'll here give an overall view – somewhat like the picture on the lid of the cardboard box with all puzzle pieces inside: What the puzzle is all about is how to think about gender, sexuality and power, acknowledging that our usual way of thinking about this is a product of a very specific European history – a history of the development of capitalism – and that the resulting concepts are not universal. By focusing on the European "war against women", the witch hunts (roughly the 16th and 17th centuries) and seeing this as an aspect of the origin, the basic condition of capitalism, Federici indicates that capitalism and subordination of women go together. Patriarchy existed before, and patriarchy exists elsewhere, but not of this calibre. Philosophers of the time, founding fathers of 'modern science', provide lines of thinking legitimizing capital's exploitation of nature, and of women. Protestantism further limits women's worlds to just the household, as wife and mother. All way through this European history of thinking and of women's subordination, it has to be kept in mind, first how colonialism, slavery, racism and subordination of non-European people have fomented capitalism as an economic system, and second how most of these processes are still ongoing, and how lines of thought legitimizing and supporting this economic system are proliferating also today. Decolonial thinkers aim to show these connections and also to suggest alternative lines of thinking about women, gender and sexualities.

Primitive Accumulation in a Global Context

In her 2004 book: *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Silvia Federici takes her point of departure in Marx' 'Primitive Accumulation', one of the last chapters in *Capital* volume 1. Marx here deals with the beginnings of capitalist economy, rooted in "conquest,

enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly: force" (Marx 1887/1990, 620). Peasants were removed from access to the land, on which they had grown the crops and kept the animals that gave them subsistence. In England this process took place in the last part of the 15th century and the first part of the 16th century, the so-called 'enclosure of the commons'. The expropriation of peasant's land transformed peasant producers into 'free labourers', 'sellers of themselves', or rather: sellers of their labour power: wage-workers. "The history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (Marx 1887/1990, 621). Another aspect of primitive accumulation, and a precondition for the establishment of capitalism as such, was – as noted, but not analysed by Marx – "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting for black skins ... These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation" (Marx 1887/1990, 651).

Federici reiterates the processes described by Marx in great historical detail and with a focus on the implications for women, a focus which is nowhere present in Marx' work. "What would a history of capitalist development be like if seen not from the viewpoint of the formation of the proletariat, but from the kitchens and bedrooms in which labour-power is daily and generationally reproduced?", she asks (Federici 2018, 473). Seen from this vantage point, the process of primitive accumulation was not only about expropriation of peasant producers from their land; what simultaneously took place was also expropriation of women's bodies.

Anibal Quijano, founding father of the modern/coloniality/decoloniality school of thought, describes the process of primitive accumulation from a Latin American position and with a focus on race (also not present in Marx' work): This "new pattern of world-Eurocentric colonial/modern capitalist power ... was based on the idea of 'race' and the 'racial' social classification of world population." 'Race' as "a new mental category to codify

relations between conquering and conquered populations ... as biologically structural and hierarchical differences between the dominant and the dominated. So those relations of domination came to be considered as 'natural'" (Quijano 2000, 216-218). Capitalism, modernity and coloniality are interlinked: "Modernity refers to a specific historical experience that began with America ... But it was Western Europe that, since the 17th century, formally and systematically elaborated the new intersubjective universe in a new knowledge perspective. And it was Western Europe that termed that knowledge perspective 'modernity' and 'rationality'" (Quijano 2000, 220-221).

Man of Reason and Death of Nature

Marx was critical to the ruthless force applied in capital's 'primitive accumulation', but he took 'nature' for granted as a resource for humans to exploit. Marx' thinking is a product of modernity, standing on the shoulders of people like Francis Bacon and René Descartes, to be introduced below. Caroline Merchant is critical to this whole line of thinking. In her book *The Death of Nature* (1980) she describes how in pre-capitalist Europe 'nature' was perceived as a living organism, a nurturing mother with inherent creative power. In the 16th and 17th centuries however, the dominant metaphor binding together cosmos, nature and society changed from the organism to the machine. Previously "the image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother had served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body ... " (Merchant 1980, 3). But commercial mining would soon require exactly that.

Thus, new ideas were needed, ideas of nature as a resource to be exploited, legitimizing technological developments and enhanced production. Merchant discusses in fascinating detail the development of these ideas and the emergence of 'modern science'; an entire chapter is devoted to one of the celebrated fathers of this thinking, Francis Bacon (1561-1626). In *The Masculine*

Birth of Time (1603) Bacon presented a program advocating the control of nature for human benefit. From having been conceived as a creative and life-giving power, to be treated with reverence and respect, in Bacon's thinking 'nature' is a resource to be mastered and controlled. At the same time male dominance is emphasized. Men are the ones to enact the mastering and control of nature – including women, who are categorized as close to/part of nature. René Descartes (1596-1650), another important thinker of this era, emphasises the supreme importance of rational thought. "Cogito ergo sum" is spoken from the position of a male ego, the Man of Reason (male, white, European). The world is organized in terms of *hierarchical dichotomies*: mind/body, human/nature, man/woman. Mind is human, masculine, body is nature, feminine. Man is master of nature and of women. As pointed out by Quijano: "after Descartes 'body' was simply forgotten as a necessary component of the idea of human or person ... 'body' was installed in rational knowledge as a lower status 'object' of study" (Quijano 2000, 221).

At this point in time, patriarchy as such was not a new phenomenon, but in the thinking of people like Bacon and Descartes patriarchy was cemented and reinforced. The idea that 'nature' should be mastered by Man had been around for a long time. Actually, this is what God says to Adam in Genesis, chapter 1 of *The Holy Bible*. Likewise in classical Greece, patriarchal ideas were afoot, as expressed by Aristotle, who contributed gestation to men, while women giving birth only supplied raw matter. Thus: Patriarchy as such was nothing new; what is at issue is the form and shape of patriarchy, and to which extent it is socially dominant or not. Even under conditions of patriarchy, in the pre-capitalist, pre-scientific era in Europe, there was a parallel line of women's knowledge, particularly connected to healing, procreation, midwifery, birth control. Knowledge about giving birth and how to prevent pregnancy, knowledge about sexuality was female knowledge. During the European witch hunts – "the state sponsored terror campaign against women" (Federici 2004, 63) – women with this kind of knowledge were particularly targeted.

The European Great Witch Hunt ca 1450-1750

"The rise of capitalism was coeval with a war against women" (Federici 2004, 14). The European witch hunts took place during the same centuries as the initial processes of capital accumulation, and the object was the same: subordination, control and exploitation of nature for the benefit of capital accumulation. Supported by thinking in terms of hierarchical dichotomies introduced by 'modern science', women's bodies were classified as 'nature', and categorized, along with 'nature' in general, as objects to be expropriated and controlled by men. In this process also women's knowledge was destroyed. In the witch hunts women's control of reproduction was labelled 'reproductive crimes' and women guilty of such knowledge/such crimes were seized and burned at the stake. The witch hunts were a campaign – waged by the church and by the upper classes – against this knowledge, and against women's relative autonomy.

Capitalism, as Federici points out, is deeply dependent on women as producers of the most important commodity for capitalist production: labour power. For this very reason women and women's fertility must be controlled. To Federici the witch hunts signal the decisive subordination of women to capital, and to men, "the equivalent of the historic defeat, to which Friedrich Engel's alludes in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884)" (Federici 2004, 102). This was the process through which women became subordinated to men in ways they had not been before.

Women historians and activists of the New Women's Movement in the 1970s started re-interpreting the figure of 'the witch' and re-writing the history of the European witch hunts (Mies 1986, among others). Federici builds on this work; she stresses the value of being a Marxist, seeing capitalism as the bottom line, the basic condition of our society, but she also criticises Marx: "Marx' under-theorisation of domestic work [implies that he] ignore[s] the largest activity on this planet and a major ground of divisions within the working

class" (Federici 2018, 471). Marx' shortcomings in this respect are not oversights, she says, but signs of limits his theoretical and political work could not overcome. "But ours must" (Federici 2018, 474). This is exactly what I am trying to do in this text: Major areas beyond the limits of Marx' thinking are gender, race and nature. I focus on gender, also looking into ways in which *the very concepts of gender* as used in the Western world today date back to early modernity thinkers at the rise of capitalism.

Women's Work and Women's Knowledge

Re-reading Maria Mies: *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) I was surprised to see to which extent she actually develops insights regarding the connections between subjugation of nature and subordination of women. She also notes the role of the witch hunts in this context, pointing to the fact that "the persecution of the witches was a manifestation of the rising modern society and not, as is usually believed, a remnant of the irrational 'dark' middle ages" (Mies 1986, 83). She expands on the implications of this for conceptions of 'work' and 'knowledge', criticising the way in which 'modern science' has divided the human body itself into "truly 'human' parts (head and hand) and 'natural' or purely 'animal' parts (genitalia, womb etc.)" (Mies 1986, 46). For women, however, this division does not work: "Women can experience their *whole* body as productive, not only their hands or their heads." Furthermore, it is of crucial importance "that women's activity in producing children and milk is understood as truly *human*, that is conscious social activity. ... [Thus] the activity of women in bearing and rearing children has to be understood as *work*," (Mies 1986, 53). Writing from a black feminist point of view Patricia Hill Collins (1994) coins the term *motherwork* for this type of work. "It is one of the greatest obstacles to women's liberation," Mies continues, "that these activities are still interpreted as purely physiological functions, comparable to those of other mammals, and lying outside the sphere of

conscious human influence. This view ... has to be understood as a result of the patriarchal and capitalist division of labour and not as its precondition" (Mies 1986, 54). This is the crux of the matter: the fallacy of defining the production of human lives as 'nature', and the importance of acknowledging women's work in this context.

This whole thing of seeing women as active and conscious producers of new lives is connected, of course, to the kinds of women's knowledge, which were targeted and demonized during the witch hunts, but which feminists like Mies see in a different light: "In the course of their history, women ... acquired through observation and experiment a vast body of experiential knowledge about the functions of their bodies, about the rhythms of menstruation, about pregnancy and childbirth. ... They were not helpless victims of the generative forces of their bodies ... Women in pre-patriarchal societies knew better how to regulate the number of their children and the frequency of births than do modern women, who have lost this knowledge through their subjection to the patriarchal capitalist civilizing process" (Mies 1986, 54).

Protestantism, Housewifization, Heterosexuality

In Denmark, the witch hunts may be seen as a direct implication of the introduction of Protestantism by royal decree of 1536. Protestantism again linked to emerging capitalism and the alliance of the King with the bourgeoisie, against the old powers of the nobility and the Church. With the Reformation the land and the riches of the Church fell to the Crown. The first witch execution/burning in Denmark took place 1540; the last took place some 150 years later, 1693. In this period an estimated 1000 persons, 85-90% of them women, were burned at the stake in Denmark.

Grethe Jacobsen's book: *Women and Women's Lives in Medieval Denmark* (1986, in Danish) turned me into a sceptic regarding the blessings of the Reformation, from women's points of view. Protestantism made life more difficult for women, in many ways. The pre-Reformation religion

had been full of women. There had been, first and foremost, Virgin Mary, Heavenly Queen and powerful mother, as a figure of identification for women. There was also Saint Anna, Mary's mother; in many Danish churches Saint Anna is pictured along with daughter Mary with grandchild Jesus in her lap: "Almost like a female Trinity" (Jacobsen 1986, 127). In addition, there was a multitude of other female saints: Saint Birgitta, Saint Catarina, Saint Barbara, etc. With the Reformation Christianity became all male: God Father, God Son and the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost might not be a man, but certainly is not a woman. Thus, when in the 16th century Protestantism was implemented in Danish church life, "the first casualty was the female aspect of religion" (Jacobsen 1986, 128). For Martin Luther a woman's place was in the home, as a wife and mother. The emphasis was on marriage. Marriage was the institution established by God for the expression of sexuality. No other form of sexual relation was permissible. Patriarchy depends heavily on marriage and heterosexuality. Men's access to offspring goes through women; thus, women and women's sexuality must be controlled. In patriarchal Christianity heterosexuality is taken for granted, extra-marital sex is strongly condemned. Other forms of sexuality were even more strongly policed and forced into hiding.

The Reformation took place in the 16th century, but housewifization is still ongoing in Africa – and elsewhere in the Global South, along with expanding capitalism. The Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which in the 1980s and 1990s were rolled out over Africa promoted by IMF/the World Bank, may be seen as yet another round of 'primitive accumulation' (Federici 2012). The UN World Conferences on Gender, from Mexico 1975 to Beijing 1995, made sure that conceptions of gender were adjusted accordingly, producing a standard conception of gender as global discourse (Amadiume 2000). In processes starting with Christian missions and European colonialism, previous family structures – in Africa often with old women in key positions – are being replaced by modern nuclear families with a man as the household head. The family with a breadwinner (man) and a housewife (woman) is a colonial

invention, nevertheless also strongly advocated by a socialist party like *Frelimo* in Mozambique and perpetuated by current development policies. The male headed nuclear family as a core institution of gender relations in terms of male dominance/female subordination seems to be an icon of modernity and a shared ideal of post-independence socialist (*Frelimo*) and capitalist (World Bank) development alike. Heterosexuality as a strongly policed norm is likewise a colonial invention, generally embraced by African governments. The irony of this is that nowadays among Africans, homosexuality is often believed to be un-African, introduced to Africa by vicious Europeans (Epprecht 2008) while in actual fact historically in many places same-sex relations were quite frequent and not very keenly policed: as long as men and women fulfilled their social duties in terms of procreation/securing offspring, they might conduct their sexual lives as they pleased (Murray and Roscoe 1998). This at a time when in Europe homosexuality was strictly closeted and/or outlawed. Thus, regarding sexuality, North/South positions have shifted. Many Africans now insist that 'homosexuality is un-African' (Horn 2006), while UN/World Bank and development aid pave the way for acceptance of queer sexualities.

The Coloniality of Gender

In a series of articles (2007, 2010, 2020) Maria Lugones has presented her thinking on what she calls 'the coloniality of gender'. 'The coloniality of gender' refers to particular European notions of gender, imposed on non-European societies in the process of colonization. Lugones shows how notions of gender, race and heterosexuality are inter-linked, all tied up with capitalism and colonialism. 'Race' presents itself as biology, thus indicating a 'natural' hierarchy of power. Actually, it works the other way round: power constructs 'race', the claim of 'biology' hiding the construction. Likewise, 'gender' is presented as biology, as nature. But also, ideas of male/female as a hierarchical dichotomy are constructed by power: "Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender. Both are

powerful fictions” (Lugones 2007, 202). The idea of gender defining ‘man’ as ‘human’ and ‘woman’ as ‘nature’ is very specifically tied to European history; there is no reason to presume that this – actually very peculiar – conception of gender should be universal. And in actual fact, it is not. As argued by African feminists Ifi Amadiume (1987) and Oyèrónké Oyéwùmí (1997) in pre-colonial African societies a fixed category of ‘woman’ as ‘the second sex’ simply did not exist. Female human beings did exist, but not ‘women’ as a category of people subordinated to men. Man/woman was not a dichotomy, gender boundaries were changing and floating, and gender was *not* a dimension of power. Gender was perceived as situational, i.e. not dichotomized, not hierarchical – and often not important at all. Social hierarchies followed other dimensions, such as seniority and lineage. Women could be rulers as well as men, “there were no legal, linguistic or cultural gendered specifications for access to given offices and positions,” (Oyéwùmí 1997, 115). But along came the British, and things would change. “The very process by which females were categorized and reduced to ‘women’ made them ineligible for leadership roles. ... [Thus] for females colonization was a twofold process of racial inferiorization and gender subordination. ... The creation of ‘women’ as a category was one of the very first accomplishments of the colonial state” (Oyéwùmí 1997, 124). This is exactly what Lugones refers to as “the coloniality of gender”: the very idea of ‘women’ as a category, and as a category subordinated to another category: ‘men’. Applying this European conception of gender in African settings distorts existing realities. Male power is everywhere presumed, female power and social importance remain unseen. This is how European concepts work on a global scale. ‘The coloniality of gender’ did not stop with colonialism. On the contrary: Today, in the present post-colonial era, this same colonial conception of gender is promulgated even more widely through international and national development programs and UN development goals.

My suggestion in this paper is that instead of imposing Western gender constructs on Southern realities, feminists might learn and take inspiration

from different notions of gender and sexualities elsewhere. Here decolonial thinking may be helpful. Decolonial thinking focuses on knowledge and conceptualizations; how things are understood. Regarding colonialism it is a key point that “Western expansion was not only economic and political, but fundamentally epistemic” (Mignolo & Walsh 2018, 137); conceptualizations are crucial. Marx’ merit is his analysis of capital: the focus on capitalism, the inequalities of power on which it is based and which it perpetuates. Also important is however a focus on *the limits* of Marx’ thinking. The shortcomings in his analysis of capitalism, such as a lack of adequate conceptualizations of ‘nature’, of ‘race’ and of ‘gender’, and – connected to gender – of ‘social reproduction’ (Bhattacharya 2017). Another shortcoming is his limited focus on epistemologies; how ideas are not just produced by, but also co-producing socio-economic realities.

In this regard ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ are fertile fields for analysis, for decolonial insights – and for reconceptualizations. Things look the same – men and women are everywhere – but how gender and sexuality are understood: dichotomous or not, hierarchical or not, heterosexual or not, fixed or floating; to which extent identification of gender is fixed to bodies – all of this may vary greatly. According to Oyéwùmí male and female are relational categories, depending on social positions not on bodies. Ifi Amadiume highlights similar aspects in her 1987 book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*, and later books. Under certain conditions a daughter may be designated as a son, and a woman may take another woman as her husband. In the case of woman-woman marriage the issue is not one of sexual relations, but of children and inheritance. In the African contexts, with which I am most familiar, I have found that marriage and sexuality are two very different things: Marriage regulates offspring, but not necessarily sexuality (Arnfred 2011). The husband will be considered the father of children born by his wife, even if the biological father might be somebody else. Lineage and inheritance are important issues, non-normative sexuality less so, particularly not if the men/women practising extra-marital or same-sex relations also take care of

their obligations as married wives/husbands; very often same-sex relations will not be alternatives to marriage, but supplementary. This also means that seeing lesbian/gay as identities often does not match realities.

Rethinking Feminism?

A decolonial analysis shifts the terrain for feminist struggle. The notion of gender often taken for granted: gender as a relation of power, with men in privileged positions – this particular version of patriarchy emerged in Europe from the 15th century onwards, under violent conditions related to the establishment of global capitalism. This notion of gender is part of a capitalist/patriarchal worldview, which persists in understanding *motherwork* as non-work, as ‘nature’. In the New Women’s Movement of the 1970s we struggled against patriarchal power relations, but we did not manage to reconceptualise the very idea of gender. Important critiques of the lack of attention to race have emerged, initially by feminists of colour in the West, now increasingly from the Global South. At the same time, however, the increasingly dominant neo-liberal mindset has reduced the scope of feminist struggle to issues of equality – even if struggles for ‘gender equality’ within this paradigm cannot possibly get further than to a very limited edition of equality with men of the same class and race – at the expense of other women of subordinated/lower classes/races. Nevertheless, this notion of gender is currently being universalized through so-called ‘development work’. Inspiration for alternative ways of structuring gender and sexuality may however still be gained from listening to

and learning about other conceptualizations, from struggles of anti-colonial resistance in the Global South (Lugones 2010, 2020) and from contemporary anti-capitalist feminist struggles in different parts of the world (e.g. Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser 2019).

The putting together of my puzzle was helped in the first place by Silvia Federici. Her analysis of women and women’s bodies subjected through the European witch hunts to the ‘blood and fire’ of capitalist primitive accumulation made sense: subordination of women and exploitation of nature are part and parcel of capitalism; radical change cannot take place without a radical change of this economic system. I presume that this is what I have felt ever since the days of the New Women’s Movement in the 1970s; only I was not able to conceptualize it properly. My writing of this puzzle paper has been a step in the direction, I want to go, also pushed and promoted by my experience of fieldwork in Mozambique. This helped me being open to radically different ways of conceptualizing gender, beyond the standard Western hierarchical dichotomy of male dominance/female subordination. This is where the decolonial feminist puzzle pieces fit in. This part of the puzzle of course is open-ended. Many more pieces may turn up, completing the picture; the picture itself may change. What is still lacking are activist components – what will be added by the continuations of the women’s strikes in Poland, Spain, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Peru and other places? The strikes giving the impetus to Arruzza et al’s 2019 *Feminist Manifesto*, but then halted again by the global Covid pandemic. What will be added by further feminist movements in the Global South?

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