

EDITORIAL NOTE

*They called me once, The prophetess of lies,
The wandering hag, the pest of every door-
Attest ye now, She knows in her sooth
The house's curse, the storied infamy.*
—Cassandra, Agamemnon

LIES came out of our experience within struggles. The story of the journal is the intersecting narratives of our involvement with the occupations and strikes of recent years and the gendered fault lines that emerged within them. We met in the midst of these activities. We felt the need to organize autonomously as feminists. We started reading groups, held summer camps, met friends in other cities, and developed forms of mutual aid and solidarity. We did not want to go home, or maybe home suddenly felt like a more hostile place. Things got harder. But the more we read and wrote together, the more we desired a means to devise a theory and politics that is inchoate but at least our own. This journal is that: a way to communicate, to be overcome by the feminist commune, to survive with lesser pain or better pain, to become a more precise and effective force.

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This is a journal of materialist feminism, which means that we are interested in (among other things) the conditions that enable us to make and circulate a journal, the way a text in print expresses a set of practices and relations. Materialism cannot be opposed to or purged of ideas. Our writing is not a detour from material relations, but a mode of their refusal; it is a practice of naming what is violent in these relations, of laying it bare and vulnerable to attack. This unnamed violence has an especially forceful momentum within movements whose sense of normalcy is predicated on revolution or some future world-to-come. We are aware of our

histories and of the tensions inherent in critique: the limits to what can be thought emerge historically, but the forms we use to conceptualize and critique are not limited in application to the time and context in which they first appear. So we draw on and participate in multiple traditions of thought and struggle: feminism, Marxism, queer theory, communist theory, and anti-racist theory. We find abstraction useful but we aim to keep our ideas grounded, to see how the contours of thought are also social relationships. We are careful that whatever work or politics our ideas imply is desirable, while not forgetting that an idea is never a brick, and in this way our feminist practice is materialist.

We find a materialist approach useful in our search for a location within the set of practices called feminism, in our effort to clear a space from which our position within the social order becomes more intelligible. Our materialism dispenses with concepts of rights, equality, justice, agency, representation, or any that otherwise affirm the same set of relations and political forms that inaugurate and ensure our oppression. Rather we turn our attention toward the various registers and forms of violence that characterize patriarchy, a structure and set of mechanisms that produces relations of domination and subordination, but within which identity categories are unstable. Our project emphasizes the contradictions, tensions, and ambivalences embedded in the use of the category “woman” as a political point of departure. Indeed, we approach these contradictions as the site of the most productive work we must presently undertake. We identify two fronts to this work.

First, we interrogate the relative usefulness of categories such as “women,” “not-men,” “feminine,” and “queer;” we contend that these name real material processes generative of specific kinds of subjects or social locations, not something essential or salvageable within us. In this sense we break with those feminist traditions that seek to honor, elevate, or unearth a “real” female essence, to define “woman” by physiology, or to ossify manifold experiences into a singular,

categorical gender. We also break with traditions that view “woman” as the sole oppressed category under patriarchy. The violent relations produced by the forced binary gendering of bodies and the enforcement of heterosexuality in all spheres of life are as much a part of patriarchy as is the production of male domination over women and, in fact, these processes reinforce one another.

Second, we insist that patriarchy is never pure, never a relationship between two figures, but more an arrangement of violences whose distribution has been most powerfully sorted by categories of race. For this reason, too, we refuse to adopt a foundational category of “women” whose generality remains mute about white cis women’s violence while presenting their experience as constitutive of the female gender. We resist the impetus to order or prioritize forms of oppression as prior to or derivative of one another, and assert instead that any discussion of gender already implies race, and vice versa.

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Everything we write will be used against us. Every claim on or lament against society that we write will be received in the same way as accounts of rape — as lies. We don’t care anymore. As soon as we stop resisting the charge we can turn around and face the others that have not accused us, those we should have been

talking to the whole time. We name this journal after the shame we no longer feel and commemorate all these outcast comrades: the witches, crones, hysterics, spinsters, she-wolves, oracles, and misfits — our fellow-travellers.

See you at the gun club / dance hall / hot springs / savage blockade.

We’ll be in touch.

Endless winter,

the LIES editorial collective

This writing is dedicated to those recently fallen, whose memories serve to remind us of the urgency of struggle:

Brandy Martell, Esme Barrera, Paige Clay, Anna Brown, Mark Aguhar, Shelley Hilliard, Marilyn Buck, Shaima Al-Awadi, Amber Lynn Costello, Deoni Jones, Hatice Firat, Josefina Reyes, Marisela Ortiz, Tyra Trent, and far too many more.

And to those who have needed to lie, and to those who told the truth but weren’t believed anyway.