

## Caliban, Ch. 1

### INTRO

- Why is feudalism important to the feminist movement?
  - Some feminists believe that reproductive labor isn't a form of value-creation, and that sexism is a cultural structure
  - Instead, it is actually inherent to Capitalism
  - After feudalism came the genesis of housework (separation of production from reproduction)
  - Anti-feudal movement was the first grassroots women's movement
    - Despite their defeat, they still threw the feudal system into a crisis
- Reproductive labor** is all the labor that goes into the production of **labor power**, which is to say, the production of future workers.
- It is a socioeconomic activity that has been mystified to look like a personal service or a natural resource.
- This unpaid labor is a pillar on which wage slavery has been built

### I. SERFDOM

- Movement from Roman slavery to feudalism:
  - 1) Slaves released w/ plot of land (b/c marooners and the quell revolts)
  - 2) Landless peasants went to lords for protection (German invasions)
  - 3) → homogenized the class between former slaves & ag. Workers
- Serfdom not nearly as bad as slavery for the workers but worse for the bosses
  - Bad 4 bosses: More juridical work
  - Good 4 serfs:
    - Gave serfs direct access to the **means of production** (the land)
    - Took them out of shitty slave housing conditions (ergastula)
    - Closed economy & collective struggle
    - Creation of “**the commons**”
    - More power for women
      - Domestic activities were not devalued because both men and women did work for sustenance. Viewed as “real” work because no money economy yet
    - Domestic chores were done w/ other women-- fostered solidarity

### II. THE STRUGGLE ON THE COMMONS

- End of 14<sup>th</sup> century: “revolt had become endemic, massified, frequently armed.”
  - Wanted hold over their surplus-labor and products + broaden economic + jurisdiction
  - Relentless Class struggle.
  - Killed bailiffs, collectively withheld work on fields, purposely lazy
  - Deserted mandatory military service
  - Collective land → “we'll have our will in the woods”
  - Against taxes the lords collected
    - Lords weren't providing services in exchange, so it revealed the arbitrariness of feudal power

### III. LIBERTY AND SOCIAL DIVISION

- 1<sup>st</sup> concession to peasants were **charters**
  - Written rules & fines → less arbitrary arrests
  - Gave a level autonomy to local governments
  - Right to sell goods at market
- Commutation of labor** to money payments (money rents/taxes)
  - Serfdom ended
  - BUT created social division & disintegrated feudal village
    - Some peasants could now hire other peasants
    - Others went into debt
    - Started the process of **proletarianization**
- 2 other problems:
  - 1) peasants could no longer tell what work they did for themselves what was for the nobleman
  - 2) peasants hiring other peasants turned land owners into capitalist tenants
    - transformed income differences into class differences
    - created a mass of poor people who relied on donations
- Hurt Jewish people
- Hurt women (but gave them access to cities)

### IV. THE MILLENARIAN AND THE HERETIC MOVEMENT

- Millenarians** were composed of peasants brutalized by poverty & the wretched and was significant because they demanded not just change w/in the manor, but TOTAL change
- Millenarian movements were swift & militant, targeting the rich
- Heresy** was the search of the medieval prole for a concrete alt. to the growing money economy
  - Difference: millenarians were spontaneous, heretics planned for a new society
  - Was the strongest opposition movement in the Middle Ages
  - Crusades set against them & then the inquisition (like a grand jury, today)
  - ”Liberation theology for the proletariat”**
  - Was international & against hierarchies
  - was a reaction to the church's greed → church used to love the poor until their numbers increase → “only voluntary poverty has merit to god”
- The church uses “heresy” charges to attack all political insubordination
- Taborites, Bogomils*
  - lots of scandalous stuff: vegetarianism, no kids/sex, no hierachies. Early birth control?

### V. THE POLITICIZATION OF SEXUALITY

- The church recognized the power women's sexuality had over men and tried to quell it by removing women from authority & demonizing sex acts, even going so far as to create a canon of what sex acts were ok to do.
- Homosexuality was condemned, along with clerical marriage
- Sexuality became a state matter

## VI. WOMEN AND HERESY

- Women were assigned high statuses in the heretic movement
- Very prevalent in heretic movements
- \*black death/birth control connection
- persecuting heretics → witch hunts
- violent put down of communes

## VII. URBAN STRUGGLES

- common cause of the heretic movement: women/men, urban/peasant
  - All worked the land, all had the same political rulers
  - Refusal to work or manual labor
- Urban prole: artisan apprentices, waged day laborers
  - urban wage workers faced new serfdom in the city
  - very fucked up conditions
  - huge, casualty heavy battles whenever they tried to start worker's governments

## VIII. THE BLACK DEATH AND THE LABOR CRISIS

- Killed 30%-40% of everybody and created a labor shortage → inaugurated a new era
- Nobody wanted to work or abide by regulations
- Labor became more expensive b/c scarcity → shifted power to lower class
  - abundant land, threats of it being seized were gone
  - willful disobedience (rent strikes, etc)
- slavery revival
- ”now is the time” wheel of fortune appearing everywhere
- Not just for less restrictions or better conditions, but end to lords
- Difference of wages btwn men and women decreased
- Why did the revolts happen?
  - scarcity of labor gave them the upper hand
  - spectacle of employers competing for them raised their self-value
- Caused a golden age of the prole in England (high wages, cheap food)
  - 5 day work week, paid commute

## IX. SEXUAL POLITICS, THE RISE OF THE STATE, AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

- The state co-opted rebellious young male workers by decriminalizing rape
  - turned class antagonism into antagonism against women
  - target poor women
  - undermined class solidarity
  - Raped women had to leave town or turn to prostitution
  - Desensitized the population to violence against women (preparing ground for witch hunt)
- Institutionalization of prostitution (municipal, state-run brothels)
  - sex used to be a privilege for old men, now it was used to mollify youth
  - Widespread, legitimate
- Persecution of homosexuality
- Bourgeoisie & nobility united and that's what stopped the prole revolution
  - first step to the absolute state

→ **the state became the ultimate manager of class relations and the supervisor of labor-power**