

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 14th 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

- 1st 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**