

# MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS AND ACTION

## ISSUE

# 70

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SYDNEY UNI STRIKES**

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# EDITORIAL

THIS IS THE 70TH ISSUE OF MUTINY!  
ANOTHER ZINE, ANOTHER MILESTONE.

THIS ISSUE FOCUSES ON GENDER, EDUCATION, AND THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY. IN *WONEN*, GENDER WARS AND REFUSAL ANNETTE BLANKA TRACES A 'GENDER WAR' UNDERWAY AGAINST WOMEN, INTERTWINING THE FIBRES OF GENDER AND CLASS IN HER ANALYSIS. AN INTERVIEW ARTICLE WITH THE VALERIES; 'ANARCHA-FEMINISM AND ANARCHO-MACHISMO IN SPAIN' HIGHLIGHTS HOW GENDERED HIERARCHIES CAN PERVADE NOMINALLY RADICAL AND ACTIVIST SPACES; AND BRINGS HOME THE NEED TO CONSTANTLY CHALLENGE THEIR EXISTENCE. IN *RESISTING MORE THAN COURSE CUTS*; CLAIRE JOHNSTON TELLS THE STORY OF THE WOLLONGONG FREE SCHOOL, AN INSPIRING, LOCAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE GLOBAL RESURGENCE OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND A VIBRANT SPACE FOR DISCUSSION OF ISSUES LIKE RAPE CULTURE, VICTIM BLAMING AND CONSENT.

K-BOX WRITES ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES OF THE STRIKES AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY FROM MARCH – JUNE. SHE DRAWS OUT ITS COMBINATION OF CAMARADERIE AND ACTION, CREATING NEW BONDS OF SOLIDARITY AND HELPING US BEGIN TO OVERCOME THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY. IN A VERY DIFFERENT PIECE ON THE 'EDUCATION ECONOMY', PATHWAYS TO ILLEGALITY, SANMATI VERMA DOCUMENTS WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THAT CAME TO THE FORE OF POLITICS THROUGH THEIR MASS, SELF-ORGANISED PROTESTS OF 2009 AND 2010. VERMA ASKS US TO CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF WIDESPREAD ILLEGALITY AMONGST FORMER INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS – WHAT WILL BE THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS FOR AUSTRALIAN CAPITALISM? FINALLY, TIM SCRIVEN TALKS UP CHALKING AS A TACTIC THAT PROVIDES A FORM OF ACTIVE PROTEST IN THE PLACE OF A CULTURE OF SPECTATORSHIP, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT STRUGGLES AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY.

LOVE AND SOLIDARITY, MUTINY ZINE COLLECTIVE  
(FI LION, BLACKBEARD, SYZYGY, JIMINY KRICKET, MNM  
& DUMPSTEREDTWIN)

# Women, 'Gender Wars' and Refusal: What Century Is This Again?

**Annette Blanka**

Lately we've heard a fair bit about so-called 'gender wars' between the major parties as they compete to position themselves for election. The absurd levels of misogyny directed at former PM Gillard and other women by the Coalition, amplified through media discourse, are just a taste of what's to come under an Abbott government. Gillard-the-individual-woman has shown courage and perseverance in withstanding this onslaught. But the attempt to position Gillard as a feminist hero rings hollow. Feminism means equality for all women; Gillard represents policies that materially harm large sections of the female population. On the very day of her celebrated speech to Parliament in which she slammed Abbott's countless instances of misogyny, her government axed single parents' benefit (after the youngest child turns 8), forcing hundreds of thousands of single mothers onto the unliveable Newstart unemployment allowance. Similarly, the NT Intervention and Income Management policies are intensely harmful to women, who are often responsible for managing household budgets and keeping communities together. But these individual policies form part of a larger context. My argument is that another 'gender war' of sorts is underway against women, over which Gillard and the media discourse continue to maintain a deafening silence. Gender inequality is accelerating, a key consequence of what the Zapatistas refer to as the "Fourth World War": the ongoing devastation wrought by neo-liberalism over the past 30-odd years.

Contrary to the hype peddled by the Sydney Opera House in their 'All About Women' event earlier this year, women are not poised on the verge of becoming "the richer sex". The reality is that we gain only 10% of world income, own 1% of world property, and yet perform 2/3 of the world's work (UN figures), and this extreme inequality prevails not only in the Global South, but right here, within the world's rich countries. It is no coincidence that in the supposedly futuristic world of cyberspace, women's voices make up just 15% of the authors of online analysis and commentary (including comment feeds on articles), and even on the apparently open Wikipedia website (Cohen, 2011).

Neo-liberal austerity, intensifying since the Global Financial Crisis, has had a disproportionate impact on women, along specifically class lines. That is, it has reduced the economic and social power of multitudes of women, apart from the most wealthy. Far from gender being some separate "other" oppression to class, they are entwined. Women make up a majority of the labouring class itself. To foreground class in this way is not to deny the specific experience of being gendered under late capitalism. Moreover, to understand sexism as integral to the reproduction of capitalism, as I do, is to open possibilities for emancipation.

## **Austerity: A Rough Guide**

As many readers are aware, the Age of Austerity or neo-liberal capitalism that we live under was first entrenched in the early 1970s. An early step was the Nixon government's de-linking of the US dollar from the gold standard, a move followed by other world currencies. From then on, the dollar was no longer pegged at a set value, backed by material wealth (in this case, gold). At the same time, investment controls that limited the flow of capital across borders were lifted. This unleashed frenzied currency speculation that continues to destabilise economies to



this day. The lifting of investment controls has intensified the power of capital to push for “ideal” terms of investment in individual countries through, among other policies, the driving down of wages and corporate tax rates. Another key component is the dismantling of the so-called “social wage” through the rollback of welfare and the privatisation of public goods (transport, telecommunications, electricity and water, higher education). Finally there was a massive restructuring of work, in which jobs have been made increasingly insecure, short-term and stripped of benefits, such that in Australia, 40% of the workforce is now casualised. Waves of automation have been unleashed by the employing class to shrink employment (‘labour costs’) across whole industries, from manufacturing to printing, finance, and all levels of media production. The result is mass structural unemployment. In all this, undermining the strength of unionised workers and winding back the gains made by social movements in the 1960s was always a key motive. Harvard Professor, Samuel Huntington articulated the view of the elite in the mid-1970s, when he wrote that the

“democratic surge of the 1960s” represented an “excess of democracy,” which must be reduced if governments are to carry out elite agendas, in an influential book published by the Trilateral Commission (a body which incubated many of the policies of austerity, see Sklar, 1999). While the austerity economic model has tanked all over the world, it remains the ruling model.

However, the connection is seldom made that the age of neo-liberalism has coincided with an ongoing backlash against women, whipped up and relentlessly perpetuated through the mass media. As analysed by Susan Faludi in her ground-breaking book *Backlash* (republished 2006), the aim has been to diminish the social role of women and remove the gains made through decades of feminist activity, in favour of so-called “traditional values”. This has involved a relentless belittling of women in public life in order to push them out of the “public” sphere, and back to the traditional “private” sphere of home and family. Meanwhile, women have been portrayed as an evil “other,” in a way that excuses and normalises gender violence. This pervasive symbolic violence, to borrow Bourdieu’s term, is directly connected to normalising realities that are materially harmful to women. For instance, the demonising of single mothers and other economically precarious women has accompanied the slashing of government income support. A third of Australian women will experience violence in their lives, yet funding to women’s services is dwindling (CEDAW, 2010).

### **Women and Work: Paid and Unpaid**

In the present context, even while a majority of university graduates are women and women have struggled in all spheres to expand their options, the reality of austerity since the GFC has served to undercut gains. The dismantling of the welfare state and reduced incomes is pushing the work of raising children and caring for the sick and elderly increasingly on the shoulders of women in the hidden,

unpaid workplace of the home. Unpaid work responsibilities inevitably impinge on women's position in the labour market. Since the GFC, women make up the largest numbers of those who are underemployed, or people who aren't able to work enough hours to gain a sufficient income, most frequently due to childcare responsibilities (Australia Institute, 2009).

The work of reproducing fed, clothed, cared-for human beings is the invisible layer that underpins all capitalist waged work. As Christa Wichterich puts it, "Industrial and financial value creation is based on a thick layer of social regeneration, care work and social safety nets, which are assumed to be outside of economics and not producing value" (2009). As it is work from which capital profits enormously, we can recognise this unpaid labour as a dispossession. Here, there isn't even the formality of a wage. What is happening is analogous to the outright plunder of colonisation. Over several decades, revolutionary feminist Selma James has done path-breaking work to cast light on this invisible labour:

Women reproduce the human race (and thus the whole workforce), and are everywhere its primary carers from womb to tomb. Yet we were told even by leading feminists that caring was work in a care home but not in our home, and that childcare was a job like any other – but not if done

in families. (James, 2012a; emphasis added).

James identified that women's position of inequality is rooted in this role, personified in the housewife. There is the expectation that women, whether they have jobs or not, will perform this invisible work in the family for free, for life. The fact that large numbers of women are also in the workforce has not served to lift this burden from women's shoulders, but rather opened the trap of the "double day" – being doubly exploited in both the workplace and the home. In response to this situation, James has argued compellingly that housework be paid a wage. Importantly, the point of this demand is not to further entrench women staying at home as domestic workers, but to reject the whole structure of domestic work, to "refuse housework as women's work, as work imposed upon us, which we never invented, which has never been paid for", as James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa put it in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (in James, 2012b). They argue that keeping women isolated in the home was an intentional aspect of the institution of domestic slavery, and the question is to invent forms of struggle by which women can break out of this isolation and into socialised struggle. From this has grown the Global Women's Strike. Since 2000, the Strike has seen women mobilise at the grassroots in over 60 countries on International Women's Day and throughout the year. The Strike looks to bring women and men together across divisions to demand pay for all caring work (James, 2012).

Beyond the home, the burden of invisible, gendered labour serves to reinforce hierarchies in the workplace. The position of women in academia illustrates this. In Australia, women make up over half of lecturers at the lower pay



levels, but only 15% of professors. The figure is similar across the world's rich countries. Not only is this a basic inequality that reproduces visible male hegemony to students, but it also means less mentoring and networking pathways for women. One of the key reasons for this is family responsibilities (Pyke, in *The Conversation*, 2012). This also causes early career complications, in that women are more tied to one location than their male counterparts, who may typically split their time between several continents. Finally, the gendered experience of unwaged labour is repeated in the workplace, as it is also the lower-level academics who must perform the majority of unpaid work on the job, such as marking.

While women in the workforce are increasingly concentrated in part-time casualised work, the dismantling of welfare hits women in particular. Not only is the slashing of the Single Parents payment a reduction of income to the far below poverty-line Newstart allowance, but Newstart imposes an expanded regime of punishments and busywork. As with Income Management, the aim is to harass single mothers into the low-wage, high-exploitation end of the labour market, enforcing the burden of the double day. Meanwhile, Income Management, while promoted as "helping families", has been overwhelmingly rejected by women subjected to it. The largest study of its impacts in the NT found that 74% of women didn't find it easier to look after their families, and 79% wanted to opt out altogether (Equality Rights Alliance, 2012). Although the entire welfare system can in a sense be seen as "sit-down money", or a type of insurance by the boss class to ward off radical social change, it's also true that welfare in Australia was won through struggle from below. For instance, the payment for single mothers was a victory won as recently as the 1970s, in the US and Australia. This was a result of feminist organising, particularly by unemployed mothers (Gordon, 1988). The struggles against the current rollback carry on

this radical trajectory.

We can understand the struggle against capital as being fundamentally a struggle against the boundless imposition of work, as Harry Cleaver (2000) and others have convincingly argued. In developing an anti-work perspective, it is vital to include the unpaid reproductive work of women. This is not to say that this socially-useful work shouldn't be done, but rather that it be transformed: caring work needs to be valued, paid, and put at the very centre of society. The physical, emotional, and relational needs of human beings must frame the limits in which questions of the economy and work are addressed.

If we see that work is imposed by capital not just in the workplace, or site of so-called "productive" labour, but throughout the sphere of reproductive work, then our understanding of class struggle needs to permeate beyond the confines of the formal workplace. Like systemic white supremacy, it is through the subjugation of women that capital secures the hierarchies within the class through which it imposes its will on us all. It is capitalism that needs one part of the class to be subordinate to another in an endless pecking order, and worsening gender inequality increases capital's power over us all. This means that our collective strength will come not from "unity" behind those who are already more advantaged within the class, but through connections of love and solidarity that strengthen the more exploited parts, thereby unmaking our internal divisions.

Reality demands that we transform the stereotypes of class. Let's recall that, contrary to what some sociologists might have us believe, class is not a 'category' to which we are allocated by income level. It's a social relationship defined by one's ownership of wealth (capital), or lack of it. The working class is peopled by those who don't own capital, and so possess only the capacity to work, in its many different forms. These relations are

reproduced everyday, and we take part in reproducing them. You can't blow up a social relationship. In a real sense, we begin to unmake capitalism by generating other relations. Through our refusal of unequal gender relations, we open possibilities to move beyond capitalism. Through this positive refusal, we begin to constitute 'the dangerous class'.



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# Pathways to Illegality, or What happened to the International Students

Sanmati Verma

This piece maps the growth, collapse and reformation of what is termed the 'international education economy'- a conglomeration of interests including Australian Universities and TAFEs, private vocational education providers, State governments, education and migration agents- cumulatively worth around \$15.3 billion to the Australian economy. More specifically, I seek to document what has become of the particular representative group of international students who came into focus through mass self-organised protests in 2009 and 2010 - predominately Indian and Chinese students, working in Australia's service economy (cabs, convenience stores, contract cleaning, labour hire, sex work etc.) and enrolled in vocational courses offered by private providers. Mapping the significant shifts in the Australian economy and migration policy that brought this cohort into existence, I then attempt to follow what has become of these several thousand temporary migrants, as migration laws and regulations were changed from 2010 onwards specifically to thwart their aspirations for permanent migration and a future in Australia, under the guise of re-establishing the 'integrity' of Australian international education. Whilst it is impossible to offer a conclusive account of the different directions taken by former international students targeted by these changes, I suggest one thing is clear: the changes were neither designed for, nor did they have the effect of, expelling former international students from Australia and back to their home countries. Rather, the raft of changes have had the dual effect of re-founding the international education economy on a more sustainable footing favouring the market share of Australian universities, whilst simultaneously creating a sizable new class of permanently provisional or overtly illegal migrants.

## 'International Education Economy' - A Background

International students have formed a numerically and politically significant component of Australia's migration program- and in turn, the Australian populace- since 2001, when then Prime Minister John Howard made extensive changes to the Migration Regulations 1994 to permit overseas students to lodge applications for permanent residence while remaining in Australia. Alongside the reshaping of the humanitarian program and his introduction of the Business (Long Stay) subclass 457 visa, the changes to the Migration Regulations concerning overseas students are now considered to be amongst Howard's crowning immigration reforms. The numbers speak to the significance of these changes: in 1994, there were short of 100,000 overseas students enrolled in Australian schools and universities; by 2010, there were 500,000. The peak, in 2009, was at just over 600,000 overseas students in Australia. In 2011, it was estimated that the 'international education industry'- representing an array of different interests and industries, including Australian Universities and private colleges, tuition centres, accommodation providers, education and migration agents- cumulatively amounted to \$15.3 billion in export income. This made international education the third most profitable export earner, after coal and iron ore. Though enigmatically described as 'export income,' the benefits of the international education economy flowed mostly to local business and communities:

...In fact, the majority (52 per cent) of the \$15.7 billion revenue from international education in 2011 flowed to the host communities – the local shops and retail sector, accommodation providers, travel services and other community enterprises.



If the Coalition government under Howard were the architects of the international education economy, subsequent ALP governments presided over its growth and expanding profitability. The contribution of ALP governments from 2005 onwards has been, in particular, to shift the focus of international education away from tertiary education- where it served the purpose, under Howard, of softening the impact of higher education funding cuts - and channelling students towards vocational education and trades courses. From 2006 to 2010, while overseas student numbers in universities remained largely stable, numbers of VET Sector (subclass 572) increased by 400%. China and India were the leading two nationalities represented in these increased visa grants.

The growth in VET enrolments was not incidental, or a delayed realisation of opportunities by students in China and India. This mass movement of temporary entrants was facilitated through the growth of complex networks implicating Australian education providers across the spectrum of universities and VET colleges, working in tandem with local agents and middlemen in India and China to ply study and migration opportunities in Australia. Agents in the corners of India's agrarian Punjab state assisted to market and recruit students for entry, not only into private training colleges, but the vocational education offshoots of Australian universities- including the memorably-named Ozford College (affiliated with Central Queensland University) and Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology (affiliated with Deakin University). The precise relationships between Australian Universities and VET providers varied and took diverse forms- ranging from board membership, partial ownership and investment. In the case of RMIT University, a 'feeder program' operated

through partnership with Wuhan University of Science and Technology funnelled Chinese students into RMIT courses offered in Australia (where they were subsequently over-represented in academic progress and show-cause proceedings). Whatever the precise relationship, it is evident that Australian Universities stood in direct relation with the international VET sector, despite later revisionist attempts to elide this relation when the VET sector came to crisis from 2010 onwards.

It is disingenuous to ask how many students arrived in Australia during this period for the 'right reasons,' or as 'genuine students,' as opposed to simply seeking a pathway to more permanent settlement in Australia. It is disingenuous, chiefly because the overt linking of student visas with permanent migration outcomes from 2001 onwards was precisely what contributed to increased enrolment and ensured the growth of the international education sector. Students were intended, if not overtly promised, permanent migration on completion of their studies in Australia. An entire private education industry- not to mention, a greatly expanded Australian university and TAFE sector- grew up in the shadow of this explicit promise.

From 2006 onwards, with the question of enrolment significantly eased through the various relationships and processes described above, potential entrants had only to worry about the remaining visa criteria- principally, access to funds sufficient for living expenses, course fees and travel during the visa holder's intended stay in Australia. Aspiring applicants were able to meet these requirements variously through mortgaging parental property and landholdings, loans from agents taken at high interest, falsified financial

documents or contracted arrangements with secondary visa holders (the students' putative 'husband' or 'wife') to demonstrate the required funds in exchange for being included in the visa application.

Through these means, some 210,888 VET Sector student visa grants were affected for overseas applicants between 2005 and 2012. A combination of punitive visa conditions (the requirement to service ever-increasing tuition fees while limited to working only 20 hours per week) together with the aggressive racialisation of new entrants, ensured that students rapidly came to occupy a new underclass in the labour market - disproportionately represented in cabs, service stations, convenience stores and as labour-hire for roof insulation and construction work. At the same time, the profit-seeking growth in the VET sector meant that course content and learning was nominal only: students attended cookery classes in converted CBD office buildings to find ovens fitted without gas connections. Documenting the seemingly unending growth in the international education economy in 2011, Ben Rosenzweig and Liz Thompson wrote:

The dynamics of these economies were persistently rendered opaque by two officially-sponsored fantasies: that these economies were essentially about "education", with the desire for migration secondary or incidental; and secondarily that all of these genuine students did not to have to work for money.

It was this historical and political grouping of temporary entrants, forged in a very particular moment in the growth of Australia's international education economy, that could be seen protesting on the streets of Melbourne with signs

that read, 'We don't just drive your cabs, we drive your economy.'

### **'The Expulsion'**

A series of wildcat strikes by mostly VET sector international students from 2008 onwards laid bare the multiple and transnational interests shaping the international education economy. The brutal assaults on student visa holders Kanan Kharbanda, Sourabh Sharma, Sravan Teerthala, and finally, the murder of Nitin Garg in 2010, propelled a public relations spectacle between the governments of Australia and India regarding the management of the multi-billion dollar industry.

After initial attempts to isolate and individualise attacks (through asking Indian victims to dress and speak less provocatively), government discourse took a further depoliticising turn, locating the problems students encountered as one of 'integrity' of the international education sector as a whole. The spectre of the 'dodgy college' did the work of casting the crisis in the international education economy as an aberration, an unintended consequence, a result of external corruption- as opposed to the logical and necessary conclusion of all the industry's imperatives. At the same time, and more importantly, projecting the problems of the international education economy onto the 'dodgy colleges' gave license to the later consequences that were visited onto the attendees of those colleges- the VET sector visa holders, who by presumption 'non-genuine' students.

2010 saw the unending proliferation of changes and measures taken to reinforce the 'integrity' of the international education economy- that is, to re-establish it on an equally profitable footing less beholden

to the vagaries of student protest and international censure. A spate of audits were conducted into international colleges operating throughout Melbourne- which lasted until the auditing body itself fell under scrutiny for its internal processes. Enhanced 'integrity checking' led to high rates of student visa cancellations, and a massive rise in the refusal of further student visa applications by Indian and Chinese nationals in particular. In 2011, the introduction of the 'genuine student' and 'genuine temporary entrant' criteria for student visas operated as a *carte blanche* permitting the Department of Immigration to refuse further student visa applications based on an assessment of the applicant's study history i.e. whether they were previously enrolled in the international VET sector. At the same time, in 2011, 'streamlined processing' arrangements were introduced for students enrolled at Universities, meaning student visas could be granted without English language or financial evidence if a student could show confirmation when applying for the visa of enrollment in a Bachelors or higher course.

The cornerstone of the international education economy's re-formation was the overnight change to the Migration Occupations In Demand List (MODL) on 8 February 2010, to drastically favour profession requiring Bachelors or higher qualifications. Prior to that date, the 105 occupations on the MODL had been weighted in favour of trades and had dictated the growth of the international VET sector and, in turn, the courses offered to and undertaken by several thousand international students. The implications of the February 2010 changes to the MODL are too extensive to list here but for our purposes, it is enough to say that for the 122,149 VET sector student visa holders in Australia at that time- a cohort who had paid thousands

for an education never obtained, who had worked the most violent and precarious jobs imaginable in the Australian economy- any hope of a permanent migration outcome was all but destroyed. Liz Thompson and Ben Rosenzweig described that moment as 'the expulsion,' in the following terms:

The ALP federal government responded to the movements of guest consumers and to fractures in the smooth development of international education economies by sweeping a large part of these economies away and many of those on international student visas out of the country – all in one movement collapsing together economic restructuring, border control and repression. The state sought to disperse struggles and solve problems without having to acknowledge or confront anti-Indian xenophobia in particular or broader hostility to non-white non-citizens, largely by acting to dispense with a section of the (particularly private) international education industry, and with a section of the (particularly less wealthy and/or more likely to be troublesome) students...The restructuring of these economies was thus configured as a reassertion of labour market management as well as a defence of the "integrity" of the immigration and border control apparatuses of the Australian state – a performance of sovereignty proudly evoking that readiness for violence the possibility of which seeks to ritually re-found state and nation.

My contention is that talk of 'expulsion' of former international students has been both premature and misconceived. After all, the logic of the border is not exclusively to halt movement but rather to sort, redirect and modulate its forms in ways ultimately productive of new segments in the labour market - to funnel movement into value and inasmuch,

redraw the lines of the nation across social relations.

## **Dispersal**

The 122,149 former VET sector international students, and probably thousands more affected by migration reforms of 2010 onwards, have dispersed so far as we can recognise in a number of disparate directions, depending on their cache of skills and social capital.

### 1. 'Transitional Arrangements':

A significant proportion of students visa holders from 2010 have opted into the 18-month amnesty offered after their occupation was removed from the list for permanent residency. Former students were permitted to apply for a Graduate Skilled (Temporary) visa based on the old and more inclusive list of skilled occupations, up until 31 December 2012 at which point that door was closed. That visa allows the holder another 18 months in Australia but does not form a pathway to something more permanent. That is the road to nowhere that many ex-students are on.

### 2. Further Student Visas:

As mentioned, part of the re-founding of the international education economy from 2010 onwards involved offering 'streamlined processing' of student visas for those enrolled in Bachelors or higher courses. While allowing Universities their share of 'export income,' these arrangements also allowed for the continuation of business as usual for former international colleges - either through new partnerships with Universities, or (as is the case with 'VU Sydney') through rebranding as University adjuncts at significant cost. The option of further study in higher education was

made palatable for former students, through the guarantee of a 'work permit' of at least 18 months following the successful completion of study.

Of course, the other side of this visa processing has been streamlined compliance processes within higher education providers, involving the ability to directly report non-compliance to the Department of Immigration to affect student visa cancellation. Former VET sector students also have had to contend with the arbitrary 'genuine student' and 'genuine temporary entrant' criteria when applying for their further student visa. The assessment of this criteria explicitly allows the Department of Immigration to take into account the applicant's country of nationality, circumstances in their home country (ie poverty) and their previous study history (ie 'whether the applicant has undertaken a series of short, inexpensive courses').

The path of the further student visa is, evidently, costly and precarious. Former students embarking on this course have either seen their further visa cancelled or refused, leaving them with the final option of lodgment in the Migration Review Tribunal.

### 3. Migration/Refugee Review Tribunal:

In all of the Migration and Refugee Review Tribunal's recent reporting, it is plain to see that that body is now inundated with review applications and is buckling under the pressure. For the past year, the wait for a hearing in the MRT has been two years, making it a legitimate strategy for extending stay in the country. In 2010-2011 alone, 8,469 review applications were lodged with the MRT in relation to student visa refusals, cancellations and skilled visa

refusals. During 2010-2011, student and skilled visa related review applications constituted 52% of the cases lodged with the MRT- a review body dealing across the spectrum of visas and migration decisions. On top of that, as of 2011, the Tribunal still had 9,569 applications still on hand in relation to student and skilled visa refusals and student cancellations. Evidently, there is an impressive war of attrition being waged by former international students.

Similarly, in 2010-2011, China and India constituted by far the highest rate of lodgments in the Refugee Review Tribunal in relation to Protection visa refusals. During that year, 689 applications were lodged by Chinese nationals, and 435 by Indian nationals- which represented a 97% rise in lodgments from India. At the same time, the Tribunal still had 477 visa applications on hand to decide from the previous year. In March 2013, the RRT issued a successful review outcome to a Punjabi Protection visa applicant- being one of the very few successful outcomes from that cohort over the past 5 years.

Former students may have more or less success in their review applications at the MRT or RRT- in any case, it remains a provisional strategy for prolonging stay in Australia.

## **Illegality**

Former students have found other options, particularly in the form of employer or partner sponsorship. The final, and most obvious option, is illegality or simply staying on in the country without any formal or legal status. Discussions of illegality and its consequences have not been prevalent in Australia as compared with Europe and North

America, where their physical landscapes permit for mass undocumented entry. What is salient in discussions of illegality is that there is nothing irregular about irregular migration and undocumented migrants form an indispensable part of the labour market in both contexts. Australia has not historically had the benefit of a sizable flow of flexible labour without status, with all the opportunities for extraction and exploitation that this implies. Former student visa holders are slowly sifting into the permanently illegal communities of regional Victoria, working alongside Samoan and Fijian former seasonal workers, and 'offshore entry' protection visa applicants released into the community on bridging E visas. What are the social implications of creating a permanently illegal class of residents, without the entitlements to education, welfare, medical care and social recognition that legal status implies? What will these communities look like, 5 or 10 years into the future, and what impact will their existence bear on the future direction of migration policy? These questions, of course, cannot be answered in advance of people's movements and attempts at contestation. What I have sought to pose here is the question, not of the consequences of expulsion, but the forms of differential inclusion of those formerly holding international students' visas- not as a long-past historical quandary, but a present social process in the unfolding.

JULY - AUGUST 2013: FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA TO FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND AND ACROSS THE CORAL SEA. SOME PEOPLE CALL IT ACTIVIST CAMPING. WE CALL IT SOLIDARITY! FIGHTN THE GOOD FIGHT... PAPA MERDEKA!

# LAND & SEA CONVOY LAKE EYRE TO WEST PAPUA



NO MORE FAFI  
I PROMISE!

WOOF!

WOOF!

WE'LL  
CATCHEM, JUST  
NEED ONE  
GOOD RIDE..

YOU'RE  
RIGHT, MAYBE  
WE DIDN'T  
NEED THE  
BLENDER..



SCAMPI SPARKY!  
YOU MADE IT  
OUTTA SWDNEY

THE TRUCKY  
WAS A TOTAL  
OLD-MATE!

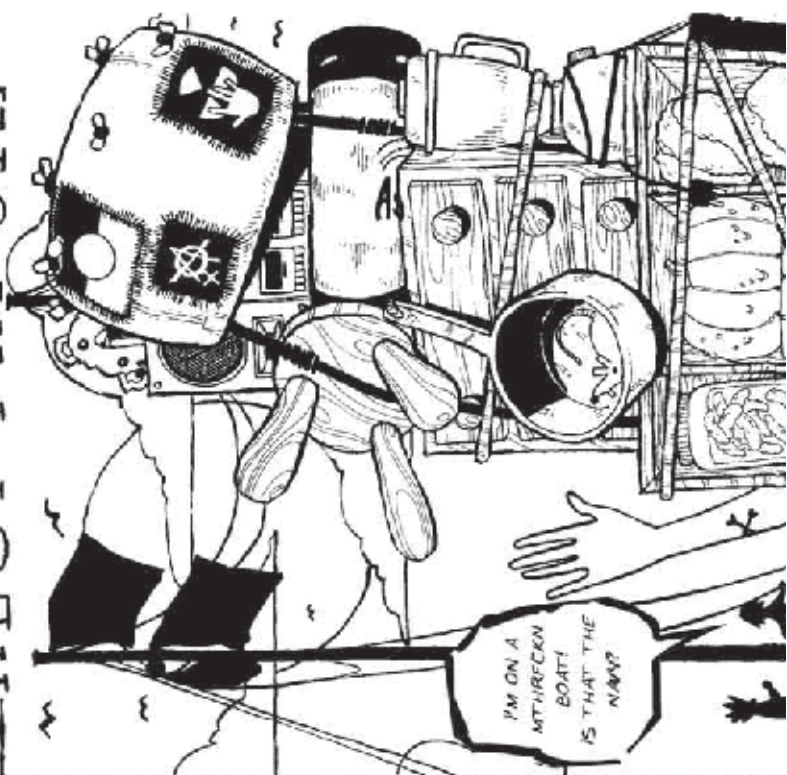
I NEED A  
MILK-SHAKE!

I NEED A  
TAKE-A PISS..

HEY GAYS, LET'S  
GET BACK ON  
THE ROAD!

ANYONE CHECKED  
THE BINS?

STILL ALONG  
FCKN PUNKS.



I'M ON A  
MTHRFCKN  
BOAT!  
IS THAT THE  
NAME?

...HAIL TO CAIRNS!  
NEVER MAKE IT  
OUTTA NSW!  
-OR WE'LL  
CAN'T TAKE 'EM  
ANYWHERE.

WE GOTTA  
FLAT!

SHIRT! I TOLD  
YOU TO LET  
THE PRESSURE  
DOWN ON THE  
DIRT.

DON'T WORRY,  
I CHANGED A  
TIRE ONCE  
BEFORE.

WE NEEDA  
CHANGE THE  
VEG FILTER  
ANYHOW.

COULDN'T YOU  
DO THAT  
BEFORE WE  
LEFT?

SOMEONE HITTA-ROOOOOOOOO!!!

I'M GONNA START A VEGAN  
POT IF ANYONE WANTS TO  
HELP CUT VEGGIES.

I'LL CHOP THAT ROO  
TAIL. WHAT? IT'S  
FREEGAN!

IT'S S'YILL AN  
ANIMAL!

YEH, BUT IF WE  
HIT-IT, WE GOTTA  
EAT-IT, RIGHT?

DID YOU  
EVEN BLEED  
IT?

WE MADE IT!

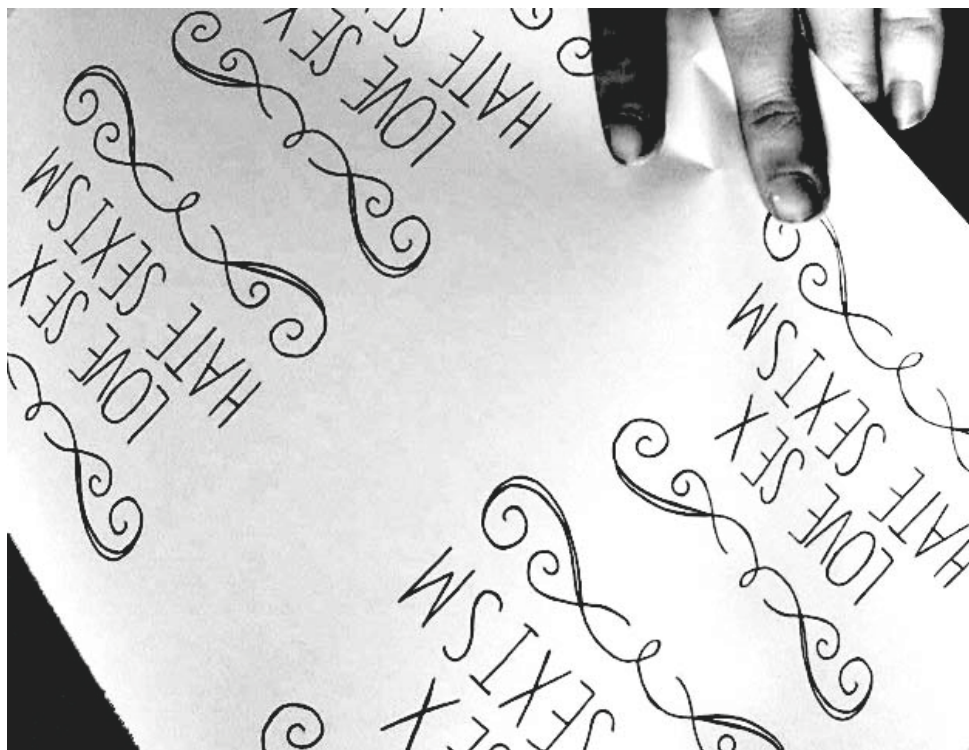
WOOF!  
WOOF!

WHAT IS IT  
SPARKS?

WOOF...

DON'T WORRY, I'VE BEEN  
WATCHING 'SAULING CLIPS  
ON YOUTUBE.

HON TO  
SAL!



# RESISTING MORE THAN COURSE CUTS

Wollongong University  
Free School

By Claire Johnston

Following the neoliberal trends across tertiary education, the University of Wollongong Faculty of Arts notified its students at the end of last year that if they wished to major in one of seven interdisciplinary courses, such as Asia Pacific Studies or Gender Studies, they had to declare it on their academic enrolment by the close of 2012; as from 2013 these courses would no longer be available. The justification from management was entirely predictable: enrolments were “pathetically low” and students had “voted with their feet”. Yet despite the supposed unpopularity of the courses, students were upset with the decision, and as we were to find out, were actually interested, engaged and eager to learn about some of these areas.

At the same time as these decisions were



being made, a group of students who had been inspired by their class on the philosophy of feminism[s] decided to form FemSoc, a gender inclusive feminist society. What was clear to us in FemSoc was that the investigation and study of gender was crucial to abolishing patriarchy on our campus and in the society we lived in. On the one hand, we were genuinely upset that the Faculty of Arts was dissolving the Gender Studies major - after all, women's studies and gender studies were born out of struggle. Removing these courses would reverse years of campaigning to have the study of gender acknowledged as an important area for both research and teaching. However, after some consideration and discussion with academic staff, we knew that there were significant problems with the way the Gender Studies course had been run, such as the dominance and influence of the Centre for Research On Men and Masculinities. We concluded that fighting for the course to be reintroduced in its previous form wasn't especially appealing.

This is how our free school began. FemSoc was a diverse group with diverse politics, and although some of us had experience in campaigns on campus, we decided that running a series of free, weekly public lectures and workshops was a relatively simple and accessible project that would give us a platform to not only publicly condemn the university's decision to cut Gender Studies but also to open a space for discussion of issues to do with gender. We have been astonished by its consistent popularity with students and staff. More importantly, we have been impressed by the space it has provided for developing and testing our ideas, not just about issues revolving around gender, but on the problems of the university and

tactics of resistance.

## FREE SCHOOL

FemSoc has between forty and fifty members and everyone is encouraged to begin their own projects and campaigns with the assistance and support of others in the group. Free School was a project organised by several members in the group. The process of establishing the free school was pretty straight forward: a room on campus was booked for 12.30 each Wednesday, academics doing research on issues related to gender were asked if they would like to give a half-an-hour lecture followed by discussion, posters were designed and Facebook events were created. There were deliberately few guidelines given to academics wishing to present or run a lecture or workshop. Consequently we ended up with a pretty diverse program. Weekly topics included:

- Feminism 101: Isn't everything ok now? Workshop presented by Jessie Hunt, a student and free school organiser. She facilitated a group discussion about consent and rape culture, and the possibilities for feminist activism on campus and more broadly in society.
- "White Women's Anxieties": White Women, Indigenous Women and Feminism. Lecture presented by Dr. Lisa Slater based on her book titled 'Close to Home: Anxieties of Belonging in Settler Australia'. In this book, she examines progressive white women's anxiety, not just any anxiety, but anxiety that is produced in intercultural encounters with Indigenous Australians.
- 2012 Anti-rape Protests and Media Activism in Urban India. Lecture presented by Sukmani Khorana who spoke about the growing popularisation of gender activism and the role of

both old and new media in India, and examined questions about the positive and negative dimensions of western media representations of the anti-rape protests

- Men and Feminism. Lecture presented by Dr. Michael Flood who presented his work on how men can contribute to a feminist future, the dilemmas of involving men in feminist activism, and the principles and strategies that should guide men's participation.

- Feminism and History. Dr. Sharon Crozier-De Rosa presented her research on the feminist campaign for suffrage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and incorporated issues surrounding anti-feminist backlashes in history.

- WTF Happened in Steubenville? Sex, Consent and the Media. Workshop facilitated by Jessie Hunt and Liv Todhunter, students and free school organisers, about victim blaming, rape culture, and the influence the media has over common ways of thinking about rape and sexual assault.

On average we would have between twenty and forty people attend each week, and discussion would almost always spill over the allocated hour. Even at the end of heavily academic lectures, attendees – usually students – would always have questions ready to throw at the presenter. Discussion would often flow onto the FemSoc social drinks at the university bar in the late afternoon and some sessions gave inspiration for other student-run projects such as Consent Week, which members of FemSoc organised during a week in semester.

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

The level of popularity and engagement we

have experienced with free school says several interesting things about feminism, students, the university and education more broadly.

Firstly, the re-emergence of a feminist movement in recent years in both Australia, mostly in the form of the Slut Walks and Reclaim the Night demonstrations, but also across the world, particularly in India, has had a local impact on campus. FemSoc is certainly a product of this renewed focus on feminist activism and themes from this movement such as rape culture, victim blaming and consent have been consistently brought up in Free School lectures or workshops. The enthusiasm and numbers of students participating perhaps suggests a change in how young people (although it should be noted that it is not just young people attending) are viewing feminism in the face of years of anti-feminist backlash. In one of the final Free School lectures, it was interesting to observe the presenter very quickly shift her framing of feminism away from a distinctly liberal approach after her audience raised their eyebrows at the use of the 'more females as CEOs and on boards' explanation of feminism.

Secondly, the popularity of Free School says something about 'the student'. Constantly I am being told that most students are uninterested in politics, activism and education outside the realm of [I]earning their degrees. Within the classes I am meant to take as part of my degree, I observe low lecture attendance and dull and unstimulating tutorial discussions (usually because no one has done the required readings for the class). Students outright resent assignments, deadlines and grading, and will do the bare minimum to graduate - this is most

commonly expressed through phrases such as “p’s make degrees”.

This image of the ‘apathic’ student flows into activism and politics. Friends who see themselves as ‘activists’ tell me they are sick of an apathetic student population, to whom they try to convince to attend a protest or rally to ‘save’ courses and institutions they don’t really like or believe in. I encountered these attitudes quite recently at the Edufactory conference at the University of Sydney. For instance, this idea was captured in the very first session when a student organiser proclaimed that ‘left students know about these issues more than anyone else’. This assumes students need but don’t have the political analysis to understand their own situation. Since organising and participating in Free School, myself and others in FemSoc have started to question these assumptions about the student and the university. The level of support and engagement we have received from students and staff within the university has suggested that people are engaged, willing to learn and to participate. Even more exciting is that they are willing to dissent.

## WHERE TO NEXT?

There is potential for Free School to develop into a bigger experiment of self-organised learning that challenges the structures of the university.

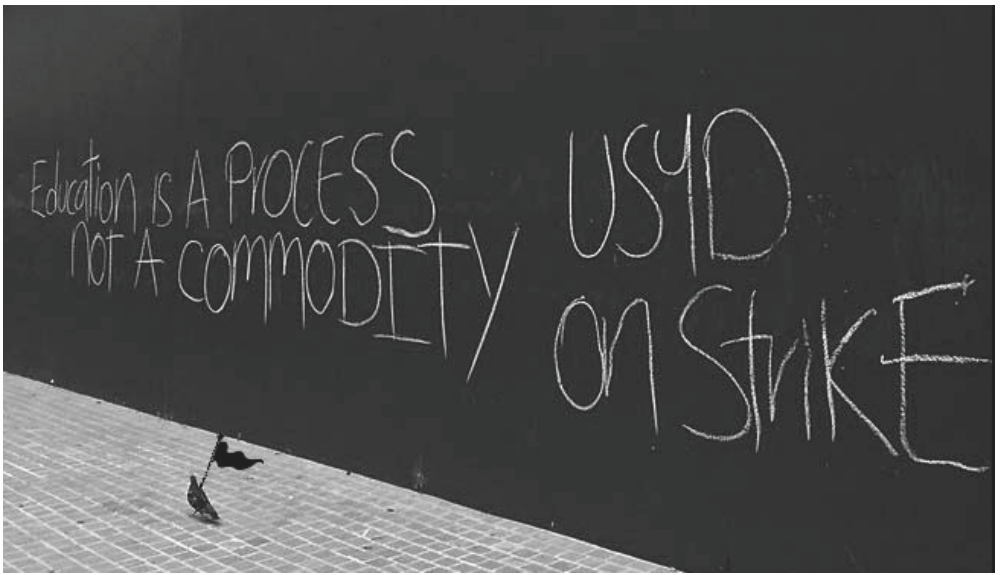
To an extent, the format of Free School sessions last semester was still based on hierarchical teacher-student relationships; in that the role of academics was to impart their greater knowledge to students. Although Free School can provide a space where academics can present their research, it would be more valuable if it defined

knowledge by a set of criteria beyond having academic credentials. Instead it could place greater emphasis on the knowledge that comes from people’s daily lives and lived experience of gender, the university, etc. As much as possible, Free School should try and create a space where knowledge can be shared, developed collectively and not just consumed. We have found it difficult to break-out of a traditional lecture followed by question and answer format, but are working on ways to introduce more workshops into the program that allow for academics to share their research and for everyone else to direct the discussion and participate.

The other main issue we are currently dealing with is decentralising the organisation of Free School. Currently, there are only a handful of dedicated organisers. However, we acknowledge that for Free School to become sustainable it is super important for us to share our skills with others and create the space for new people to become involved as much or as little as they have time for.

Finally, the most exciting potential our Free School has is to transform a small part of the deeply alienating and stressful institution that is the university, into a fun, engaging and caring space. Although we began this project to discuss and take action on gender, it has become a project where we can challenge the dominant forms of pedagogy and spread dissent to how our education is structured.

Where to next? Abolish the university. Free schools for everyone!



## Reflections on Striking at Sydney Uni

*K-Box*

On the first strike at Sydney Uni I found myself on a picket chanting 'no class, class war,' as bemused young men with sports bags walked towards us over the Parramatta Road footbridge. Throughout that day such a complex welter of emotions stirred in me, but in that moment I felt amusement and an overwhelming sense of relief. It was a relief to be part of a collective response to the larger undercurrents that have been responsible for the many small discontents and everyday alienations of ten years of the university in my life.

The first strike was called in March this year, and four more followed, the last in early June.

They were called as part of an enterprise bargaining campaign but seem to have focused the energy of many people frustrated with university management and their neoliberal push. This has been experienced particularly in the form of job cuts, increasing casualisation and diminishing work conditions, and its consequences are wide reaching and insidious. This economic agenda comes from beyond the university and engulfs it. Our experience of its effects in the university is compounded by the ways it restructures our lives outside the university. The university is a creator of workers as well as an exploiter of labour, it culturally assimilates people to middle class lifestyles and values, it offers a place for some critique of the social order, but not the means or, it seems often, the inclination to act on these critiques in substantial ways. The mounting pressures of strident neoliberalism, and the experience of the strike seem to have catalysed around me a more robust response, and a more open discus-

sion, about what people would like the university to be.

For me, the strikes have brought an intoxicating coalescence of camaraderie and action, allowed the forging of new connections, and opened up the space for more political conversations. My emotions, experiences and analysis have become entangled, and here I will try to explore and describe some of what I have felt and thought about the strike and the university. I want, too, to write something of the visceral experience of the pickets, of the weeks of strike: the joyfulness of the sudden release of tension that comes when you do the things you always dream of, and live just for a minute in that precise and perfect moment of struggle, however short-lived, alongside all your new best friends and strangers.

I spent the first day of strike at the Parramatta Road footbridge picket. It was a scratchy day. Those of us standing on the picket brought a mix of different political approaches and we lacked strong affinity or trust as a collective body. We struggled to make democratic decisions together, and as a result the political discussion was made up of isolated and prickly conversations between individuals. Arguments centred on how to make decisions on the picket, and whether and how to follow the union's protocol, which many of us did not feel was binding as we had no part in making it. Union officials and several others tried to control other picketers' behaviour without being willing to engage in discussion. I was asked several times to 'control my friends'. I felt politically squeezed from different sides, as different friends and comrades were frustrat-

ed with each other's tactics, but didn't feel comfortable having these conversations as a group. Students crossing the picket seemed to have little idea what the strike was about, or what crossing a picket might mean – many offering their support as they walked past. I felt ineffectual and inarticulate, wedged between different ideas about how to be effective with apparently no means to work out how to navigate these in order to have some coherent, democratic strategy. It provided tangible evidence of the way we are fragmented at the uni, and have grown unused to making decisions together without recourse to some higher power.

Before the next 48 hour strike many of us put a lot of effort into spreading the word about why there was a strike and how students could support it. At the 48 hour strike, the campus felt more politically aware and tense. Arguments on the pickets about union protocols and police continued, as more picketers chose to block traffic, and others took more disruptive action making noise around the campus itself. Students who were antagonistic to the strike were angry and threatening. To me, it seemed that at least some of these conversations began to concentrate on the underlying political differences which caused them: disagreements about what kinds of action are legitimate, strategic or democratic, and disagreements about how the university should function. Police responded to disruptive tactics with brutality and arrests. Widespread solidarity for those brutalised was lacking, and some strikers even tried to defend police actions and involvement. The feeling of conflict on campus was tangible, with politi-

cal faultlines exposed and raw. After the arrests and police brutality, and the antagonism and heartlessness of unsupportive students, I felt my own rage and frustration mounting. Walking around on the second day of the strike, beating a makeshift drum so hard I turned my thumb into a bloody mess, I didn't notice the pain and even the intimidating behaviour of macho students barely registered above my own anger. After more arrests I reached my personal nadir, crying pitifully in the gutter outside newtown police station. The 48 hour strike felt like the breaking point – the point when it became harder for people to pretend the strikes weren't happening, but also the point when I felt the most broken.

At the next strike, union officials and others still tried to enforce the union protocol, or even police interpretations of it, but I felt that the attrition of political arguments accompanied by police violence and unreasonableness was bringing people into tighter solidarity. Some of this might have happened because people with convergent political persuasions sought each other out on particular pickets, but the result was a stronger sense of support on those pickets which chose to prevent the entry of traffic. I missed the next strike but police violence continued, accompanied by arbitrary arrests intended to intimidate and break the strike. Since then, university management and police have continued to threaten students, staff and community members with time-consuming legal proceedings and other formal means of intimidation including campus bans.

In the face of these iniquities, solidarity

has swelled and strengthened, although still with hiccups. It seems that the strikes have opened up space for the development of a more profound political conversation, and strengthened ties between different people and parts of the uni. In a time of overwhelming fragmentation, this solidarity is reassuring. Looking back to the first strike day, I find even my own self unrecognisable. Each strike, each conversation I felt more confident in making the political arguments I wanted to make about the university. My confidence stemmed from feeling the solidarity of others on the pickets, from conversations with others at the strikes and the meetings in between, and from the way the strike helped me to comprehend my own experiences of the university in a political context. In particular, explaining to students approaching pickets why I was there helped to condense many of my own experiences with an unexpected clarity. I realised, in the middle of a conversation with a student who thought staff had too much sick leave, that at the age of 29 I had never had a job with any kind of sick leave at all. I thought of days suffering from chronic depression, dragging myself from my room to teach, never relating my experience to the neoliberal changes at the university I had been involved in campaigning against. Explaining my working life to others, in the context of the excellent analysis provided by so many different people around the strikes, helped me to comprehend it myself.

The strikes also helped me articulate and understand the ways alienation operates at the university. During the strikes, when the force of the state and security was most on show, it became

more obvious how it operates implicitly on other days. The idea of professional protestors and outside agitators was very present, in media representations and management emails, but also on the pickets. Security pointed out to me people who they thought weren't students – class figured highly in their requirements of what students look like. Many students commenting on videos of pickets made comments such as “not a degree in sight” and suggested that none of the people in various clips were staff or students. Leaving aside how anyone could possibly know by face all of the staff and students of the university, and the fact that their claims were patently wrong, visual profiling of the categories of people who ‘belong’ in a university was common place as a means to describe people as outsiders. These claims were used to diminish the ‘rights’ of people to be involved in the dispute, but also to characterise anyone on the pickets as outsiders, thus reinforcing the alienation of people who do not appear to be privileged and who are not willing to culturally assimilate to elite values and political persuasions.

There are many privileges attendant on working and studying at university, and for a long time this has been coupled with the nostalgic image of the university as being above or outside of capitalism, which hides some of the ways the university exploits my labour. And yet I have many experiences of neoliberalism in my everyday life which are as conspicuous as the brute force which makes it viable on the days of the strike. As I ride along Eastern Avenue on busy mornings, my way is obstructed by markets and I can never decide

what annoys me more, that there are shops selling shoes and bags on campus, or their pseudo market chic. Cops stroll about ever more confidently, military recruitment drives become more frequent, and entire haunted castles, ferris wheels and fairy floss stands materialise as I race by to meet deadlines and arrive at class on time. The university is decorated with advertising for what is effectively private tuition in the techniques of capitalist exploitation. The university has demolished and rebuilt at least one building each year of my attendance, while it claims to have no money for pay rises or resources for postgraduates. Whilst there is a temptation to imagine the university was once a pristine institution outside of capitalism, the truth is this campus has been intimidating from my first arrival. When I first attended uni in newcastle, it felt like a liberation from the social stratification and the intense and gendered social gaze of school – but Sydney University offered much more intimidating versions, intensified by class politics.

On the picket line at the first strike, I felt confused about what I was defending. At each succeeding picket, it became easier to articulate that I wanted to challenge all of these things. The strikes offered some of my first satisfying confrontations with particularly entitled and arrogant students who have always made me feel uncomfortable. At last I felt comfortable telling them what I thought the university should be, and even though it was pointless to engage with them, I was glad to render their ease slightly less comfortable.



# Anarcha-feminism and anarcho-machismo in Spain

Interview with *the Valeries* by Jeremy Kay

*This article is an edited interview from December 2012. It follows on from a set of interviews (published in the last edition of Mutiny) which discussed Spain's economic crisis, massive social movements (such as '15M'), and anarchistic politics. This interview focusses on anarcho-feminist organising and perspectives. The Valeries are two radical anarcho-feminist squatters living in Madrid. The interview was conducted in Spanish – I apologise for any errors I may have made due to misunderstandings or poor translation. – Jeremy.*

## -A story from Casa Blanca-

We'll start with a story that illustrates the sort of thing anarcho-feminists regularly deal with within the anarchist movement in Spain.



It happened at Casa Blanca – a squatted, self-managed social centre in central Madrid. It was a very big building with lots of space, and had more-or-less anarchist politics. It was squatted in early 2010 and evicted in September 2012. Hundreds of different collectives participated in the space.

Sometime towards the beginning of the occupation, a group of womyn asked the general assembly of the building for a womyn's autonomous space. [This article uses the term 'autonomous' as is common among English-speaking activists, but the term used in Spanish is literally 'non-mixed'.] The assembly said yes to this request, and the womyn started fixing up the space – cleaning and putting in lights etc.

During this time, we put up a poster on the door of the space that said 'autonomous space – no machistas' [ie 'no patriarchs / macho arseholes']. Someone wrote on the poster underneath 'nor feminazis.' That was a sign of things to come.

There were some changes in the collective and time passed, and then a group of us started to prepare the space to be used for some new things like a gym and workshops on self-managed health.

We sent an email to the main group to ask for a key so that we could enter at will. All the collectives had their own key. They responded that we had to go to an assembly to ask for the space. We flipped out a bit at this, since we didn't think it was necessary, as the space was autonomous, and that process had already happened anyway. But we said OK, fine.

But the 'assembly' was a joke. There were only two guys from the social centre – it wasn't a full assembly, but rather a 'welcoming committee'. Other people brought proposals, and the two guys said what they thought. It wasn't a very horizontal way of making decisions! All the other proposals were ac-

cepted. We were last. The two guys didn't understand what an autonomous space was, and didn't know that the space had already been designated as such. They also didn't know about the work that we had already done. So we explained (yet again – as we've been doing since the 1960s!) the reasoning behind autonomous spaces. They said they couldn't decide on the spot, and maybe another group wanted the space. We said that we knew no-one else wanted it because we'd been there a lot, using it. But they said that they would pass the proposal to the assembly and that in a week there would be a response.

Well, we waited a week, then two weeks, three weeks, one month, and still there was no response. So we sent an email asking if they remembered us and if they'd made a decision. They didn't respond. But one of us was on the internal email list for the social centre and saw an email that said the space was going to be used for a different group, a non-autonomous group. We were pretty pissed at that!

From then on we didn't send emails obviously. Instead we wrote a communique to the internal group of the social centre. We also did some small posters to put up in the social centre in which we explained briefly what had happened and that we considered Casa Blanca to be a patriarchal space with a lack of understanding of gender politics. We went to put up the posters on the day of the 2 year anniversary when it was full of people. Many people looked at us in a malicious way, but didn't ask us anything when we put the posters up. One womyn started insulting us, and two others asked what was happening. We told them the story, and they said they would talk with the guys from the welcoming committee, who then said to them (not us) that it had been a mistake, and so we should take down the posters. We found out later that those two guys from the welcoming committee had never passed on our proposal, they had just ignored it. According to them,

they had forgotten.

Later we received emails with insults that we were sabotaging the social centre and 'fragmenting the movement', and that we should get lost.

### **-On anarchism and machismo-**

There are many people here who call themselves 'anarchist'. But how do we understand who is an 'anarchist'? Is it someone with a certain aesthetic – who wears a few badges, or is it someone who actually reflects on the values of patriarchy, class, race and sexuality that exist in society and within ourselves? It's funny that when you call some anarchist 'machista', they get all offended, and don't look within themselves. Whereas if you point out when someone is being racist, they take it seriously and look within. For me honesty is very important. If you really are an anarchist, you will look within when you are criticised. You won't let your pride get in the way. The macho pride here is very strong. This is to be expected in general, but it's sad when you find it among anarchists. In fact, often anarchist boys take greater offence if they're called out on their behaviour, than non-anarchist boys. Because of course, as soon as you call yourself 'anarchist', you're a mountain of marvellous things, and don't need to change. In reality, new ideas are always difficult to accept.

The didactic role that we are required to play is one of the paradoxes. Because one of the roles you have to assume as a woman is to be sweet, patient, calm, understanding and caring. As this is a role created by patriarchy, we have to fight against it. This doesn't mean that I'll never be caring, just not all the time. But when anarchists around me don't understand feminist ideas, they expect me to be caring and lovingly and explain things to them. But I get angry –

since the ideas of feminism aren't exactly new, and if they're anarchists, they should have some idea of them! For me it's a problem here that as soon as a person squats and wears a hoodie and dumpster-dives, they consider themselves an anarchist. If that's all anarchism means to you, then you don't feel like you need to develop any deeper political ideas. If those who call themselves 'anarchist' truly opposed all hierarchies, we wouldn't need to call ourselves 'radical anarchy-feminists', just 'anarchists'. But because the term 'anarchism' is used poorly, and just as a fashion, it loses its meaning.

There's also a perspective among some anarchists here, that separates anarchism and feminism. They see feminism as an institutionalised, reformist fight. They don't see the strands within feminism. We think this perspective is just an excuse to avoid working on any feminist actions.

### **-On the anarchy-feminist movement in Spain-**

In general, the anarchy-feminist movement in Spain is quite well connected. We put on talks and workshops about issues such as gendered violence and aggression, gender roles and authoritarianism. Proposals and actions often arise out of these events, although distance is a problem for us. We have a loose network across the Iberian peninsula of people who have a good perspective on gender.

One idea that we've been discussing a lot is about how to move on beyond self-defense. So much of our energy is directed at men. And this includes having to explain feminist ideas to them all the time. Sure, we want to include male comrades in the struggle, but not at the cost of ourselves. They also have to take steps and realise how to act, how to educate themselves, how to critique themselves. This isn't

our responsibility. We need to employ our time and energy on ourselves, for ourselves. If not, we can't advance. We don't want to spend our whole time justifying and legitimising ourselves. This affects us – it affects our ability to believe in ourselves.

It's important to spend some time in womyn's autonomous groups. It helps to be able to come back to mixed groups and see them in a new way, to see the gendered constructions. A strong network of womyn's autonomous spaces exists in Madrid and other parts of Spain. We've spent time working just with womyn, and time working with men – either way we get called 'feminazis'! This is one reason why we need autonomous groups – to be away from this sort of machismo.

We also want the term 'feminist' to include the trans reality. Feminism is advancing all the time and nowadays the concept of 'woman' doesn't fit so well – it doesn't include the ideas of lesbianism or trans. Trans-womyn are included in our autonomous spaces.

We also attempt to use language in ways that challenge patriarchy. For example we use the feminine form when speaking in the plural (instead of the masculine form which is normally used in Spanish). [In this article, the spelling 'womyn' is used as an imperfect way to reflect some of the feminist linguistic actions used by the Valeries in Spanish.]

We call ourselves 'radical anarchy-feminists' because many people here call themselves 'anarchy-feminists' without really having the critique of patriarchy. We feel we've done a lot of work and personal reflection to develop our critique of the construction of patriarchal values. We also consider patriarchy to be one of the roots of the problem – and for this reason we like the term 'radical', which originally comes from the word for 'root'.

We think a radical anarchy-feminist posture is good, because it's about making change now. Others say 'it's not the time'. But radical anarchy-feminists reply that that we're not waiting until the world understands – we have to act now, whether they understand or not. We have to avoid being victims.

## **-On the reformist feminist movement-**

Within the broad 15M movement, there exists the group 'Feminista Sol'. It's an assembly and nominally the feminist part of 15M. On one hand we like it, on the other, it makes us afraid. It highlights the issues of feminism and patriarchy – a very important action in this society – but it has a very reformist character, like 15M in general. The strategy is all about asking the State for things, which leads to a loss of autonomy. It's absurd – we can't ask the State for things and at the same time fight against it. It's like the International Women's Day rally: the one day when we're given permission to go on the street and shout – and the rest of the time we have to shut up. All of the political parties participate in the rally. It's ridiculous.

Similarly, we think the demand to legalise abortion is very problematic. [In Spain abortion has been legal since 2010 – with some procedural restrictions. Before that it was decriminalised but not legal and womyn had to prove 'serious risk to physical or mental health'.] Some anarchy-feminists have participated in campaigning for the legalisation of abortion, as well as feminists who are not anarchists of course. But we think it is dangerous to ask for more laws which end up delegating more of our own power to the State. Control over our own bodies is a responsibility that we need to assume ourselves.

## IN PRAISE OF CHALK

We have written this because everyone talks about strategy and not enough of us talk about tactics. At best one hears discussions about broad classes of tactics "mass tactics" versus "insurrectionary tactics" essentially this is just another strategic discussion (though necessary). When tactics are spoken of, they are often discussed in an apolitical manner, in DIY guides or lists of creative action ideas. This short paper considers the political strengths of the tactics of chalking, most especially at rallies.

We are often told that there is a complex dialectical relation between form and content. It is said that it is naive to claim that a form essentially has a particular content.

This may be! Where is the tactic or stratagem that hasn't been used by the enemy as well? Where is the organisational form, however, democratic or pre-figurative, which has not been adopted by some business or bourgeoisie think tank somewhere?

Nonetheless, to claim that organisational form is neutral is to commit the opposite mistake. Form may not determine content, but it's pretty bloody important.

One notable thing about going to a rally, demonstration or protest is that it usually involves being talked at. There is most typically a pre-established speaking list, with little or minimal flexibility. There is the voice of those with something to impart, and the ears of Those Who Must Have Words Battered Against Them. In this sense it mirrors the worst excesses of authoritarian education structures.

Just like the lecture, the rally may be unavoidable in our present circumstances. But during recent struggles at Sydney University we have discovered a solution to allow everyone a voice without mere cacophony.

Just hand them a piece of chalk. Give everyone chalk. Take a bucket of the stuff and pass it around. Have a few prearranged militants start, so as to give everyone else a visual explanation of what the chalkstick you've put in their hand is for.

I don't know what prices are like where you live, but here you can get a bucket for two dollars if you shop smart (you can also make your own- a simple recipe needing simple supplies). I don't know what laws are like where you live, but here chalk generally isn't considered graffiti because it washes off. This isn't a DIY guide, but I do have one tip, wet the chalk before the rally- it last longer and goes on more nicely.

There's nothing quite as satisfying as writing obscenities on a politician or manager's door.

Upon giving out chalk we found that the result was a beautiful (make sure to bring cameras!) multi-coloured symphony of slogans, symbols and etchings. Many who find rallies alienating no longer felt like spectators, but as agents.

Our engravings persisted both physically (for it takes a while to organise a wash off) and electronically. Our photographs looked better than dull snaps of protestors walking in a line.

"Expression" is rarely a static reporting our thoughts, but participates in their creation; any writer can tell you this. Many of those who hover between reform and radicalism seem to find a radical voice when given a stick of chalk and a wall. The most notable moment was one young man who wrote ACAB, and relayed afterwards that it was in the moment of writing it that he had become satisfied of its truth. We have since experimented several times and the result is similar.

The fear of arrest is greatly lesser than that engendered by the spray can. The liberal's cries are quieter or non-existent. Dozens or even hundreds create a mural of their own desires. With ease we act beyond the ropes of any Trotskyist or Reformist who would seek to make the event an endless repetition of their message or line. Let chalk etch, scrawl and scrub, long live colour, long live the power of the people!