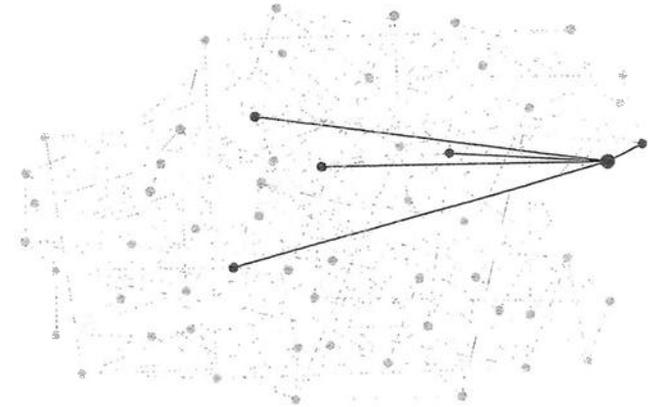


# **KEYWORDS FOR RADICALS**

**THE CONTESTED VOCABULARY OF  
LATE-CAPITALIST STRUGGLE**

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## MISOGYNY

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THE TERM "MISOGYNY" DERIVES FROM THE MODERN Latin, "*misogynia*" and from the Greek, "*misogynes*." Both contain the etymological root "*miso*," meaning "hatred, hater." For its part, "*gyne*" refers to "woman" or to "wife." Thus, "misogyny" sometimes slips into common usage as "woman-hater." This etymology does not specify who is to be considered a woman (e.g., on the basis of primary or secondary sex characteristics); instead it refers to the feminine gender role of "wife" and, in particular, the wife of the king—the "queen" (Old English "*cwen*," "*quean*," or honored woman "*gwen*"). Woman's nomination as queen then split from a sovereign reference to assume the more wide-ranging meaning of "powerful, young woman"

have conservatively rebuked objections to their attempts at circumscription. In a 2015 *New York Times* op-ed, Elinor Burkett pushed back against trans perspectives that she claims go too far by infringing on cisgender women's right to self-definition. In her account, "the trans movement" oversteps its bounds by "demanding that women reconceptualize ourselves" (8). In one transphobic moment, Burkett claimed that Caitlyn Jenner was simply a man who wears nail polish and falsely concludes that this experience makes her a woman. For Burkett, this position made Jenner no better than other "women-hating" men. Today's stark division between trans-misogynist radical feminists and trans-feminisms reiterates the racist divisions carved by white women's liberation movements that spoke for all women on the presupposition that they knew who and what women truly were.

Trans women have been at the forefront of contemporary feminist deployments of "misogyny" as a key term. "Trans-misogyny" conceptualizes injured feminine subjects beyond those marked as "female" at birth. Writer and activist Julia Serano elaborates the concept in *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (2007). In her view, "trans-misogyny is steeped in the assumption that femaleness and femininity are inferior to, and exist primarily for the benefit of, maleness and masculinity." As a result, trans women are the target of most of the violent attacks and the butt of most jokes aimed at gender-variant people (2012, 1). As a result of trans-misogyny, "trans women and others on the trans female/feminine spectrum are routinely sexualized in the media, within psychological, social science and feminist discourses, and in society at large" (ibid.). Peggy Phelan's famous joke about misogyny in the media bears repeating in an age when Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenner have graced the covers of *Time Magazine* and *Vanity Fair*: "If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white [cisgender] women should be running Western culture" (1993, 10).

Both Serano and Phelan understand that misogyny is wedded to essentialist notions concerning femininity. This makes it all the more hypocritical when trans-exclusionary radical feminists

(TERFs) participate in trans-misogynist smear campaigns that sexualize trans-women as predators. They become "feminist misogynists," to use Susan Gubar's term (1994) for when feminists paradoxically reinforce what they would otherwise denounce by invoking the same restrictive logic of womanhood and manhood marshaled by patriarchal misogynists. In this case, TERFs draw on feminist critiques of misogynist practices that target females exclusively while denying that the "sex/gender system" is itself a changing "sets of arrangements" that create hierarchical divisions between the sexes (Rubin 1975, 159).

Trans-feminism builds on the insight that femininity is disparaged in patriarchal societies, but it sheds the essentialist notion that it is solely attributable to female-assigned persons. Expanding the circumference of femininity prevents misogyny from being seen as a problem solely for women who have "female" life experience, vulvas, XX-chromosomes, or who can biologically reproduce and are therefore enslaved to patriarchy in some special sense.

In her trans-feminist manifesto, Emi Koyama calls attention to shared and differential experiences of misogyny: "trans women are targeted because we live as women. Being a woman in this misogynist society is dangerous, but there are some factors that make us much more vulnerable when we are the targets of sexual and domestic violence" (2003, 7). On *Feminist Wire*, Nick Artrip recounts the impact of misogyny on the gay hook-up application Grindr, claiming that "misogyny has crept so greatly into our culture that even sexual positions within the gay community have become politicized" (2013). "No Fat, No Femme" tags reflect current strictures concerning the admission of a preference for being a bottom. In this context "Vers" (for versatile) becomes code to cover the shame of being a bottom in a scene where it is perceived as feminine. In both cases, discrimination is aimed at feminine male-assigned subjects (trans women and gay men), though those subjects identify with femininity from different gender positions. Similarly, femme queer women face misogyny from lesbians who question their identification with femininity or perceive them as passive and weak (Brushwood Rose and Camilleri 2003).