



BRILL

Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism

Marxism-Feminism

A: märksīya nisā'īya. – E: Marxism-Feminism. – F: marxisme-féminisme. – R: marksizm-feminizm. – S: marxismo-feminismo. – C: Mǎkèsī zhǔyì-nǚxìng zhǔyì
马克思主义-女性主义

Marxism-Feminism [*Marxismus-Feminismus*] is characterised by its effort to fight and work for an integration of the feminist revolution into Marxism. The resistance it encounters means that feminism has been forced to take on an initially oppositional and polemical form. The aim of the feminist revolution is the liberation of women from male domination as a precondition for the transformation of our society into one based on solidarity. This perspective seeks the eradication of patriarchal gender relations as an integral aspect of the socialist transformation of the relations of production. This means revolutionising the revolution, setting out to alter every dimension, every aspect of the social.

For theoretical consistency, this requires Marxism-Feminism to think of gender relations as relations of production. This position is founded on Marx and Engels's thesis that male domination over the female gender constitutes the first instance of historical class relations, at the heart of which is the ability to dispose of others' labour-power (*German Ideology*, 3/32); slavery can be seen as an extension of this form (Marx 1972, 160).

One of the problems for Marxist Feminism is the question of its theoretical and practical approach to the 'intersection' of gender relations with relations of class and race. Another central problem is the challenge of conceptualising

the persistence of sexual violence against women without constructing naturalised and essentialised dichotomies of masculinity versus femininity.

Feminist Marxism has deliberately taken up the 'one-sided' feminist challenge and started to transform theory and praxis. Historically and conceptually this transformation also coincides with the strategic integration of ecology.

Insofar as the goals of feminist Marxism and Marxist Feminism draw closer together, and thereby enhance Marxism itself, so their contrasting differences begin to disappear. From both a programmatic and a practical-utopian perspective, they can therefore be seen as historical and transitory formations. However, even if they are bound to disappear as distinct formations in the wake of their successes, the work that they have started will continue for generations.

1 Origins

The expression 'Marxism-Feminism' first appeared as a term designed for international struggle at the beginning of the 1970s. Its exact meaning was gradually developed through a learning-process that took place in a conflictual field of multiple meanings, promoted by a minority among the feminist voices that was also marginalised among the Marxists. It originated in the context of a students' movement that had started to read Marx, and a women's movement that attempted to change traditional Marxism by inserting within it the standpoint of women and a programme for their liberation. The overlap between elements of both movements created an environment in which such struggles for change could be waged. This resulted not

only in conflict between feminists, but above all in conflict between feminists and those who advocated an orthodox Marxism that was both factional and dogmatic. In Germany, this was, in part, thanks to groups of students ('K-Gruppen') who attempted to protect the 'one true' Marxism from feminist infiltration.

Mariarosa **Dalla Costa** and others called a conference in Italy (Padua) to discuss the 'overthrow of society'. Participants included about 20 feminists from the US, Italy, France and the UK, who united around a campaign for 'Wages for Housework'. This was extremely successfully launched under the leadership of **Dalla Costa** and Selma **James** with a call for a strike on housework (Sylvia **Federici** renewed this call in 2012). In 1972 **Dalla Costa** and **James** published their manifesto for the 'overthrow of society' simultaneously in Italian and English; the following year it was translated and published in German, and later in Spanish and French. It entails a feminist reading of **Marx** that launched the 'domestic-labour debate'. Here, the unwaged labour of women in the household is considered as producing surplus-value, since women also work longer hours than are needed for their individual reproduction. Female unwaged labour is discussed in relation to the reproduction of capital, and the refusal of housework is proposed as a subversive and revolutionary strategy.

These arguments caused sharp public debate, published mainly in the *New Left Review* between 1974 and 1977. Wally **Secombe's** contribution, 'The Housewife and her Labour under Capitalism' (1974), opened the debate to underline the role of work in the household for a critique of political economy. While the position of **Dalla Costa**, developed within the framework of autonomist Marxism (*Operismo*), found supporters worldwide, it also provoked strong feminist critiques of its conceptualisation of housewives as waged labourers who would be enabled, through wage-payment, to collectively organise childcare, meal preparation and so forth. Heidi **Hartmann** summarises the consciousness-raising potential of the

Wages for Housework position in this way: 'By demanding wages for housework and by refusing to participate in the labour market women can lead the struggle against capital. Women's community organisations can be subversive to capital and lay the basis not only for resistance to the encroachment of capital but also for the formation of a new society' (1979, 6). However, **Hartmann** makes the criticism that, while this strategy makes women part of the anti-capitalist struggle, it does not evince feminist thinking in terms of the actual content of the gendered division of work, thus it remains fundamentally economic and does not aim for a more human society.

In 1979, Sheila **Rowbotham et alii's** influential book on the relationship between the women's movement and socialist organisation was published in the UK. It problematised conceptualisations of consciousness and the avant-garde. It argued that the women's movement had 'cut through circular avant-gardist thinking'; questioned the criteria by which avant-gardism defined 'progressiveness' and 'backwardness'; and pointed instead to a praxis based on 'lived experience' (1979, 102–11). Opposition to feminism in groups that regarded themselves as Trotskyist and Leninist often resulted in women quitting those socialist and communist organisations. **Carla Ravaoli** notes in the case of Italy that the failure of feminist women to change socialist politics then led to a strategy of 'double militancy', in that they had to fight on two fronts: one directly against capital, the other against patriarchal cultures and their consequences, which in turn have been employed and cynically exploited by capital (1977, 163 et sq.).

A fierce debate resulted from the publication of Heidi **Hartmann's** essay 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism', first published in the US in 1975, re-worked in cooperation with Amy B. **Bridges** and republished in 1977, re-printed in *Capital & Class* in 1979, and finally appearing in 1981 together with twelve contributions to the debate published in the volume *Women and Revolution*, edited by Lydia **Sargent**. In the Introduction

to the volume **Sargent** formulated a theoretical challenge: 'How can women understand their particular oppression in a way that can confront the narrowness of Marxist terminology (as used by the men in the movement) which focuses on work and economic relations as the primary (sometimes only) area of importance; and how can they develop a new theory which understands the importance of reproduction, family, and sexuality as central to current analyses and future visions?' (1981, xviii).

In its composition **Sargent's** edited volume is a classic of productive engagement in debate. It showcases work in progress: different positions are introduced as first steps, prerequisites are formulated, and perspectives on what still has to be developed are sketched out. The following terms are shown to be contested: production, patriarchy, sex/gender system, the personal and the private as political – within a Marxism in motion of which Marxism-Feminism is one expression, alongside the 'everyday-life school' (for example, Eli **Zaretsky**, 1973) and the 'Radical Feminists' (for example, Shulamith **Firestone** 1971, and Kate **Millett** 1969). Right from the beginning these individual positions establish themselves on a dividing-line, where the centre of analysis switches between either the position of women in the economic system or the relations of domination between men and women.

Hartmann argues initially that the specific focus of feminist Marxism is a departure from 'the women question'. 'The women question has never been the "feminist question"' (1975/1981, 3). The latter is much more concerned with the development of a theory of female oppression, of its integration into capitalism, and with a basis for reconstructing Marxism. 'Radical Feminists' include psychoanalysis in their analysis. 'The personal is political' means here that the 'original and basic class division is between the sexes, and that the motive force in history is the striving of men for power and domination over women, the dialectic of sex' (1979, 10).

Zaretsky aims to widen our understanding of production and work by integrating housework, and thereby to update Marxism by integrating feminist questions. 'The housewife emerged, alongside the proletariat [as] the two characteristic laborers of developed capitalist society' (1973, 114). The feminist Marxism suggested by **Hartmann** formulates its challenge as the attempt 'to use [...] Marxism to consider patriarchy as a system of social relations based on men's control of women's labor power, both in the home and in the wider economy' (1975/1981, 371). In this way, it avoids economism, which suggests one unitary system in which everyone labours for capitalism, and also the psychologism of theories of patriarchy, which develop another unitary theory that assumes an essentialist male drive for power.

There was no such systematic debate in Germany, but Marxism-Feminism can be traced in various accounts, bearing witness to the existence of such discussions. The *Frauenzentrum Berlin* [Berlin Women's Centre] discussed a 'Marxism/Feminism working group' that aimed to clarify the theoretical significance of feminism, as well as a working group on 'the workers' and women's movement' (see Jutta **Menschik** 1977, 96). **Herbert Marcuse** was one of the supporters of an interconnection of Marxism and feminism. He gave a series of lectures on the topic during 1974 in Germany and the US. **Siegline Tömmel** argued that, as part of the 'recent opening-up of intensive debate on the relationship between Marxism and Feminism and also on the theory of women's liberation [*Frauenemanzipationstheorie*] in Germany [...] judgements about the priority of "class" or "gender" in the struggle for women's liberation caused disagreement within the women's movement itself' (1975, 835). Initially the female Marxists within the movement gave predominantly defensive responses. The seminar programme of the *Otto-Suhr-Institut* at the Free University of Berlin lists for the semester of Summer 1975 a seminar on Marxism-Feminism offered by **Ingrid**

Schmidt-Harzbach, in which more than one hundred students participated (Lenz 2010, 212).

In protest against the orthodox women's policy of their party, feminists in the French Communist Party in Paris founded the journal *Elles voient rouge* [*Women See Red*], and in 1980 they organised an international symposium entitled *Féminisme et Marxisme*. Here, representatives of 'autonomous' women's groups as well as feminists within parties and trade unions discussed politically and strategically how the women's movement could constitute itself as a force without having to rely on traditional structures, debating, for example, whether they should form their own women's party. Central topics included: patriarchy and women as a class; housework as productive or unproductive work; wages for housework; the right to paid employment; part-time work and the family; the women's movement and self-awareness groups; movement and party; the state and the personal as political; complicity; and homosexuality (the discussion was published in 1981 under the title of the symposium; see a review in *Das Argument*, Beiheft 1983, 11 et sqq.). Nicole Edith Thévenin (1982) announced programmatically: 'It seems to me that, from a Marxist perspective, feminism is equally fruitful in theory and in praxis'. From the beginning of the 1980s, publications that highlighted the tensions between Marxism and feminism started to accumulate in Western-European and Anglophone countries (USA, Canada, Australia).

In the first place, Marxism-Feminism is a concept of a movement [*Bewegungsbegriff*]. It polemicalises, on the one hand, against a form of Marxism that does not include feminism, and, on the other hand, against a feminism that does not view Marxism as its guiding principle. 'The women's question should be dealt with from a Marxist perspective, and to this end traditional Marxism needs to be reconstructed, extended and critically used' (Haug/Hauser 1984, 17). The history of the term Marxism-Feminism – that is, when the term first appeared – can

only be vaguely delineated. A survey in 2014 asked 30 international Marxist Feminists already active in the 1970s about who coined the term Marxism-Feminism. Their responses generated only hesitant references to one another, but no clear results suitable for a historical account (Haug 2014).

Internationally the term was used to describe a current in contrast to 'materialist feminists' or 'socialist feminists'. Differences were soon debated on internet discussion forums. Retrospectively, Martha E. Gimenez characterises these in this way: 'In the exciting times of the women's liberation movement, four main traditions of feminist thought can be identified: the liberal tradition (concerned with the realisation of political equality within capitalism), the radical tradition (concentrating on men and patriarchy as the main sources of female suppression), the socialist tradition (a critique of capitalism and Marxism, aimed at avoiding reductionism in Marxism that results in a two-system theory, where an interaction of capitalism and patriarchy is assumed) and Marxist Feminists (a theoretical position represented by relatively few feminists in the US – including myself – that aimed to develop the potential of Marxist theory, to grasp the capitalist sources of female oppression' (2000, 18). In the aftermath of the world financial crisis of 2008 and beyond, the collection and classification of texts from these international currents has gained renewed topicality in journals, workshops, and educational programmes of the Left, or, for example, at the annual conference of the journal *Historical Materialism*.

2 Representation

To enable a better overview, we can distinguish between different historical-thematic stages within Marxism-Feminism. Initially, we see a separation from traditional forms of Marxism, which took place partly as a split from these approaches, and partly as a forthright critique of them. Struggles existed

around the question of a Marxist approach to questions of women's oppression, as well as around questions of research design and of new methods of scientific inquiry. Overall, Marxism-Feminism can only be depicted as a project in development. We can discern moments of intervention, where either Marxist renewal has been advanced by feminist insights or, where feminist work was criticised by Marxist inquiry and thereby reconceptualised.

2.1 Separation

In Germany, where the women's movement predominantly emerged from within the students' movement, feminist critique initially targeted the theoretical foundations of Marxism. This stood in contrast to the UK, Italy and France, where feminism focused on criticising the politics of the workers' movement. Early publications expressed dissatisfactions, arising from a sense of exclusion from the version of Marxism taken up by the students' movement, with the classic authors of Marxism themselves. A book like *Die Märchenonkel der Frauenfrage: Friedrich Engels und August Bebel [The Peddlers of Fairy Tales about the Women Question: Friedrich Engels and August Bebel]* (Roswitha Burgard and Gaby Karsten, 1975) notes the patriarchal style of these leaders' way of life, collects their scattered comments on women, and exposes them to female laughter. Indeed, once on this trail, we quickly find that women are excluded as a matter of course. For example, we read in such an important text as the *Communist Manifesto* that 'not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself, it has also called into existence the men [*Männer*] who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians' (1969, 18). Here it goes without saying that women have disappeared from sight and their claim to be autonomous agents has been dismissed, as it becomes simply a question of 'do[ing] away with the status of women as mere instruments of production' (25). Yet whilst such feminist acts of decon-

struction and desecration can be emancipating, they are also limited in the longer term.

2.2 Conceptual Work

As Marxism-Feminism developed, it spread across countries and continents, enabling people to discuss it widely, with a desire to grasp female oppression by its roots and bring it into the political spotlight. In a continuous process of discussion, voices chimed in from everywhere, only some of which can be illustrated here.

Fundamental tenets and concepts of Marxism were challenged. First of all, the concept of *class* was challenged, and thereby also the corresponding theory of domination based on one single source, whose comprehensive abolition therefore 'only' requires this one class-struggle. French feminists were among the first to extend the concept of class in order to make it fruitful for feminist work. 'The distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is as simple as the division between genders' (Thévenin 1982, 12). But since women have no common space (such as the factory), nor a shared economy, and so are defined more 'by their class membership via their husband rather than via the class of woman' (11), an overarching form of female solidarity and a shared understanding of oppression is required. Christine Delphy (1980) identifies this as a reciprocal constitution of men and women in a relation of exploitation. This allows for an analogy with the relations of waged labour. The location of women's oppression is within marriage, endowed by a work contract. We can state 'the existence of two modes of production in our society: (1) most goods are produced in the industrial mode; (2) domestic services, child-rearing, and a certain number of goods are produced in the family mode. The first mode of production gives rise to capitalist exploitation. The second gives rise to familial, or more precisely, patriarchal exploitation' (33). According to Delphy, in both cases the enemy is the man who appropriates female labour-power.

These arguments stimulated international discussion. From the UK, Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh (1979) accused Delphy's argumentation of being both anti-Marxist and anti-feminist. With regard to women, they argued that her work fails to differentiate between married women and women in general, and lacks any reference to the ideological construction of femininity. The assumption of two distinct modes of production – capitalist and patriarchal – ignored the Marxian concept of the mode of production. 'What is needed is a more complex analysis of the way in which the historically constructed category of women has been harnessed into various divisions of labour at different periods and how this category has itself altered in the process' (104). What became obvious during these intense debates was that every attempt to focus the entire movement on only *one* phenomenon resulted in energy-sapping divisions that did not do justice to the problem of women's exploitation and oppression. The assumption that domination could be reduced to one source, rather than being a polymorphic praxis based on various inter-related conditions – as, for example, Marx and Engels outline in *The German Ideology* – gives rise both to feminist conceptions of patriarchy and to a conceptualisation of capitalism as a singular totality. What is needed is a combined theory of domination that allows for an understanding of the societal system as two-sided, as capitalist and patriarchal at one and the same time. In this way the concept of *gender* is placed alongside that of *class*. Since male domination of women cannot be simply tacked on to other forms of domination, we have to understand them as distinct but nonetheless thoroughly imbricated. The works of Louis Althusser and of Karl Polanyi were particularly influential in developing such a perspective on domination, which proved particularly influential for Anglo-Saxon feminism.

New concepts were developed: *Sexism* – analogous with racism – was intended to denote general relations between men and women, insofar as they were to be understood

as relations of domination and exploitation. The reification of women as objects of male desire, evident in the aesthetic treatment of the female body, was exposed as offensive. This demonstrated the comprehensive oppression of women, their subjugation mediated through the body, and their resulting exclusion from positions of power in politics, economics and science.

The concept of *women* as a theoretical-political problem in particular concerned feminist Marxists in the US and France: What is common to all women, such that it could be seen as the starting point of a shared project of liberation? After the fight against abortion laws was stifled by compromise, Simone de Beauvoir (1981) suggested that, in order to revive the women's movement, women should concentrate on *housework* as a shared focus for struggle, since all women are ultimately homemakers, regardless of class, social stratum, status and so forth. Controversy was also caused by the question of whether to call women 'sisters', since this could be seen as similar to 'that obscure notion of brotherhood, a moralistic and illusory [...] universality' (Suzanne Blaise 1982, 32). The hope of uniting on the basis of a non-authoritarian commitment between female beings in shared powerlessness is criticised by Elisabeth Fox-Genovese (1979/80) as a conservative amalgam of femininity. In contrast she suggests 'that we must adopt gender system as a fundamental category of historical analysis', which enables an 'understanding that such systems are historically, not biologically determined' (1982, 6 et sq.), and 'to grasp the equal participation of women in the human struggle for survival and domination of nature with the aim of a humanistic world' (1983, 688).

It remains in dispute whether it is housework and family, men in general, or capital that create and perpetuate women's oppression. Ultimately, the question of *oppression* itself is still contested: does it arise out of wage discrimination, sexual exploitation, the appropriation of others' labour-power by men and by capital? During the 1970s and early

1980s, as women in the French Communist Party were involved in such debates, and their arguments were generating controversy in England and the US, silence on the women's question still prevailed in parallel organisations in Germany. Until the late 1980s, capital was considered the number-one oppressor of women. The phrase 'patriarchal capitalism' had simply appeared, albeit without any clear idea of what this might actually be.

2.3 *Building on Marx*

In various countries, feminists who view themselves also as Marxists differ on the question of how to build on Marx. Some concentrate on Marx's early work (Danièle Léger in France, Rada Iveković in Yugoslavia, Gabriele Dietrich in India) and suggest innovative studies of anthropology and history; Raya Dunayevskaya recommends *The German Ideology* and calls for new studies of gender relations, and their mediation via forms of families and marriage, as an aspect of relations of production; and for that purpose she recommends the reading of the *Ethnological Notebooks*, where Marx shows that 'the elements of oppression in general, and of woman in particular, arose from *within* primitive communism, and were not only related to [the] change from "matriarchy", but began with the establishment of ranks – relationship of chief to mass – and the economic interests that accompanied it' (1981, 180). At the beginning of the 1980s the notion that Marx needed to be re-read in a feminist way had become accepted among Marxist Feminists internationally. For such an endeavour Barrett compiled a report on the discussions around Marxist-Feminist concepts, *Women's Oppression Today* (1980), which became a standard work worldwide. The 24 women of the women's editorial board [*Frauenredaktion*] of the journal *Das Argument* and the *Sozialistischer Frauenbund Westberlin* [Socialist Women's Alliance of West Berlin], who translated the report into German, altered the subtitle to *Outlines of a Materialist Feminism*, in order to give the book a better launch. In this way,

they made it unrecognisable as a Marxist-Feminist book.

Barrett considers it the duty of Marxism-Feminism to 'investigate the relations between on the one hand the organisation of sexuality, domestic production, the household etc. and on the other hand the historical changes in the mode of production and in the forms of appropriation and exploitation' (1980, 18). She presents debates around three main concepts: *patriarchy*, mainly with reference to 'radical feminism', a view which implies that capitalism and patriarchy cannot be successfully linked; *reproduction*, where the functionalism and reductionism of Marxist analysis are problems to overcome, in order to link societal reproduction with individual and biological reproduction so that they no longer serve as a 'divisive political force' (34); and finally *ideology*, following Rosalind Coward (1977), who shifts the relationship for feminists between ideology and the economic towards an equivalence of the three forms of practices (political, ideological and economic) (Barrett 1980, 32). 'There is no general and essential economic existence of the relations of production, there is only the particularity in which they are secured, a particularity in which the conditions of existence are all-important' (Coward 1977, 34). In every theoretical complexity with which she engages, Barrett works through the deficiencies with respect to Marxist-Feminist claims, and shows which questions remain unexplored, finally concluding that 'although driven by crucially important political motivations, Marxist-Feminist theory is still at a relatively early stage in formulating a perspective which challenges, but benefits from, the more developed science of Marxism' (38). As a way forward she suggests focusing on specific linkages. 'Of these perhaps the most crucial are the economic organization of households and its accompanying familial ideology, the division of labour and relations of production, the educational system and operations of the state' (40). Further topics to research, according to Barrett, are the production of gendered subjectivities, sexuality and

'biological reproduction' (41), and 'sexuality and domination' (42).

Eight years later, Carole Pateman drafted a coherent analysis of patriarchy, drawing on Sigmund Freud. It is understood as a 'fraternal patriarchy' following the 'ousting' of the fathers, sexual oppression of women, colonialism, and bourgeois thinking in social contracts. The original social contract concerns 'white men', whose fraternal contract legitimises 'the social contract, the gender and the slave contract' (1988, 221; cf. *HKWM* 8/1, 87 et sq.).

2.4 *Experiences, Everyday Life*

According to US citizen Barbara Ehrenreich, disappointment over the unsuccessful struggles of the nineteenth century for equal rights (property ownership, divorce, suffrage) gave impetus to the women's movement of the twentieth century to express the slogan 'the personal is political' as a universal claim, initially located in a socialist context. 'Without the binding understanding, that in the sense of the feminist principle, the personal (the way we act and treat others on the individual level) is political, there is little hope of building a socialist movement that entails diverging and often antagonistic social groups' (1978, 17). The accentuation of the 'personal' is not only a challenge to the conventional division of labour, and the starting point for many consciousness-raising groups on which the new women's movement was built; it is also a theoretical attempt to shift the problematic search for the link between capitalism and patriarchy towards consideration of the practices of everyday life, rather than deducing one from the other. The experiences and everyday life of women becomes the object of feminist research, which integrates theories of culture and ideology as sub-disciplines.

New *methodologies* had to be found to enable such an endeavour. By the end of the 1970s, these methodologies posited the question of research subjects and objects in a different way. Consciousness-raising group meetings resulted in 'collective memory work', developed and applied by Frigga Haug

et al. (1983), a method of collective reflexive research with transformative goals, which was taken up as a movement by many groups in a number of countries. This method starts from the insight that women are not simply the victims of their own conditions, nor are they solely the victims of men, but that they unknowingly participate in their own oppression. This argument stays true to the Marxist insight into the 'coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity of self-change' (*MECW* 5, 3). The victim-actor thesis (Haug 1980, translated into many languages) and the subsequent research on the *Sexualisation of the Body* (1983; 1984 in English) became a 'classic' of Marxist-Feminist research on women. It elaborates a socio-historical construction of what became a purely discursive constructivism in academic discussions (cf. Chantal Mouffe 1983).

Among Italy's feminist Marxists, the shifting of focus to the personal was discussed under the headings of 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. To bring the personal to the forefront meant that transformation was required here and now (immanence), not in a distant future in a different societal formation (transcendence). The issue now is to create something like a permanent revolution in the personal sphere (for a summary, see Carla Pasquinelli 1982).

2.5 *Feminist Critique of Feminism Building on Marx*

At the beginning of the 1970s, Donna Haraway challenged every form of essentialism within feminism, and conceptualised gender as a construct. She also questioned the cult of motherhood as a retreat into biology, which she considered an ideologically interested construct. In her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1984), controversially received among feminists, she suggests a 'socialist-feminist subversion of genetic engineering' where she combined the anti-capitalist struggle with a critique of feminist renunciation of technology. Haraway fights not so much for a feminist Marxism as for a more Marxist feminism. Her concerns

were influentially taken forward by Judith **Butler** (1990). This shift of emphasis, denying substantial meaning to gender in liberation theory, has resulted in various superficialities, and strengthened a post-feminism that wants nothing to do with Marxism.

Doubts about whether gender would constitute significant grounds for knowledge at all were strengthened by the appearance of Cultural Studies (especially in the US). Luce **Irigaray** objected to this erasure (1974). She argued that the entirety of Western culture and its symbolic order would become unintelligible without thinking about binary constructions of gender and/or sexual difference. Drawing on **Marx's** analysis of the double character of the commodity, **Irigaray** deciphers why women are overlooked in silence, and why they themselves do not desire to attain the status of subjects. According to their social nature, women appear as use-value and exchange-value in one – as a mother and thus as a 'natural' reproducer; and as virgin, where they become 'pure exchange-value', nothing but 'possibility' (1977/1979). 'Participation in society requires that the body submits itself to a specularization, a speculation that transforms it into a value-bearing object [...]. A commodity – a woman – is divided into two irreconcilable "bodies": her "natural" body and her socially valued, exchangeable body' (179 et sq.). 'This transformation of women's bodies into use-value and exchange-value inaugurates a symbolic order. Women, animals endowed with speech just as men are, ensure the potential use and circulation of the symbolic without being able to share in it. Their lack of access to the symbolic is what has established their place in the social order' (189). According to this, a critique of capitalism would have to start much earlier, in a critique of the very practice of exchange and the way its role is conceptualised in our understanding of and thinking about society. Tove **Soiland** criticised attempts in the twenty-first century to assume the 'maintenance of multiple subject positions' as a means of overcoming the 'heteronormativity' of male/female categorisations as 'too affirmative' (2014, 116). 'Only

under the presupposition that genders are coherent identities' does the idea of deconstruction to overcome gender borders make sense. 'But how to deconstruct what appears in the theory of sexual difference as the non-articulation of the female position?' (ibid.).

Rossana **Rossanda** suggests employing the 'female experience of life' in the 'intolerability of its alienation' for the purpose of emancipation (1981/1994, 79 et sq.). 'In this transition, which will not be easy and for which the high level of pain and conflict in today's relations between the genders may be characteristic – [...] the experience of women, by becoming totality, also becomes culture in an encompassing sense' (80). The question of binary constructions of gender is taken up in debates about gender relations.

2.6 *Labour and Value-Theory, Debate on Housework*

Since the beginning of the campaign for wages for housework, feminist critique has targeted the foundations of the critique of political economy in its theories of labour and value. In his writings, **Marx** built on the notion that labour and land were the sources of all social wealth. He worked out that capitalist exploitation was based on the commodity of labour-power, which, in a unique way, was able to create more value than it required for its reproduction. Women's work, which – according to feminist critique – certainly exists in the area broadly referred to as the 'reproduction of labour-power', is not only largely invisible in society as a whole, but is also systematically rendered invisible in Marxist theory. To begin with, the international debate was essentially aimed at proving that 'housework not only produced use-values but was essential for the production of the surplus-value' (**Dalla Costa/James** 1973, 39; 62, footnote 12 added: 'housework is *productive* labour in the **Marxian** sense'). Later on, the debate focused on doubts about the **Marxian** concept of labour and attempts to expand it into a political subject of liberation, and reckoned accounts with the critique

of political economy as a whole. During the course of these debates, pivotal authors such as Claudia von Werlhoff (1978), Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen (1981) and Maria Mies (1981) distanced themselves from Marxism. So too did Christel Neusüß, whose influential book (1985) comprehensively documents the ignorance of the labour movement concerning the production of life and housework. Opposing *Marx*, she claims that the commodity of labour-power cannot be easily integrated into an analysis of commodity production and value-form, since the work of those who produce life, of mothers, would thereby become invisible (25). She suggests that Marx had forgotten that 'it is not just work that produces things, but also work that produces humans' (34).

The debate around housework, which became ever more academic over the years, was ingloriously side-lined by a struggle around authorship between the first authors **Dalla Costa** and **James**, after the latter simply deleted the former as a co-author from the revised edition of the important book of 1972. **Dalla Costa** used this event to make some amendments public. According to her, the campaign for wages for housework basically had no particular authors, but arose from the feminist and workerist Marxist movements. But it had incorporated earlier demands, such as those of Chrystal Eastman in the early twentieth century, Wilhelm Reich in the 1930s, Simone de Beauvoir in the 1940s and so on. Basic income and a minimum wage had already been central demands in Italian workerism, with which the Wages for Housework campaign could connect (**Dalla Costa** 2012). Lise Vogel points to other fore-runners of these demands in the US (2001, 1188).

Next to this are attempts to link women working in the home in the 'industrialised world' of the North with the subsistence economies in the South. In the words of Maria Mies, 'The "colonies" are therefore the external world's "housewives" – and the housewives over here are the internal colony of capital and of men' (1983, 117). In this per-

spective, the relationship of every man to his wife in the 'industrialised North' would be just as exploitative as the relationship of the imperialist countries to the countries in the 'Third World'. Or, as was claimed in the article 'Women and Ecology' by Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen about a conference of the Green Party: one would have to finally grasp that women, nature and the 'Third World' stood on the side of the exploited while all men stood on the side of the exploiters.

Like the housework debate, the debate about a 'dual economic system' (dual-system approach) also shows an anchoring in Marxism as well as venturing beyond its borders. This second debate is concerned with the relationship of the capitalist and patriarchal modes of production, their internal connection or their external combination. The concepts of gender relations, imperialism, and domestic mode of production are examined and developed in new directions.

What remains to be recorded is that the tension between the two poles of the term Marxism-Feminism became stronger in the on-going process of debate, since discussions had to take place across the entire length of their borders. It quickly became apparent that, as feminists developed their self-confidence, the presumably solid foundations of Marxism had to be investigated anew.

2.7 *Gender Relations as Relations of Production*

In the shadow of the surrender of European state-socialism, it became unfashionable to think about *Marx*, as he seemed to have lost his historical relevance. Internationally, postmodernism and post-feminism had dismissed the 'grand narratives' to which the theories of Marxism-Feminism also seemed to belong. Self-confident women had emerged from the experiment in state-socialism, yet they did not see any use in Marxism-Feminism and hardly developed an effective resistance to capitalist incorporation; this forced the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy back onto the agenda.

Frigga Haug intervened several times with the demand to understand gender relations as relations of production. Thereby one is no longer concerned with adding the women's question, but rather with reconstructing the concept of the relations of production itself, to include the production of life as well as the production of the means of life. As Marx and Engels set out in *The German Ideology*, this enables us to grasp the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy at its roots and to study the 'fixation of gender in the totality of societal relations' (Haug 2008/2011, 310). With the societal character of genders in mind, in the sense of historically discoverable men and women, one has to ask how their initially natural complementarity in regard to reproduction has become culturally and ideologically overdetermined and naturalised in the historical process. Gender relations thereby become comprehensible as 'fundamental relations of ruling in all societal formations': 'They span (and in turn are central to) questions of divisions of labour, domination, exploitation, ideology, politics, law, religion, morality, sexuality, body and senses, language; indeed, essentially no area can be meaningfully researched without paying consideration to how gender relations form and are formed' (ibid.; see also *HKWM* 5, 493).

After the formation of the party *Die Linke* [The Left Party] in Germany in 2007, Haug picked up the discussions where they had left off, and brought together in practice the areas that had been separated by demarcations, with the project of the *Four-in-One Perspective* (2008). This is concerned with the task of emancipating the areas of both producing the means for life through waged labour, and privately/publicly organised social reproduction, from their hierarchical positions within capitalism. It also aims to include the neglected areas of self-realisation and political action to which each individual is likewise and equally entitled. The integration of the four areas is vital to avoid reactionary solutions for any one particular area, and to work on resolving the patriarchal-capitalist

nexus of domination. In this way, the struggle of women to enter into history and thereby gain subject status becomes crucial for the struggle for socialist democracy, and for capability and participation for all.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, calls grew for Marxism-Feminism to remember its own history and renew itself. As an essential area for further research, Meg Luxton (2013) identified an expanded 'politics of language' which overcomes the 'predominance of the English language' (512) and is directed towards a socialist long-term goal that is not from the outset subordinated to a US-imperialist primacy. Ideological class struggle here is just as relevant as the recognition that effective resistance against change is anchored in the very personality of individuals (514). The link between individual change and changing the conditions remains current. As the inheritor of feminism in Marxism, a newly rising Marxism-Feminism aims for a good life in a world characterised by solidarity, where 'the needs of humans have become a human need' and thus the individual 'in its individual existence has become a community at the same time' (40/535), as Marx anticipated it, and as it must be related to the totality of gender relations through feminist consciousness.

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Being-Marxist, birth control, body, caste, child abuse, child labour, children/childhood, child's play-group, cloning, commune, competence, competence/incompetence, complementarity, concrete useful labour, cook, collective/total labour, conduct of life, counter public/oppositional space, courtesan, crisis, Critical Theory (II), critique (IV), Cultural Studies, cybertariat, experience, detective novel, dialectics, disposable time, division of labour, domestic-labour debate, domestic mode of production, domination/rule, double burden, double militancy, dual economy, equal-rights policy, exchange-value, family, family work/domestic

labour/housework, female labour/women's labour, feminisation of labour, feminisation of poverty, feminism, feminist discussion of ethics, feminist legal critique, feminist theology, four-in-one perspective, free love, gender, gender contract, gender democracy, gender-egalitarian societies, gender mainstreaming, gender relations, goddess, headscarf debate, heteronormativity, hierarchy/antihierarchy, historical forms of individuality, homeworking, homosexuality, housewife, housewifisation (of labour), identity politics, immaterial labour/work, individual reproduction, individual work, International Women's Day, intervening social research, justice, kibbutz, labour movement, Lacanianism, land seizure/land grab, laughter, learning, lesbian movement, living labour, love, machismo, maid/maid-servant, market-women, marriage, Marxism, masculinity, memory work, mind and hand, mode/conditions of life, mode of production, orthodoxy, outwork/telework, patriarchy, performance/achievement, power, putting-out, relations of production, research of everyday life, sexuality, sexual liberation, short-time work, socialism, socially necessary labour/labour time, subjective factor, surplus-value, reproduction, revolutionary realpolitik, Third World, value, volunteer-work, witch, witch-hunt, woman-question, women's emancipation, women's forms, women's labour politics, women's language, women's movement, women's shelter, women's studies, work/labour.

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der Armut, Feminismus, feministische Ethikdiskussion, feministische Rechtskritik, feministische Theologie, Frauenarbeit, Frauenarbeitspolitik, Frauenbewegung, Frauenemanzipation, Frauenformen, Frauenfrage, Frauenhäuser, Frauensprache, Frauenstudien, freie Liebe, Geburtenkontrolle, Gegenöffentlichkeit, Gender Mainstreaming, Gerechtigkeit, Gesamtarbeit, Geschlecht, Geschlechterdemokratie, Geschlechterverhältnisse, Geschlechtervertrag, geschlechtsegalitäre Gesellschaften, gesellschaftlich notwendige Arbeit/Arbeitszeit, Gleichstellungspolitik, Göttin, Hausarbeitsdebatte, Hausfrau, Hausfrauisierung, häusliche Produktionsweise, Heimarbeit/Telearbeit, Herrschaft, Heteronormativität, Hexe, Hexenverfolgung, Hierarchie/Antihierarchie, historische Individualitätsformen, Homosexualität, Identitätspolitik, immaterielle Arbeit, individuelle Reproduktion, Internationaler Frauentag, Kaste, Kibbutz, Kinder/Kindheit, Kinderarbeit, Kinderladen, Kindesmissbrauch, Klonen, Köchin, Kommune, Kompetenz, Kompetenz/Inkompetenz, Komplementarität, konkrete nützliche Arbeit, Kopftuchstreit, Kopf und Hand, Körper, Kriminalroman, Krise, Kritik (IV), Kritische Theorie (II), Kulturstudien (Cultural Studies), Kurtisane, Kurzarbeit, Kybertariat, Lacanismus, Lachen, Landnahme, lebendige Arbeit, Lebensführung, Lebensweise/Lebensbedingungen, Leistung, Lernen, Lesbenbewegung, Liebe, Machismus (machismo), Macht, Magd, Männlichkeit, Marktfrauen, Marxismus, Marxistsein/Marxistinsein, Mehrwert, Orthodoxie, Patriarchat, Produktionsverhältnisse, Produktionsweise, Reproduktion, revolutionäre Realpolitik, Sexualität, sexuelle Befreiung, Sozialismus, subjektiver Faktor, Tauschwert, Vier-in-einem-Perspektive, Wert.