



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

PUNK WOMEN AND RIOT GRRLS

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Being Pussy Riot is like Being Batman: you put on the mask – and you become Pussy Riot. You take it off – and you are no longer Pussy Riot.

Participant quoted in Gessen 2014

I shall be short and to the point: I want to defend the political importance of the Pussy Riot project, stressing the notion of the *political* in the mode of socio-cultural activism. I shall do so by highlighting two aspects of this project that for me pertain to a long and distinguished tradition of feminist politics: one is *visual* and the other *musical* and although they of course intersect and interact, I want to deal with each separately.¹

1. THE VISUAL EXAMPLE

The political

In a system that, in spite of massive counter-evidence in terms of structural injustices, ruthless opportunism and brutal violence, insists on calling itself *advanced* capitalism, feminist politics has a crucial contribution to make to our collective understanding of what exactly constitutes the political moment and political action. While “politics as usual” continues to unfold its protocols of choreographed antagonism and predictable institutional practices, the new wave of feminist movements operate through diffuse resistance to despotic regimes, the occupation of public

spaces and the quest for alternative modes of becoming political subjects. A world-wide *new* women's movement is in action in the world today and for the older generation to which I proudly belong this is a source of great joy and also of great concern, in view of the violence of the repression it triggers.

Feminist politics expresses the desire for transformations by taking as its starting point the embodied and embedded, affective and relational structures of our social relations, the mixture of personal and collective, the intimate and the public (Braidotti 1994 and 2011a). It places uncomfortable and provocative but vital questions at the centre of the political agenda. Violence, freedom, poverty, dignity, legality, self-determination – these are the key issues. This insight translates into an active involvement in *the politics of everyday life*, where 'life' is not taken for granted, but is approached as an ethical-political praxis of struggle, confrontation – critique and creativity joining hands. Feminist politics work through transformative experimentations with new technologies of the self, new arts of existence and ethical relations. It is made of progressive emancipatory measures but also of radical experiments with self-styling or critical praxis.

Feminism pioneered the practice of *the politics of locations* (Rich 1985) as a method for grounding activism. A location is an embedded and embodied spatial but also temporal site: it is a memory, or rather, a set of counter-memories, which are activated against dominant social representations of subjectivity. They are the tools for consciousness-raising which is central to the transformative politics of feminism.

Feminists have been openly critical of the universalistic orientation of most political theory, Marxism included. We stress instead the need for a change of scale, to unveil power relations where they are most effective and invisible: in the specific locations of one's own carnal, psychic and social existence, in our immanent intellectual and social practices. One has to start from micro-instances of embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations which compose the self. A situated practice.

The emphasis on the embodied and embedded nature of the subject results in trusting *lived experience* and renewed interest in the present. One has to think global, but act local: here and now. To come to terms with the present while resisting it, being oppositional without being negative, that is the challenge for politicized relational subjects.

Of course there is intense awareness of the vulnerability of embodied subjects, which result in subtler and more effective analyses of how power works in and through the body (Butler, 2004). This double emphasis on fragility on the one hand and resistance to despotic power relations and masculine violence on the other is crucial to a feminist approach to the political. 'Difference' is never a neutral category, but a term that indexes exclusion from the entitlements to subjectivity. This results in making entire sections of living beings into marginal and disposable bodies: these are the sexualised, racialised and naturalised others for whom to be different always means being different-from and to be worth less than. We're all human, it's just that some seem to be more mortal than others.

The context

I want to pay tribute again today to this tradition of radical feminist politics at a point in history when the general tendency is to dismiss it or deride it as an outdated historical experiment. Feminism rejects the sanctimonious, dogmatic tone of dominant ideologies, Left or Right of the political spectrum, in favour of the production of joyful acts of insurrection. Feminist politics is critical but also affirmative, it aims at the counter-production of alternatives to the present and to the structures of subjectivity. The spontaneous and creative aspects of feminist practice are coupled with a profound form of generosity; that is to say, with an ethics of non-profit to build upon micro-political instances of activism. This humble yet experimental approach to changing our collective modes of relation to the environment, social and other, our cultural norms and values, our social imaginary, our bodies, ourselves, is the most pragmatic manifestation of the feminist politics of radical immanence. It is one of our key contributions to radical democracy.

Feminism also breaks from a Marxist tradition of taking some doses of revolutionary violence for granted as a remedy to processes and social practices of exploitation, marginality and exclusion. This radically immanent materialist feminist politics takes seriously affects, sexuality, pacifism, human rights, environmental issues and sustainable futures.

While the theoretical gurus of what's left of the Left complain about their political impotence, to cite Alain Badiou (2013), or perfect the histrionic art of de-bunking for its own sake, like Slavoj Žižek, they also accomplish a far more pernicious sleight of hand: they have virtually erased the intellectual and political capital built by feminist theory and practice over the last 30 years – as if we had not developed schemes, methods, practices and tactics that could be of general relevance. The Left has questions to answer about the epistemic violence they have exercised against feminist theory and practice and they should not add insult to injury by first deleting feminist politics and then complaining that there is no alternative politics left on the Left.

What's left of the Left mis-understands the feminist politics of experience; they fail to see the relevance of the politics of desire and the affirmation of alternative ways of becoming subjects. Feminism expresses a radical aspiration to freedom aimed to confront and demolish the established, institutionalised form of gender identities and the power relations they actualize.

This politics of joyful affirmation of counter-subjects – far from being a regression into cultural narcissism, as the critics suggest – is an incisive intervention on the brutality and banality of power. It encourages the counter-production of different political affects and desires. The pursuit of political felicity is collective, not individualistic and not for profit. It is a political project that is geared to the task of constructing social horizons of hope, as sustainable alternatives to the schizoid political economy of advanced capitalism, to its brutal materiality and murderous violence. We are here and we don't agonize, we organize!

Public faces spell the regimes of power

It is not because it is 'advanced' that capitalist power must be understood as sophisticated. It is actually a primitive system, disingenuously simple. Which is why some conservatives take pride in defining capitalism as instinctive and in-built into the human selfish genes (Dawkins 1976) and their evolutionary capital. I firmly reject such flattering and self-congratulatory postures and focus my intellectual work on revealing the raw forces that sustain the schizoid moves or de-territorializations of a fast-spinning system that is advancing at top speed on the road to nowhere.

Feminist analyses of power not only debunk any notion of the 'natural roots' of capitalism as embedded in something they call 'human nature'. What's the human got to do with it, I wonder? What molecular, grass-roots movements – like feminism – also target for criticism is our singular and collective desire for the very conditions of our servitude. It is as if we collectively tended to believe in the inevitability of some sort of oppression, like the naturalisation of capitalist power relations. This collective fascination with power is also known as: the micro-politics of domination and it begins with the construction of our desires.

In other words, capital is not a transcendent notion but a radically immanent one: it has to do with the inscription of bodies into power relations in a transversal mode that involves affects and unconscious desires. Capital aims at saturating the social space, its systems of signification and the forms of interactions it enables between us. A crucial element of its effectiveness is *the powers of visualization*, recognition and re-presentation that it mobilizes and masters. Let me develop this point further.

Feminists have been among the first to reveal and critique the seduction of the image of power embodied in the dominant subject who represents the norms, values and aspirations of a people. Feminist politics has a clear libertarian sub-stratum and it entails the critique of *the* public face as the dominant emblem of sovereign power.

Deleuze and Guattari (1977; 1987) teach us that 'faciality' – the visualization of power as framed by a recognizable face – fulfils the function of re-territorialisation of the subject. Public faces accomplish the branding of the self as the private property of the bounded individual, so as to make it recognizable, consumable and profitable. A face distributes power across a territory it creates and controls; it engenders individual and collective identities as brands, which can be said to be recognizable to the degree to which they approximate *that* face, *that* image of power.

On faciality

I know that right now you all expect me to show you images of faces of the likes of Vladimir's (Putin) or Silvio's (Berlusconi), but I will not, not only because they are repulsive, but also because I want to strike a different note about *this kind of power* (while I do this, you can project your own show of ugly despotic faces in the private psychic projection room of your minds).

My point is a lot simpler: a face is a landscape of power, even and especially when it is familiar, reassuring, the symbol of a nation, a people, an ethnic entity. Think of the healing power of the presence of King Harald the 5th at the horrendous events round the killings on the island of Utoya in 2011, which took the lives of 69 young left-wing Norwegians. Norway taught the world a lesson in dignity and grief that time – and the world did mourn with you all.

Let us start therefore from the benevolent face of power drawn from Northern European constitutional monarchies – countries like Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands, great democracies, often run by women.

I am a deep admirer of former Queen Beatrix, of her professionalism and dedication. I am also indebted to her because she was kind enough to bestow a knighthood upon me – I went to collect it together with my lawfully wedded wife Anneke and we stood out as two decorated lesbians for the price of one in an assembly of distinguished men. I am not saying this to boast – though you may address me as Sir Rosi – but to make the point that the benevolent face of power functions by caring, by taking care, but also and always by taking care of business.

The political economy of faces codifies dominant power. It allocates cultural and political codes – whiteness, gender, class, ethnicity, propriety – as passports to normality. Normality means degrees of sameness with that dominant face. Possessing the ‘right’ face is a social process of subjectivization that functions binary exclusions: is she black or white? Straight or LGBT? Subjected to or the subject of? The face will tell (Griggers 1997). Following Canguilhem’s (1966) and Deleuze’s definition of normality as the zero-degree of deviancy (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), I would argue that the production of faces – for instance white, powerful, self-entitled femininity (Braidotti 2002) – is the site of convergence of contradictory but highly effective axes of power. On the one hand, public faces express privilege and normative activity, but they also symbolize functionality and commodification.

The function of dominant faces is always phallic – regardless of the gender of the person actually exercising that power. The image conveys a standard norm about being subjects: white, able-bodied, heterosexual, speaking a standard language, owning the land, the property, the families and the children, the nation.

In the case of heads of state, the functionality of faces is shown by their historical reproduction in coins and as stamps:



Image 1: Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. © Frank van Beek Fotografie. All rights reserved.



Image 2: Queen Beatrix on Dutch coin.



Image 3: Queen Beatrix on Dutch stamp. © Photographer: Vincent Mentzel; design: Peter Struycken; typography: Gerard Unger.



Image 4: Femen activist Inna Shevchenko. © Vipavlenkoff/ Shutterstock. All rights reserved.

The French, who care more for their aesthetics than most, regularly change the faces on coins and stamps, making it an honour for the chosen woman to represent the Republic. In 2013, incidentally, Inna Shevchenko, founder of the Ukrainian movement *Femen*, became the new face of Marianna – the Republic – on all French stamps.



Image 5: Inna Shevchenko on French stamps.

The function of criticism

In democracies, however, the faces of our rulers and leaders are also normally used for ironic, satirical and culture-jamming purposes. Democratic criticism requires the uses of satire and irony as means to 'speak truth to power', as Edward Said taught us (2004). And this is certainly this case in Dutch cultural politics, where the ruling monarch routinely enters a 'spinning' process of ironic subversion, or creative de-territorialization.



Image 6: This image was taken from De Haagse Post (HP) in the second half of the 1990s. With thanks to Anneke Smelik. We are unable to trace the copyright holder as is magazine has since stopped publication.

About images in advanced capitalism

The political function of faces and of faciality enters a new phase of intensity in our era of hyper-mediation. Visualization today is the ultimate form of success, control and commodification. The omnipotence of digital media and social networks is internally contradictory: it commodifies everybody while also intensifying the differences and structural inequalities in terms of access to the very technologies that enact the commodification. Visual commodification distributes degrees of recognisability and hence intensifies power relations.

Digitally relayed faces produce both circulation and immobility. They hang in a sort of stasis due to over-accumulation as commodified visual objects of desire. In fact they suspend active desire, in favour of recurring longing for more. This established the pattern of the addictive pursuit of commodified non-necessities. We are all voyeurs, addicted to our 'selfies'. Soon this very event we are sharing here and now will enter the suspended landscape of media circulation and will roam forever on line: "zombies of all lands, unite!"

The visual commodity, the recognizable face, the face of power, circulates like a never-dead object of desire within the *spectral economy* of mediated advanced capitalism (Derrida 1994). As such, it contracts our space/time continuum: it embodies the promise of enjoyment and its perennial deferral, in a form of mediated suspension. The simultaneous arousal and frustration of desire means that the commodified images embody time, as time stored or frozen or time 'saved' (Massumi 1998).

It follows that mediated visual commodities become co-extensive with the inner space of subjectivity, as well as the outer space of the market and of social relations. This cycle of presence-absence of fulfilment lies at the heart of the affects induced by commodities in the contemporary market economy, namely a manic-depressive cycle of frenzy and fear, euphoria and paranoia. It induces a perverse political economy, addictive habits of consumption that keep us coming back for more (Franklin, Lury and Stacey 2000).

About icons

The commodified face as landscape of power underscores the crucial role played by the social imaginary and its unconscious interpellations as an integral part of the mechanisms of power (Braidotti 2011a). Thus, imaginary representations fulfil both a psychic and a social function, fuelling the powers of identification with dominant icons. If in the past these icons were religious in origin and function, today they are dominated by the celebrities of popular culture images and by political figures, ranging from the ubiquitous face of Che Guevara or the young Angela Davis, to the images of Nelson Mandela and other secular saints like Princess Diana (Campbell 1988).



Image 7: Che Guevara. Public domain.



Image 8: Angela Davis. © Pres Panayotov/Shutterstock. All rights reserved.



Image 9: Diana, Princess of Wales. Photo © irisphoto1/Shutterstock. All rights reserved.



Image 10: Nelson Mandela. © Fine Art America. All rights reserved.

These iconic representations fulfil a totemic function in the religious and almost sacrificial sense of the term: “they suffered so that we may be better off”.² The irrational and even ‘mystical’ elements of mass popular culture have been commented upon negatively by traditionalists (an argument that also played a role in the court case against the Pussy Riot) – but also by critical theorists as diverse as Adorno and Horkheimer, and Deleuze and Guattari who fear their manipulative powers.

Contemporary digital techno-culture has intensified this trend, encouraging viral links between visual culture, the faces of global icons and a social imaginary that fetishizes them into the ‘sacred monsters’ of global consumption. The imaginary is not only the emanation of a symbolic system that allegedly structures both our psychic and our social existence, but also the material implementation of social relations of power. The mediated face is a decoding and over-coding machine fully inscribed in the material strata of advanced capitalism.

Minorities and becoming-minoritarian

Feminist critique is the conceptual detox cure to help us rid ourselves of the appeal that such images of power – these standards of recognisability – exercise on our minds, our bodies and the inner recesses of our embodied and embedded existence. By extension, there is a positive and creative tension between the identitarian claims of political movements that are grounded in the historical experience of oppression, like feminism, and the aspiration to a new collective redefinition of our shared humanity through multiple processes of becoming. *A creative tension between recognizable faces and anonymous masses.* Between the high visibility and the potential despotism of the One and the facelessness of the multitude. *How to achieve visibility while escaping re-territorialization in the age of hyper-mediation is the critical question.*

In identifying the points of exit from the phallogentric modes of thought, towards a new, practice and image of power we need new figurations for these subject-positions. This results in the elaboration of alternative images of the subject, which displace the dominant vision or visualisation of power.

To break open the binary between the recognizable ONE and the nameless MANY feminism has invested the potency of 'ANY-ONE' – the transversal collectivity of anybody-ness – Deleuze and Guattari (1994) speak of 'homo tantum' – that anybody who becomes the site of unexpected resistance: becoming political by becoming imperceptible (Braidotti 2011b).

Feminists, as usual, cut to the chase and took a radical position in favour of de-personalization or affirmative de-subjection. We just put on different faces.

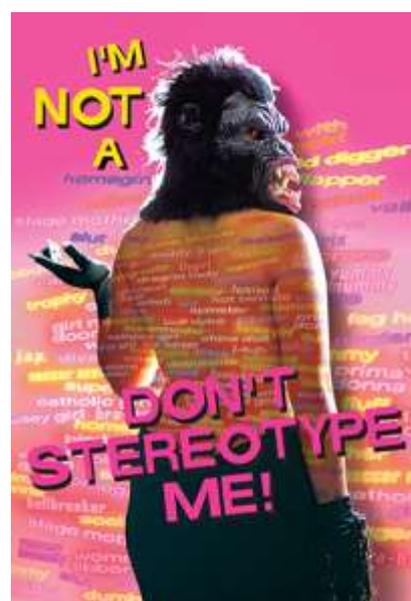


Image 11: Guerrilla Girls poster.
Available at www.guerrillagirls.com/freedownloads/index.shtml

Feminist cultural politics

Feminist politics, like all bio-mediated political intervention today, needs to juxtapose the recognizable faces of icons to the anonymous forces of the masses or the multitudes, the iconicity of some to the anonymous faces of endless others. The point is to open up public spaces for anyone to become political, thus causing great turmoil in the register of representation.

The radical political stance today consists in becoming-minoritarian or nomadic, in a viral manner: you put on your mask, you become Pussy Riot, you take it off, and you no longer are Pussy Riot. The process of becoming-Pussy Riot is subversive in that it works actively towards the transformation of the signs, the social practices and the embodied histories of white

institutionalized femininity, of resisting citizenship, of human rights campaigning, feminist and gender politics and art practices.

In other words, the quest for identity is expanded to activate multiple becomings, away from reterritorialised identities, away from faciality as a despotic regime. For no identity – LGBT included – is an exception to the rule of commodification and e-territorialization. The best we can do is position our temporary identity claims strategically in one of the zones of the highest public turbulence and activated processes of becoming all kinds, all genders, ages, races and species.



Image 12: Pussy Riot. © Игорь Мухин at Russian Wikipedia. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported.

That's the becoming-political: the masked faces of Pussy Riot, who are both over exposed celebrities and anonymous militants carrying on what must feel at times like a losing battle, sustained under the threat of constant retaliation, repression and violence. You just put on that mask.

And in putting on the balaclava you don't hide yourself but rather express another political subjectivity, which allows you to unveil and debunk the working of power and despotism. A despotic power that then tears away that mask from you, gives you back a public face, a name, a social location and proceeds to persecute you and punish you at will. The technique of subjectivation as subjection reveals the negative face of power – *potestas* – but this is only part of the picture. As Michel Foucault (1977) teaches us, power is also productive – *potentia* – and what it produces is not only resistance, but also alternative ways of becoming subjects.

In the case of Vladimir Putin, his visual illiteracy made him under-estimate the extent to which the exposed faces of the previously nameless Pussy Riot protesters would turn Nadya Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina into global icons and mega stars. Pussy Riot becomes a meteo-rite. I don't think there is anyone the world today who does not want to become Pussy Riot.

Pussy Riot struggle not only against that despotic image of power, but also for viable and more democratic alternatives. Their strategy aims to reveal and unveil, not conceal and disguise. This is a struggle you fight at your own risk and peril, without



Image 13: Pussy Riot. With special thanks to the photographer Denis Sinyakov.

guarantees of success, relentless, subterranean, fundamentally invisible, even when it is televised and webcast. *Deeply democratic in a Spinozist mode, feminist politics expresses the aspiration to freedom as constitutive of the human subject. This is viral politics at work. And it does go viral.*

As a political gesture, it is also deeply radical in holding current democracies accountable for their limitations, contradictions and hypocrisies. Radical politics show that it is all work-in-progress: 'advanced' democracies need to become-democratic as well. It all begins with the body and the construction of our desires. It begins by framing spatial and temporal scales of becoming that may enable us to understand which plateau of power we happen to be dealing with, right now. Becoming-democratic, that is to say: *becoming a people that was missing*; bring about a time that will have been sustainable. Never forgetting the future; this is the politics of any faces, all faces of a resisting people to come, rejecting the despotic power of One, becoming imperceptible together.



Image 14: Pussy Riot supporter outside court, Moscow, 17 August 2012. © Elena Rostunova/Shutterstock. All rights reserved.

2. THE MUSICAL EXAMPLE³

My second example of feminist cultural politics and how it is both reflected and amplified by Pussy Riot is musical.

Janis Joplin "Mother of God, please chase Putin out" has a distinguished feminist punk and rock pedigree. The original member of the 'Club of 27', Janis Joplin (Archer and Simmonds 1986), in the song "Mercedes Benz", as early as 1969 addressed an appeal to the good Lord to please provide her with this car as a quintessential status symbol, so that she can keep up with her friends and not lose ... face!

Joplin's rock prayer is not blasphemy, but a tactical or ironical device, not unlike what we saw done to Queen Beatrix earlier on. It is a way of appealing to higher powers than the temporal ones, thus stressing the impotence of worldly power. It also replaces the appeal to a natural order with the seduction of socio-cultural conventions, stating in no uncertain terms that women will not play nature to male culture and that they want their share of this world too (Kruger, 1983).

Janis Joplin, "Mercedes Benz" (1969)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tGuj34062s>

This consumeristic mode – typical of the Baby-Boomers – will be replaced in the course of the feminist struggle by the deconstruction of the market economy and gender identity by the punk-rockers of the early 1980s. Do remember that Cindy Lauper was there before Madonna.

Few moments in popular culture can match the punks in iconoclastic rejection of stereotypes and in uncompromising criticism and political determination. The punk movement debunked the perverse political economy of advanced capitalism by targeting first its consumerism.

Capitalism promotes the quantitative proliferation of multiple options in consumer goods: 50 TV channels and nothing decent to watch. It is a spinning machine that produces quantified variations of commodities. Advanced capitalism functions through the social control of mobility, favouring the circulation of commodified products: goods and commodities, data and capital circulate globally (Braidotti 2013). People do not circulate nearly as freely. Real-life mobility through migration, for instance, or diasporic movements, is checked by relations of class, ethnicity, gender and age, to name but a few crucial variables.

The best musical example of this rejection of the political economy of consumerism and the standard gender roles in European feminism is the work of dissident Berlin punk artist Nina Hagen. Highly talented musically and fully trained as an opera singer, Hagen deliberately defies all the expectations of traditional feminine endings in classical and other types of music (McClary 1991). She enacts instead a radical process of becoming-woman (Griggers 1997) that dramatizes the most subversive aspects of the feminine, in keeping with an established political tradition of female grotesque (Russo, 1994). In her agenda-setting song: “Unbeschreiblich Weiblich”, she also demonstrates beyond doubt that feminism rocks:

Nina Hagen Band, “Unbeschreiblich Weiblich” (Pop-Meeting 1979):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eA9Y-tOYzY>

The real historical turning point however, comes with Bikini Kill and the GRRRLS punk movement. They openly call for a radical break from the social system, daring us to take the challenge.

Bikini Kill, “Double Dare Ya” (1992):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NH-9Pow-2oE>

“We’re Bikini Kill and we want Revolution Girl-style now!”

CONCLUSION

From Olympe de Gouges’s universal declaration of the rights of women to the lyrics of the punk rockers including Pussy Riot, feminists have expressed their resistance in and through their bodies, mis-behaving in public places so as to undo the restrictions of repressive power.

We have written our protests in letters of ink, fire and at times even blood, on paper, stone walls, sand and often on their own bodies. We have sung and danced to them. This kind of protest is like a visceral scream of rebellion against the centralized master-code of sovereign power. It is a generous act of intervention upon our common world.

So what do Pussy Riot know?

Firstly: that you can only beat the system from within and it's going to hurt. That for all the talk about virtual reality, 'soft' diplomacy and digital networks, the materiality of power weighs heavily upon embodied and embedded subjects. The 'virtual' character of technologically mediated power relations today is not ethereal but materially grounded. Power harps on real bodies in real-life situations with a degree of targeted violence that is necro-political. We need cartographic, i.e. materialist mappings of contemporary power-relations, with special attention to mediation and technology.

They also know that women and LBGTs are especially targeted, and resistance starts but does not stop here. They force attention onto issues of radical democracy as well as identity-politics, moving towards broader political issues of poverty, social justice, peace and environmental sustainability to cultural concerns: feminist politics is human-broad.

Next, they cultivate a healthy disregard for the distinction between high and low culture, with special emphasis on creativity, artistic expression and the active enactment of their theories in the space of writing and the production of nomadic texts and practices. They know that from the Guerrilla Girls to Bikini Kill through the Occupy movement, all revolutions involve culture and the radical transformation of self-representation.

This is what Pussy Riot know: that technological mediation, artistic and cultural practice as forms of active social participation are key elements of contemporary global citizenship, even and especially when they involve civic disobedience. They know that culture is a political arena, as well as a global vector of trans-national communication, identification and generational recognition.

They also know, at an exceedingly high personal cost, that freedom of expression, especially of political dissent, is still not a universally accepted human and political right, even on the European Continent. As feminists, activists and active citizens, Pussy Riot combine the struggle for emancipation of youth, women and minorities with a visceral democratic impulse to protest.

Their technologically mediated powers of expression gives them a global outreach – they are nomadic subjects – but they also remain loyal to their own vision of the norms and values and the codes specific to their country. They express a new trans-national political subjectivity that clashes with the unitary formations of church, nation and state and in this respect, they are simultaneously global 'net-izens' and locally rooted active citizens in a community that fails to grant them basic human and political rights.

This produces serious politics and cultural critique through visual and musical interventions. Their practice deserves to be taken seriously – and not only by Putin and the fathers of the Church who sent three of Pussy Riot to jail for it – but as a general model of radical politics in our highly mediated times.

This politics is all the more effective as it is joyful, affirmative; it puts wings on your feet even as its practitioners lie behind bars. Pussy Riot's creative acts of insurrection prove conclusively the point that Deleuze and Guattari make more ponderously when they stated that: *"You don't have to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing you are fighting is abominable"* (1977, xiii).

Anarchist feminist Emma Goldman had already anticipated this decades ago, in stating: "If I can't dance, I just don't want to be part of your revolution".

Occupying the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow was only in an indirect way an act of deviancy aimed at attacking the despotic means by which Vladimir Putin has organized his territory with the support of the Orthodox Fathers of the Church. It was first of all an affirmative event, done out of love, in which a very short and sudden outburst of raw energy revealed the impotence of institutionalised power forever. It was a prayer of joy, a hymn to freedom.

Affirmation, not sadness, fuels feminist politics.

Pussy Riot Punk Prayer, 'Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away' (Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow, 21 February 2012): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPDkjbTQRCY>

Original footage: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grEBLskpDWO>

Video of Rosi Braidotti delivering the talk on which this article is based (First Supper Symposium, Oslo, 12 May 2014):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5J1z-E8u60>

'Pussy Riot meets Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti' (First Supper Symposium, Oslo, 12 May 2014):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXbx_P7UVtE

Notes

¹ This paper was originally commissioned by the First Supper Symposium and first presented in Oslo on 12 May 2014, preceding a conversation between Pussy Riot members Nadya Tolokonnikova/Masha Alyokhina, Rosi Braidotti and Judith Butler. Documentation of this event can be found here: <http://www.thefirstsuppersymposium.org>.

² For a fuller analysis of the postsecular spirituality involved in these processes, see Braidotti (2008).

³ For a fuller analysis of women in rock, see Braidotti (1994).

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