

**SACRED STATES: PROTEST BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN A
POSTSECULAR AGE**

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate in Philosophy degree in Religious
Studies

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Abstract

In the age of mass information, globalization, and peer-to-peer social networks, the traditional markers of identity and elective affinities, particularly those of religion and nationalism, are shifting in relation to contemporary trends. The field of Religious Studies has been influenced by a series of ‘post’s: postsecular, postmodern, postcolonial, and post 9/11. The rise of revolutionary religious movements internationally is a hallmark characteristic of the postsecular age. Participants in these movements are variously characterized as religious dissidents, militant secularists, neo-fascist nationalists, and terrorists. However, according to the dialogues within these communities, participants do not think of themselves in these terms. The dualizing labels of ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ do not lend meaning to these contemporary identities. This thesis addresses the question: How do traditional and contemporary theories in the field of Religious Studies evaluate contemporary religious nationalist movements, and how do their analyses compare to how members of the groups in question perceive themselves? To answer this question, this dissertation examines and contrasts four key case studies: the Native Faith Movement and Femen in Ukraine, and the Gezi Park protesters and the Gülen Movement in Turkey. By analyzing group activities through the fora of the curated digital presences of group leaders and members, this research investigates emerging elective affinities and markers of identity which transcend the religious/secular binary. Contemporary theory from the field of Critical Religion and feminist theology transcending the religious/secular binary will be applied to these case studies in order to gain a deeper understanding of the shifting relationships between religion, protest and the nation.

Keywords: Femen, Gülen Movement, paganism, feminist theology, Critical Religion, postsecular, Gezi Park, Ukraine, Russia, vestigial states, the Goddess Movement, activism

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
List of Figures	v
Introduction	1
0.1 Methodology.....	4
Chapter One: Literature Overview	9
1.1 Introduction to Paganism in Ukraine	9
1.1.1 Secularization Theory.....	13
1.1.1.1 The Postsecular.....	20
1.1.2 Agency and Identity.....	23
1.1.3 Lived Religion.....	26
1.1.4 Nonreligion.....	28
1.1.5 ‘Religion’ the Category and Critical Religion.....	30
Chapter Two: The Aesthetics of Action: Visual Catalogue	48
Chapter Three: Women Between Church and State in Ukraine	95
3.1 Ukraine and the Birth of Femen.....	95
3.2 Critics of Femen.....	137
Chapter Four: The Goddess and Activism	159
4.1 God the Father.....	159
4.2 Feminist Theology.....	166
4.3 Why Women Need the Goddess.....	170
Chapter Five: Between Caliph and Republic in Turkey and the Hizmet Movement	174

5.1 Gezi Park.....	174
5.2 The Gülen Movement.....	183
Chapter Six: Theorizing Beyond the Religion/Secular Binary.....	191
6.1 The Religion/Secular Binary.....	191
6.2 Re-orientations of Identity.....	199
6.3 Theory of Vestigial States.....	202
6.4 Supernational Entities.....	212
6.5 Subjugated Knowledges.....	221
Concluding Statement.....	225
Bibliography.....	226
Figure References.....	249
Copyright of Images.....	253

List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Witch-hunt in Moscow, Ritual Sacrifice</i> , (Hachfeld 2012).....	50
Figure 2: Oksana Shachko, Anna Hutsol and Alexandra Shevchenko (Kishkovsky 2013).....	51
Figure 3: Oles Buzina, author of <i>Ladies, Back to the Harems</i> , known for “his open stance against the right for a woman to say no to sex” (The Observers 2009).....	52
Figure 4: “A wedding photo from the Carpathian mountains, circa 1930s.” (@third_roosters 2016).....	53
Figures 5-8: Contemporary photos of Ukrainian pagan dress (Pivni 2016).....	53
Figure 9: Ukrainian Independence Day rally August 2009 (The Observers 2009).....	56
Figure 10: Inna Shevchenko (Glass 2012).....	57
Figure 11: Femen logo (Femen.org).....	57
Figure 12: Anna Hutsol beaten by Ukraine’s police (Femen.org).....	58
Figure 13: (Oyster 2014).....	58
Figure 14: (Quatre 2012).....	59
Figure 15: Staged action (Lobo 2013).....	59
Figure 16: Staged action (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014).....	60
Figure 17: Protest in Belarus (Toxaby Live Journal 2011).....	60
Figure 18: Iryna Krashkova before (Solonyna and Kuznetsova 2013).....	61
Figure 19: Iryna Krashkova after (Rudenko 2013).....	61
Figure 20: Memorial graphic for Oksana Makar (Phillips 2012).....	61
Figure 21: Oksana Makar protest (Katrandjian 2012).....	62
Figure 22: Jenny Wenhammar (Femen Sweden 2013).....	62

Figure 23: “Poor Because of You” in Davos (Common Dreams 2012).....	63
Figures 24-25: “Holy Sperm” protest in Paris (Cercle 2012).....	64
Figure 26: Amina Sboui (Amnesty 2013).....	65
Figure 27: ‘Memen’ solidarity (Shevchenko @femeninna 2013).....	66
Figure 28: “Pope No More” in Paris (Nigeria Today 2013).....	67
Figure 29: Swastikas in Brussels (Montgomery 2015).....	67
Figure 30: “Ban Erdogan” (Bare-Breasted 2014).....	68
Figure 31: Turkish woman demanding the release of Turkish journalists (Eye for Protest 2015).....	69
Figure 32: Canadian women in solidarity with imprisoned Turkish journalists (Eye for Protest 2015).....	70
Figure 33: Letter of thanks to Femen from imprisoned journalist Can Dündar (Eye for Protest 2015).....	71
Figure 34: Campaign of support for imprisoned Turkish journalists (Eye for Protest 2015).....	72
Figure 35: Alexandre Cernec remix of the 1878 painting by Félicien Rops, <i>The Temptation of St. Anthony</i> (La tentation 2013).....	73
Figures 36-37: French Muslims supporting laïcité (Rabaa 2013).....	74
Figure 38: Happy Birthday Oksana Shachko (facebook.com/femenmovement 2014).....	74
Figures 39-40: Screenshot of a Ukrainian pensioner reacting to a Femen protest (Vocativ 2013).....	75
Figure 41: Victoria Sendón (facebook.com/femenmovement 2014).....	76
Figure 42: “Abortion is Sacred” in Madrid (Cinco 2014).....	77

Figure 43: “Catholic Church, Out of My Body” (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014).....	77
Figure 44: Saudi Arabian Women’s Day of Action (Supinsky 2011).....	78
Figure 45: Femen Brazil (Almeida 2013).....	79
Figures 46-48: Femen Canada (www.facebook.com/FEMENCanada 2013).....	79
Figures 49-50: Femen heathens (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014).....	81
Figure 51: Chained to Jesus in Madrid (Dragan 2014).....	83
Figure 52: Drawing by Luz (Luz 2013).....	84
Figure 53-54: Drawings by Luz (femen.org 2015).....	85
Figure 55: Beyoncé—Feminist (Bailey 2014).....	87
Figure 56: Moujan Taher: “I’d rather be a rebel not a slave.” (Iranwire 2016).....	88
Figure 57: Occupied Gezi Park (Turgut 2013).....	89
Figure 58: Ballet show at Gezi Park Protest (@EsraFurtana 2013).....	89
Figure 59: Aerial view of Gezi Park Protest (ilariagenovesio 2017).....	90
Figure 60: The original Lady in Red photo (Baker 2013).....	90
Figure 61: Stencil by Ari Alpert of the Lady in Red (Ari Alpert, <i>Lady in Red</i> , 2013).....	91
Figure 62: Anonymous Lady in Red stencil (Gruber 2013).....	91
Figure 63: Woman’s eyes burned by tear gas (Sevim 2013).....	92
Figure 64: Gay Pride Parade Istanbul, Turkey (Dreamshare 2015).....	92
Figure 65: Feminist society of Istanbul (alizex786 2016).....	93
Figure 66: Nun protests with Femen (M Brace deFreak 2012).....	94
Figure 67: Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian President Vladimir Putin (CTV News 2012).....	94

Introduction

In the midst of war and revolution, Ukraine and Turkey are crucibles of new iterations of old religious and political movements. What separates the religious from the political? Examining the protest group Femen reveals that to women in Ukraine, both church and state are systems of governance which exclude them from participation and leadership in similar ways. Protests groups in Turkey are also defying conceptions of the state grounded in a secular/religious binary, and the use of these labels to qualify these movements obscures rather than clarifies these ideological movements.

Applying a mode of analysis that rethinks the category of religion in terms of sovereignty is necessary for understanding the evolving relationship between church and state in times of security as well as in times of crisis. Jasbir Puar (2007) writes that the conventional categories of gender, race, sex, age, and religion as markers of difference are “realigning in relation to contemporary forces of securitization, counterterrorism, and nationalism” (p. 342). The division between the concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘the secular’ as silo categories makes many twentieth century frameworks for studying religion inadequate in coping with these contemporary forces; the observations that contemporary religions are becoming more secular, or secular spaces are becoming more religious make less sense as the definitions of those categories transform.

The group Femen began protesting topless in Ukraine in 2009, and the movement has since spread to cities around the world. The members regularly critique the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox Churches and use religious imagery in their protests. A founding member is a Byzantine Icon artist who once wanted to become a nun. Are these women ‘religious’? Is their work sacred or profane? I contrast Femen with several women’s groups in the Ukrainian neo-pagan Native Faith Movement. The Native Faith women are also feminists and activists, but

unlike Femen, who criticize the state, are applauded for their nationalism. The Turkish protesters at Gezi Park were often characterized as ‘militant secularists’ by politicians and the tightly controlled media, but most observed Ramadan and they collectively planned a public Iftar dinner during the protests (Kolluoglu 2013; Cassano 2013). Who determines whether or not their activities are ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’? The Gülen Movement has been called a religion, a cult and a terrorist organization by various observers with different perspectives, and yet the group is as systemically enmeshed within the workings of the Turkish state as the Gezi Park protesters are outside of it. A comparison of these movements and their relationships with both religious institutions and state institutions reveals that the World Religions Paradigm (WRP), which takes non-Christian contexts and “remodel[s] them according to liberal Western Christian values”, and mischaracterizes even internal differentiations between Christian groups, is inadequate in coming to terms with contemporary globalized identity formation (Owen 2011: 253). My dissertation questions the validity of the religious/secular binary as a way to make sense of religious nationalists and protest movements, particularly in colonial and post-colonial contexts. In these contemporary times of shifting identities, a theoretical framing which includes an analysis of sovereignty and the state is a promising alternative.

My research is grounded in four case studies. The case of primary focus is the Femen movement which originated in Ukraine in 2008 and became an international movement in 2012. The Native Faith movement (on the rise since the 1980s), the Gezi Park protesters (2013), and the Gülen Movement are examined as parallel protest groups which could also be described as religious nationalist movements.

This research is aimed at determining why the religious/secular binary and theoretical models which employ it in the field of Religious Studies fail to make sense of Femen and other

such movements. My approach focusses on streams of thought, debates, and key concepts of research within the field of Religious Studies which move contemporary theories beyond the religious/secular binary.

In Chapter One I will review the strategies for dealing with Femen (a movement criticizing church and state) in the field of Religious Studies, namely Secularization Theory, Postsecularism, Identity Theory, Lived Religion, Nonreligion, and Critical Religion, using the field's treatment of the Native Faith Movement (a movement criticizing church and state) as a comparative example. Chapter Two is a visual catalogue of actions and media to impart on the reader a stronger understanding of Femen's activism, accompanied by Chapter Three's narrative account putting the images into context. The goal of Chapters Two and Three is to convey the ideological and historical underpinnings of the Femen movement as it began in Ukraine and has spread to cities around the world.

Chapter Four explores the limitations of the religion/secular binary for women socially, culturally and theologically. The Goddess is examined as a feminist theological statement, as well as the social and political effects of discourse which transforms mythos into ethos. Chapter Five examines the Gezi Park Protests and the Gülen Movement in Turkey. I explain how they are mischaracterized by classic Durkheimian analysis in ways similar to Femen and Native Faith. Chapter Six turns to Naomi Goldenberg's theory of vestigial states to imagine new ways of making sense of religious nationalist movements in the so-called postsecular age.

The concrete aim of this work is to tell the story of the commitment of these activists operating on the fringes of hegemonies through the digital catalogue of their successes and failures over time, including images, videos, interviews, articles, and blog and social media posts. Through this telling, I intend to convey the importance of deconstruction and critique in

capturing what is lost and what is at stake in the essentializing categorizations of ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ in the shifting global formations of religion, activism, and the state.

0.1 Methodology

The empirical domain of this work is composed of text and image-based narratives shared online by leaders and practitioners of Femen and Native Faith, and observations of the Gezi Park protesters and the Gülen Movement. I have been actively monitoring Femen groups online since they began their activism in 2009. What began as a fascination with the planned actions themselves and then with the public reactions to these actions transformed into documentation and research. I ‘followed’ Femen International on the social media network Facebook immediately, and subsequently Femen France, Femen Sverige (Sweden), Femen Australia, Femen Canada, and the group Feminists Against Femen. More recently, as chapters were established, I followed Femen Kurdistan, Femen Nederland, Femen Iran, Femen Polska, and Femen Taiwan. There are many other chapters around the world, but the ones listed above have a coordinated social media presence on Facebook. Other groups, like Femen Egypt, send their updates via the Femen International website, www.femen.org, an online source I also regularly frequent.

I follow several chapters on Twitter. I follow Femen France leader Inna Shevchenko on Twitter and I subscribe to talks and debates that she participates in on YouTube and Vimeo. I have watched several Femen filmed productions, from amateur YouTube videos to professionally produced documentaries available on Netflix.

My information gathered on the Nativist Movement is culled from my membership in Facebook groups and my subscriptions to personal blogs of Ukrainian neopagans, like the

feminist portal, Hagstone. The Facebook groups I monitor are *Slavic Paganism and Witchcraft*, *Slavic Religion*, *Slavic Folklore and World Dreaming*, *The Tribe—Return to Sisterhood* (#tribesisters), *Slavic Reformation Society*, and *The Northern Grove*. I am an active member of the groups *Slavic Paganism and Witchcraft* and *The Tribe—Return to Sisterhood*, and I have posted images, videos, and articles in these groups. I myself have a Facebook account, which I log onto regularly to communicate with friends, check world and community news, and consume entertainment. Joining these online pagan communities incorporated them into my own digital life. In a way, I was immersed in the experience of these cultures through the same mode that other members of the groups were, on our computers, in our personal time, interspersed with our other digital pursuits.

I selected the groups based on my personal interest in gender and women's issues. I avoided groups which appeared to be overly masculine-presenting to focus more closely on my interest in feminist theology. It must be noted here that Slavic Neopagan online communities are sometimes criticized for having fascist, neo-Nazi, and white supremacist members. I did notice these kinds of discussions in male-dominated groups, but none of the groups I focused on in this study remotely touched on these subjects. Contributions to the *Slavic Paganism and Witchcraft* group are made mostly by women, and #tribesisters is exclusively for woman-identifying people, which is why they are the groups cited most frequently in my study. These specific groups regularly engage in anti-racist discussions.

My empirical data is comprised predominantly of images with accompanying text—'taglines'. This is the preferred mode of communication in the Facebook fora. I have also collected stories and sound and video bytes of interest to my research. In particular, I use several first person narrative style articles from the Femen website in my thesis.

A catalogue of images is included with this dissertation. Some of these images were taken by journalists, and others by photographers appointed by Femen themselves. All images, including those of police grinding handcuffed women into the ground, or male passers-by kicking the topless women, were shared online, on Twitter or Facebook, by Femen members. Femen aims to incite a strong reaction. As Femen Sweden avows, the group strives to “provoke patriarchy into open conflict by forcing it to disclose its aggressive antihuman nature to fully discredit it in the eyes of history” (www.femensweden.org 2016). I curated these images with the intentions of Femen activists themselves in mind, so any covered nipples were censored by media channels, not by myself or by Femen. Another goal of my assemblage of this catalogue was to convey the story of Femen visually as followers of their online presence would experience them.

All data I have shared in the dissertation, including visual media and text-based data, are in the public domain. Deciding what was pertinent for inclusion for my analysis was difficult. For example, I was unsure whether or not to include Femen protests which did not directly reference religion, such as their actions at polling stations during elections. I decided to focus less on those protests, but nevertheless include them given what I am arguing in my thesis about the religious/secular binary.

My information on the Gezi Park protests was first limited to Twitter and Facebook trends, because conventional media dissemination was blocked by the Turkish government. While in Turkey I was able to learn a great deal more about the movement on the streets, in bars, shops, restaurants and cafés—over time my ability to look for the right information online improved. Similarly, my knowledge of the Gülen Movement began through living and travelling

with members in 2014, and this background equipped me with insight on their various names and organizations to properly further research their activities.

I am interested in the popular culture of the growing class of people who are unpropertied, educated, young, poor, and childless. This group of people often do not attend church services, do not participate in the census due to their unpredictable housing and employment conditions, and do not identify as 'religious'. Their digital lives are often more colourful than their embodied lives. I chose this method of research, monitoring these digital communities, because it reveals aspects of the 'lived religion' of this demographic that is not revealed by other research means.

My methodological goal in assembling a digital ethnography was observation, to help me understand and explain, particularly in the case of Femen, the development over time of these movements. I believe the study of culture can be strengthened by the digital age, and that technological resources offer great potential for enrichment. I avoided quantitative data collection, like web usage mining, to protect the privacy of group members, even though all data presented in this dissertation is available in the public domain.

I narrowed the focus of my research to the sites of correspondence of 'religion', political commentary, and feminism/social justice. What I have noticed is not that these fields of interest intersect, but that they are not separate. The general ethos and character of each of these groups differ between communities, but politics, religion and feminism are integral and interconnected aspects of group participation. The undifferentiated overlapping of posts about religion, politics and feminism is important to my work and worthy of investigation because it exemplifies my hypothesis that the top-down secular/religious binary approaches obscure the nature of these groups. The women, and sometimes men, who participate in these communities post as

frequently about the state of the revolution in Ukraine, the political scandals, and their visions of better government as they do about pagan ceremonies, pagan gods and goddesses, and pagan persecution by Russian state authorities and Orthodox Church emissaries. In Turkey, the Gezi networks are as likely to talk about feminism, unions, Ramadan, or Kurdish repression as they are to talk about environmentalism. The ‘elective affinities’ cross the boundaries of gender, race, religion, or other conventional identity categories.

Femen activists stage actions against Ukrainian political scandals, Catholic Church scandals, Orthodox Church misogyny, economic interference in Ukraine by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Religious Freedom legislation which persecutes gay people, and a number of other causes which defy ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ categorization. It is through these online communities, and irl (in-real-life) communities mobilized through digital networks as case studies that it becomes clear that contemporary theories of religion need to address notions of governance, beyond the religious/secular binary.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Overview

1.1 Introduction to Paganism in Ukraine

Since the 1991 Ukrainian confederation, trends categorized under the umbrella term ‘Neopaganism’ in Religious Studies have been on the rise in Ukraine. Religion in young democratic Ukraine has exploded in post-Soviet rebellion; Olga Lyubitseva writes that Greek Catholic communities are growing, the “number of Protestants and charismatic churches of believers” is seeing an unprecedented increase, many Ukrainians are reconstituting ancient pagan religious practices, and the Moscow Patriarchate, the institutional centre of the Russian state church, has launched a vigorous campaign to revitalize Russian Orthodoxy in Ukraine, including significant funding for church construction projects (Lyubitseva 2014: 91). This data is significant, particularly when considering that only a few decades ago, all religions except for the Russian Orthodox Church were forbidden (Ivakhiv 2005: 7).

‘Neopaganism’ is not the preferred term of Ukrainians and pan-Slavic pagan movement adherents. Ridnoviry, Native Faith, Nativism, Native Ukrainian National Faith, Rodism, The Union of Indigenous Ukrainian Faithful, Religion of the Ancestors, and Native Faith Movement are all terms frequently used by these communities. The prefix “neo-” in ‘Neopaganism’ is considered insulting because it implies a discontinuity between pre-Christian practice and contemporary practice. Both popular and academic discourses on paganism discredit nativist movements with this language, particularly in comparison to the language used to describe

Testamenters.¹ For example, Lyubitseva, a widely cited and credible source on religion in Ukraine, describes these movements as: “a ‘return’ of some Ukrainians to ancient religious roots, promoting actually paganism (Native Ukrainian National Faith), rituals of which are reconstructed” (2014: 91). In the same article quoted above, the author writes that “[t]he oldest Christian shrines of Ukraine are located in Crimea. They are presented by cave complexes, which, despite the difficult course of historical events, revived and continue to perform their sacred function” (Lyubitseva 2014: 95). The ‘difficult course of historical events’ refers to Soviet repressions of non-Russian Orthodox Christian citizens. There is no mention of the ‘difficult course of historical events’ of Christian persecution of Slavic pagans. There is also no mention of the pre-Christian usage of the cave complexes (Krushynska 2016). The language used to describe non-ROC Christians is soft and complimentary, while the language used to describe Ridnovirs is sceptical and dismissive. There is no doubt that the Christian caves have revived their sacred function, but the pagan practices are dubious modern guesses. This is typical phrasing in studies of religion unassumingly written from a Christian or World Religions Paradigm perspective.

Native Faith Movements have a pre-Christian calendar which traces holidays and special occasions through the seasonal cycle, on a lunar calendar beginning around March (Panayiv 2016). Many Ukrainian Christians celebrate these holidays as well, sometimes with Christian names and sometimes not. For example, erecting a coniferous tree and decorating it with lights during the winter solstice is an ancient Slavic tradition practiced by many Christians. There are

¹ Ukraine’s government tourism website defines paganism as “all religions other than Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism” (WUmag.kiev.ua). In keeping with this framing, the word “testamenters” is sometimes used to describe “Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism”, referencing the shared history, shared mythological lineage, and systemic similarities of these traditions. Panayiv, Oleksa. “Gods of Slavic Mythology.” *Welcome to Ukraine*. (Accessed January 2016. Retrieve online at <http://www.wumag.kiev.ua/index2.php?param=pgs20092/50>)

many Ukrainian villages where, in the past as well as today, it is difficult to classify practices as Christian or pagan. The fusion was named *dvoriyya* (Double Faith) by frustrated Christian leaders in the fifteenth century, and is still called this today. Hagstone, a blogging community for pagans and heathens, defines this community as a distinct tradition:

[T]here is Double Faith (*Dvoje Vierie*, or *Dve Viere*) – a syncretic Slavic religion that arose as a result of forceful conversions that survives in traditional culture in the villages. It combines Orthodox and Catholic practices with heathen ones, syncretizing old gods with Christian saints and blending heathen stories into Christian folklore. (Sanna 2016)

As Christianity spread, more churches were dedicated to Mary than any other Christian figure; according to Boris Rybakov, this was because Eastern Europeans, who almost universally worshipped female goddesses alongside male ones, sought to modify Christianity's lack of female representation (Rybakov 1982: 12). Some churches displayed the goddess holding a baby girl in her lap, both representing Mary and Jesus, and the mother and daughter deities Lada and Lélia (Rybakov 1982: 397). The mother of Mary was also emphasized in Eastern Europe more than Western Europe because of the indigenous significance of grandmothers in Ukrainian culture (Rybakov 1982: 396). Ukraine's famous ancient wooden churches, like *Rizdva Bohorodytsi* (Birth of the Mother of God), are dedicated to aspects of Mary's life and feature murals of wealthy female patrons or leaders (Krushynska 2016). Churches with later murals from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries feature men exclusively.

Protective amulets were a popular Slavic pre-Christian accessory (Rybakov 2006: 36). From the eleventh to sixteenth centuries, amulets were prevalent that featured Christian saints, such as Mary, on the outside. On the inside, against the wearer's skin, was a snake goddess. The exterior Christian symbolism appeased the Christian elites, and the snake goddess on the inside protected the wearer.

Ukraine's government tourism website defines paganism as "all religions other than Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism" (Panayiv 2016). While the new Christian movement and its notion of afterlife was interesting to pagans, it was not as powerful as the old ways.

From a perspective of a Slavic peasant, Christianity must have not been seen as the replacement of old Slavic mythology, but rather an addition to it. Christianity may have offered a hope of salvation, and of blissful afterlife in the next world, but for survival in this world, for yearly harvest and protection of cattle, the old religious system with its fertility rites, its protective deities, and its household spirits was taken to be also necessary. This was a problem the Christian church never really solved. (Panayiv 2016)

Boris Rybakov, the pre-eminent Russian scholar of Slavic pagan history, writes that in his examination of the literature he does not notice a distinct shift between a pagan time and a Christian time. He notices a new focus on afterlife, but that the character of public revels and festivals, dress, and songs did not significantly change. Over several centuries, the imagery of mermaids (snake goddess), the tree of life, the horned goddess, and griffins were replaced by the imagery of the life of Jesus.

Women in the contemporary Native Faith Movement often wear crowns of flowers in their hair during festivals in the spring and summer. This is an ode to Mokosh, the horned goddess of harvest and fertility often depicted in ancient and contemporary Ukrainian embroidery. Ridnoviry makes space for the worship of female gods, absent in the church of the god called God. The crown of flowers is also emblematic of the rural lifestyle of a Ukrainian peasant (see Figure 4).

The crown of flowers is an iconic symbol of the Ukrainian protest group Femen, who name Ukraine's Christian churches, and the state's collusion with them, as the primary source of the oppression of women, along with dictatorship and the prostitution industry in Ukraine.

Femen frequently discusses religion and features ‘Double Faith’ religious symbols, texts, and practices in their actions. They often protest in ‘sacred’ spaces. They wear pagan crowns, and they comment on the positions of church leaders, clerics, and imams on a regular basis. It would seem that Femen is a group that should be widely studied in the field of Religious Studies. When searching for a suitable methodology to examine and explain Femen, I found that the predominant theories in the field preserving the religious/secular binary theorized by Durkheim (1912) erased the political dimensions of Femen’s work, rendering them almost invisible. I noticed that Native Faith movements studied within the field as ‘New Religious Movements’ or ‘neopaganism’ were similarly reduced to their phenomenological dimensions, distorting both their historical contexts and their ideologies.

A wide range of tools are available to study the Nativist Movement and Femen within the field of Religious Studies. Some make more sense and are more useful than others in this regard. This chapter will review the literary lineages of these tools and examine how the Durkheimian religious/secular binary embedded in many of these theoretical lenses hinders analysis of Femen and other movements outside of the Testamenter traditions.

1.1.1 Secularization Theory

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo. Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation, but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusion man, so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality like a man who has discarded his illusions and regained his senses, so that he will move around himself as his own true Sun.

—Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*
(Marx 1843: 42)

Karl Marx saw the ideology of the religions² around him as a fantasy coping mechanism constructed to avoid the harsh reality of wage slavery and feudalism (Marx 1843: 131). He theorized that when the people finally rose up in revolution against their overlords, they would no longer need the ideology of otherworldly salvation.

In 1912, influenced by theories of evolution, Emile Durkheim mused that over time, the ideologies of Testaments would transform into social constructs like nationalism, the way that he thought animistic traditions were primitive precursors to polytheism and then monotheism. He argued that their *sui generis* cosmological formulations represented a simplistic, imprecise version of science or moral philosophy which would eventually fade into history (Durkheim 1912: 208, 225). This sounds as though Durkheim was an atheist, but he also wrote about the categories of sacred and profane as universal categories. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, he wrote of the sacred and the profane that:

In the history of human thought, there is no example of two categories of things as profoundly differentiated or as radically opposed to one another. The traditional opposition of good and evil is nothing beside this one: Good and evil are two opposed species of the same genus, namely morals, just as health and illness are nothing more than two different aspects of the same order of facts, life; by contrast, the sacred and the profane are always and everywhere conceived by the human intellect as separate genera, as two worlds with nothing in common... The fact is universal. (Durkheim 1912: 36)

This dissertation argues for a theoretical framework which sees the secular/religious binary as ‘opposed species of the same genus’, culturally and contextually relevant, and not universal. Durkheim struggled to come to terms with the Christian tradition of cosmology he was raised in on one hand, and new information about indigenous traditions on the other. His hierarchy of traditions which theorized that the practices of Western Europeans were superior

and the practices of people of colour were “primitive” was tainted by racism and social Darwinism. On some level however, he was beginning to understand that what gets called religion referred to a form of governance displaced and replaced by a new order. He could not abandon his notion of the sacred/profane absolutism; he seemed to be something of a deist, criticizing the medieval Christian social order in Europe, while holding onto the idea of a universal ‘sacred’ concept (and its ‘profane’ mirror). In the following passage, Durkheim attempts to ‘secularize’—or explain with social science—the Church as a social institution which *interprets* a universal ‘sacred’. Thus ‘religion’ the category was theorized as a study of interpretations of a universal concept called ‘sacred’.

Religious beliefs proper are always shared by a definite group that professes them and that practices the corresponding rites. Not only are they individually accepted by members of that group, but they also belong to the group and unify it. The individuals who comprise the group feel joined to one another by the fact of common faith. A society whose members are united because they imagine the sacred world and its relations with the profane world in the same way, and because they translate this common representation into identical practices, is what is called a Church. In history we do not find religion without Church. Sometimes the Church is narrowly national; sometimes it extends beyond frontiers; sometimes it encompasses an entire people (Rome, Athens, the Hebrews)..." (Durkheim 1912: 41)

Durkheim ultimately theorized a universal religion/secular binary to overcome the logical fallacies which arise when competing cosmologies interact. As Tomoko Masuzawa explains in *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, this system of comparative religion privileged Christianity at the expense of non-Christian systems (2005). Any cosmology without a sacred/profane binary was rendered invisible by the field of Religious Studies, because the binary was supposed to be ‘universal’.

Sigmund Freud took a different approach. He saw what were called ‘religions’ as comprehensive social systems responding to all of the anxieties within a society, using the German term *Weltanschauung*.³ He created an analytical lens which theorized all cultural systems as psychological coping mechanisms. Perhaps his most famous definition of religion is found in *Moses and Monotheism*:

Religion is an attempt to get control over the sensory world, in which we are placed, by means of the wish-world, which we have developed inside us as a result of biological and psychological necessities. But it cannot achieve its end. Its doctrines carry with them the stamp of the times in which they originated, the ignorant childhood days of the human race. Its consolations deserve no trust. Experience teaches us that the world is not a nursery. The ethical commands, to which religion seeks to lend its weight, require some other foundations instead, for human society cannot do without them, and it is dangerous to link up obedience to them with religious belief. If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man’s evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.” (Freud 1939: 155)

Freud likened absolute belief in the doctrines of churches to a childhood dependence on parents. He saw the human psyche as an evolving organ which would abandon such dependence when it developed the ability to take care of itself. Although often limiting his analysis to the individual, he made wider claims about society in general; he wrote that “the time has probably come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect” (Freud 1927: 44). According to these nineteenth and twentieth century theorists and their Enlightenment predecessors like Hume, Jefferson and

³ “‘Weltanschauung’ is, I am afraid, a specifically German notion, which it would be difficult to translate into a foreign language. If I attempt to give you a definition of the word, it can hardly fail to strike you as inept. By *Weltanschauung*, then, I mean an intellectual construction which gives a unified solution of all the problems of our existence in virtue of a comprehensive hypothesis, a construction, therefore, in which no question is left open and in which everything in which we are interested finds a place. It is easy to see that the possession of such a *Weltanschauung* is one of the ideal wishes of mankind. When one believes in such a thing, one feels secure in life, one knows what one ought to strive after, and how one ought to organise one’s emotions and interests to the best purpose.” Freud, Sigmund. “Lecture XXXV: A Philosophy of Life.” *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*. Hogarth Press, 1933.

Voltaire, ‘religion’ as a psychological coping mechanism, or as a social institution, was doomed by reason to gradually disappear, as science unveiled the true secrets of nature and the purpose of life (Stark 1999). This is the basis of the secularization theory dominating 20th century social theory and philosophy.

In “Science as a Vocation”, Max Weber took up the term ‘disenchantment’—*entzauberung*—borrowed from Friedrich Schiller, to describe the “rationalization and intellectualization” of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Weber 1946: 155). He defines *entzauberung* as the “knowledge or belief that... there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation” (Weber 1946: 155). He believed that the process of coming to this understanding had been taking place gradually over human history until the present, and he cited the example that “in ancient times as priests became differentiated from magicians, injunctions were placed against the use of magic”, commenting particularly on the “rational” training required for priests in contrast to the “‘irrational’ initiations of magicians” (Hansen in Weber and Charisma 2001: 107). Many European scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries predicted the ‘end of Christianity’. Frederick the Great theorized that religious practices everywhere were in decline. As Rodney Stark remarks, Thomas Woolston claimed Christianity, and competing ideologies in the ‘religion’ category, would be completely gone by 1900 (Stark 1999: 249).

Ian Barbour (1966: 16-25) explains that prior to the Early Modern European period, the medieval concept of how the universe functioned was based on ancient Greek philosophy and Aristotelian science. This was the superstructure of Christian cosmology, and the early church hierarchy formed premodern European governance structures. According to Barbour, pre-Galilean thinkers envisioned the world’s purpose as a stage for the God-Messiah-Man drama

described in Biblical literature. When Early Modern Europeans began to understand more about the vastness of the universe and the particulars of the solar system, they realized that the God-Messiah-Man drama was not central to the physical universe. Earth was not the centre of the universe. Man was thus no longer the centre, nor was he special in the way that medieval theologians theorized. Rapidly ensuing scientific discoveries only further confused attempts to understand the world through interpretations of increasingly aging Biblical texts. The Enlightenment and the movements that followed had Christian philosophers and scientists like Newton struggling with the emergence of disunity between theology and science within their shifting and expanding worldview.⁴ Early Christians thought of Muslims as Christian heretics, with their differently prioritized main characters, but when Christopher Columbus visited the Cayman Islands, he quickly realized that Jesus or the god called God were not even universal to the world, let alone the universe (Nongbri 2012: 84). This was the philosophical precursor to the theorizing of secularization by Marx, Freud, Weber and others. According to Lambert, scholars like Voltaire, Kant and Locke were hoping for a revelation of new truths by science, a kind of Ten Commandments upon which to frame a new scientific cosmology (Lambert 1999: 5).⁵

Secularization, or evolutionary-religion theories characterized Religious Studies throughout the modern age. The postmodern era gave rise to a series of ‘post-s’. The

⁴ I have provided the briefest summary of Ian Barbour’s treatment of Early Modern European theology and science. See *Issues in Science and Religion* for the detail and depth this topic entails. Barbour, Ian. *Issues in Science and Religion*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966)

⁵ The reification of science as an inalienable truth is critiqued by Cordelia Fine, Timothy Fitzgerald, Geraldine Finn, Rosi Braidotti, and others.

Braidotti, Rosi. "In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminism." *Theory, Culture & Society*. (vol. 25 no. 6(2008): 1-24)

Fine, Cordelia. *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010)

Finn, Geraldine. "On the Reification of Ideas –Of Man—and the Return of the Repressed." (presented on March 9 2016 in *Gender and Religion*, University of Ottawa)

Fitzgerald, Timothy. *Religion and Politics in International Relations: The Modern Myth*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011)

secularization theory framework was critiqued in the 2000s for its lack of accounting for women or the developing context, and for the unexplained growth in religious membership in the United States (Starke 1999; Mahmood 2005; Braidotti 2008; Bracke 2008). Secularization theory reflected a colonial, western, secular humanist, neoliberal outlook, and one which even failed to explain American exceptionalism. ‘New’ religious movements and ‘new’ fundamentalist movements emerged from what some thought would become a monolithic, monocultural secular society (Stark and Bainbridge 1987). Just as the notion of a universal secularism was becoming dubious, so was a universalizing notion of ‘religion’. Sociologists in Religious Studies began to break down the category of religion into composite elements. Peter Beyer redefined the main category of religion into sub-categories, including collective cultural religion, organized religion, state-enforced political religion, and individual invisible religion, or ‘bricolage’, to “address the question of the social forms of religion and the broader societal influence and significance of those social norms” (2000: 94). Lambert made a distinction between private and public spheres, examining the development of the ‘private’ sphere, and the shifts in religion at the public and private levels, theorizing a framework of macro, meso, and individual level secularization (1999: 5). He further discussed changes in the ways that people viewed and related to the physical world, assembled socially, and expressed themselves creatively. He listed and described some of the ways he thought these changes altered ‘religion’, including vocational ethics, pluralism, denunciation of religious formalism, equality, love ethics, pragmatism, and individualization (Lambert 1999: 9). The category of religion was expanded and applied to a variety of different contexts in a variety of theoretical experimentations. These attempts did not ultimately resolve the secular/religious binary tension theorized by Durkheim and problematized by Jack Goody,

Tomoko Masuzawa, Elizabeth Burns Coleman and Kevin White, and others (Goody 1961; Masuzawa 2005; Burns Coleman and White 2006).

1.1.1.1 The Postsecular

Parallel to these pragmatic approaches, ‘the postsecular’ was theorized (Taylor 2007; Braidotti 2008; Habermas 2008; Bellah 2012). Habermas (2008) argued that ‘western secular’ nations of the 21st century were entering a “post-secular age” (Habermas 2008: 18). By this he meant that the secularism of Weber, Marx and Freud was a false prophecy, and that the world was becoming ‘re-enchanted’, a post-*entzauberung*. Religious Studies then turned to collecting evidence that religion/enchantment was returning to the world. The upsurge of postsecularists coincided with the closure of many theological schools, as scholars with theology backgrounds migrated into departments of Religious Studies. The field of Neurotheology⁶ in Religious Studies regained prominence, and expansive research based on the notion that ‘religion is the root of everything’ proliferated. Linda Woodhead’s (2010) book *A Sociology of Religious Emotions* combined and epitomized many of these ideas deriving their heritage from Paul Tillich’s 1957 ‘Theology of Ultimate Concerns’ theory. This denomination of theories represented a kind of neo-Protestant search for “the everyday sacred” outside of Durkheim’s theorized Church (Ammerman 2013). I am not suggesting that scientific study of meditating

⁶ Neurotheology posits that ‘spiritual experience’ is scientifically quantifiable in human evolutionary neurological physiology. ‘Spiritual experience’ here means feelings of awe, trance, a sense of oneness or shared consciousness with other living creatures, and altered states of consciousness induced without the use of psychoactive drugs (Newberg 2010). William James’ 1902 book *Varieties of Religious Experience* is a key text in framing the feelings studied in contemporary neurotheology.

James, William. *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902)

Newberg, Andrew. *Principles of Neurotheology*. (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010)

minds or emotional responses is not relevant or interesting. My concern is that the categories of 'religious' and 'secular' severely impede analysis of this kind of research.

The framing of 'religious' emotion reifies secularism and does not break down the religious/secular binary, ultimately not resolving the mysteries of the unsatisfying divide between religious/secular or religion/science. This anxiety with the category of religion fits within a broader critique of Grand Narratives in the social sciences and humanities, characterized by 'post' theories.

James Diamond writes:

The dominant sensibility of our time, in intellectual and spiritual terms, is one of "coming after." In Western discourse, at least, we are clearly in an age of "post"s: post-modern, post-colonial, post-Communist, post-Christian. In Jewish circles it is fairly de rigueur to speak of this time as post-Holocaust, post-Zionist, post-denominational. Of late we are hearing in our culture a less familiar but no less important permutation of this "coming after" syndrome": the post-secular. (James Diamond 2004)

According to Charles Taylor, the purpose of religion was to respond to the 'great questions' of human life: why are we here, how did life on Earth begin, and what happens after we die. He theorized that the resurgence of religions after a secular age arose from the failure of science to smoothly respond to these 'great questions' (Taylor 2007: 308). He uses the term "axial turn into a new age of rationality" to describe "the end of tribalism and collectivism evident in the writings of Kant and Rousseau", but searches for a salvaged, enlightened version of Catholicism to become a "new horizon of significance" (Taylor 2007: 611). Taylor feels something is missing from the contemporary model of state-sponsored secularism with private pluralism; he notes that the lack of authority of a public church leaves the government no moral foundation for holding corporations responsible for 'unethical' choices and actions. Taylor grapples theologically with the angst of a 'post' age, writing that "things that ought to be

determined by other criteria will be decided in terms of efficiency or cost benefit” (1991: 5). Another theorist, Robert Bellah (2006), describes secularism as “trying to jump outside our skins into a realm of pure reason” (p. 121). Thus an era of shifting rather than diminishing ‘religiousness’ was theorized, in an attempt to take into account that declining or increasing ‘religion membership’ mapped differently amongst different demographics. However, postsecular theory, the framework for dealing with the dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of secularism, did not deconstruct the religious/secular binary, protecting the concept it sought to critique. By critiquing only the category of secular and protecting the mirror category of religious, the ‘secular’ ultimately evaded deconstruction.

Not only did postsecular theory fail to deconstruct secularism and offer a theoretical alternative, but the ‘postsecular’, a framework whose foundation posits innate, timeless, and universal ‘religiousness’, is an alarming possibility to many feminist theorists (Gaylor 1997; Moller Okin 1999; Reed 2002; Jeffreys 2012; Pollitt 2014; Goldenberg in Stack, Goldenberg and Fitzgerald 2015) who see the rise of religion as an obstacle to women’s liberation. Postsecular theory and secularization theory are increasingly inadequate lenses for analyzing a rapidly changing world. In terms of assessing contemporary trends in Ukraine and Turkey, the discourse of secularization and the postsecular frame movements through the colonial lens of ‘the continued Westernization of the East’, or as the rejection of western values. In this outdated and simplistic ‘clash of civilizations’ framework, women are inevitably marginalized, unable to ally with either the emerging democratic state or the vestigial state system. It is my hypothesis that the patronizing ‘civilizing’ narrative is incapable of making sense of the influences at play amongst women in Ukraine and protesters in Turkey.

1.1.2 Agency and Identity

As Masuzawa argues, secularization theory and theories of the postsecular preserve “European universalism”. The field of Sociology offers theoretical tools to critique secularization with the contemporary work engaging with theories of agency and identity (Mahmood 2005; Braidotti 2008; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Bracke 2008).

Agency and identity are key terms with the field of Sociology. Sociological theories stemming from Durkheim’s (1895) discussion of free will in *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique* examine the relationship between social structures as determinants and human free will, or agency. There is a distinction to be made between Sociology and Religious Studies in the discussion of free will. The sociological notion of agency is frequently understood as power expressed within “resilient patterns that order social life” (Hays 1994: 57). The agency and identity discussions in areas of Religious Studies influenced by theology see agency as an expression of ‘true’ innate identity (Mahmood 2005). Particularly pertaining to gender and the roles of women in religious traditions, Religious Studies work invoking agency and identity theory often relies upon ‘free will *as a woman*’ or ‘free will as a man’—free will from within an essentialized (*sui generis*) identity category, rather than understanding free will as constrained by shifting humanly mitigated systemic categories. Like secularization theory and theories of the postsecular, this analytical perspective preserves Durkheimian sacred/profane absolutism, where ‘religious’ identity is perceived as beyond ‘power expressed within resilient patterns that order social life’, ultimately rendering invisible anyone not self-identifying within a religious/secular framework.

Problematically, the argument that essentializes woman directly contests the basic feminist notion that “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman” (Beauvoir 1952: 267).

Non-dual thinking is a fundamental principle of early feminist theology. In her 1990 text, *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology: In Search of Method* Pamela Dickey Young writes that a “feminist theology of liberation has as one of its main goals wholeness, the overcoming of dualisms such as mind and body, male and female, technology and nature, and it insists that wholeness is attainable only when hierarchy is overcome” (p. 25).

Women’s rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s led to widespread critiques of gender-based discrimination in traditions, texts and practices within institutions like government and law. The field of Women and Religion emerged as an examination of traditions, texts and practices within religious institutions. “The personal is political”, the slogan of the second-wave feminist movement, moved ‘women’s issues’ previously considered ‘private matters’, like domestic violence and women’s reproductive health, into public consciousness (Hanisch 1970). The problem with contemporary identity and agency theory in Religious Studies that preserves dual notions of religious/secular and male/female is that it represents the de-politicization of women’s experiences after a hard-earned struggle to bring the revolutionary understanding that “the personal is political” into mainstream consideration.

De-politicization is a central problem in the field of Religious Studies, stemming from the Durkheimian segregation of sacred and profane, and subsequent purely ideological separation of what is called ‘religious’ and what is called ‘secular’. A conceptual apparatus that postulates circumstances controlled by gods, or a god called God, or by magic, has a universalizing function that forsakes the ‘why’ question. The agency and identity framework seeks to acknowledge and understand diverse perspectives, but when applied to Religious Studies theories which define ‘religion’ as a universal concept, erases the context and significance of these diverse perspectives. Take the concrete example of the rise of Ukrainian Neopaganism.

The agency and identity approach frames the contemporary trends in Ukraine by arguing that Ukrainian people are getting in touch with their authentic innate identity as polytheistic Slavic people. In “Deeper Identities: Neopaganism and ‘Native Faith’ in Ukraine”, Adrian Ivakiv writes that Christianity overtook indigenous traditions in the fourteenth century, and their resurgence in the modern age is a natural return. He argues that the ethno-nationalist character evident within these groups in contemporary times is circumstantial and temporary; “Ukrainian Native Faith, like some other forms of Central and Eastern European Neopaganism, has become caught up within a set of ideas [nationalism]” (Ivakiv 2005). Ivakiv is negating that ‘the personal is political’, dismissing the links between Neopaganism (theorized as personal) and neo-nationalism (theorized as political) as temporary separate circumstances. The ‘difference’ is purely categorical. This tendency to refer to an essential nature of a so-called religious movement amputated from aspects which relate to ‘politics’ echoes the theological perspective, which blames Christianity’s evangelical failure for rising paganism. Vitaliy Proshak exemplifies this outlook, writing:

[R]ising interest in paganism concerns the essence of Christianity itself. In some cases Christianity has failed to keep the pure Christian doctrine and has adopted pagan traditions, forms, and beliefs; because of this many people see paganism as a foundation of Christianity and call for a return to the spiritual roots of the true religion. However, people who hold this view either forget, or do not know at all, that it is not the doctrine of any particular church that defines the core of Christianity, but the Bible. The Bible does not have any traditions, forms, and beliefs adopted from paganism. Therefore Christianity is not based on paganism. (Proshak 2006: 146-147)

Problems and solutions are framed within the discrete circuit of a religious/secular binary. This essentialist narrative does not adequately address the rise of Neopaganism, or explain the protest group Femen. Agency and identity, as addressed specifically in the field of Religious Studies, is intensely focused on the individual, to the exclusion of collective trends,

and yet individual perspectives are used to generalize about groups and communities. Some engagement with theories of class and wealth are needed. Ukrainian Religious Studies scholar Serhii Plokyh has a more practical evaluation of ‘identity’ grounded in his understanding of Ukrainian ideological movements:

When it comes to “identity texts” produced by elites, it is worth noting that political and religious institutions, with which those elites were closely associated, generally tend to sustain identities that justify their existence and present their view of the world. (Plokyh 2006: 7)

Agency is difficult to evaluate and measure. At *Religion, Gender and Body Politics*, a conference at Utrecht University in February 2015, Raadhika Gupta explained that “agency is measured in acts of resistance, not acts of compliance” (Gupta 2015). Thus agency is difficult to assess in a regime of conformity.

1.1.3 Lived Religion

A promising marriage of identity theory and systemic structuring in the field of Religious Studies emerges from the work of Meredith McGuire (2008) and others (Orsi 2005; Ammerman 2007; Morgan 2014) in the field of Lived Religion. In *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, McGuire challenges existing ways of approaching and studying religion. She argues that method and theory which essentialize religion with belief-based definitions are insufficient in the field. Moreover, she is interested in the richness of what she calls ‘lived religion’, or the study of people’s material practices which slip through the cracks of scholarly examination because they are forsaken in belief-centred definitions. She uses ethnographic narratives to demonstrate how the myriad small gestures and non-doctrinal affirmations related to religious identity reveal detail and unexamined significance that is not captured in the study of the doctrinal beliefs from which they are supposed to stem. Her work in *Lived Religion* contests

the patriarchal ‘big church’ focus of the field, challenging the category of religion to include the non-canonical, contemporary, and lower class aspects of movement followers. The Lived Religion framework provides the methodology to address components of grassroots religious nationalist movements which would otherwise escape examination. McGuire unsettles the field’s notion of how religion is to be studied. In a combination of the secular/postsecular discussion and identity analysis, she identifies the patriarchal and classist underpinnings of the category of religion in the field of Religious Studies, and provides a historical timeline of the Reformation and Enlightenment ideas she considers fundamental to the contemporary academic study of religion. McGuire describes lived religion as “religion arising from commoners in contrast to that formed by the elite,” an analysis which in many ways documents women’s contributions (McGuire 2008: 45). Unfortunately, Lived Religion does not go far enough to address the effects of the universalizing function of the category of religion, to offer an analysis that can distinguish between ‘lived religion’ and, for example, expressions of ethno-nationalism. It must be noted however that even the name ‘lived religion’ begins to break down the category—a deconstruction that this dissertation argues is necessary.

Another potential pitfall of studies in Lived Religion is that the microscopic focus on the individual delves into myopia if it lingers continuously in the interesting but usually dangerously depoliticized realm of theology journaling. This is not a critique of the field as a whole, however. For example, new research points to refreshing directions and impressive scholarly accountability for theories of Lived Religion, like this Ukrainian book, *Letters From Heaven*, by Himka and Zayarnyuk:

Reflecting critically on the heuristic value of popular religion and on the concept of popular culture in general, *Letters from Heaven* is characterized by a shift of focus from churches, institutions, and theological discourse to the religious practices themselves and their interconnections with the culture,

mentality, and social structures of the societies in question. An important contribution to the fields of religion and Eastern Slavic studies, this volume challenges readers to rethink old pieties and to reconsider the function of religion. (Himka and Zayarnyuk 2007)

1.1.4 Nonreligion

In 2012 I wrote a paper called “Where Are the Women Atheists?: Atheism as Oppositional Identity in a Culture of Theism, and Freethinking as an Intersectional Identity.” I came across George H. Gallup Jr.’s 2002 poll which avowed that a “mountain of Gallup survey data attests to the idea that women are more religious than men, hold their beliefs more firmly, practice their faith more consistently, and work more vigorously for the congregation” (2002). The ‘reasons’ given were not very convincing, including the patronizing justification that “more so than men, women lean toward an empirical rather than a rational basis for faith” due to what he calls “complex factors relating to the female and male psyches” (Gallup 2002). Were women truly irrational? This led me down a path of research into any available science which demonstrated that women’s brains were less rational than men’s. I did not find any, but I did find a ‘mountain’ of research debunking these kinds of unscientific studies. There is no proof that men’s and women’s brains are different, or the same, despite unscientific statements like “the female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems” (Baron-Cohen 2003: 1). The research points to many enculturated differences. One study ‘proved’ that women were less intelligent than men ‘because of their small brains’, but when a female scientist re-produced the same study using short men and tall men instead of women and men, she received death threats (Gaylor 2012).

The field of Religious Studies abounds with surveys which indicated that women indeed self-identify as ‘religious’ and attend Christian services more than men in North America

(Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi 1975; Brown 1987; Francis 1993; Paloutzian 1996; Pew Research Centre 2007). Not only that, but white men comprise up to 80% of the membership of secular humanist and atheist groups in North America (Jacoby 2012; Cragen 2012). This prompted me to write the 2012 paper centred around the question “where are the women atheists?”

Nonreligion is an ambiguous and strange category because it is not defined in terms of a practice or belief like many other things studied in the category of ‘religion’, but is, to use Richard Cimino’s phrasing, an “oppositional identity in a culture of theism” (2012). This makes it a negative identity within a category of positive values. In a *Bigthink* lecture on atheism and agnosticism, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson comments that “I don’t play golf, is there a word for non-golfer-players?” (Tyson 2012). I wrote in my paper that “[i]n terms of the anthropological study of ‘religion’, do we look at the Maori and study them as non-Buddhists, or study Evangelicals as non-Hindus?” (2012).

Although the growing field of nonreligion is built on confusing grounds, it is nonetheless an important ideological space to examine apostasy, decolonization, anti-church sentiment, and other projects working with the category of religion. In *Locating Nonreligion in Mind, Body and Space: New Research Methods for a New Field*, Lois Lee describes nonreligion as “anything which is primarily defined by a relationship of difference to religion” (2012: 131). Without defining ‘religion’ though, getting to the root of why women are less likely to identify as atheists is treading in murky waters.

Atheism historian Gavin Hyman (2010) traces the historical identification of ‘atheists’ to the witch-burning craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (p. 6). These ‘atheists’ were not men’s groups gathering to talk about the metaphysical nonexistence of a god named God like the contemporary New Atheists in America; they were predominantly women who defied

Christian concepts of governance, sexuality and patriarchal social arrangements (p. 10). First wave feminist writings engage overwhelmingly with critiques of Christianity, like Voltairine de Cleyre's assertion that "[t]he question of souls is old—we demand our bodies now. We are tired of promises, God is deaf, and his church is our worst enemy" (Gaylor 1997: 355). Brent Nongbri (2012) discusses the shift in meaning of the term *haireisis* in Early Modern Europe from 'choice' to the modern notion of 'heresy' (p. 36). In the case of women, 'choice' was heresy against the forces controlling their bodies, not a theological concept. For women, 'nonreligion' has a different socially encoded meaning than it does for men. While the field of nonreligion offers a space to explore some forms of oppositional identity in a culture of theism, its protection and inherent legitimization of the category of religion as separate from the state makes it unsuitable to study Femen, a group which would seemingly be fit to study in a field of nonreligion.

1.1.5 'Religion' the Category and Critical Religion

Caution in handling generally accepted opinions that claim to explain whole trends of history is especially important for the historian of modern times, because the last century has produced an abundance of ideologies that pretend to be keys to history but are actually nothing but desperate efforts to escape responsibility.

—Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
(Arendt 1948: 9)

Clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct have the socially recognized function of protecting us against reality.

—Hannah Arendt, *The Life of Mind – Thinking – Willing*
(Arendt 1978: 4)

'Religion' is a contemporary category which has developed over time like a number of other Early Modern European categories. It is a category that is operationalized differently in contemporary contexts than it was in the past, although the category itself carries a valence of timelessness and theological unchangeability. The phenomenological approach to the Study of

Religion in particular protects the categorical taboo. For example, a major difference between Religious Studies and Cultural Studies is that Cultural Studies is founded on the principle of contingency; it is known and understood that cultural movements have beginnings and ends, and are created and re-inscribed by participants. The definition of culture acknowledges that people are raised in a culture. This principle is true of what we are calling religions or religious movements, but the *sui generis* claims of the subjects of study sometimes penetrate the theoretical integrity of the field, causing a general lack of definition.⁷

Emile Durkheim may have theorized a universal sacred, but he also theorized the need for an analysis of history conscious of context. He reversed the notion of ‘great men making history’, instead writing that history makes the individual. He wrote:

History is not only the natural framework of human life, man is a product of history. If one takes him out of history, if one tries to conceive him outside of time, fixed, immobile, one distorts him. This immobile man is not man. (Durkheim 1920: 89)

Brent Nongbri applies this concept of contingency to the modern category of religion. He explains how the *sui generis*⁸ claim constitutes a separation of the category of religion from context, ahistoricizing the term and the development of its usage (2012). The field of Critical Religion sets aside this categorical taboo and acknowledges the history and context of the category of ‘religion’ in the study of the uses of the term in contemporary life. More than that, Critical Religion, as a member of the Critical Theory family of deconstruction, provides a

⁷ *Sui generis* is a legal term defined by the Legal Information Institute of Cornell University Law as “Latin for of its own kind, and used to describe a form of legal protection that exists outside typical legal protections -- that is, something that is unique or different.”

Sui generis. (n.d.). In *Legal Information Institute: Nolo’s Plain-English Law Dictionary*. (Retrieved from https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/sui_generis)

⁸ Russell McCutcheon’s 1997 book, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*, marked the beginning of the application of the legal term *sui generis* to the category of religion.

McCutcheon, Russell T. *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

theoretical space to break the vast category of religion down into composite parts for closer examination. This is important for feminists and others interested in social justice, because critiquing “Religion” is impossible as a monolith.⁹ Definitions of religion are diffuse. Critique only becomes possible when the category is broken into pieces to isolate and closely examine those which overlap with fascism, racism, sexism, homophobia and hate, and to endorse and support those which are uplifting and liberatory. It is impossible to target and eliminate misogyny and terror-related violence, for example, and at the same time praise tithing and meditation, without approaching what gets called ‘religion’ as composed of distinct and more palatable pieces. Maria Birnbaum’s take on William Connolly’s developing notion of “deep pluralism” in *Why I Am Not A Secularist* (1999) and *Pluralism* (2005) is useful here:

Connolly points to the necessity of “acknowledg(ing) that your philosophical stance is grounded in a complete mixture of contested faith and porous argument” (Connolly 2005: 82) and the “difficult work of desanctifying some elements in the identity of each” (Connolly 1999: 144). (Birnbaum 2015: 194)

The objective of Critical Religion theory is not to get rid of the word religion and replace the category with something else, but to reimagine ways of organizing material in the ‘religion’ category, and understand how it gets classified there in the first place. As Tomoko Masuzawa argues in her critique of the World Religions Paradigm, “her use of the term ‘invention’ does not imply that all communities, organizations, institutions, and traditions were the figments of European imagination. Rather, what was invented was a class of analogous and comparable ‘world religions’” which systematically excluded cultural elements incompatible with Christendom (Curtis 2005: 266). Critical Religion is different than earlier attempts to break

⁹ An excellent example of this is *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*. Winnifred Sullivan’s 2005 book explores a case study with meticulous detail demonstrating how ambiguous definitions of religion make Freedom of Religion legislation problematic. Sullivan, Winnifred Fallers. *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005)

down the category because it maintains that there is no essentialized 'it' at the centre of the category, and that the category functions colonially not universally.

The Women's Movement is one of the influences of the field of Critical Religion. Describing the 1970s and 1980s Goddess Movement, Carol Christ writes that "though nourished by ancient symbols of Goddesses from around the world, women's imagination is by no means subject to the authority of the past. Instead modern women joyfully discover what is useful to us in the past and reject what is not" (1979: 74). The category of religion as a monolith prevents discarding the patriarchal underpinnings tied into the foundations of the World Religions Paradigm. "What is useful to us in the past" comes with the baggage of "what is not" when the category of religion remains undisturbed.

Leslie McCall writes that "feminist researchers [are] acutely aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category. In fact, feminists are perhaps alone in the academy in the extent to which they have embraced intersectionality—the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations—as itself a central category of analysis. One could even say that intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far" (McCall 2005: 308). Feminist studies also seeks to unsettle norms—religious/cultural/social—rooted in essentialized identity narratives which are actually fluid, complicated and multidimensional in nature. Feminist theory invokes a methodology of free thought recognizing the pervasiveness of patriarchy in constructions of the family, government, religion, and other dimensions of women's lives. It is within this undifferentiated space that the actions of Femen can be understood beyond a religion/secular binary.

Critical Religion as a field developed when the critical theories of feminist theology, queer theory, and post-colonial theory penetrated the field of Religious Studies. Critical theories emerged in the 1980s and 1990s from a radical consciousness shift in the 1960s and 1970s questioning the hegemonic structural forces governing society, or the Grand Narratives, to borrow Jean-François Lyotard's term. In particular, Women's Liberation and the Civil Rights Movement were manifestations of the critique and dismantling of the Western Canon (Foucault 1984), white supremacy (Fanon 1963; hooks 1992), Christian Imperialism (Jakobsen 2004; Masuzawa 2005; Chidester 2007; Hutchinson 2011), and male dominance (Friedan 1963; Christ and Plaskow 1979; Daly 1968, 1973; Lerner 1986).

Each of these realms of critique is unique, but there are many points of intersection among them, particularly in the development of theories of deconstruction. Foucault remarks that "the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them" (Foucault 1984: 6). The 'religion' category often operates as neutral or apolitical, masking particular kinds of violence. Contemporary feminist theory, taking intersectionality into consideration, is often redefined as the exposure of unexamined systems of power (McCall 2005). In *Jesus: Miriam's Son, Sophia's Prophet*, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1994) names this system of power "kyriarchy", a term aiming to transcend 'patriarchy' and address Eurocentric, wealthy, able-bodied, white, Christian or post-Christian authority in knowledge production (p. 48).

Various subfields of critical theory—notably feminist theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory, critical history, critical psychology and theories of racialization—interrogate hegemonic

structures and processes through the historicization of claims of universality. A concrete example of this process of mooring abstract ideology in grounded historical contexts is the examination of the changes over time in men's and women's fashions. Pointing out when and where men wore high heels, makeup and skirts historically is a demonstrative argument for tearing down gendered dress codes in contemporary times.

Of particular relevance to the field of Religious Studies in interrogating the category of religion is the unpacking of definitions of the secular. Ben Halpern writes that "the history of Jewish secularism (unlike secularism in Occidental Christendom, which is a native growth maturing over the whole extent of European history) is the application to Jewish matters of standards carried over from the outside" (1987: 863). From non-Christian perspectives, 'Secularism' can be seen as a development of Occidental Christendom, a post-Christian condition in European and colonial societies, not a universal quality of human nature. In this light, using 'secularism' as a universal category is a colonial construct. In *Secularisms*, Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini explain how 'secular' and 'religious' as categories are co-constitutive, and that 'western secularism' can be analyzed as a culturally Christian category produced in relation to the development of other Christian categories. They further argue that 'secular' is as modern a concept as 'religious'; there is no such thing as a neutral 'secular' condition that is universal, writing in *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* that "Protestant dominance habitually passes for secularism" (2004: 114). Jewish scholar James Diamond echoes this sentiment, critiquing the terms of study and writing that "the secular would appear to be essentially a Christian category, secularization a process indigenous to the Christian experience".

One could argue that the binary opposition of the sacred and the secular is not a Jewish one and therefore in a Jewish context questions about the post-secular are

non- starters. There really is no word in Biblical or rabbinic Hebrew that denotes ‘the secular.’ The Hebrew words for the sacred or the holy are *kadosh* (adjective) or *kodesh* (substantive.) The antonym for *kodesh* is *hol* which the revised *Jewish Publication Society Tanakh* translates as “profane.” We see this in Leviticus 10: 8-11 where it is given in apposition with another binary opposition *tahor* “clean” and *tamay* “impure.”

And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is the law for all time throughout the ages, for you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane and between the unclean and clean; and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the Lord has imparted to them through Moses.

The sacred and the profane here are cultic distinctions and criteria, not cultural or worldview or lifestyle signifiers. (James Diamond 2004)

These theories examining the ‘secular’ are working toward understanding secularism as an essential feature of the Occidental Christian cosmological worldview which functions through dualistic principles, rather than the universal counterpart of a worldwide sacred and profane. Diamond’s example of the Jewish context challenges the Durkheimian idea that all societies have religious and secular divisions. It is within Critical Religion that a theory working beyond a religion/secular binary to address the contemporary proliferation of religious nationalist movements is able to take root.

Beyond simply being an inaccurate depiction of pagan traditions, submitting non-Christian contexts to the application of Occidental Christian dualisms is a colonizing undertaking because it renders invisible cultural aspects without elements comparable to aspects of Christianity. The application of the totalizing philosophy of dualisms erases anything that does not fit the dualistic framework. This invisible data can be described by the Foucauldian term “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault 1980: 82).

Like Robert Orsi and some others working in Lived Religion, the field of Critical Religion involves a self-reflective meta-analysis of the field’s development. Russell McCutcheon’s work in particular examines the “insider/outsider problem” (2001). His works

Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion, and Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia are focussed on the ‘caretaking’ and ahistoricization often preserved in the tools of analysis. This thinking in some ways echoes Jean-François Lyotard’s critiques of the academic establishment embedded in critical theory generally.

Lyotard (1984) critiques “research and its legitimation through performativity and ... education and its legitimation through performativity” (p. 41-53). Lyotard’s descriptions of the mechanics of knowledge production target the academic establishment and raise questions about the ‘truths [we] hold to be self-evident’ in the Early Modern European era. Lyotard cites Feuerbach’s notion that religious narratives are not explanations of Christian imperialism, but legitimations of it, to argue that narrative history, or history through storytelling, can be seen as a history of legitimations. Repeating ideas without critiquing them is thus re-inscribing and legitimating them. Timothy Fitzgerald’s early work like *The Ideology of Religious Studies* also critiques the field itself, but his more recent writing focusses on religion and politics and colonial formations, expanding the field of Critical Religion into a direction which explains the harms of re-inscribing colonial legitimations. This kind of critique is relevant for my work with pagans and protesters, because it demonstrates how submitting pagan or other non-Christian cosmologies to Christian dualistic framings legitimates continued imperialism of indigenous concepts. In *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, Joanne Sharp explores where so-called Western stories are called ‘history’ and so-called non-Western stories are called myth and folklore (2008: 20). Categories (‘history’, ‘myth’, ‘religion’ etc.) are a part of the story itself in the narrative of history.

More broadly speaking, Critical Religion is part of the lineage of critical theory deconstructing ideological hegemonies. Lyotard theorizes the breakdown of the totalizing philosophies of Enlightenment Modernity, namely “theologies, theories or ideologies of general development, often involving salvation or emancipation, such as Christianity or Marxism”, into diffuse *petits récits* (Friedrich 2012). Horkheimer (1982) cites Geuss’s assertion that “critical theory maintains that ideology is the principal obstacle to human liberation” (p. 244). To give an example, critical theory would approach a concept like ‘freedom’ as a discourse of freedom that shifts and gets used in particular ways, rather than ‘freedom’ as a reified essential condition. Unpacking ideologies, for Geuss and Horkheimer, means sorting their far-reaching abstraction into a clear historical timeline of ideas and the theorists who conceived of these ideas within their particular contexts. Inserting the author into the writing places responsibility on the author; as feminist theorist Annie Bunting notes, “strategic essentialism is nothing if not employed self-consciously” (1993: 12).

Lyotard identified this way of thinking of history as a ‘paradigm shift’, called the ‘postmodern turn’ by Steven Best and Douglas Kellner (1997). The postmodern turn is characterized by the idea that “the self does not create culture but culture creates the self”, and people build cosmological systems based on their worldview (Cahoone 2003: 5). This anti-essentialist abyss is darkly described by Jacques Derrida (1982) as “the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of the West, the end of Oedipus, the end of the earth, Apocalypse now” (p. 80). However, to the deconstructionists, productive possibilities open when the “classical dividing lines between the various fields of science are [...] called into question—disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the borders between sciences, and from these new territories are born” (Lyotard 1984: 39).

One of these new territories is the field of Queer Theory. In 1988, Judith Butler explained her theory of gender performativity in her essay titled “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”, inspired by Simone de Beauvoir’s foundational statement that "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman" (Beauvoir 1952: 267). Butler theorized that gender is not something that one has, but something that one does. Gender is constituted by a chain of citation, in which people mime or cite the behaviours of others, prevailing as a theatrical construct performed in a social environment in relation to an audience of other people. She writes:

Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. [...] In opposition to theatrical or phenomenological models which take the gendered self to be prior to its acts, I will understand constituting acts not only as constituting the identity of the actor, but as constituting that identity as a compelling illusion, an object of *belief*. (Butler 1988: 519-520).

Butler describes how gender dualism is created by socialized norms of masculinity and femininity through performance of those identities. This development is an important point in history for women’s rights, because it undermines biological determinism and opens the possibility for women and men to escape ‘roles’ through performance variation. Butler analyzes Beauvoir to illustrate this point:

When Beauvoir claims that 'woman' is a historical idea and not a natural fact, she clearly underscores the distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity. To be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (Butler 1988: 522)

Queer Theory is the application of deconstruction to notions of sexual identity, “challenging the production of dominant categories of discourse” (Schipper 1998: 825). ‘Queering’ is a strategy operationalized to expose weaknesses in a dominant discourse, and make conceptual space for exploration of difference. Queer Theory opposes discursive naturalizations by problematizing the ‘normal’, and universal claims of what ‘normal’ means. Shelley Park (2013), for example, ‘queers’ the notion of motherhood through explorations of unusual mothering.

The continued queering of the category of Man ruptures Early Modern European notions of what it means to be human (Zetkin 1920; de Beauvoir 1952; Sayers 1971; Rich 1980; Fine 2010; Finn 2016). The ‘history of Man’ in the Modern era is a history of “'kyriarchy', meaning the rule of the emperor/master/lord/father/husband over his subordinates” (Fiorenza 1994: 14). Both the stories of women and those of non-Europeans were marginalized in academic discourses during this period. Critical theories lead to the deconstruction of colonial formations as well.

Edward Said’s early work (1978) argues that all knowledges of ‘The East’ should be treated with a hermeneutics of suspicion because they are produced through European Christian imperialism. He cites Foucault’s notion that power is constituted through dominant modes of knowledge production. This examination of knowledge production led to research both of those celebrated by history and those disqualified from it. As African filmmaker Owen 'Alik Shahadah notes, “until the story of the hunt is told by the lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter” (*500 Years Later* 2005).

Gramsci writes about cultural hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935). He explores the ways in which ruling elites and the capitalist nation-state work to maintain

dominance through ideology. Gramsci argues that this pro-capitalist ideology, in the form of hegemonic culture, gets propagated as “common sense”. Gramsci coined the term ‘subaltern’ to describe people in groups systemically excluded from political representation with no public voice for self-advocacy. Much of postcolonial theory works to communicate subaltern voices.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak cautions against calling particular groups or people subaltern. She supports the development of the subaltern concept as a theoretical tool. Spivak argues that it is not possible to literally ‘give the voiceless a voice’; while reifications such as "this is 'the voice' of Indian tribals/African women/Cairo's poor..." can seem well-meaning, they remain productions of hegemonic knowledge arrangements (Sharp 2009: 114). Calling specific people ‘subaltern’ also plays into a doctrine of discovery and re-invests the power of naming in the colonizer.

Transcending ideologies of colonialism, which takes place long after political sovereignty is achieved, is one of the foundational principles of postcolonial studies, as well as deconstructing the systems which perpetuate colonialism. Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon’s work (1961) on mental health and dehumanization explores the lasting effects of colonizer/colonized relationships; other works examine this dynamic further (Nandy 1983; Thiong'o 1986). The representation of the imperial regime by the colonized (Memmi 1957) and of the colonized people by the colonizer (Saïd 1978) is also examined. Albert Memmi’s book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, was “confiscated by colonial police throughout the world since its publication” (Memmi 1965). This demonstrates the high stakes of postcolonial work.

Saïd theorized that it was through the construction of ‘the Orient’ as a place, ‘the Oriental’ as Other, and Oriental Studies as the collected European knowledge of Orientalism that the concept of ‘The West’ was constructed in opposition to it. He writes:

Every one of them [Nineteenth-century writers] kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability; this is why every writer on the Orient, from Renan to Marx (ideologically speaking), or from the most rigorous scholars (Lane and Sacy) to the most powerful imaginations (Flaubert and Nerval), saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption. The Orient existed as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts, and commerce. Thus whatever good or bad values were imputed to the Orient appeared to be functions of some highly specialized Western interest in the Orient. (Saïd 1978: 191)

Haudenosaunee elder Ray Tehanetorens Fadden (1993) describes how all desirable knowledges, inventions, philosophies, mathematics, governance structures, and sciences are attributed to ‘Western’ thinkers. Their indigenous origins, learned through colonization, are obscured by a racist discourse. He specifically notes the Iroquois Confederacy’s influence on American democracy, and the revolutionary effects of indigenous foods and medicines on the health of colonists and subsequently Europeans. This decolonizing concept has surfaced in popular media with the July 20, 2016 hashtag on Twitter, #WhitePeopleDidNotInvent, where users of the peer-to-peer social networking site shared inventions commonly thought to be invented by white people, but were in fact invented by people of colour.¹⁰

Postcolonial studies focuses on Neocolonialism, or the continued control by imperial forces of post-independence states through economic suppression (Sartre 1964; Nkrumah 1965).

Kwame Nkrumah describes how post-colonized states establish self-governments only to find

¹⁰ I have elected to include a footnote for the term ‘people of colour’ because it represents an idiom subject to the fluidity of Orwell’s euphemism treadmill and may not stand the test of time. The term was operationalized by Martin Luther King Jr. and advocated by Frantz Fanon to replace the pejorative connotations of the term ‘ethnic minority’. ‘People of colour’ is criticized as racializing and reductionist but is intended to acknowledge the collective systemic discrimination of non-white people of a variety of backgrounds rather than to identify particular people or groups. In the context of #WhitePeopleDidNotInvent, the term draws attention to a collective invisibility of non-white origins of contemporary philosophies, inventions and politics popularly attributed to European origins. Schaefer Richard T. *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society: Volume 1*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc., 2008) p. 1038.

that they are paralyzed by the interventions of outside forces and economic control by multinational corporations.

S. N. Balagangadhara brings the postcolonial discourse into the field of Religious Studies with his book, *The Heathen in his Blindness. . . "Asia, the West, and the Dynamic of Religion*. He argues that "Christianity spreads in two ways: conversion and secularization," challenging the notion of a neutral secular state void of Christian philosophical ideology (1994). He cautions that the modern discipline of Religious Studies has a history of applying "emic categories of Christian thought as though they were etic categories of description and analysis" (1994: 15). David Chidester's work (2007) examines how the categorization of 'religious' was withheld from colonial Africans until Europeans wanted to collect taxes from them, thus the use of the category was a 'civilizing' discourse for economic purposes. Timothy Fitzgerald's 2016 book *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations* directly addresses the linkages between formulations of religion and colonialism.

Like other fields of critical theorizing, Critical Religion aims to historicize the de-historicization of key concepts of analysis; in Religious Studies, this means the contemporary understandings of what is classified as 'religion'. Russell McCutcheon and William Arnal (2013) argue that the word 'religion' can be more productively used as data rather than used as an analytical category. Brent Nongbri (2013) documents the history of the term 'religion' as an article of data. By providing dates, locations and (Christian) authors of 'religion' as terminology, he argues that a better understanding of the modern concept is possible. *Before Religion: A History of the Modern Concept* is a seminal work within the field which catalogues the deployment of the term 'religion' the way that Edward Saïd (1978) addresses Orientalism and Orientalism Studies.

Nongbri explains that there is no analogous word in his father's indigenous language of Khasi for 'religion'. According to Nongbri, what gets called 'religion' in his culture by the academy is framed in the contours of the western configuration of religion rather than in indigenous terms. Nongbri's work raises important questions and challenges for scholars of Religious Studies about what is lost in these formulations, and what can be gained through deconstruction and indigenized reframings of their cultural social construction. He raises important points about the 'othering' inherent to a World Religions Paradigm, demonstrating that "[g]roups that modern scholars discuss as different ancient 'religions' did not discuss one another in that way" (84). Islam, for example, was not seen as 'another religion', but as a Christian sect, like the Collyridians who worshipped Mary rather than Jesus. In the popular story of Josaphat, Gautama Buddha was venerated as a Christian martyr. According to Nongbri, Christians during late Antiquity incorporated ideas, festivals and figures they liked into their traditions, rather than thought of themselves in terms of a distinct ethnicity. Nongbri recounts the history of the modern understanding of the concept of religion as a term which develops in concert with the definition of the modern state.

Tomoko Masuzawa's (2005) work addresses what she calls the 'World Religions Paradigm'.¹¹ She argues that the notion of 'World Religions' is an extension of the Christian philosophy of ecumenism, misrepresenting non-Christian contexts. The WRP is a framework of comparison where the default model is Christianity. Like Nongbri, Masuzawa notes that "European universalism [is] preserved in the language of pluralism." Her work shows that the

¹¹ The most well-cited critique of the 'World Religions Paradigm' is Suzanne Owen's article "The World Religions Paradigm: Time For a Change." She reviews some other critiques of the WRP, like those of Catherine Bell, Teemu Taira, Richard King, James Cox and Jonathan Z. Smith. Owen, Suzanne. "The World Religions paradigm: Time for a change." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*. (vol. 10 no. 3(2011): 253-268. Retrieve online at <http://ahh.sagepub.com/content/10/3/253.full.pdf+html>)

WRP is a process of imagining ‘others’ for the purpose of constructing an image of Christendom, and she cautions against allowing sloppy scholarship to mask universalism in uncritical approaches to pluralism. Timothy Fitzgerald’s (2016) work highlights how the category of “religion has been used to subject indigenous concepts to the needs of colonial powers” since the sixteenth century, and will continue unless addressed within the field.

Naomi Goldenberg critiques the protections offered to patriarchal hierarchies unexamined by the categories of ‘religious’ and ‘secular’. She advises a method of specificity in communication. Rather than using vague phrases like ‘religious violence’, ‘religions of the world’, or ‘religious behaviour’, she recommends thinking about what specifically is being described, and using more precise terminology. She theorizes that ‘religions’ can be thought of as vestigial states, or the vestiges of former sovereignties disenfranchised by the modern state. They maintain some form of social governance which is approved by the state. As Nongbri notes in describing the writing of John Locke, “the church was now a voluntary assembly of individuals who gather together for the sole purpose of obtaining salvation. Any gathering for this purpose ought to be tolerated by the civil authorities, provided that the participants played by the rules of the game, the most important of which was, do not disturb the functions of the state” (2012: 102). Goldenberg also describes vestigial states as ‘states-in-waiting’, because they often aspire to future sovereignty. Vestigial states which interfere with the functions of the nation state risk being labelled ‘terrorist organizations’, like the Gülen Movement in Turkey building a network of schools.

Goldenberg’s framing of religion as a category of governance and sovereignty is helpful in making sense of contemporary developments beyond theories of secularization and the postsecular. Vestigial state theory demystifies both the category of ‘religion’ and the category of

‘secular’. In the contemporary context, states-called-religions like Vatican City, political groups-called-religions like the Islamic State or the American Dominionists, or philosophies-called-religions like Confucianism defy analysis by Durkheimian means. The discursive division of religious/secular is obscuring effective analysis. Simply put, Foucault’s strategy is to “proceed as far as possible [in analysis] without recourse to universals” (Foucault 1984: 4). These and other writings (Cavanaugh 2009) challenge “the production of dominant categories” of religion, making space for alternative perspectives within the field as a whole (Schippert 1998: 825). The production of the dominant category of religion is analyzed so as to come to terms with human communities related to the study of ‘religions’ which can no longer be squeezed into a modernist Durkheimian framework, in an age of ‘posts’.

The case studies of Ukraine and Turkey provide interesting examples which complicate the secular/postsecular and agency/identity narratives. Ukraine appears to be a European and predominantly Christian country, or strives to appear that way. However, Ukraine’s history is truly neither East nor West. Slavic paganism is more similar to Vedic Hinduism than to Greek Mythology, but the modern conquering by Christendom ties the region to the development of Early Modern Europe. Ukraine’s Soviet history and continued cultural, religious and economic connections to contemporary Russia also complicate east-west identity. Likewise, the Turkish case confounds the secular/religious binary. The modern state of Turkey was founded on secular democratic principles, and ‘secularism’ is encoded in the constitution. Yet, the country is officially Muslim, and imams and clerics are public servants. Before the founding of the Republic, the Turks were part of the Ottoman Empire, ruled for over four hundred years by the Islamic caliphate. Turkey became a member of the Council of Europe in 1949, and the

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1973.¹² Like Ukraine, Turkey is neither East nor West. These modern states, located in the borderlands of ancient empires, call into being the productive possibilities alluded to by Lyotard as he calls into question the classical divisions of modernity, like east and west, and secular and religious (Lyotard 1984: 39).

Secularization Theory and Identity Theory frameworks both echo the dichotomies of East and West, sacred and profane, and religious and secular. Post-9/11 study of religion is forced to look beyond twentieth century dualisms for contemporary theorizing.

Secularization Theory as well as Postsecular Theory obscure contemporary feminist, activist and liberal theological movements. Studying ideological alliances, or “elective affinities”, to borrow Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1809) term, in either of these methods relegates political concerns to the realm of the ‘personal’. I will examine selected contemporary religious nationalist movements using theory which analyzes “religion as a category of governance and sovereignty” (Stack, Goldenberg and Fitzgerald 2015), with the goal of moving these contemporary feminist movements into frameworks of visibility.

¹² The relationship between Turkey and the European Union has unraveled under the regime of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with their application for membership to the European Union suspended in 2016 for human rights abuses. Perhaps Turkey and the United States will fortify their relationship instead under President Donald Trump, who praised Erdoğan’s handling of the July 2016 coup. Westcott, Ben. “Trump stresses 'close' relationship with Turkey in first call with Erdogan.” *CNN.com*. (February 8 2017. Accessed Feb 8 2017. Retrieve at <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/politics/trump-erdogan-call/>)

CHAPTER 2

The Aesthetics of Action: Visual Catalogue

Contemporary pagan aesthetic is a unique and beautiful blend of reconstructed styles of clothing and accoutrement fashioned from organic cottons and wools, silver, leather, furs, and semi-precious stones, and zany colourful explosions of tie-dye, paint and throwbacks to the 1960s. Festival and ritual clothing are unique to particular communities, but often blend ‘traditional’ peasant styles and contemporary enhancements that emphasize dance, music-making and syncretic symbolism. The eco-nationalist imagery is powerful.

Likewise, the imagery of Femen is central to understanding their beliefs and practices. Any study of Femen is incomplete without a visual representation of their powerful real-life goddess performance. Mariam Betlemidze (2015) writes that “[a]n encounter between an image and its seer provokes the Deleuzian (2003) sensation that is ‘transmitted directly and avoids the detour and boredom of conveying a story’ (Deleuze and Bacon, 2003, p. 36)” (p. 377). The group Femen operationalizes this visual sensation of direct storytelling in their protests, combined with the power of social media. John Postill and Sarah Pink define social media as “web applications that process, store, and retrieve user-generated content” (2012). The buzz created from the images of Femen protests encourages users to re-post the content. The more buzz, the more shares. Femen does not need any marketing department—the sensational images are made to be share-worthy. As journalist Katie Glass remarks in an interview with Sasha (Alexandra Shevchenko) for *Sunday Times Magazine*:

Their protests appeal to a YouTube-watching, glamour-model-idolising generation because they are visual, “quick, instinctive and easy to understand”, explains Sasha. “The way we look says everything we want to say. We stand with our legs apart. With our faces angry, not smiling. Our fists above our heads. This is not the pose of a woman trying to be sexually appealing. It’s a position that suggests we have something to say — and we do.” (Glass 2012)

Part of the pleasure and discomfort of these photos arises from the juxtaposition of discordant elements. For example, women yelling in the traditionally quiet space of a church, steam rising from the hot, fresh piss of a beautiful topless protester on a poster of President Yanukovich’s face, women ridiculing a misogynist imam, or a sexy blond young woman wearing a crown of flowers with “In Gay We Trust” or “Fuck Pope” written boldly on her bare breasts are all taboo-shattering scenes which invite closer examination and consideration. These images herald a new era which struggles to make sense of women, representation, bodies, religion and mass media. As Betlemidze writes, “[e]very mediatized assemblage contains multiple links that function as traces that constantly weave and unravel various mediated entities. In this weaving process it is not that opposites are merged seamlessly to destroy the essentialist binaries, but rather that they are irreducibly entangled. In these assemblages, opposites cross over into the other side through connection, becoming, rupture, and spinning” (2015: 377).

Globalization and multiculturalism, and the ensuing exposure to many different cultural frameworks simultaneously, require a theoretical outlook which accounts for difference. Images of breasts abound in popular culture, pornography, and the media, but the placement of these breasts in a political context, or in a civic forum, is confusing and stimulating. The undifferentiated use of political imagery and religious imagery confounds and ‘entangles’ the sacred/profane binary (see Figure 1). The photos are presented in this chapter as a flood of

images with selective written details, just as they would be online. Each image included in this archive is referenced and further explained in following chapters of the dissertation.

Figure 1



This cartoon, *Witch-hunt in Moscow, Ritual Sacrifice*, depicts Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church (2009-) on the left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin (2012-) wearing an Imperial crown on the right. They are lighting a pyre where three women dressed in black are tied. These women are Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina, and Katrin Nenasheva. Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina spent two years in a Russian penal colony for performing the hit song *Holy Shit* with the feminist punk band Pussy Riot at Moscow's central Russian Orthodox Saviour Cathedral. They performed the song to protest against Patriarch Kirill's official endorsement of Vladimir Putin's campaign. (Hachfeld 2012)

Figure 2



In this image photographer Dmitry Kostyukov, Femen activist Yana Zhdanova, and three childhood friends (the three women on the right) from their hometown of Khmelnytskyi in Western Ukraine, Oksana Shachko, Anna Hutsol and Alexandra Shevchenko, stand outside the district court building in Kiev after their hearing. They allege that they were kidnapped, beaten and held by Ukraine's security service "to prevent protests during a visit to Kiev by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church" (Kishkovsky 2013). The police say that they were spotted randomly by police committing "petty hooliganism". They were fined fifteen to twenty dollars each and released after Putin and Kirill left Kiev. (Kishkovsky 2013)

Figure 3



This photo was taken at the book signing of Oles Buzina, author of *Ladies, Back to the Harems*, known for “his open stance against the right for a woman to say no to sex” (The Observers 2009). Alexandra Shevchenko throws a cream pie at him. (The Observers 2009)

Figure 4



“A wedding photo from the Carpathian mountains, circa 1930s.” (@third_roosters 2016)

Figure 5



Contemporary photo of Ukrainian native dress by artist @third_roosters. (Pivni 2016)

Figure 6 and Figure 7



Contemporary photos of Ukrainian native dress by artist @third_roosters. (Pivni 2016)

Figure 8



Contemporary photo of Ukrainian native dress by artist @third_roosters. (Pivni 2016)

Figure 9



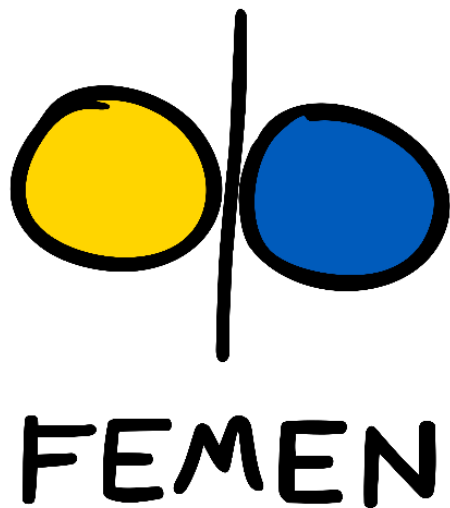
Ukrainian Independence Day rally in August 2009, where Oksana Shachko marches topless for the first time. (Observer 2009)

Figure 10



Inna Shevchenko joins the movement. (Glass 2012)

Figure 11



Femen creates a logo, sealing their international brand. (Femen.org)

Figure 12



Femen's Anna Hutsol is beaten by Ukraine's police. (Femen.org)

Figure 13



Members of the public reacting violently to a Femen action. (Oyster 2014)

Figure 14



Sasha (Alexandra Shevchenko) tussling with police at a protest. (Quatre 2012)

Figure 15



Staged action. (Lobo 2013)

Figure 16



Femen activists prepare for a rally called “Day of Wrath”, organized by Christians and neo-fascists protesting the French government’s proposal to legalize gay marriage and criminalize the clients of prostitutes. After this photo was taken, they marched down to the rally bleating and herding the “extreme right sheep” (Patushki 2014). Photo taken by Jacob Khrist. (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 17



Protest in Belarus. (Toxaby Live Journal 2011)

Figure 18 and Figure 19



Iryna Krashkova of Vradyivka, before (Irina 2013) and after a brutal gang rape. (Solonyna and Kuznetsova 2013)

Figure 20



Memorial graphic for Oksana Makar—“We remember... we love”—who was beaten, raped and lit on fire. (Phillips 2012)

Figure 21



Femen protest at the general prosecutor's office demanding justice for Oksana Makar. (Katrandjian 2012)

Figure 22



(Femen Sweden 2013)

In August 2013, a pregnant Swedish Muslim woman was grabbed from behind, her headscarf torn off and her head slammed into a car until she passed out. Foujan Rouzbeh and Nabila

Abdul Fattah started the Twitter hashtag #hijabuppropet, calling on Swedish women to wear headscarves in solidarity with Muslim women. Many high profile Swedish politicians answered the call and posted their photos online. Jenny Wenhammar of Sweden, a self-described “sextremist, atheist, feminist” created this solidarity image with the Femen symbol painted between her breasts widely shared on social media (Femen Sweden 2013). She wrote:

I dress in solidarity with your message - how I dress or do not dress myself does not give anyone the right to hurt me. We wear what we want and cover what we want. Anyone who decides over me and my body is not God, Allah or any other. My body, my rules.

Jenny

(Femen Sweden 2013)

Figure 23



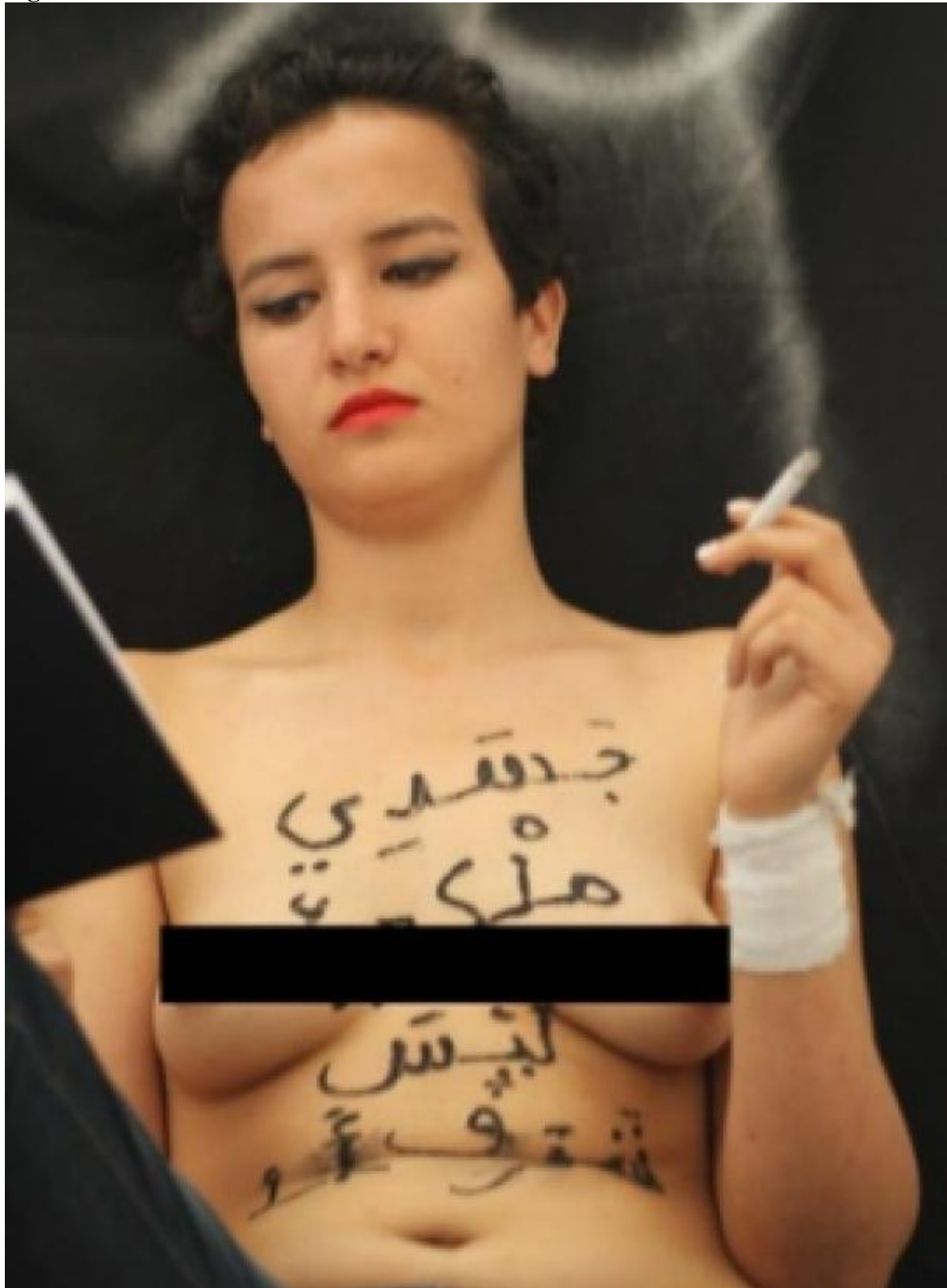
“Poor Because of You” in Davos. (Common Dreams 2012)

Figure 24 and Figure 25



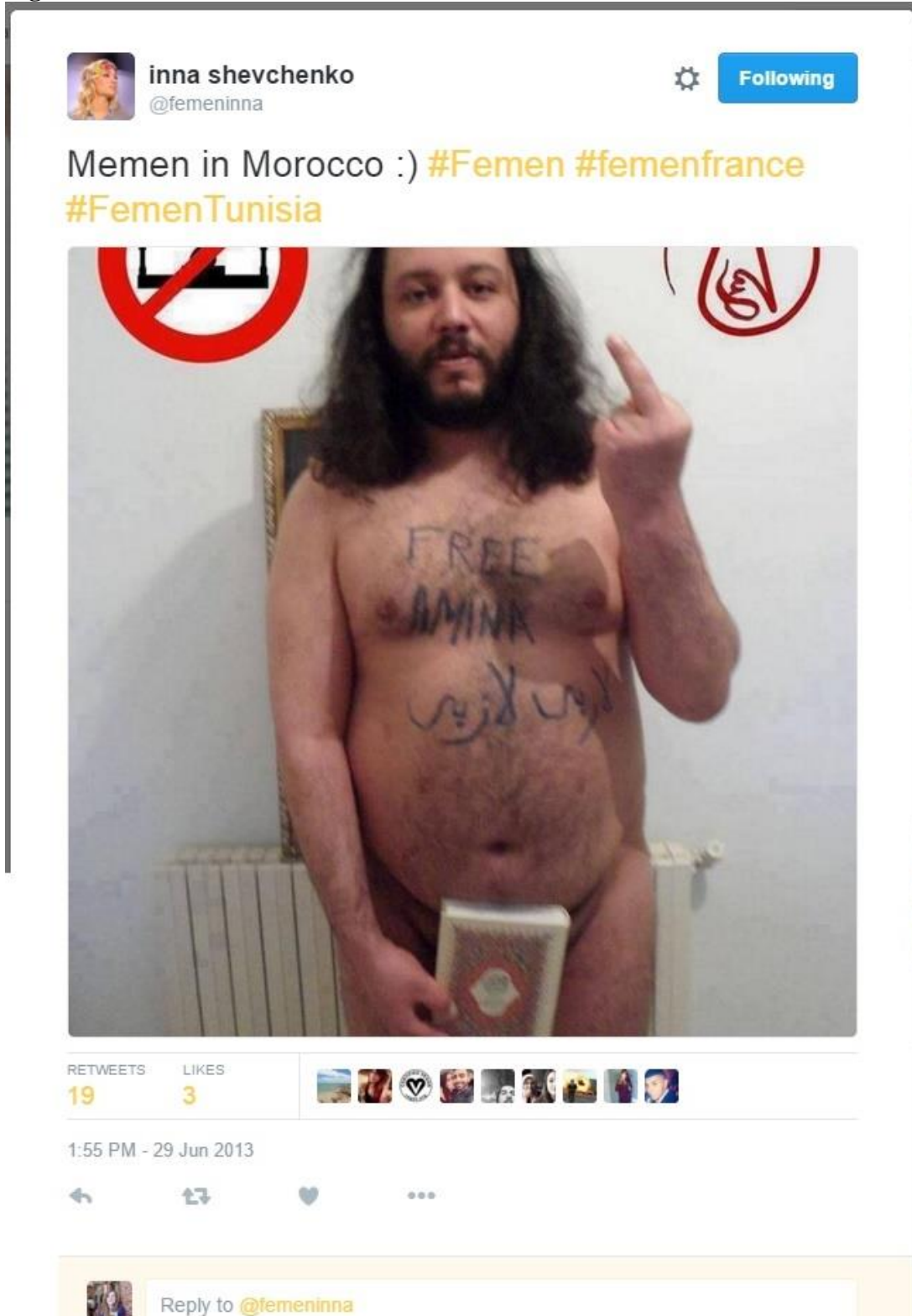
“Holy Sperm” protest in Paris. (Cercle 2012)

Figure 26



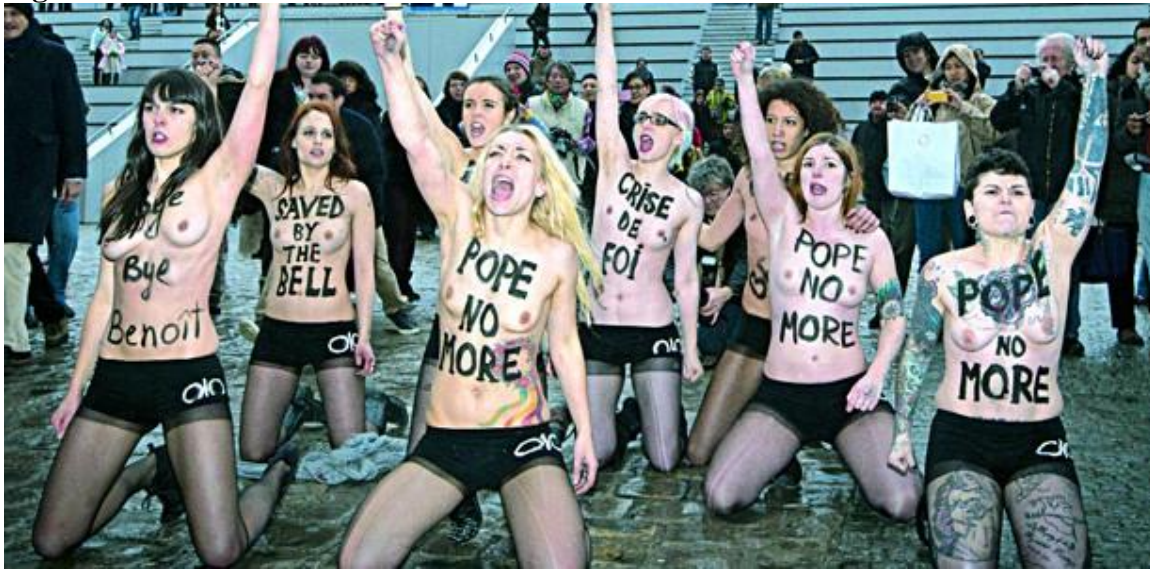
Amina Sboui: "My body belongs to me and is not the source of any man's honor." (Amnesty 2013)

Figure 27



'Memen' solidarity. (Shevchenko @femeninna 2013)

Figure 28



“Pope No More” in Paris. (Nigeria Today 2013)

Figure 29



Example of graffiti scrawled on a building in Brussels in 2012. (Montgomery 2015)

Figure 30



Two topless women with the words “Ban Erdogan” written on their chests protested fraudulent elections at a polling station in eastern Turkey. (Bare-Breasted 2014)

Figures 31-34



Turkish woman demanding the release of Turkish journalists. (Eye for Protest 2015)



Canadian women in solidarity with imprisoned Turkish journalists. (Eye for Protest 2015)



3.12.2015

Silivri

Sevgili Femen,

İsimlerimizi, son yılların en
etikli işyanı pahasına, göğsünüzde
görmek, yüreğinizin üzerinde okumak,
yüreğimize su serpti.

Her gün mazluman yarıda
olan harekettinize silivri'den
tes-kümlenimizi ve sevgilerimizi
yolluyorum.

Umarım.

Sevgiyle

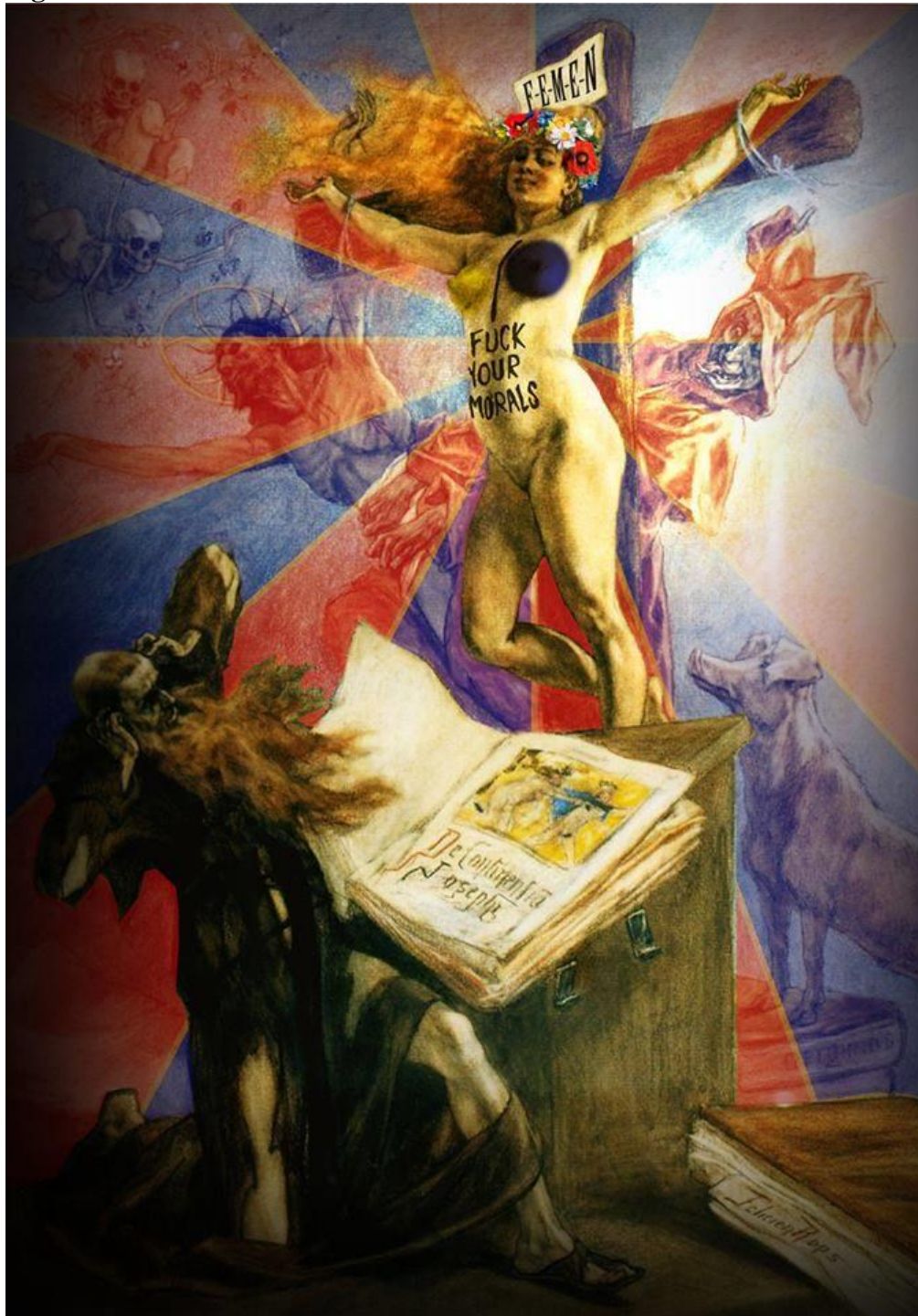
Can Dündar

Letter of thanks to Femen from imprisoned journalist Can Dündar. (Eye for Protest 2015)



Campaign of support for imprisoned Turkish journalists. (Eye for Protest 2015)

Figure 35



Alexandre Cernec ‘edited’ the 1878 painting by Félicien Rops, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* to reflect a Femen theme (La tentation 2013). The tagline of this image on Femen International’s Facebook group states that “[n]ous sommes en France, pays laïque depuis plus de 100 ans. Blasphémer est notre droit... [w]e are in France, which have been a secular state for more than 100 years. Blasphemy is our right”. (Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 36 and Figure 37



French Muslims supporting laïcité. (H. 2013)

Figure 38



The online community supporting Femen provides international solidarity for women who would otherwise be working in isolation in their communities. Femen International wishes Oksana Shachko a Happy Birthday. (facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 39 and Figure 40



Screenshot from a viral *Vocativ* video of a Ukrainian pensioner reacting to a Femen protest. (Vocativ 2013)

Figure 41



Victoria Sendón, a Spanish feminist philosopher and professor who is a member of Femen Spain. (facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 42



Femen activists stage an action during the anti-abortion rally in Madrid (Cinco 2014). On their chests are written 'your morals are killing me', 'abortion is sacred', and the rhyme 'pro-vida genocida', which translates to 'pro-life genocide'. (Cinco 2014)

Figure 43



This image shows a solidarity action in Sweden in support of Femen Spain's pro-choice action pictured in Figure 42 (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014). The caption reads:

*Catholic church out of my body!
The action was Femen Sweden support for the right to legal abortions, and
made specially to support the women in Spain who are fighting for their right
to their bodies. Also supporting our sisters in Spain.
Catholic church out of my body!
Aborto es sagrado! [abortion is sacred]*

My body – my choice!
(www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 44



This image was created in support of the Saudi Arabian women's day of action. On June 17, 2011, Saudi women drove cars in protest against the law preventing women from driving. (Supinsky 2011)

Figure 45



Femen Brazil. (Almeida 2013)

Figure 46



Femen Canada. (www.facebook.com/FEMENCanada 2013)

Figure 47



Femen Canada. (www.facebook.com/FEMENCanada 2014)

Figure 48



Femen Canada. (www.facebook.com/FEMENCanada 2014)

Figure 49

FEMEN OPEN DOOR PARTY

Venez danser
aux portes de
L'ENFER

DJ'S
LE KIDNAPP CREW
LUZ & SARAH

LIVE SERIGRAPHIES
MATCH D'IDÉES
BIÈRES &
BARBECUE

DIMANCHE
20 AVRIL*

19H



AVEC LA PRÉSENCE
DES FEMEN
ESPAGNOLES,
ALLEMANDES,
SUEDOISES,
QUÉBÉCOISES
ET FRANÇAISES

VENEZ CÉLÉBRER L'OUVERTURE DU QG FEMEN
AU 4 rue du Port, 92110 Clichy (Mo: Porte de Clichy)

Heathen imagery in a Femen advertisement. (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 50

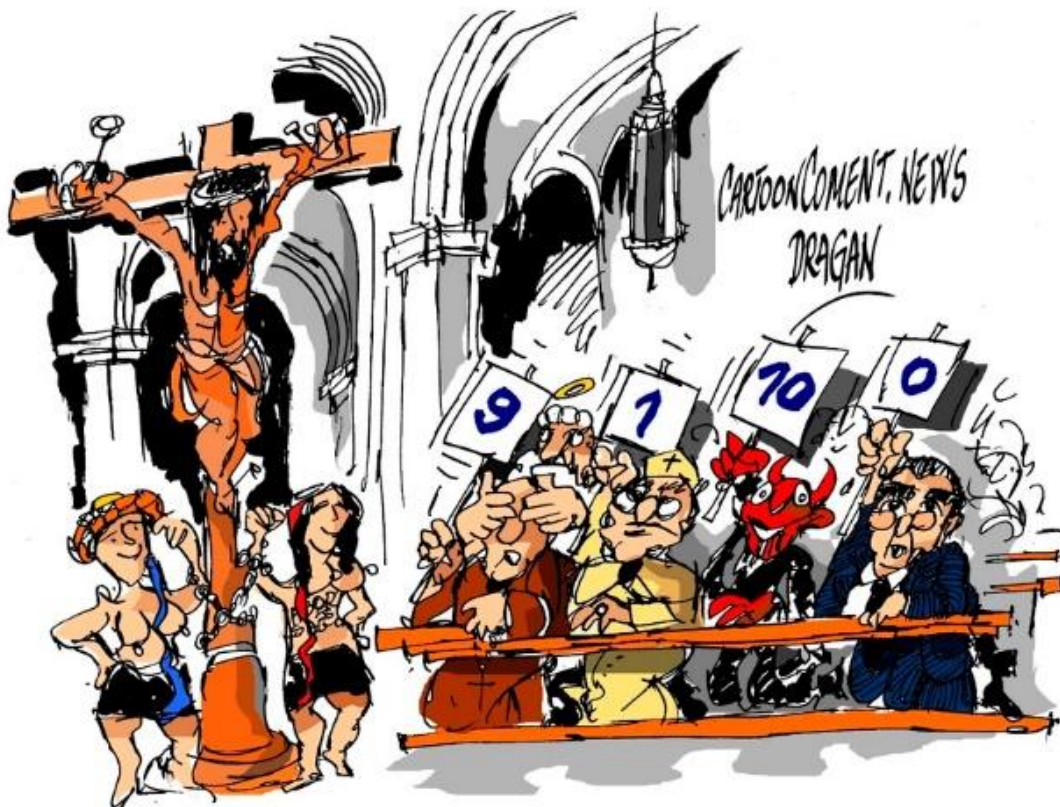


This photo plays on heathen imagery, confusing attempts in several countries to charge Femen under blasphemy laws. Shevchenko created this image in response to the many allegations about her ‘secret motives’ and calls to burn her at the stake. She has been accused of being a cult leader, getting paid by a variety of interest groups to protest, including the Vatican, alt-right nationalist neo-Nazi groups, and various national governments, like Israel, Ukraine, and the United States of America. The image is accompanied by this intentionally sarcastic text:

Since the age of ten I have practiced satanic rituals and I was looking for, by any means necessary, to participate in a Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik-feminist-satanic-gender conspiracy—the only possible future for women of the XXI century. My mother is Arab, an undeclared Jew and transgendered, my father is Ukrainian, a Mason (Sacred Heart Lodge) and a former career Nazi. My path was mapped out and my parents are very proud of me... In my cult, every night we recite "Molotov

Cocktails, Bazooka, Kalashnikov" (x10)[...] Otherwise we are not allowed to speak. If we open our mouths, even just to yawn, the penitence is electroshock therapy to the nipples. [...] The Mayor of Paris... the Socialist Party, the Bolsheviks, the Mossad, the NSA (Obama is also in love with Inna) and thanks to the Vatican (Inna also seduced the Pope)...with so many helpers, friends, sponsors and mentors, Femen cannot fail; it's written in the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the Manifesto and even in Mein Kampf (on page 532). (www.Facebook.com/femenmovement 2014)

Figure 51

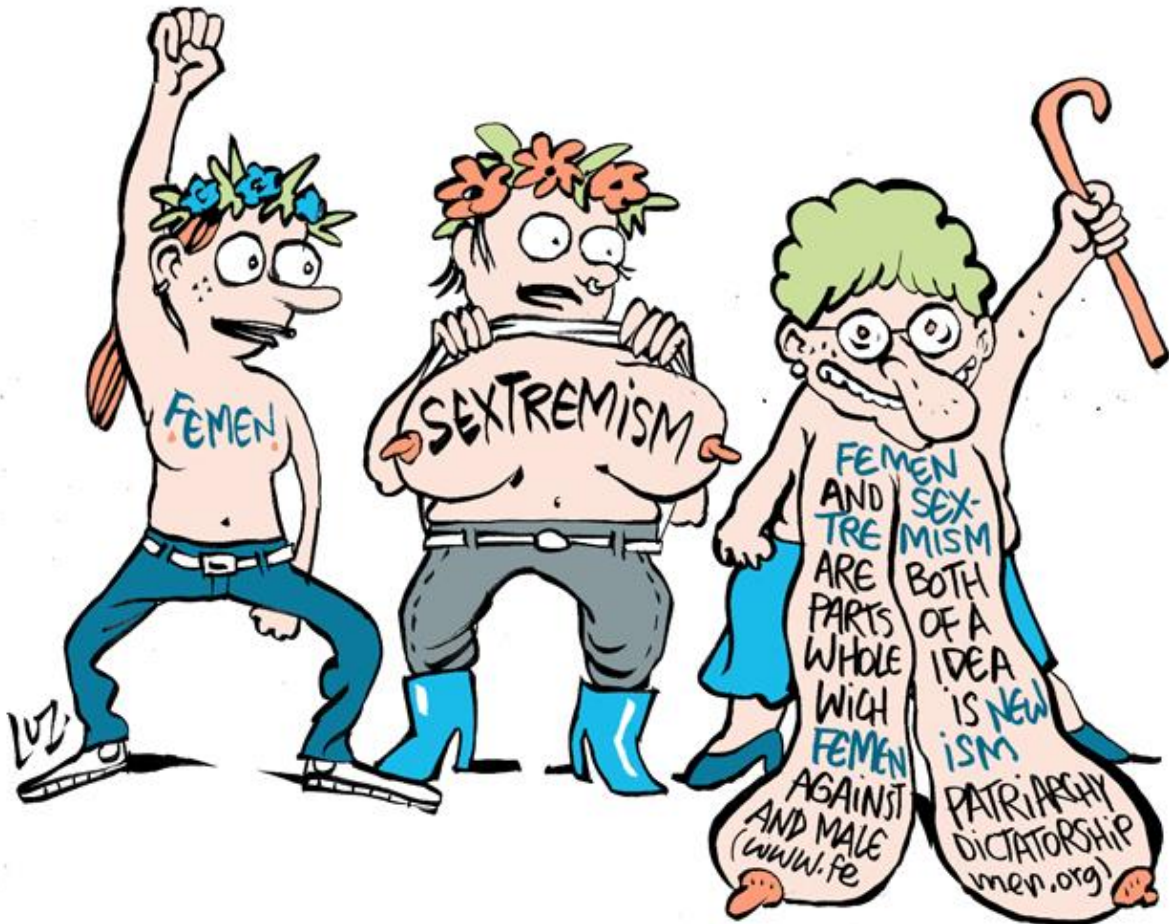


Two topless Femen activists chained themselves to the topless Jesus statue on the altar of the Cathedral Almudena in Madrid demanding access to safe and legal abortions. What is most interesting about this cartoon by Dragan in regard to the dissertation is that the ideological boundary separating ‘church’ and ‘state’ is ignored here.

The nudity of Jesus is normalized and read as neutral in church spaces, while topless women are coded as sex objects. The women protesting draw attention to this discrepancy by nonviolently juxtaposing their bare breasts with those of Jesus. The action is effective because the commodification of women’s bodies is the main reason why Spanish women do not have access to safe, affordable, stigma-free abortions. In the comic, the (male) church leaders and politicians are the judge and jury of what looks like a nude beauty pageant. The God character hides the eyes of the priest who scores the three competitors 9/10, the pope frowns in disapproval and scores them 1/10, the Satan character scores nude Jesus and the nude women 10/10, and the President scores them 0/10. I imagine that the priest is giving his honest assessment, Satan is enjoying the controversy, and the politician is the most disapproving because he hates the bad

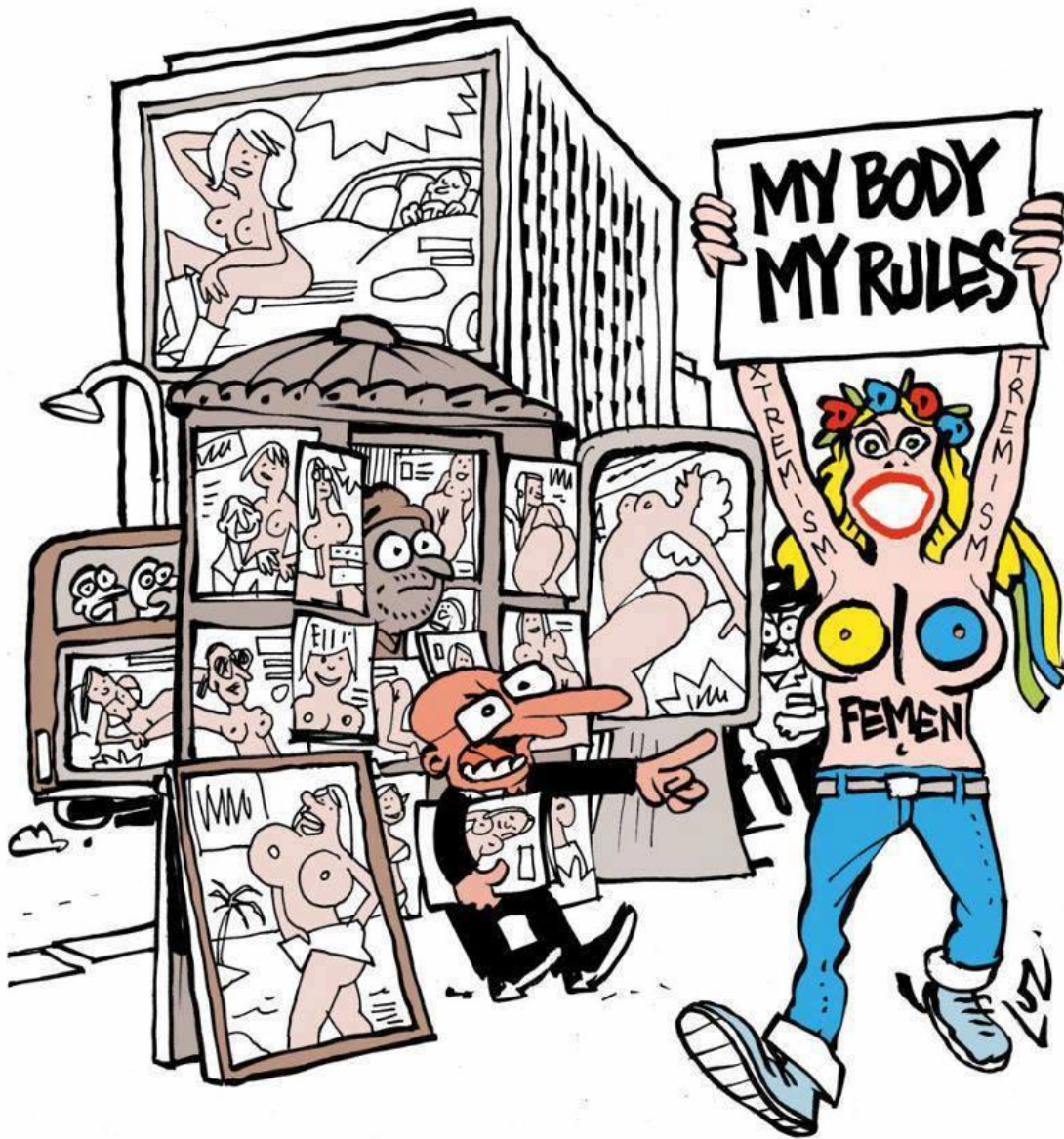
press and the politically loaded ideological predicament he is forced into on issues of women's bodily autonomy. (Dragan 2014)

Figure 52



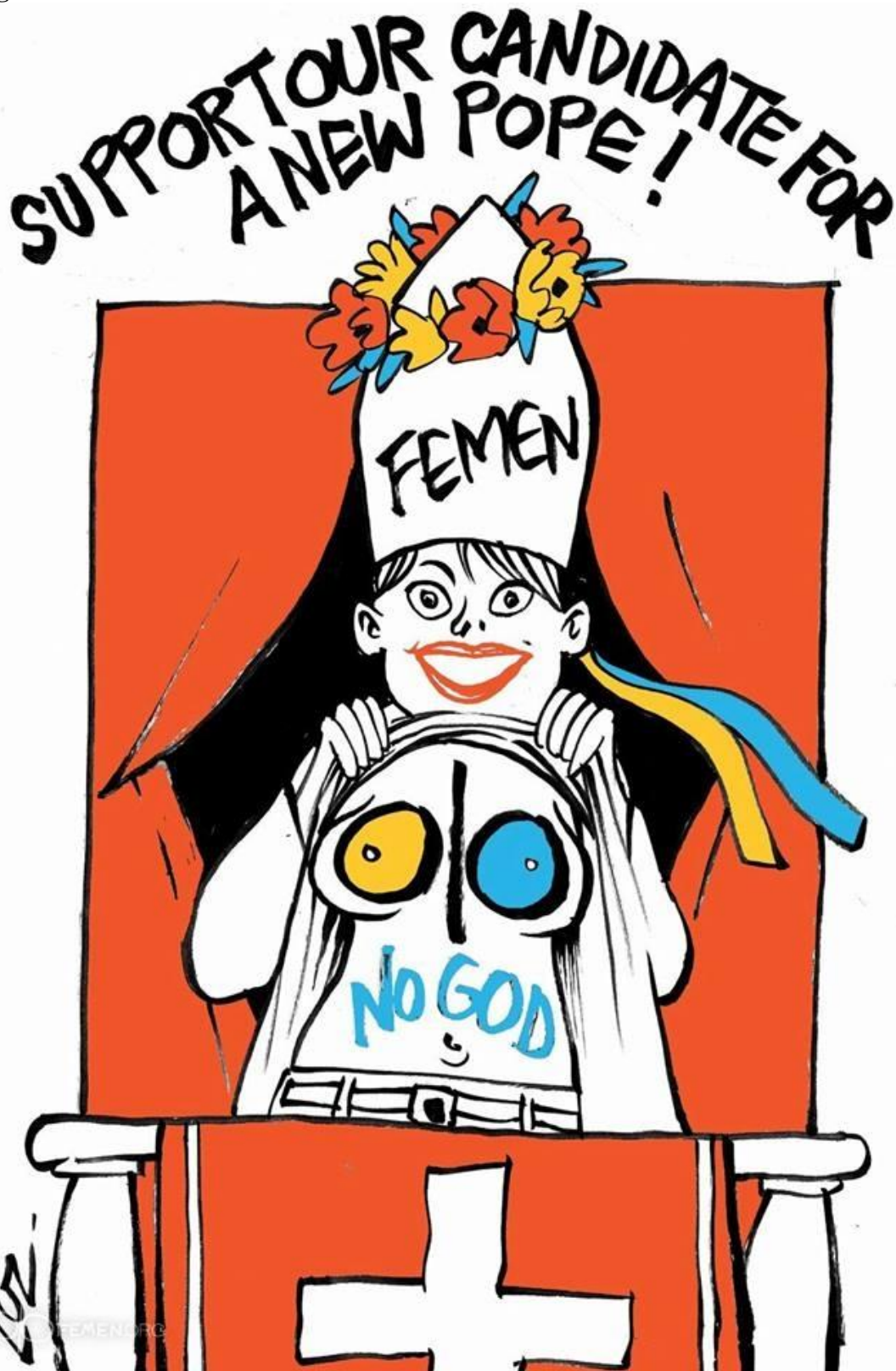
These drawings by the artist Luz are examples of Charlie Hebdo's support for Femen in Paris. (Luz 2013)

Figure 53



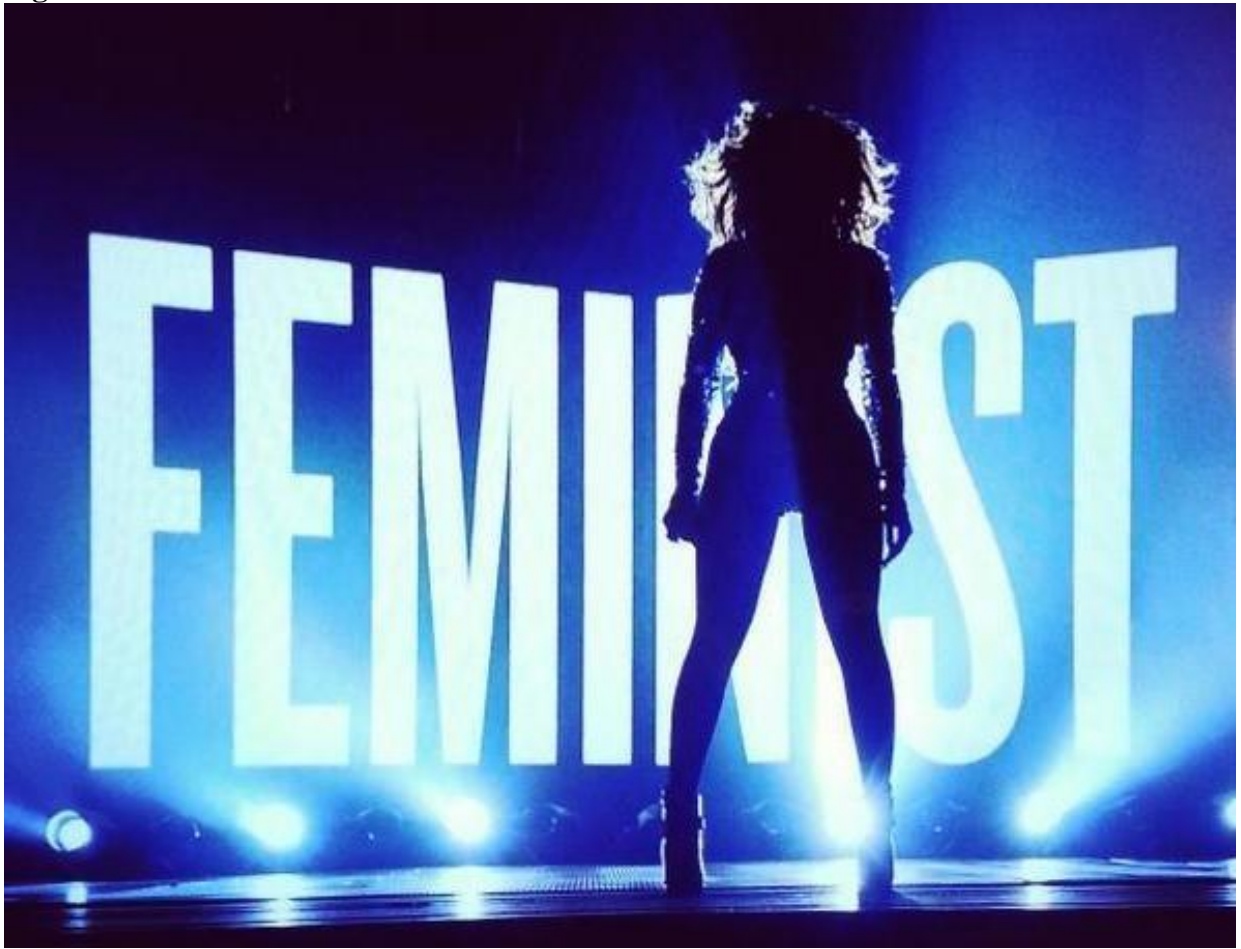
These drawings by the artist Luz are examples of Charlie Hebdo's support for Femen in Paris. (femen.org 2015)

Figure 54



These drawings by the artist Luz are examples of Charlie Hebdo's support for Femen in Paris. (femen.org 2015)

Figure 55



Beyoncé—Feminist. (Bailey 2014)

Figure 56



Iranian artist Moujan Taher: "I'd rather be a rebel not a slave." (Iranwire 2016)

Figure 57



Occupied Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey. (Turgut 2013)

Figure 58



Ballet show at Gezi Park protest in Taksim Square. (@EsraFurtana 2013)

Figure 59



“Work by Day, Protest by Night” (Turgut 2013). (ilariagenovesio 2017)

Figure 60



The original Lady in Red photo. (Baker 2013)

Figure 61



Stencil by Ari Alpert of the Lady in Red. (Alpert, *Lady in Red*, 2013)

Figure 62



Anonymous Lady in Red stencil. (Gruber 2013)

Figure 63



This woman's eyes were burned by tear gas. (Sevim 2013)

Figure 64



I watched the Gay Pride Parade of Turkey from the second floor of a Taksim coffee shop. This image is a screen capture from a video I took that day. I leaned over the balcony to watch thousands of smiling people waving rainbow flags; half the crowd would shout and the other half would respond, back and forth. I asked the man beside me what they were saying, and he translated for me.

“WHERE IS MY LOVER?”

“HERE I AM!!”

“WHERE IS MY LOVER?”

“HERE I AM!!” (Montgomery 2014)

Figure 65



alizex786

5m



alizex786 @dreamshare supporting the feminist society of Turkey 💕

When I wandered down amongst the people in the crowd after the Pride Parade was over, I heard young people talking about Gezi Park. I bought a newspaper from the feminist society of Istanbul, who had set up a table for the parade. This photo was taken by Alyshea Cummins. (alizex786 2016)

Figure 66



Sister Marie Veronique, a Dominican nun says “I think they're absolutely right to do this... It's a good way to shock people and call attention to this [gang rape of two 16-year-old girls in Paris]” (Beardsley 2012). (M Brace deFreak 2012)

Figure 67



Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian President Vladimir Putin. (CTV News 2012)

CHAPTER 3

Women Between Church and State in Ukraine

Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance.
—Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*
(Arendt 1970: 56)

3.1 Ukraine and the Birth of Femen

Ukraine is a country on the brink of war and revolution. Since gaining sovereignty as a nation in 1991, Ukraine has held democratic elections, overthrown a corrupt oligarch in the Orange Revolution, carried out a census, implemented an independent currency, and ousted another corrupt oligarch in the revolution of the Maidan. She has also been invaded and continues to be occupied by Russian armed forces. Her sovereignty may be short-lived.

Amidst the political chaos, religious nationalist movements arise to throw their irons in the fires of change. The camps of hundreds of thousands of political protesters in the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity were variegated with adherents of The Nativist Movement, Ridnoviry, the Union of Slavic Native Faith Communities, and other offshoots of the heterogeneous Slavic Neopaganism movement in Eastern Europe. Similarly, the camps were frequented by members of Femen, the protest group made famous by their signature topless protests.

Intrigued by footage and plays of the protests, author and film critic Peter Pomerantsev travelled to an encampment to take in the revolutionary setting in person. He writes:

When I first arrived in Maidan a few months after the violence had ended, the square was still a tent city surrounded by barricades of tires, car parts and furniture (as if the very fabric of the city had risen up and rebelled). The dregs of the Maidanistas were still living in the tents, refusing to leave. Wandering among them I found a crucible of utopias: Cossacks dreaming of a return to the Hetmanate; “liquid democrats” inventing ways to vote and then unvote for parliamentarians as with “likes“ on Facebook; ethno-pagan nationalists searching for pure Ukrainian chromosomes; libertarians, anarchists, neo-fascists and Christian socialists. (Pomerantsev 2015)

The Maidanistas, named for the Maidan Nezalezhnosti—Independence Square, the central square of Ukraine’s capital city of Kiev—are only the latest Ukrainians struggling to maintain a border with Russia in what Adrian Karatnycky says has been a pseudodemocracy since independence (2005: 40). Self-governance in former colonial territories is often a bitter struggle to establish sovereignties free of corruption and chaos in their early stages. This has been the case for Ukraine throughout the 20th century.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire’s military expenditures outpaced her investment in infrastructure and the economy fell hard. The government disseminated propaganda to keep up popular support for the war efforts, but support waned. By 1917, over a million Russian soldiers died fighting on the massive 1,600 kilometres-long Western front in the Second Fatherland War—the war that is called World War One by westerners. All productivity was channeled into the war effort; metal and chemical manufacturing increased while food production dropped by 22 percent and the cost of food doubled and tripled during the war (Yanowitz 2016). Peasants were funneled into the cities to work in industrial factories, living an average of twenty people in a room as men were shipped off to the war front. The women grew increasingly frustrated as the war laboured on and on with

no end in sight and they were forced to produce weapons instead of food. Urban factory workers as well as soldiers slowly starved to death over food shortages. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa writes:

Resentment is felt worse in large families, where children are starving in the most literal sense of the word, and where no other words are heard except, "Peace, immediate peace, peace at all costs." And these mothers, exhausted from standing endlessly at the tail of queues, and having suffered so much in watching their half-starving and sick children, are perhaps much closer to a revolution than [members of the Duma], and of course, they are much more dangerous... (Hasegawa 1981: 201)

People with a history of civil disobedience and dangerous revolutionary ideas were forbidden to work in factories or as soldiers. By 1917, due to crippling numbers of casualties, these dissidents had to be sent to fill the depleting ranks. At the war front, they took up leadership positions in organizing an anti-war movement. This lack of support both from home and the front meant that no matter what Tsar Nicholas II wanted Russia to do, the war was ultimately unsustainable.

Several general strikes took place in January and February of 1917. On February 23rd—March 8 of the Gregorian calendar—the socialist holiday proposed by Clara Zetkin in 1910 called International Women's Day, women textile workers held illegal meetings in the morning. In the afternoon they left their seats on the factory line and marched to local metalworking factories demanding that the men join them. According to Édouard Burdzhhalov, the police reported that over 75 000 people went on strike that day. He shared a firsthand account by one of the workers at the Noble Machine Construction Factory:

On the morning of February 23 one could hear women's voices in the lane which the windows of our department overlooked: "Down with the war! Down with high prices! Down with hunger! Bread for the workers!" Myself and several comrades were at the windows in a flash.... The gates of No. 1 Bol'shaya Sampson'evskaya Manufaktura were wide open. Masses of women workers filled the lane, and their mood was militant. Those who caught sight of us began to wave their arms, shouting: "Come out! Quit

work!” Snowballs flew through the window. We decided to join the demonstration... (Burdzhalov 1987: 107)

This event is called the February Revolution. In days all manufacturing in St. Petersburg ceased. Tsar Nicholas II sent a telegram from the Western Front ordering the military garrison to open fire on the protesters. These soldiers refused their orders, some firing on their commanding officers, and many joined the strike. Nicholas Romanov abdicated the throne March 2 (Gregorian March 15).

After a brief rule by provisional government, the Soviets—workers’ councils who had been stirring since 1905—and the Bolshevik party established the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. This new government was led by Vladimir Lenin. The Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany to end Russian involvement in World War One. This chaos precipitated declarations of independence from Imperial Russia by the outer territories of the empire, like Belarus, Latvia, Georgia, Estonia, Azerbaijan, Finland, Armenia, and Lithuania; Ukraine declared in 1918, establishing the Ukrainian People’s Republic. There was widespread civil war within the UPR and Russia reconquered most of it in 1921. A western portion, including the major city of Lvov, joined independent Poland (Burdzhalov 1987).

Lenin died in 1924. His successor, Joseph Stalin, promoted a theory of “Socialism in One Country”, introducing the First Five-Year Plan. The policy most significant to Ukraine was the introduction of "kolkhoz", or collective farming. Stalin’s economic policy was a dismal failure and between 1932-1933 millions of farmers—*kulaks*—were starved to death. Children born in 1933 in Ukraine had a life expectancy of seven years (Snyder 2010: 48).

In 1937, Stalin launched a purge of intellectuals in the borderland republics of the Soviet Union, including Ukrainian territory under Soviet control. He built a network of prison camps in the most remote and inhospitable regions of Russia where torture, grueling labour, unsanitary

living conditions, and starvation were endemic. These camps are most remembered through Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's 1973 book, *The Gulag Archipelago*.

The effects of the Holodomor, the forced starvation of Ukrainians, and the destruction of their artists, great thinkers and community leaders, is not to be understated. Much of the most significant cultural preservation for generations took place in Canada and the United States, where large Ukrainian populations emigrated in 1918, and in the communities of ethnic Ukrainians in Poland. Soviet Ukraine was a devastated wasteland of death and destruction, scarred by genocide and starvation. Timothy Snyder writes:

The good people died first... Those who gave food to others died. Those who refused to eat corpses died [...] parents who resisted cannibalism died before their children did. Ukraine in 1933 was full of orphans, and sometimes people took them in. Yet without food there was little that even the kindest of strangers could do for such children. The boys and girls lay about on sheets and blankets, eating their own excrement, waiting for death.

In one village in the Kharkiv region, several women did their best to look after children. As one of them recalled, they formed "something like an orphanage... The children had bulging stomachs, they were covered in wounds, in scabs; their bodies were bursting. We took them outside, we put them on sheets, and they moaned. One day the children suddenly fell silent, we turned around to see what was happening, and they were eating the smallest child, little Petrus. They were tearing strips from him and eating them. And Petrus was doing the same, he was tearing strips from himself and eating them, he ate as much as he could. The other children put their lips to his wounds and drank his blood. We took the child away from the hungry mouths and we cried." (Snyder: 50)

Countless such stories surface today; under the Soviet regime, until the 1980s, the use of the word 'hunger' in history books in Ukraine was forbidden (Melnyczuk 2012: 253).

In 1941, the Ukrainian territory was invaded by Germany. The remaining peasants resisted, but were occupied until 1944. Almost 7 million Ukrainians were killed, including 1.5 million Jewish Ukrainians. In 1944, the Tatar community in Crimea was deported to the Siberian gulag by Stalin and Russian-speaking peasants were established there. When Germany

unconditionally surrendered in 1945, the Allies declared victory in World War II, and the Soviet Union regained control of Ukraine (Snyder 2010).

Between 1933 and 1945, 14 million people, not including soldiers on active duty, were killed between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the region known as ‘the bloodlands’— Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States. As Snyder reports, “most were women, children, and the aged; none were bearing weapons, many had been stripped of their possessions, even their clothes” (Snyder 2010: viii).

After the Allies delivered Ukraine back to the Soviets, a resistance movement in the 1950s and 1960s developed. The resistance was met with “the biggest wave of political repressions of the post-Stalin period. According to the KGB, from 1954 to 1959, 183 ‘nationalist and anti-Soviet groups’ in Ukraine were eliminated” (Zakharov 2005).

The Ukrainian Diaspora abroad played a large role in publishing and distributing Ukrainian books, poetry, art, and cultural mythology and folklore during the repressions. In 1970 an anonymous bulletin began circulating in Ukraine, the *Ukrainsky Visnyk* (‘Ukrainian Herald’), whose issues appeared at different times by different publishers until 1990 (Vasyl 1985). The Herald told the stories of political prisoners and repressions, missing persons, incarcerations of activists in psychiatric hospitals, as well as stories of the Holodomor, Ukrainian history, and artistic writings. Dissidents met in Russian prisons and shared their stories with one another, organizing actions within labour camps. Family members and visitors of the prisoners smuggled out secret writings and sent them to the diaspora in North America and elsewhere to be published (Zakharov 2005). International pressure by human rights organizations resulted in the release of many of these dissidents in the late 1980s, and when they returned to Ukraine they motivated Ukrainian student uprisings and formed organizations like the Ukrainian People’s

Movement for Restructuring. This period also marks the rise of Native Faith movements, or Ukrainian Neopaganism movements (Ivakhiv 2005: 16). Pagan festivals, rituals and gatherings had been brutally repressed under the Soviet regime because the Soviets have long understood the connection between ‘religious’ movements and ethnic nationalism.

After a rock concert in 1986, 300 Latvian youth marched down Lenin Avenue calling for an end to Soviet oversight and an independent Latvia. In 1987, 5000 people gathered to lay flowers to commemorate the forced deportation of Latvians to ethnically cleansed regions, a history officially denied by the Soviet Union. After that, police blockaded the main square on significant holidays to prevent demonstrations, but on these days thousands of Latvians lined the streets in silent protest. Similar non-violent protests followed in all of the Baltic States.

In 1989, an estimated 2 million people in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania held hands in a peaceful chain across 600 kilometers, called the Chain of Freedom, calling for the independence of their states from the Soviet Union (Hanovs and Tēraudkalns 2013: 66).

Students in Kazakhstan rioted in 1986; several were killed by police and many more were detained. Some were sent to labour camps and others, from one hundred to several hundred, were summarily executed. It is difficult to say how many (Batalden and Batalden 1997: 146).

That year marked the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine. A reactor at the nuclear power plant exploded, killing over ten thousand people and causing intergenerational health damage for millions more. In 1988, a rally commemorating the Chernobyl disaster turned into a nationalist protest. Ukrainians gathered illegally that year to celebrate one thousand years since the ‘Baptism of Kiev’ by Volodymyr the Great, the ruler of the ancient Ukrainian kingdom of Kievan Rus’. Ukrainian Catholics held secret services in the forest. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians held rallies in 1988, protesting the government and celebrating the Kievan Rus’

millennium. These services were led by political dissidents, Ukrainian Catholic and Greek bishops, and students, and they were violently suppressed by state officials. Protesters then held rallies focussed on ‘ecological issues’, and these drew tens of thousands of demonstrators. Protesters in Ukraine and Belarus demanded better cleanup of the Chernobyl disaster and aid for people living in the contaminated zones. While these ecologically focussed rallies appeared less politically threatening at the outset than rallies led by churches, the discursive language of religion quickly became embedded in the action as Native Faith Movements connected environmental concerns with pagan earth worshipping. In *Nova Religio*, Adrian Ivakiv describes this movement as “the fusion of environmentalism and nationalism” phrased in the language of religion (Ivakhiv 2005: 10).

The character of protest in Soviet Ukraine was slightly different than the movements taking place in the more westerly states. Rudnytsky argues (1987) that Ukrainian society lacked the intellectual class to articulate a political theory of independence. He describes the writings of Ukrainian dissidents as “lower and narrower” than those of revolutionaries in the Baltic States and in Russia (Rudnytsky 1987). Rudnytsky identifies that the shift from peasants and working-class factory workers to newly educated youth played a role in the demographics of the protesters. He writes:

This state of affairs reflects the general provincialism of contemporary Ukraine's cultural life: the lack of contacts with the outside world, the insufficient knowledge of foreign languages, and the limited access to non-Soviet books. Furthermore, because of continual purges directed primarily against elite elements of Ukrainian society, present-day Ukraine's intelligentsia is sociologically very young and hence culturally immature. In examining the family backgrounds of Ukrainian dissidents, one finds in most cases that they are first-generation intellectuals. This causes a cultural handicap that even gifted individuals find difficult to overcome. (Rudnytsky 1987).

Rudnytsky's comments ring particularly true in hindsight when looking at the effects of the internet on contemporary Ukrainian dissent. Protesters are now able to communicate and rally with movement political leaders without relying on the influence of Ukraine's religious leaders as they did in the late 20th century. They also have access to a wealth of historical information online, including histories written in other countries and other languages translated easily online.

Patricia Monaghan notes that the rural elements of Ukrainian paganism that survived centuries of Christian domination were those practiced by peasants. Historians suggest that wealthy nobles in the ancient Ukrainian Caucasus were associated with a male trinity; this reflects the close mythological relationship with Vedism and the Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva trinity reserved for the elite caste in the Indus valley. Ukrainian¹³ peasants were associated with a multitude of local spirits and goddesses. In the early days of Christian encounter in Ukraine, Slavic male deities were combined in the thunder god Perun, one aspect of the pagan trinity, and monotheism became the marker of elite status in post-conversion Ukraine. In the nineteenth and twentieth century purges of the elites of Ukrainian society, only the peasant practices remained, and still constitute a majority (if not all) of pagan or double-faith practices today (Monaghan 2011: 199).

February 26, 1989, as many as thirty thousand people participated in a service commemorating the Ukrainian intellectual, artist and poet Taras Shevchenko, and unauthorized

¹³ The term 'Ukrainian' is used here for regional specificity, but keep in mind that the contemporary nation of Ukraine was federated by an Act of Independence in 1991, so using the term 'Ukrainian peasants' to refer to ancient people is technically anachronistic.

The name 'Ukraine' means 'borderlands'. 'The Ukraine' (*the borderlands*) was the way that Moscovites would refer to the rural, primarily nomadic region to the West of Moscow after the fall of 'Kievan Rus', the ancient proto-Ukrainian state centred around the ancient city that is also modern Ukraine's capital city, Kyiv.

Steinmetz, Katy. "Ukraine, Not the Ukraine: The Significance of Three Little Letters." *Time Magazine Online*. (March 5 2014. Retrieved at: <http://time.com/12597/the-ukraine-or-ukraine/>)

molebens—public Slavic rituals practiced by Old Believers—took place. Protests and marches around the country were staged by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Marian Society *Myloserdia*, and other groups that had been forbidden since the 1930s (Swatos 1994: 25). In September 1989, the mass graves of Ukrainians killed by the Soviets were exhumed. Parishes that were officially Russian Orthodox declared that they were now Ukrainian Orthodox. Communities in Western Ukraine converted to Ukrainian Greek Catholicism, and Pope John Paul II began asserting authority over the new Catholic communities and applying international pressure on Gorbachev. Alexei Krindatch explains how the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate was severely reduced by the Ukrainian independence movement:

In Russia... with the exception of a few scattered areas with a predominantly Islamic population... the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) [has] de facto the status of something like a state church. In Ukraine, however, the religious, ethnic and political features of particular Ukrainian *oblasti* and even *raiony* determine in equal part where a particular church will flourish. The political changes in post-soviet Ukraine and the aspirations for a new national independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church initiated by a significant number of Ukrainian Orthodox clergy and supported by the new Ukrainian political elite have caused splits and schisms in what was until 1990 the Ukrainian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, uniting all Orthodox parishes and dioceses in Ukraine. By the autumn of 1993 three rival Orthodox churches had formed, hostile to one another and competing for the souls of Ukraine's inhabitants. These are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church -Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), which remains under the jurisdiction of the ROC, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church -Kiev Patriarchate (UOC-KP) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church (UOAC). The latter two both claim to be the bearers of a distinctive ethnic Ukrainian Orthodox tradition, and try to outdo each other in efforts to explore the idea of 'one state-one church'. (Krindatch 2003: 38)

In 1990, the local governments in the Soviet Republics of Lithuania, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Estonia and Latvia collectively refused to pay taxes to the Soviet Union. That year, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) declared independence from the Russian

Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate, and Patriarch Mstyslav I ‘of Kiev and all Ukraine’ (Stepan Ivanovych Skrypnyk) returned from exile in Canada and the United States after 46 years to lead the movement. More Russian Orthodox parishes defected, and Patriarch Mstyslav I attended and lead nationalist rallies (Wawrzonek 2014: 160). Michał Wawrzonek’s book *Religion and Politics in Ukraine: The Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches as Elements of Ukraine’s Political System* explains how deeply imbedded the church institutions are in the foundations of the modern Ukrainian nation-state.

In 1944, the Soviet Union had deported, imprisoned or executed the entire Tatar population on the Crimean peninsula and resettled Russian-speaking peoples there. In the 1980s, the surviving Tatars who had been resettled to Siberia returned in waves to the Crimea and established a Tatar parliament to work within a future independent Ukraine.

Ukraine held a national referendum in 1991 and voted 90% in favour of sovereignty, adopting an Act of Independence. Leonid Kravchuk was elected the first President of Ukraine. Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia signed an agreement, the Belavezha Accords, dissolving the Soviet Union and forming the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Leonid Kuchma, known for election rigging, corruption scandals, pro-Russian politics, and shutting down independent media, was elected in 1994. In 1996, Ukraine adopted a constitution, becoming a semi-presidential republic, and implemented an independent currency, the hryvna. As with any newly sovereign state, Ukraine suffered from growing pains. Inflation, economic turmoil, high crime rates, and corruption plagued the state. Although the economy somewhat stabilized by the late 1990s, corruption is embedded in Ukraine’s new government system. Karatnycky writes that during the Kuchma years, “[w]ide-ranging privatization enabled government insiders and cronies to buy state enterprises at bargain-basement prices. Steel mills,

today worth several billion dollars, were bought for a few million. Regional energy companies fell prey to the same forces” (Karatnycky 2005: 39). For example, Kuchma sold Ukraine’s most lucrative steel mill to a family member for much less than the variety of offers by other investors. The tax system also promotes little oversight for the oligarchs buying up public works, and anyone challenging Kuchma’s politics was forced out of business. Ukraine’s major industries are run by different wealthy and influential families who support the conservative agenda.

Karatnycky describes this system of oligarchs thusly:

Under Ukraine's constitution, local government officials are not elected but appointed by the president, who allowed oligarchic groups to create local enclaves headed by their allies. In the Zakarpattia (Transcarpathia) region, local and central government officials enabled one oligarchic consortium to amass vast fortunes from the lumber industry by stripping the forests of their trees. Now, parts of this once richly forested mountain region have been dangerously depleted, compounding the problems caused by deforestation in the Soviet era. Over time, several Ukrainian oligarchic clans became dominant in the young nation. Medvedchuk, who became presidential chief of staff in December 2002, represented the Kiev clan, which controlled regional energy and timber companies and invested in broadcast media. The Dnipropetrovsk clan, which invested in the energy pipeline industries, included Viktor Pinchuk, now Kuchma's son-in-law. A powerful group from the eastern coal-mining Donbass region included metallurgy baron Rinat Akhmetov, the postcommunist world's second wealthiest man, with a net worth of \$3.5 billion. Each interest group established its own political party in parliament. The Kiev clan ran the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United). The Donetsk oligarchs created the Party of Regions, the ranks of which included a local governor who later became prime minister: Yanukovich. The Dnipropetrovsk group created and backed the Labor Party. And the influence did not stop there. The oligarchs owned or controlled their own national broadcast media and local and national newspapers. Each was capable of massively funding political campaigns in the emerging pseudodemocratic system. (Karatnycky 2005: 40)

In 2001, the European Union called for an inquiry into the disappearance of investigative journalist Georgiy Gongadze; it was later determined that he was strangled and beheaded by President Leonid Kuchma by his own admission in tapes secretly recorded by Kuchma’s former bodyguard (Wawrzonek 2014: 173). The tapes revealed other crimes, such as electoral fraud,

and in 2003, tens of thousands of protesters rallied in the streets demanding his resignation.

Kuchma promptly announced that his successor would be Viktor Yanukovich.

Yanukovich ran against several candidates, most notably Viktor Yushchenko, a socialist with a great deal of popular democratic support. Yanukovich and his powerful backers went to great lengths to take the election, including preventing Yushchenko's plane from landing before major political rallies, running him off the road in his car, and falsifying ballots. Yushchenko was almost killed by dioxin poisoning during the campaign, leaving his face brutally scarred. University students rallying against Yanukovich were threatened with eviction from residence in the middle of winter, and "monitors discovered that pens had been filled with disappearing ink, so that ballots would appear blank after they were cast" in areas where Yushchenko had the most support (Karatnycky 2005: 37). In spite of these setbacks, Yushchenko appeared to be handily winning the election until exit polls announced in the last hour that Yanukovich had won by 2.5%.

The morning after the election, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians marched to Kiev's Independence Square wearing orange, the colour of Yushchenko's campaign, in what is popularly called the Orange Revolution. Adrian Karatnycky attributes the sparking of the 2004 Revolution to the coming of age of the first generation of internet-using post-Soviet youth, and the dissemination of independent media and information by digital means (Karatnycky 2005: 43-44). However, there were people of all ages in the streets. A retired coal miner from Eastern Ukraine describes his reasons for joining the protest:

He went to a polling station and saw the lists of voters, and he discovered that lots of his deceased colleagues from the coalmine were on this list as actual voters (this was a wide-spread election fraud technology dubbed "the dead souls": deceased people were included into voting lists and later "their" ballots were marked with the "right" candidate). He said he exclaimed: "This is voting from hell, the underworld!" (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014)

Even producers, reporters, and editors went on strike after the election, sick of many years of the censorship of television networks and other traditional media. Surrounded by supporters, Yushchenko declared himself president, holding a public ‘swearing in’ ceremony that was recorded and quickly went viral. In the video, he called on the military to endorse him. The bold move paid off—Yanukovych ordered the troops to attack the protesters, but there was widespread disagreement among military personnel. The cabinet, besieged by demonstrators, panicked and voted to declare the poll invalid. The Supreme Court annulled the fraudulent election, followed by new elections. Yushchenko handily won, supervised by more international observers than any election in history. A plot by Russian gangsters to blow up a one-kilometer wide area in central Kiev to kill Yushchenko’s leadership team was foiled (Wawrzonek 2014: 191). Many high-ranking government officials were found to be complicit in the many schemes to control the elections. Yushchenko’s government, widely supported by dissidents and revolutionaries, accepted the pro-democratic recommendations by the international election overseers, like more elected and less appointed positions, and promises to reduce government corruption. Yushchenko’s government cancelled the sale of the Kriozhstal steel mill, and re-auctioned it for six times what it sold for previously. Other dubious sales were investigated and re-sold, and the dividends were re-invested in the budget. Despite economic strain, Yushchenko was able to offer more public services without increasing taxes, and this gained him even more public popularity.¹⁴

¹⁴ Yushchenko tapped into the nationalist discourse, branding himself the Ukrainian candidate opposed to the Russian-controlled Yanukovych. When the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church came to visit Ukraine to celebrate the 1020 year anniversary of the Baptism of Kiev, he responded by having the National Bank of Ukraine release a "Rebirth of Christian Spirituality in Ukraine" series of coins featuring the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. "Christianization of Kievan Rus Commemorative Coins." *National Bank of Ukraine*. (Accessed April 20 2014. Posted 2008)

Inna Shevchenko, a young teenager from an impoverished home in Kherson on the Black Sea, watched the Orange Revolution on television. “‘I was just a girl then, but for the first time I understood that we could have democracy in our country.’ She followed the proliferation of talk shows that pitted politicians against journalists, who ‘looked more intelligent, so I wanted to be one’” (Tayler 2013). Several years later, she enrolled in journalism at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. A successful intellectual and a star of student politics, she graduated with honours and landed a job in the press bureau of the Mayor of Kiev, in a climate hostile to women.

In 2006, Yushchenko lost the presidential election to Viktor Yanukovich. The economic crisis of 2008 hit Ukraine hard, and hit women harder. In her report, “The Impact of the Crisis on Women in Eastern Europe,” Ewa Charkiewicz notes that people with less job security are the first to be unemployed, and this largely means women (2010). Ukraine is the largest country in Europe, with the largest number of people living in poverty. While inflation skyrocketed and life expectancies dropped, Ukraine’s shadow economy thrived, organized by a network of big-business oligarchs sheltering money in Cyprus (Charkiewicz 2010). Young women in university saw their classmates faced with difficult decisions; Oksana Shachko describes being propositioned for sex every day (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014).

Shachko, a quiet, intellectual artist, was raised by a mother working many jobs to support her children and an alcoholic father, driven to depression by the collapsing economy after the fall of the Soviet Union. From a young age, she was fascinated by iconography and wanted to join a convent. She took art classes, painting beautiful Byzantine icons of Mary and the saints. Her family staged an intervention, and she did not join the convent (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 31:05). She began to study continental philosophy, dialectics, and metaphysics. Shachko was inspired

by her mother, who called herself ‘stupid’ and ‘weak’, and yet Mrs. Shachko was the one who held their family together in the face of economic turmoil. Oksana read Simone de Beauvoir, and a love of knowledge and exploration of the human condition replaced her fascination with heaven. Shachko became sick of the denigration of women; she saw that her mother was strong. She grew weary of the constant demands for sex for money on the streets, and the reports of violent rapes and murders of the women who said no. Shachko and two of her childhood friends from their hometown of Khmelnytskyi in Western Ukraine, Anna Hutsol and Alexandra Shevchenko, began staging public protests against sex tourism and sex slavery in Ukraine (see Figure 2). Shachko said:

The Femen Movement developed out of our first campaign: ‘Ukraine is not a Brothel.’ We started out activities in Kiev, we wanted to express our anger and combat Ukraine’s reputation in Europe and around the world as a brothel, that all Ukrainians are prostitutes. Ukrainian women got that reputation after the USSR fell apart. The factories closed, the job went, and there was just crisis and poverty. A lot of women and young girls went to Europe to sell themselves like fresh meat or some kind of product.” (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 13:31)

In April 2009, Alexandra attended the book signing of Oles Buzina, writer of *Ladies, Back to the harems*, known for “his open stance against the right for a woman to say no to sex” (The Observers 2009). She threw a cream pie at him (see Figure 3).

In August 2009, Shachko and her friends marched in a Ukrainian Independence Day rally; Shachko attended topless (see Figure 9). The group instantly garnered widespread attention as images of Shachko’s bare chest saturated social media. The group attracted many more members, and suddenly they had a brand—beautiful women styled as traditional Ukrainian peasants (see Figures 4-8). The crown of flowers refers to an old Ukrainian saying: ‘Gola, bossa i ou vinkou,’ which means ‘without clothes, without shoes, but with a crown of flowers in her hair’ (Trefle 2013). Anna Hutsol explained to Russian magazine *Ogoniok* in 2010 that to her this

meant that a young girl may live in poverty, but she is cheerful and full of life, and will not let life beat her (Trefle 2013). It also references the *kulak* peasants murdered and oppressed throughout Stalin's reign in the twentieth century. Her breasts are uncovered, and Femen's twist is that they are proclaiming a political message.

Inna Shevchenko, working in the Mayor's press office, felt increasingly restricted in her work, allowed only to publish positive reports about the government (Tayler 2013). She was impressed by Femen activists and she reached out to them via vKontakte, the Slavic equivalent of the social networking site Facebook. Initially she was against the topless tactic, but she was soon converted and she enlisted her breasts for the cause. Shevchenko describes the beginning of her involvement with Femen: "We started to meet and talk, at first just primitive talks about how we were fed up being harassed by guys on the street. It's not like overnight you decide to become an activist. Life takes you there" (Gray 2014). (See Figure 10).

Experienced protester Viktor Sviatsky, as well as Jenia Kraizman joined their team. This was a turning point—a strategy was coordinated, t-shirts were printed, a logo was styled and the movement was branded (see Figure 11). From this moment onwards, Femen was not focused on drawing supporters to rallies in the traditional form of protest; now they staged carefully planned actions, which they filmed and photographed for dissemination on social media (see Figures 15 and 16). Shevchenko says "it's more important to have five cameras at the action than fifty people around, because behind each of the cameras are a million minds, who at night are sitting at home having dinner, and they will see what women are doing, and the next day they will join" (*Femen - Sextremism in Paris* 2013: 16:15).

Shevchenko lost her job in the Mayor's office before she ever protested topless. When an entirely male cabinet was appointed in Ukraine in 2010, the women "dressed up as men, then

took off their suits to reveal women's clothing” (Cochrane 2013). This was the action that Inna was fired for. In an interview with *The Atlantic*, she describes her radical awakening. “My consciousness was not raised by a blow from heaven or by a single event. It came gradually. My anger grew, starting from the day the press office fired me for my activism, not for any work-related reason. The more we demonstrated, and the more I saw how the police tried to stop us, the angrier I became. In each protest I went out to shout about what I couldn't stand anymore” (Taylor 2013). The reactions to the protests became more intense. Femen members received death threats and got their teeth knocked out. Shachko broke both of her arms (see Figures 12-14).

In December 2011, Femen members Inna Shevchenko, Oxana Shachko and Alexandra Nemchinova traveled to Belarus, the post-Soviet dictatorship on Ukraine’s northern border. In December of 2010, Lukashenko was announced President after another rigged election, marking his seventeenth year as ruler. Approximately 50 000 Belarusians gathered for a mass protest in Minsk, resulting in over 700 arrests and prison sentences. One year later, opponents of the regime tried to stage a vigil, carrying posters with the faces of missing persons detained in last year’s protest. Femen joined them, holding posters saying ‘Freedom to political prisoners’ (see Figure 17). Over thirty women and men carrying portraits were snatched away by plainclothes government agents (Agence France-Presse 2011). After leaving the rally, Shevchenko, Shachko, and Nemchinova were grabbed off the street, forced into vans with blacked out windows, and blindfolded. They were taken far into the woods, beaten, stripped of all of their clothing and possessions, and doused with oil. They heard jeers, felt knives pressed to their faces. Their blindfolds were removed, and the men were holding torches, threatening to burn them alive.

They shaved Nemchinova's head, poured green paint on Shevchenko, and cut Shachko and Shevchenko's hair off with knives.

After twenty four hours, the men left, and the girls, 21 and 22 years old, were left to wander the Belarusian outback in the winter, naked. They found a small village called Beki and called the Ukrainian embassy.

Inna Shevchenko was later asked by a journalist if she is scared while protesting. She responded:

It would be silly to say we're not, but the fear of everything around us is bigger than the fear of being beaten up [...] In my head I resigned myself to the idea that I would die that day [in Belarus]. That changed completely the way I understand myself, the world and my activity, my thoughts, goals and vision. You check yourself and understand what really matters. After that situation I have only one real fear – to be imbecilic and passive. Losing teeth can be fixed. (Carmen Gray 2014)

Without the Femen action in solidarity at the Minsk protest, there would have been little to no coverage in the European media. Femen's life-threatening demonstration resulted in the first significant international media spotlight on human rights abuses in Belarus.

Femen group members regularly face public abuse; they are detained by police, and assaulted on the street by body-policing citizens who do not approve of their toplessness. Oksana Shachko's apartment was ransacked and her art destroyed, an experience which was disheartening. She cites the case of Oksana Makar as a source of continued resolve in her activist work (*Je Suis Femen* 2014: 41:48).

On International Women's Day, 2012, Oksana Makar, 18, Yevhen Krasnoschek, 23, and Artem Pohocyana, 22 went to a friend's house. This friend was Maksym Prisyazhnyuk, 24, a young and wealthy lawyer from a powerful political family. Oksana was beaten, violently raped, strangled with cable, and lit on fire. Her body was found in the pit of a nearby construction site

the next morning. She was wrapped in a blanket, “which at the time of her discovery had been on fire for hours, causing irreparable lung damage” (Phillips 2012). Implausibly, Oksana was still alive; she was able to tell police what happened to her and who did it. Her feet and one of her arms were amputated. Prisyazhnyuk, the lawyer, and Pohocyana, who had a rich father, were immediately released from police custody. The case would likely have ended there, but Makar’s mother made a video in the hospital, coaxing her daughter to “wave the stump that was her right arm to the camera, and persist[ed] in getting her to repeat, ‘I’ll live while I’m alive,’” in visible agony (Phillips 2012). She posted the 1:19 minute video clip on YouTube. Femen responded by staging an action on the roof of the general prosecutor’s office, topless and chanting “death for sadists” (see Figure 21). Old Ukrainian women rallied around them, crying for the tortured Makar. When the police showed up to arrest the protesters, Ukrainian grandmothers told them “unhand those girls, shame on you, what are you doing” and the police, embarrassed, let them run away (*Je Suis Femen* 2014: 2:57). The protest led to public outcry and international media attention which forced President Yanukovich to order the general prosecutor to intervene in the case. The suspects were re-arrested and charged with attempted murder. “I’m scared to walk through the streets,” said Makar’s best friend, visiting her grave (*Je Suis Femen* 2014: 4:19).

In 2013, 29-year-old Iryna Krashkova was pulled into a car by two men, who drove her to a remote forested area. All three beat and raped her, leaving her to die. She survived, and named her assailants, but only two were taken into custody (see Figures 18 and 19). The other was a police officer with political family connections. The case was similar to others, and appeared almost identical to the 2011 murder of 15-year-old Alina Porkul, who was also raped and had her eyes beaten, but she was thrown into a pond and did not survive. After Krashkova’s survival, the townspeople of Vradiyivka took matters into their own hands; hundreds of locals

stormed the police office demanding the arrest of the accused officer (Solonyna and Kuznetsova 2013).

Jeremy Maccaud and Genaro Bardy describe the Femen activists as “pioneers of the revolution” (2014). In an interview with Anna Hutsol, in exile in Switzerland, she describes how at first people saw their protests as overreactions and bad behaviour, but their audacious derision of political corruption provided the impetus to the young people of Kyiv in the Maidan to join the critique. Since the beginning, Femen have been the Valkyric harbingers of the radicalization of Ukraine. According to Yevhen Solonyna and Inna Kuznetsova, “Ukraine has long been pregnant with revolution” (2013).

Inna Shevchenko says of the topless tactic: “No one is ready to listen to women. They only want to [look at our bodies]. That’s why we tell them, look at me; but now, I’m not smiling, I’m not trying to please you... I’m trying to make you scared. [...] This nudity is aggressive. They are not used to seeing aggressive nudity, nudity that can attack, that [is] not promoting yogurt...” (*Femen - Sextremism in Paris*, 2013: 1:25-5:05). She had come to the realization that the gender roles assigned by the church are at the heart of women’s oppression in Eastern Europe.

Until this point, Femen actions were aggressive, but not illegal. In 2012, Inna Shevchenko cut down a wooden monumental cross in central Kiev with a chainsaw to protest the jailing of the Russian punk band Pussy Riot. This was the opportunity that police were waiting for. Shevchenko alleges that 20 police officers swarmed her apartment building, and she jumped from a window and fled to the Polish border. She contacted the Riahi brothers, Austrian-Iranian filmmakers who had reached out to Femen in the past to collaborate. They arrived the next day, and instantly bonded with Shevchenko; she said that they were not just “director[s] wanting to

make a cool film; they understand politically, since they're Iranian and also fled their country" (Gray 2014). They helped her seek political asylum in France, and worked with her on a film project called *Everyday Rebellion*. She was happy with the film, because it "shows that the first step was taken – that the revolution is starting. People may think that sounds a little romantic but I do believe that with all these rebellions all over the world, you see people care about each other and the situation. There's a moment in the film when we're screaming, 'Freedom to political prisoners,' and then it moves to Iran and they are screaming the same in Farsi, and you think, 'This is it, we're living in the same world and we want the same for it'" (Gray 2014).

Shevchenko opened a training headquarters in Paris, which attracted a new cohort of volunteers (see Figures 23 and 24). She launched an online shop to raise money for demonstrations, and people donated money to Femen.org. She received support from all over the world. Shevchenko quickly became close friends with the journalists and artists at Charlie Hebdo (see Figures 51-54). They got together to commiserate over the constant death threats that they received by the same groups, particularly Christian neo-Nazis and Islamists.¹⁵ The artists collaborated with Femen on several issues, including their Women's Day issue. Jeffrey Tayler interviewed Editor-in-chief Gérard Biard and the Charlie Hebdo team, writing:

Besppectacled and gentle, he likened Femen to the original "eco warriors," and told me their tactics (baring breasts among them) recall those once deployed by the radical 1960s Mouvement de la Libération de la Femme. What first drew his attention to the group? "Femen picks its targets very carefully -- religious places, centers of political and social power and the patriarchy, the places embodying what they're struggling against."

Luz presented Shevchenko with the drawings he had just finished. She was not pleased.

¹⁵ The ideological complicity of these groups is reminiscent of reactions to the second-wave Feminist Movement. Toni Head, for example, writes that when she attended the International Women's Year Florida Conference in 1975, "Mormons, Baptists, and various fundamentalist religious groups were there in force, joined with the American Nazi Party, John Birch Society, and Ku Klux Klan to try and subvert the conference." Stone, Merlin. "The Great Goddess." *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics*. (New York: Heresies Collective Inc., vol. 2 no. 1: 1978) p. 16.

"Why do you show us standing this way? Femen stands straight, holding posters high... We are more ugly, I don't want us to look sweet. We never look sweet." She summed up her advice for revisions: "More scandal! More violence!"

[Hebdo artist] Javel laughed, adding, "One of us is going to be killed. That will be a big scandal!" (Tayler 2013)

This conversation, of course, took place before the January 2015 shooting at Charlie Hebdo by some of the radicalized fundamentalists who had been threatening their lives for years. Shevchenko mourned the loss of her friends, writing, "[d]o we really need to have 12 dead journalists to admit they were free thinkers?... Our modern society is a coward that is turning away from everyone who bravely denounces the truth in a non-violent creative way like Charlie Hebdo" (Shevchenko 2015). This event marked a shift in Femen actions toward issues of freedom of speech. Shevchenko writes: "[e]ven in modern times and even within 'secular' states, the universal law of freedom of speech does not guarantee us the right to criticise religion. In reality, to criticise or to mock religion is neither allowed, nor safe. But, as long as blasphemy remains dangerous, there will be a need to commit it" (Shevchenko 2015).

Amina Sboui committed one such dangerous blasphemy (see Figure 26).

On 8 March 2013, from her grandparents' house in the Tunisian capital, an 18-year-old activist called Amina Sboui uploaded a photograph to Facebook, took a deep breath, and hit "post".

The photo showed Amina reclining on a leather sofa, reading a book and smoking a cigarette. She wore red lipstick and black eyeliner. She was naked from the waist up, and across her torso was a message written in Arabic: My body belongs to me; it is not the source of anyone's honour.

As she watched the comments stack up beneath the picture – almost a thousand in the first hour – Amina began to panic. She had anticipated the abuse, the misogyny, even the death threats. What she hadn't considered was something that now looked inevitable: her mother was going to find out. ("The Return of a Topless Rebel" 2013)

Amina uploaded the photo because she was inspired by the Femen actions she saw on social media. Feminist blogger Céline Trèfle of BlaqSwans writes that "when Amina writes on

her chest ‘my body is nobody’s honour’ she asserts her refusal to submit to her father or brothers, and asserts her sovereignty over her own body, as a free individual. Through that action, she doesn’t promote nudity, but tests women’s freedom” (Trèfle 2013).

Femen International ‘shared’ the image on their Facebook page. Amina received a fatwa and death threats from public figures in Tunisia. Then she disappeared. Shevchenko writes:

When she was kidnapped, we started an international campaign to support Amina. We called women all over the world to send their pictures in the style of Amina’s topless picture. To write a message: "Free Amina." To support her. During this campaign we got more than 1,000 pictures from many countries, including Arab countries. There were a few women who wore hijabs but they did it topless, to support Amina... we started to scream as much as we could, once we asked for international support, the world started to make noise about it. And this is what saved her.[...] We have only one protection: the media world and spreading information. If we kept silent about Amina, she would not have been set free. After we made noise that she got kidnapped, her family let her go. They didn’t want to give her her passport and documents, so we started to push publicly and they gave her all her documents. So Amina was free after that. (Larsson 2013)

Amina’s mother had taken her to an exorcist, where she was heavily dosed with medications, locked in a house, and virginity tested. After her release, Amina later wrote ‘Femen’ on the wall of a cemetery. She was arrested by police. Several Femen activists traveled to Tunisia to protest Amina’s arrest, and they too were arrested. Femen chapters around the world staged protests, some which were criticized for being racist, along with criticism from radical clerics calling for Amina to be lashed and stoned (Adamson 2015). Tunisian politician Maya Jribi stated that Amina set women in Tunisia back (Adamson 2015). The Facebook group “Feminists Against Femen” was made. Despite her detractors, Amina has the public support of many Muslim feminists in Tunisia, and her father declared that he is proud of his daughter’s bravery in standing up for her convictions (ANSAméd 2013). In his book *Power, Surveillance, and Culture in YouTube™’s Digital Sphere*, Matthew Crick discusses the YouTube video

“Amina Tyler for Tunisia women's rights, inspiring women Arab Spring” (Crick 2016: 126).

The video has over a million views, with an active debate in the comment section about Amina’s role in triggering the Arab spring. Femen activist Safia Lebdi commented during a Free Amina demonstration that “[w]e Arab women are oppressed by our families and religion, and it all begins with us, in our own families, in our communities, and in society in general” (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 36:50).

After several months, Amina Sboui and the other protesters were released, and she distanced herself from Femen, planning to start her own Muslim feminist magazine. She wrote an autobiography of her experiences called *My Body Belongs To Me*. In the book:

Amina stressed the point that she had been trying to get across in the original photograph – that when the female body is seen as the repository of a family’s honour or the source of its shame, it immediately becomes a possession that must be owned and guarded by men. The male demand for female modesty, she argued, is implicitly backed by the threat of violence. So-called “honour killings”, still endemic across North Africa and the Middle East, are just the most extreme manifestation of this threat. (Adamson 2015)

Iranian public intellectual and ex-Muslim Maryam Namazie was interviewed about the Amina Sboui situation while Amina was in prison. “Many people say the topless fight is a western idea for western ideal and it’s not relevant for the Muslim world. What do you think about it?” a journalist asked her (Namazie 2013). This was her response:

This reminds me of a slogan shouted by Iranian women protesting compulsory veiling after the Islamic movement suppressed the 1979 Iranian revolution. It was “Women’s rights are neither East nor West but universal”. I always find it interesting how Islamists use the latest technology to intimidate and kill but when it comes to women’s rights, they are considered western. Plus there is no “Muslim world”. There are as many differences of opinion in Tunisia as there are in Britain and France. Amina represents one strand; the Islamists another. She has much support not just in the west but in Tunisia, Iran and elsewhere. Her fight is also ours. (Maryam Namazie 2013)

Inna Shevchenko notes that female nudity is used by advertisers to sell things in Ukraine; it is used by the fashion industry and the sex industry, but never by women themselves. She believes that the message of Femen is that above all, women's bodies are taken back by the women themselves; their breasts are screaming their message to the world. She believes that the extreme negative reactions that people have to her small naked body expose their fears and repressions. Like Amina, her body bears the burden of their honour somehow, or the honour of the nation, and in that process of objectification, her human rights are made invisible. She comments that "when we put a naked woman in the situation, the location, the place where no one expects, it's something that is kind of working like a bomb" (*Femen - Sextremism in Paris*, 2013: 7:55). Shevchenko's breasts are her bombs, except her approach is the nonviolent use of taboo.

Maryam Namazie expresses this sentiment succinctly:

Commodification relies on an objectified image that is separate from the reality of women's bodies, minds and lives. This image is used to regulate, control and suppress. And this is what religion and pornography share, albeit in different forms. The actuality and frankness of women's bodies as a form of protest challenges and upsets both. Nudity is deeply humanising and revolutionary because it challenges the religious/pornographic view of women's bodies and reclaims a tool used for women's suppression. Nudity outrages and offends because of this very challenge. And it is taboo-breaking in the most progressive sense of the word since progress often comes as a result of offending deeply held and misogynist views and sensibilities. (Namazie 2013)

The positioning of women in public spaces draws attention to the masculinization of public space. This effect is exaggerated by the exposed breasts of Femen activists contrasted by the Christian men in anti-gay rallies, predominantly male neo-Nazi crowds, men at conservative political rallies, and the male police officers who handcuff Femen and drag them away.

According to Mariam Betlemidze:

Historically, public space has been a domain for masculine actions, while feminine actions were mainly restricted to domestic arenas (Lefebvre, 1991; Wigley, 1992; Sennett, 1994). [...] By attacking the public spaces of Paris, Kiev, Tripoli, Rome, and other places landmarked by iconic symbols, FEMEN is “subverting uses of urban space” (Sennett, 1994, p. 24) and becomes a “force of disunity” in these settings (p. 66). (Betlemidze 2015: 376).

In November 2012, Catholics organized a massive, 100 000-strong demonstration against gay marriage in Paris. Nine women of Femen France attended dressed as nuns, carrying white fire extinguishers labeled “Holy Sperm”. The “Holy Sperm” moniker was a remix of the 1983 film *Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life*’s song “Every Sperm is Sacred”, a song which ridicules Catholic teachings on birth control and masturbation. The chorus goes like this:

*Every sperm is sacred,
Every sperm is great.
If a sperm is wasted,
God gets quite irate. (Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life, 1983)*

In the midst of the protest Femen stripped off their robes to expose their breasts emblazoned with the words “In Gay We Trust”, and “Fuck Church” (see Figures 24 and 25). They proceeded to spray baby powder over the crowd of people who in turn began beating them, kicking them, knocking out their teeth and breaking one woman’s nose. LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) people rushed in to shield Femen with their backs and take them to safety (Nasreen 2012).

Femen continued their battle with the Catholic Church. In February 2013, a day after Pope Benedict XVI’s resignation, eight Femen activists entered Notre Dame in trench coats, surrounding the Cathedral’s new bells. They whipped off their coats exposing breasts painted with the words “Pope No More”, “No More Homophobe”, “Saved by the Bell”, and “Bye bye Benedict”, referencing Joseph Ratzinger’s statement about homosexuality as a “strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective

disorder” (Ratzinger 1986). (See Figure 28). They rang the bells for several minutes before being hustled out by security. This message was splashed across their Facebook page the day of the action:

FEMEN is congratulating the whole progressive world with the resignation of fascist Benedict XVI from the place of the head of the Catholic mafia. It’s symbolic that today is the day of voting on law of same-sex marriage in France. The ex-Pope was a fierce opponent of gay marriages. FEMEN applaud the complete capitulation of medieval homophobia! Pope go to the devil! Viva common sense! Viva freedom! (Femen International 2013)

For this action they faced charges for degrading a place of worship, going through two years in courts of appeal before the charges were dropped. The ‘Holy Sperm’ counter-protest was widely applauded as a clever and brave stunt, however, the ‘Pope no More’ act earned Femen widespread disapproval. People felt that it was disrespectful and insensitive to the Pope, and neo-Nazis saw it as an insult to the cultural icon Notre Dame (Editors Online 2013). Where Inna Shevchenko was once a local celebrity and a prized political refugee, she was now told to watch out and lay low or go back to Ukraine. She did an interview with *The Atlantic*:

“Our protest did one thing: it stripped the French of their masks and showed what their so-called progressivism really is. Their reaction was purely *Catholic*. Their liberalism is just a cover-up, there's nothing behind it. It's all fake.” This is strong, uncompromising anti-Gallic verbiage from one who is petitioning the French government for political asylum. Was she worried that such words, to say nothing of a criminal conviction, might adversely affect her chances? “I’m not a slave to papers. I came here to carry on my work, not for the sake of a residency permit... I won't give up demonstrating.” (Tayler 2013)

More anti-gay demonstrations took place in Paris. The disturbing popularity of the anti-gay movement in France was emblematic of a growing hostility toward marginal people all over Europe. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and neo-Nazism were also on the rise, as a subculture of hate brewed in the background of the world news declaring economic hardship and the displacement of many people by war.

Just after the Second World War, Hannah Arendt, a witness to the catastrophic events of the climax of the twentieth century mass hatred of Jews, wrote:

Nothing perhaps illustrates the general disintegration of political life better than this vague, pervasive hatred of everybody and everything, without a focus for its passionate attention, with nobody to make responsible for the state of affairs—neither the government nor the bourgeoisie nor an outside power. It consequently turned in all directions, haphazardly and unpredictably, incapable of assuming an air of healthy indifference toward anything under the sun. (Arendt 1948: 335)

In May 2014, I was in Sweden for a conference, where I was surprised to see anti-Jewish graffiti scrawled on buildings in Uppsala. I showed a Swedish colleague, who explained that the ‘cultural Christian’ terrorist Anders Breivik was from one such network of ethno-nationalists increasing in popularity in Scandinavia. Breivik’s manifesto says that “if you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and God then you are a religious Christian. Myself and many more like me do not necessarily have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and God. We do however believe in Christianity as a cultural, social identity and moral platform. This makes us Christian” (Messenger 2012: 205). He writes that he prefers Christianity to neo-paganism as a personal banner because it has pan-European ‘mass appeal’; he wants his movement to be equally attractive to Italians, Greeks, and other Europeans who are inclined to support ‘cultural conservatives’. Christianity thus functions as a universalizing ethno-ideology against Muslims, who he sees as irrational barbarians, and Jews, who he sees as conniving atheist Marxists. Breivik is orthodox in his scapegoats. Women, and feminists in particular, as well as gays, are responsible for both the decreased birth rate of white people (leading to a takeover by Muslims) (Messenger 2012: 151) and the "rise of matriarchal systems which are now dominating Western European countries" (Messenger 2012: 179). He is far from alone in this thinking; Breivik’s manifesto describes meetings across Europe with wealthy and powerful supporters of this movement (Messenger 2012). In 2011, Breivik planned a bombing of government buildings in

Oslo, an attack for which he knew that Muslims would be targeted, to distract police while he killed 69 people execution-style at a camp for youth run by the Labour Party. He selected the camp, full of young feminists and anti-racists, to deliver a decisive blow to the next generation of socialists.

After the conference in Sweden (2014), I further noticed anti-Jewish messages at train stations in Antwerp, Belgium, and swastikas on buildings in Brussels (see Figure 63). Several days later, an attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels killed three and left one wounded. The next day, I watched on television with my friends in Brussels as two seats in the European Parliament were won by neo-Nazi parties, and many other seats went to far-right parties in nations across Europe.

Femen predicted the dangers of this hate mobilization long before the European Parliament elections. In May 2013, Inna Shevchenko lead an action intended to make a farce of a neo-Nazi rally in Paris. Every year, the group Nationalist Front gathers at the statue of Jeanne d'Arc to commemorate the ousting of the British from France. Nationalist Front claims to be a right-wing group supporting family values and love of France. In 2013, Shevchenko and her topless cohorts climbed onto the roof of a hotel facing the Jeanne d'Arc statue, dramatically unrolling a massive banner that read "Sextermiation for Nazism", playing on their notion of 'sextremism' protest tactics. Immediately National Front members made the Nazi salute and shouted Nazi slogans, "instantly show[ing] what they're really about" (*Femen - Sextremism in Paris*, 2013: 11:30). The National Front members hurled invectives like 'sluts, go kill yourselves'. Femen's Anna Hutsol later cheekily remarked "[w]hy is this sex object protesting? I'm used to seeing her in porno films, in magazines, in my bed, or in the kitchen. I'm not used to seeing this object protesting" (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 40:19).

Shevchenko sees her activism as a call to action for people in the left-wing whom she sees as ‘regressive’ and passive. She calls on the people of France to use their freedom of speech to stand up against the National Front and the rising fascist movement. She believes that young people will see Femen’s action online, and be inspired to oppose hateful ideology in their own way the next time an opportunity arises (*Femen - Sextremism in Paris*, 2013: 14:00). In Alain Margot’s 2014 documentary *Je Suis Femen*, on a train winding sluggishly past the suburbs, Oksana Shachko says as she points out the window: “I want to give people a wake-up call. I want to wake up all these people sleeping in these houses, happy with their little piece of land and any old job. I want to give them a wake-up call, to make them rise up, and help us change the world order” (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 1:25:05).

The revival of fascist ideological movements helps to explain where a radical response movement like Femen comes from. Far-right extremism precipitates the radical left corollary. The history of Ukraine demonstrates that where freedoms of human dignity, like freedom of speech or freedom of assembly are repressed, the upshot is rebellion bursting from the seams.

The Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, or the revolution of the Maidan, was one such burst of rebellion. Viktor Yanukovych, the pro-Russian oligarch who tried to circumvent democracy in 2004 and was defeated in the Orange Revolution, was elected in 2010 to the dismay of Femen. He overturned the 2004 transparent government reforms fought for in the Orange Revolution, and pushed to stop pursuing NATO membership. Yanukovych won the election again in 2012, despite concerns raised by international observers over the legitimacy of the elections. During his campaign he promised to deepen ties with the European Union (*Winter On Fire: Ukraine’s Fight For Freedom*, 2014: 3:05), but in 2013, the Ukrainian government backed out of a plan to sign an association agreement with the European Union in exchange for a \$15 billion payoff by

Russia. This dismayed Ukrainians yearning for a European standard of living and European human rights laws.

This time, the generation of Ukrainians who had lived their whole lives in a post-independence democracy, and who had watched the success of the Orange Revolution on television, were now voting-age adults. More than that, they had access to Western media all of their adult lives and were mobilized on social media networks. When the Yanukovych government made the announcement that Ukraine would pursue ties with Russia and distance from Europe, the reactions were swift and decisive.

“I opened my computer to social media,” said Maksim Panov, a young law student featured in the documentary *Winter On Fire: Ukraine’s Fight For Freedom*, “and I saw a post from Mustafa Nayyem. It said ‘Let’s meet at 10:30 pm by the Independence monument. Dress warm; bring umbrellas, tea, coffee, a good attitude, and friends. Re-post highly appreciated!’. I closed my laptop, and the next time I opened it was a month and a half later” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 4:02). A young translator named Ekaterina Averchenko described how on the day of the announcement, November 21, 2013, her Facebook page was covered with messages and posts telling people to ‘come to the Maidan’ that evening (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 4:19).

Through social media, students knew when to show up, what to wear, and who would be there. Images, videos, stories and music popped up in their social media ‘newsfeeds’ and they knew exactly what was happening in Maidan Square in Kyiv from 10:30 pm onward. Protesters poured into the square from every corner of the city, dancing, sharing food, singing Ukrainian cultural music and peacefully showing their solidarity with the sentiment that Ukraine would be part of Europe now. Ukraine would be a democracy, and the time of dictators and human rights violations was over. These children were born in the 1990s; they were raised in an independent

Ukraine by parents suffused with the enthusiasm of living through the struggle to independence. “I came here because our government crossed out the future of Ukraine, and the aspirations of Ukrainian youth,” said a boy full of passion and hope who looked no more than seventeen years old (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 5:20). “I came here to defend my future and the future of my children” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 5:28). Half of the people in the crowd were women. “We are standing here to prove that Ukraine is a European country,” said a smiling teenage girl wearing bows the colour of Ukraine’s flag. “We dream of a better future” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 6:48). The crowd chanted “Ukraine is part of Europe”, “together until the end” and “Sign! Yanukovych sign the agreement” believing that it would happen.

On November 30, 2013, thousands of Berkut—meaning ‘golden eagle’, a special paramilitary police force—circled the Maidan. They bludgeoned the protesters with truncheons; students ran screaming, and those who fell to the ground were beaten over and over. One witness, a surgeon named Valerii Zalevskiy, recalled: “The troops beat everyone with iron batons instead of plastic ones. It seemed that even they were surprised at the injuries they made using them” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 10:10). While many were rushed to the hospital, minor injuries were treated at the Mykhaylivs’kyi Zolotoverkhyi Monastery (St. Michael of the Gold Dome Monastery) a few blocks from the Maidan where they were sheltered from the police (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 12:55). In the early morning hours, pools of blood and crumpled Ukrainian flags dotted the square. The police tried to convince the protesters to leave the monastery, but the dissidents locked the gates; the state was afraid to violate the church.

Happy and hopeful the day before, today they were outraged at the government’s brutal reaction. This was the first time that Soviet measures were taken against peaceful protests in the history of independent Ukraine. By 11 am, the monastery and courtyard were filled with

protesters. Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych, Sviatoslav Shevchuk, said “everyone realized that if today students are beaten, tomorrow anyone can be beaten as well. From that came the March of Millions” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 16:37).

The protesters resolved to continue occupying the square. They were joined by millions of people of all ages, setting up food lines, tents and shelters, and even a ‘tech tent’ where people could stay in touch with family members and broadcast their stories (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 36:24). People from out of town held up signs for the press calling on their neighbours to come to Kyiv and join the movement. Other signs read “They give us corruption, we give them revolution”, “We are against the police state”, and “only a coward can hurt a child”. Toothless grandmothers held up icons of the Virgin Mary. Ukrainian musicians played live performances to keep up the spirits of the protesters. There was a sound stage, and religious leaders held prayers. Protester Marieluise Beck recalled that an Open University was organized; every morning at 10 am there was a stage for academics to give lectures (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014). People made rousing speeches—one man, Ukrainian singer Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, said “there are two European values: freedom and human dignity. We will not let them take these away from us” with emotion in his voice (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 18:04). The youth were learning through experience how to organize. Ukrainian orphans moved into the encampments, where they were fed and housed, and they volunteered all over the Maidan. The encampment offered family and a reprieve from poverty. It was a (religio)nationalist, revolutionary coming-of-age for them. Polish-Ukrainian Slawomir Sierakowski described the sense of community in the Maidan encampment:

People are never as well organized as they are during a revolution – anyone who saw the kitchens at Euromaidan knows what this means. We do not know whether the invisible hand of revolution would overpower the invisible hand of the market. [...] At the realized utopia of the Maidan, the private became

public. Provisioning, sleep, healthcare, security. You walked through the Maidan and you are presented with food, clothing, a place to sleep, and medical care. Even the services of a massage therapist or a psychologist. At the Euromaidan, everything was shared. Even if the taste of coffee or "everything soup" had their own revolutionary character, they tasted exceptional, as exceptional as the event itself was. (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014)

Femen activists participated in the Maidan activities; after all, before they were an international movement, they volunteered with children in orphanages (*Je Suis Femen* 2014: 11:04). Group members still in Ukraine prepared food and liaised with journalists, while the Paris headquarters staged an action. On December 1, 2013, Shevchenko and four others undressed in front of the Ukrainian embassy in Paris. They then peed and “defecate[d] on an image of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, shouting slogans such as 'Yanukovich piss off' and 'Ukraine to the EU'” (Now World News 2013). Shevchenko made this statement:

Dictatorship in its pure form is already in Ukraine. That's why we are coming today here to pee on this face and the face who is bringing dictatorship, pure dictatorship, to Ukraine and protection and influence of Russia, of Putin. And we are giving an alarm to Europe that we need help. (Now World News 2013)

Long before Maidan, Femen was protesting the corrupt politics of Yanukovich. Fearing another fraudulent election, Shevchenko and a group of other girls stripped at a polling station in Kiev in February 2010 bearing signs which read "The War Begins Here" and "Stop Raping the Country" (Metzel 2012). After another protest in 2010, and after Ukrainian secret servicemen entered Shevchenko's apartment and threatened to break her legs if she did not stop interfering with Yanukovich's campaign (Bidder 2011), she passionately cried “[j]ust look at our cabinet; it says it all. There isn't a single woman in the Ukrainian cabinet. It's a man's country, run by men. So we've decided to take matters into our own hands and fight for our rights” (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 45:30).

While the core Ukrainian civilians in Maidan constructed shelters for a long occupation, the Berkut set up outside the square. Priests of every denomination, muftis, and old Ukrainian grandmothers holding rosary beads and praying stood in a line between the police and the protesters. Several masked young men tried to incite the crowd to storm the presidential headquarters; when questioned under duress these provocateurs admitted to being paid \$25 to ‘cause trouble’, but it was unclear who paid them (Girgenti 2014). American journalist Marci Shore wrote that “[p]rotestors were disappearing, their bodies sometimes found frozen in the forest, signs of torture on the corpses” (2015).

In the darkness of night on December 11, 2013, the Berkut gathered in formation, armed in riot gear, along with the Ukrainian military, and struck the Maidan. The peaceful protesters stood shoulder to shoulder in lines, holding hands. The police pressed forward as screams filled the air and people were bludgeoned. Their hands began to weaken. Suddenly, a different sound rose. It was the voices of thousands of people singing the Ukrainian national anthem, a song which overwhelmed the sounds of screams (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 29:48). From several blocks away, Ivan Sydor, the young bell-ringer at St. Michael’s monastery pulled the bells like never before, signalling the beginning of an eight-hour assault by the state on Maidan (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 39:00). “The last time Mykhaylivs’kyi Monastery rang all the bells like that was in 1240 when the Mongols invaded Kyiv,” he said (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 31:18). The number of protesters swelled as people heard the bells and poured into Kyiv to support the demonstration. Taxis gave free rides to the city centre. The protest was intimidating but not violent. Ukrainian citizen Ivan Suharenko describes that night the next morning in Russian:

The Maidan crowd [was] ready for bloodless resistance. I would not call it peaceful resistance, but rather bloodless resistance. Those who were longing for blood were quickly excluded. Those people who had the idea to disarm the Berkut policemen and take their shields and helmets were quickly calmed by

others – and the police were given back their things. No one was allowed to take clubs away from the policemen. (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014)

The 4000 police and military troops were unable to disperse the fifteen thousand protesters (Greener and Rospigliosi 2014: 446). The resolve of the Maidanistas was stronger than ever.

On January 16, 2014 Yanukovich passed a series of laws, colloquially termed the ‘Dictatorship laws’. These laws included preventing people from wearing helmets, driving in groups of more than five cars, and covering their faces. They also restricted access to foreign websites, threatened imprisonment for journalists investigating police officers, and “judges [were] allowed to conduct trials and sentence defendants in absentia”, permitting immediate incarceration of protesters (Markovic 2014). People all over Ukraine were outraged. They wore bicycle and ski helmets, colanders, pots, pans and costume masks to work in protest and in solidarity with the Maidanistas (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 41:39). Tensions were high and there were several skirmishes with police, including injuries caused to police by a cobblestone catapult constructed by protesters on January 20 (Girgenti 2014). Military reinforcements were called in from Dnipropetrovsk by train and a group of nonviolent activists lay across the railroad ties; the driver refused to crush them (Girgenti 2014).

Barriers were constructed out of furniture, tires, wood, and blocks of ice. Priests in full regalia constructed barricades. “From the very beginning, the representatives of all religions were on Maidan, as the ‘Men of Prayer’”, said Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych, Sviatoslav Shevchuk (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 38:21). “Different religions came together without conflict, in order to achieve one mutual and important goal,” said Said Ismagilov, Mufti of Administrations of Muslims of Ukraine (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 39:06). “When people were singing the national

anthem every three hours, I had this feeling that it became a prayer,” said Bogdan Dubas (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 39:10).

Retired military members and reservists came to Maidan to train the students how to resist the riot police. “I was worried about them, and live not too far from here” said retired soldier Sergei Kibnovsky, a rarity considering that the average Ukrainian man lives to be 62 years old (Charkiewicz 2010). Maidanistas organized into defense units with shields. Protests erupted across Ukraine in major cities and small towns. In Lviv classes were canceled on rally days and twenty thousand and thirty thousand students attended. People from all over sent medical supplies, fuel, and food to the Maidan. Observer Yaroslav Hrytsak noted that the collective building of barricades, preparation of food and organization of patrols was essential to keeping the restless, frozen, anxious protesters busy and engaged amidst increasing frustration with the government (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014).

On January 22, 2014, the Berkut assembled. Teenagers called their mothers to tell them they loved them. Protester Nataliya Stelmakh wrote that “[t]hey were shaving and putting on clean clothes in case they should die that night” (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014). The police burned the Maidan encampment to the ground, gunning down men, women and children from the rooftops with rubber bullets and live rounds. The scene was grave; twelve-year-old Ukrainian orphan Roman Savelyev shot at police with stones in his slingshot (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 1:09:40). Reflecting on this day, surgeon Valerii Zalevskiy recalled bleakly, “[C]an you imagine? Infuriating people to such despair that a banker and one of the most influential attorneys from Lviv came to Hrushevskogo Street to throw stones at the police” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 45:25). Priests stood in the billowing smoke praying aloud, their hands shaking as they held Bibles and shots rang out and protesters fell around them. The monastery set up an

emergency hospital, but many people were horribly burned, and some lost their eyes, and others their lives.

On February 18, 2014, a peaceful, unarmed group of protesters walked to Parliament. Again, they were brutally beaten by police. There were multiple casualties, especially the elderly who were unable to run away or withstand the head trauma of the beatings. A group of 40 police officers from neighbouring city Lviv traveled to Kiev, reportedly defecting from the government, vowing to protect the demonstrators (Girgenty 2014). Video footage of February 18 showed Kiev police descending upon old people, raining down blows on them, screaming “come on, finish them!” (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 1:04:30). German-Ukrainian protester Marieluse Beck recalled how “[p]riests, crying, blessed the dead” (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014).

That night, the Maidanistas declared that if Yanukovich did not resign by 10 am, they would storm the capital with live weapons. Yanukovich fled into hiding in Russia and the Ukrainian parliament made Oleksandr Turchynov interim president. Yanukovich’s palace was peacefully—or more accurately, bloodlessly—overtaken; the impoverished “people gaped at the wealth” (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014). Several members of Yanukovich’s party issued statements denouncing the use of violent measures against peaceful protesters. On February 24, 2014, after 93 days of protest, the Ukrainian government classified former president Viktor Yanukovich “a fugitive on charges of mass murder” (Girgenty 2014). The pro-democracy reforms reducing the direct powers of the President’s office which Yanukovich overturned were re-instated.

The contemporary story of Maidan echoes one from the not-so-distant past. The passage below is a worker's account of a 1918 strike in St. Petersburg right before the fall of the Imperial Russian dynasty:

Many thousands of workers had then clashed with the police—at times fighting them with clubs, or hailing them with rocks from behind improvised barricades. Women and children had joined in building these barricades—out of telephone and telegraph poles, overturned wagons, boxes, and armoires. No sooner was a demonstration dispersed, or a barricade destroyed, than the workers, after evacuating their wounded, would regroup, and clashes would start all over again. Whole districts were without light, their gas and kerosene lamps having been destroyed. (Hasegawa 1981: 10)

History repeats itself. “I can't accept that after all the wars we've had in this world, we are still resolving our problems by killing one another,” said Ekaterina Averchenko, a mobilizer at Maidan (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 1:25:49). The peasants who resisted and died for a regime change in 1918 were nameless, uncelebrated victims. The resisters of the Maidan were splashed across social media, their deaths captured on video clips to be replayed over and over again by people sitting at home perusing YouTube.com. Such a user, living anywhere in the world, could then search on Facebook and spend an hour looking at photos, messages and posts by the deceased protesters while they were still alive. When people die, their digital lives remain online, frozen in time, like a personally curated shrine. The digital world has changed the stakes of revolutions and protest internationally. From the day Oksana Shachko attended Ukraine's Independence Day celebration topless, Femen had understood this and had already operationalized the internet as a portal to social change.

While Maidan was a testament to the power of collective action against corruption, the losses should not be underestimated. An old man cried quietly, recalling the people he lived alongside during the occupation of Kiev's square. “We lost here the best people in our nation”

he said (*Winter On Fire*, 2014: 1:25:55). Thanks to the digital age, there is a record of their contributions.

Femen activist Anna Hutsol was interviewed by Euroradio about her hopes for improvement and reform by opposition leaders after the flight of Yanukovich. She liked none of them, remarking that they were all oligarchs and cowards, but she added that “[t]his revolution may produce new leaders and they may come from the barricades, from Maidan” (Zmicier 2014). She may be right. Maidan brought hardened former Soviet prisoners together with educated and energetic young people. Some of these young people have since been employed by opposition leaders and positioned within the Ukrainian National Guard.

Femen, being fiercely pro-democracy, are resisting the prospect of dictatorship any way they can. Inna Shevchenko says in an interview with *Dazed*:

Feminism is at that point again where you have to make people interested. People think a lot of things are done already, that there’s no need any more. We realised you can attract people by breaking rules and creating new ones. So we started taking off our tops, not for promoting beer or a sex club but to promote our political idea, and moving our body not in a sexy way but an aggressive way, running and screaming. Ukraine at that time was going from this Orange illusion of democracy back to dictatorship, to a Russian way of organising the political situation. For us, the younger generation, we were just terrified. So we did a radical thing. (Gray 2014)

It is within the context of the slippage back to dictatorship and the Russian state collusion with the Russian Orthodox Church and what it means for women’s rights that Femen position themselves.

There is a lack of consensus in the international community as to whether or not Ukraine has a right to self-determination and autonomy as a sovereign state. Peter Pomerantsev examines the reporting of Maidan in the international press, writing that the story of the revolution has been “spun in a hundred ways” (Pomerantsev 2015).

“It’s a fascist / CIA / Masonic / Zionist / anti-Semitic coup,” the Russian press declared. “It’s all the fault of the EU’s empire-building ambitions,” insisted the anti-EU crowd in Western Europe. “Russia has a right to rule over Ukraine,” reasoned the big power realists. And the Ukrainians who actually made, or were caught up in, the revolution had their own ways of telling the story [... as] Putin has sponsored, armed and helped man a war against Kiev. (Pomerantsev 2015)

Russian president Vladimir Putin took the turmoil surrounding the ousting of Yanukovich as an opportunity to seize Crimea, a region in southern Ukraine. The territory was formally absorbed on March 18, but Putin later commented that implementation of the plan began February 22, the night of Yanukovich’s defeat (bbc ‘Putin’ 2015). Crimeans were traditionally conservative and largely sympathetic to Russian influence on Ukraine, so their secession allowed for more liberal politics in the rest of the country. However, the taking of Crimea was proof for Putin that the international community would do nothing to stop the annexation of Ukraine, and the Kremlin continued to push westward, taking Donetsk and Luhansk. The rise and fall of nation-states in Europe and elsewhere is a constant flux, and the confederation of sovereign Ukraine is currently at a particularly high risk of jeopardy.

East-west allegiance is a difficult question for Ukrainians. The Soviet regime exterminated millions of Ukrainians, and ‘The West’, meaning Nazi Germany in the twentieth century, slaughtered millions as well. The youth of Maidan, and Femen activists as well, are currently favouring the West in hopes of building a corruption-free democratic government modelled on European Union conventions. While the young are throwing in with Europe, a large portion of the population sees control by the increasingly autocratic and colonial Russia as inevitable, and are daunted by the often bloody and dismal task of building a democracy.

3.2 Critics of Femen

Now consider this. If you had a pack of wild, "stray" dogs in a pen, would you let them out to run all over the neighborhood? No, of course you wouldn't. Why? Because dogs, being what dogs are, will wreak havoc and spread mayhem throughout that neighborhood, and they'll cause a great deal of long-term trouble. That being the case, you keep them in a pen, or on a leash. And yes, you already guessed that this same principle applies to women. Why? Because women, being what women are, are more akin to animal than human ... being human in appearance only, yet having little to no logic to use, or loyalty to have, and going chiefly off instinct, emotions and primitive drives. In fact, being completely ruled by them. Think of them as being more-or-less the "midway point" between man and animal. - Now, ask yourself this question; would you give a group of chimpanzees (or children), being very logically and cognitively immature, a bunch of knives or nukes to play with? Of course you wouldn't. But unfortunately we did. So in summary (this can turn into a VERY long topic), when men allowed feminists to create feminism ... and allowed women to have whatever they want, no questions asked they effectively "opened the door" on the dog pen. And that's why you see what we're seeing today; women completely out of control. - As women will immaturely and inherently use, abuse and corrupt everything given them eventually, it was our place (the place of men) to keep them in check from the beginning.

—YouTube user Bob Frye, commenting on a video of Inna Shevchenko (Frye 2015)

The passage above may be a wildly irrational statement on social media, but it conveys a distillation of the fears of women and feminism that Femen draws out. The irrationality of women, as noted in highly regarded data collection organizations like Gallup, is the basis for denying women access to power and rights all over the world.

When Femen emerged in Ukraine as a protest group, they received a great deal of support from locals who admired their bravery and enthusiasm, particularly pensioner women (see Figures 38-39). In recent years, the Ukrainian government has cut funding to pensions to meet the conditions to receive a \$17.5 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout package. Pensions are largely collected by women. The average life expectancy of a Ukrainian man is 62 years old, so the 'elderly' category is comprised mostly of women who are often impoverished (Charkiewicz 2010). Femen staged an action in support of these women's right to a pension.

There were also many locals who dismissed the protests outright as foolish, and others who shouted their disapproval.

In the early years of Femen, before their strategy had been worked out, Ukrainians, and men especially, were often confused as to what Femen activists were even protesting about. News reports described them as prostitutes seeking sex work legal reform, and the early charges against them were for mental illness (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014). The youths themselves did not have an elaborate, articulated message.

Sex tourism is a major problem in Ukraine, and every woman is victimised as a result, says Alexandra. "You'd walk down the street and foreigners, men, would come up to you, ask how much, touch you." [...] In those early days they were just developing their views. Feminism was unpopular in Ukraine; saying you were a feminist was "something similar to saying you're an idiot, you're crazy," says Inna. Alexandra says she used to believe the "image created by patriarchy, where feminists are ugly women with moustaches who want to cut off men's penises". (They've played with this imagery themselves. Until recently, their website featured a picture of a woman holding an enormous scythe in one hand, a bloody scrotum in the other.)

They embarked on long, lively discussions about women's rights. "We're not based on 700 pages of doctrine," says Inna, "instead we would come in and saying 'can you believe that fucker? He just touched my arse and said he wants to fuck me, and he will pay me with a cocktail.' The discussion was very primitive, and we became angry, and wanted to express it, so we started doing street performances." (Cochrane 2013)

Femen activists were cheered, protected, scorned and jeered at in Ukraine. They quickly noticed that the press cropped their signs out of the published photos, so they wrote the messages directly on their breasts (Cochrane 2013).

As described earlier, they only began to receive significant government condemnation when they criticized conservative politicians. The movement began gaining some international traction, but it was not until Amina Sboui posted her solidarity photo online in Tunisia and disappeared shortly after that the movement exploded into global recognition. With global recognition came a flurry of excitement and support, as well as waves of criticism.

Femen activists are most often criticized for protesting topless. Naysayers argue that Femen's nominal modus operandi, gender equality, is lost in the distraction of boobs. Countless articles ranging from calling them sluts and heretics to thoroughly argued treatises on performing for the male gaze abound. Some are written by bloggers and others by gender studies students, but none are written from the perspective of the field of Religious Studies (July 2016). Canadian founder and editor of the blog *Feminist Current* Meghan Murphy is a vocal opponent of Femen, writing that "[t]he only message is: 'look at me'" (Murphy 2012). Reddit user 'stephen89' calls Femen "a radical group who cares less about feminism and more about putting down men. They don't really help the cause of feminism at all and are only doing more damage than helping" (goliathrk 2013). Likewise, Murphy says that "there is a wrong way to do feminism. And Femen is doing it wrong" (Murphy 2012). There is a tension between Shevchenko's on-the-ground approach to activism and the more academic approach highly concerned with etiquette and scholarly grace; as Shevchenko's position is articulated, "I would never criticize someone else's activist tactic" (Aitkenhead 2013).

Murphy and stephen89's responses are emblematic of the neoliberal capitalist approach to feminism which sees Femen as white girls undervaluing their white bodies for the benefit of men. Shevchenko undercuts the normative use of female nudity to sell a product by using it instead "To protest and fight" (Cochrane 2013). The Murphy/stephen89 perspective is tied to the twentieth century concept of 'performing for the male gaze'.

The idea of 'gaze', and particularly 'the male gaze' was first explored by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", and developed further in later writings. Mulvey expands the Freudian notion of scopophilia, the pleasure of subjecting persons as objects to "a controlling and curious gaze" (1999: 835). According to Mulvey, Freud posits

that scopophilia, which encompasses both the pleasure of seeing and being seen in particular coded ways, is “one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones” (1999: 835). Freud must have imagined the scopophilic gaze of a doctor examining his patients. Mulvey focuses on the power dynamics between gazers and the gazed-at. She notes that systemic hierarchies are reinforced through the gaze as a mechanism. She writes that “[m]ainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order” (Mulvey 1999: 835). According to Mulvey, the glossy pages of advertisements using the female body as scopophilic, phallic-reinforcing object and the representations of women in 1930s Hollywood films exaggerate and bolster the ‘controlling gaze’ of the male as subject. In her work, Mulvey uses psychoanalytic theory “as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form” (1999: 833). Femen uses and queers the taboo of bare breasts to scandalize and make front page headlines in the media.

In 2011, before Femen entered the international spotlight, a New Zealand radio station hosted a competition called “Win a Ukrainian Wife”. The prize of the competition for winner ‘Greg’ was a two week vacation to Ukraine with a new wife every day. An image appeared on Femen’s website with Inna Shevchenko holding a sickle in one hand and a bloody scrotum in the other; the caption read “Greg! We are Waiting! Try to Win a Wife Again!” This image has been shared over and over again on antifeminist websites as evidence of an international feminist conspiracy to slaughter men.

Perhaps the most well-known criticism of Femen comes from a controversy spawning from the 2013 documentary, *Ukraine is Not a Brothel*. In 2011, Femen was joined by Kitty Green, an Australian-Ukrainian filmmaker. She lived with 5-10 women in their crumbling two-

bedroom Soviet-era apartment for fourteen months and traveled with them to protests, shooting their footage, and doing interviews. She edited the film on her laptop computer, and released it under the title *Ukraine is Not a Brothel* in 2013. The film exposes the increasingly controlling role of Viktor Sviatsky, a Ukrainian dissident and former Soviet prisoner, in the organization of Femen actions. Footage appears in the film of Sviatsky screaming at the girls and insulting them. Green said in an interview with *Vice* that if they had not joined Femen, “they would all be working as strippers or topless models or just be married with children by now” (Jones 2014). Websites across Europe and North American alleged that this man was the patriarchal mastermind behind Femen, leading to his exile from the group. The activists felt betrayed by Green, but also felt that leaving Sviatsky behind was a necessary development. In news articles reporting on Femen actions, commenters still regularly allege that Femen is actually an organization run by men. Equally common is the assertion that Femen is funded and managed by the Israeli government.

Condemnation of Femen by blogs like *Feminist Current* demonstrate a desire to fight for equality for women in a way that preserves upper-class ‘good manners’ and ‘civility’ rather than the ‘lower-class debauchery and crudeness’ of street theatre styled activism. This is why Femen makes “all feminists look barking mad”—in this case, “all feminists” is coded for upper-class (Drimonis 2015). ‘Feminist’ is a universalizing identity category, and ‘sextremism’ occupies an ideological space within the ‘feminist’ category that highlights class differences between members. The idea that Femen “are causing more division than unity among the feminist world”, as stated by Laura Santos-Bishop, reveals a tension between the ‘moderate’, ‘modest’, ‘civil’ approach of women who have access to privileged spaces of ‘respectability’, and women who do not, but who still want to claim a space in the ‘feminist’ identity category (2013). In an

article in *Head Space* called “Why as a Feminist I Will Never Identify With Femen” by Toula Drimonis, commenter Arturo Rivera writes:

I was a little startled by how FEMEN debases itself as a spectacle, while unwittingly tarnishing what feminism actually stands for. None of them are looking at the bigger picture. There was this protest in front of a church, I don't remember the name or place, but FEMEN held a protest there that ended up offending and traumatizing the patrons attending. It was so ridiculous. Just plain ridiculous. That is radical and extreme behavior at its finest, and it definitely doesn't do anything other than make a mockery of the very cause that they claim to be fighting for. (Drimonis 2015)

Femen's crudeness is not compatible with upper-class sensibilities and 'manners politics'. These 'manners politics' preserve respect and deference for churches as 'faith institutions'. The mainstream discourse draws a line at challenging 'religion'.

The perspective that Femen's topless protest tactic is a sexual performance for the benefit of men is constructed on the premise that women's breasts are inherently sexual objects for the pleasure of men, and thus uncovering them is giving men pleasure. Within the boundaries of this premise, women can choose to reveal their breasts to please men, or cover their breasts to withhold pleasure from men. There is no scenario which does not revolve around men's pleasure, and there is no space to consider women's pleasure, except within the limited role of being the scopophilic object. It is clear from the thousands of comments by appalled men who are disgusted by Femen protesters that the premise of women's breasts equalling male pleasure is flawed. As Inna Shevchenko points out, moving naked breasts from the privacy of a brothel room, or a housewife's bed, into the public realm of men functions like a taboo-exploding 'bomb'. Breasts are coded as pleasurable only within particular spaces. The image of women's breasts in front of Parliament or on the steps of Notre Dame Cathedral takes control and directs the male gaze, drawing attention to the constraints of women's bodily agency to submissive,

powerless poses. Mulvey writes that “destruction of pleasure is a radical weapon”, shattering the voyeuristic ph/fantasy of the male gaze (1999: 834).

If this is the case, then on what grounds does a feminist critique of ‘sextremism’ stand? After all, a basic definition of feminism is bringing to light unexamined systems of power (McCall 2005). After a lecture I gave about Femen to an undergraduate class on gender and religion, a student raised her hand and said that these particular activists are bad girls who make all feminists look bad. She was worried that these kinds of radicals make men dislike feminists. This comment echoes a stream within the wider realm of feminist thought that desires to maintain middle-class sensibilities of moderation.

Ever since Beyoncé walked out onto a stage emblazoned with the word FEMINIST in silver lights three meters high at the Video Music Awards (VMAs) in 2014,¹⁶ girls around the world have taken on the feminist label. It was a turning point in the history of the feminist movement (see Figure 55). What was once a taboo political word for bad girls has now permeated the mainstream as an acceptable identity. This gentrification of feminism is a depoliticizing mechanism; feminism has been reverse-queered to accept the conservative capitalist elements of mainstream society, subject to commodification and monetization. The Guardian contributor and commenter ‘Bulletpoint’ calls these “feminist lightweights” (Bulletpoint 2013). She argues that this faction of feminists who are uncomfortable with Femen oppose the group because of neoliberal sympathies. Bulletpoint writes that:

The prudish protestants in Britain are quite happy to let modern capitalism have anything as its commodity - they see no alternative to neo-liberalism [sic] and as they have no meta-narrative they simply accept its constructs as facts on the ground. What they find offensive is the female body itself exposed -and the fact that the Ukrainians are devaluing the female body as a commodity. [...] What we are talking about is the fight of so called feminists who regard the

¹⁶ Beyoncé’s statement became “the subject of two-thirds of all tweets [in the history of Twitter] about feminism in the 24 hours after her appearance,” according to a Twitter data analysis by Jessica Bennett. (Bennett 2014)

female body as a valuable commodity not to be wasted with needless exhibition and the Ukrainians who are old school and are saying F*** your commodification of the female body. (Bulletpoint 2013)

Bulletpoint's comment points to the preservation of conservative ethics in expanding the feminist movement to include 'lightweights'. Commenter 'Loumo' asks Bulletpoint to explain the meaning of 'meta-narrative'. Bulletpoint responds:

Ideological constructs are not natural phenomena. When you lack the tools or the desire to question ideological constructs then you accept them as truths that correspond to nature and human nature.

Yet, neo-liberal and capitalist economics are failed ideological constructs. They are ruinous. People who live in the ruins of this ideology, but who have no way to put it in perspective and critique it, live as if ideological fiction were fact.

This leads you into a sorry cul-de-sac. [...]

There is no critique of capitalism if you think capitalism is the end of history.

So in this way we don't criticise capitalism but racism, not capitalism but sexism, not capitalism but religious intolerance, not capitalism but poverty.

And so on and so on. The result is ridiculous. Imagine a critique of poverty without a corresponding critique of capitalism. If that's your party trick then you are lost up sh** creek, because poverty is a consequence of exploitation, of capitalism. (Bulletpoint 2013)

This conversation illustrates the wide-ranging debates between anarchists, socialists and the New Left, and conservative neoliberals within the expanding feminist movement.

Another source of intense criticism of Femen comes from their "Topless Jihad" project. When Amina Sboui posted her topless solidarity photo ("My body belongs to me and is not the source of any man's honor") and was expeditiously punished for it, Femen began a media campaign to exert international pressure on Tunisian officials to keep Sboui out of harm's way. Femen activists protested outside of mosques all over Europe as well as at Tunisian embassies. This elision of Muslims generally, rather than Tunisian officials specifically, characterizes a majority of racism directed against Muslims and drew heavy criticism from anti-Islamophobia groups. It should be noted that it was not the Tunisian state that abducted Sboui, but her family

and ‘religious’ clerics, so a protest of the ‘religious’ system was appropriate; however, Femen’s intention was to pressure the Tunisian state to step in, so the message was muddled. A core principle of Femen is excoriating critique of all religions as tools of patriarchy, seeing Christians and ‘secular’ right-wing fascists opposing gay marriage, for example, as equally dangerous forces working together to fuel hatred. The ‘Topless Jihad’ action entangled gender, race, sex, religion and politics.

Despite the controversy, Femen’s goal to create a viral buzz online throughout the world to draw international attention to Tunisia so that Amina would not be tortured or imprisoned was successful. Sboui was released; however, a good many feathers were ruffled along the way. With slogans such as “Nudity is Freedom”, “Free Amina!”, “Muslim Women, Let’s Get Naked” and images of topless women with beards and turbans down on their knees praying, the criticism is not surprising. Ilana Alazzah called it “blackface”, and “CNN, the New York Times, Al Jazeera English, and the *Huffington Post* (and elsewhere) [called] the group racist, classist, imperialist, colonialist, Eurocentric, Islamophobic, orientalist, neo-orientalist, cowardly, or, at best, naïve, and foolish” (Tayler 2013). Most of these international commentators coded Femen activists as wealthy white American or western European women rather than women who grew up in poverty from a country in ruins and at war. As explained by Agata Pyzik in *Poor But Sexy: Culture Clashes in Europe East and West*, the existence of this group of women, documented in images splashed across the features of websites all over the world, challenges the contemporary assumptions of rich whiteness in complicated ways.

Feminism as a movement struggles with both its universalizing function as a category and the desire to be intersectional, or reflect many dimensions of perspective. This gets complicated in the post-globalization age. If an activist like Ilana Alazzeah, born in San

Francisco and attending Smith College in Massachusetts where tuition is almost \$70 000 USD per year, is allowed to identify with someone calling themselves a Muslim in Tunisia, then ostensibly a Ukrainian woman is allowed to identify with someone who calls herself a woman in Tunisia, and indeed, the latter probably have more in common (‘Ilana Alazeh’ 2016) (Smith College 2016). However, the (male-centred) category of religion often trumps the category of woman for solidarity, and access to rights.

A very important issue that often gets sidelined in the conversation about ‘Topless Jihad’ is the protection of ‘religion’ from critique. On this subject, Jeffrey Tayler of *The Atlantic* writes:

The media has long fostered the view that religion should be de facto exempt from the logical scrutiny applied to other subjects. I am not disputing the right to practice the religion of one's choice, but rather the prevailing cultural rectitude that puts faith beyond the pale of commonsense review, and (in Amina's case), characterizes as "Islamophobic" criticism of the criminal mistreatment of a young woman for daring to buck her society's norms, or of Femen for attacking the forced wearing of the hijab. (Tayler 2013)

The identity category of ‘religion’ retains a privileged status amongst identity categories. Intersectionality has made needed spaces for diverse perspectives within the feminist movement, particularly in regard to race, but somehow patriarchal ideology in ‘religion’ gets preserved in the application of intersectionality, threatening the foundation of feminism itself.

Where 1970s feminism gave rise to slogans such as Mary Daly’s “if God is male, then the male is God”, contemporary mainstream feminism is deeply divided on the patriarchal category of religion (Daly 1974: 19). In “Why as a Feminist I Will Never Identify With Femen”, Toula Drimonis writes that “[p]robably the aspect that most troubles me about FEMEN is their blatant disdain of religion and the people who practice it... It’s a daily battle not to be perceived as nagging, whining, overindulgent, man-hating bra-burners without having a bunch of women

flashing their boobs in protest to undo all that work and make all feminists look barking mad” (2015). Women demanding the right to vote is no longer perceived as ‘barking mad’ in mainstream discourse, but exposing breasts against God’s will still is. Likewise University of Exeter professor Francesca Stansfield writes that “Femen have a ridiculous white saviour complex, they should respect the religious sensitivities of Bethlehem and stop giving feminism a bad name” (Frenkel 2013).

While Femen’s propensity to take aim at religion has earned them considerable condemnation and scorn, it has also garnered them support. Reddit user metalvendetta writes “Femen are the only feminist group I’ve seen that are prepared to stand up to the religious monoliths of Islam and Christianity. For that alone, they get my support” (goliathrk 2013). What metalvendetta and other internet-news-consumers in the under-thirty age bracket are unaware of is that the feminist movement has a vibrant contemporary contingent of critics of religion like Women Against Fundamentalism, Pussy Riot, and renowned feminists like Maryam Namazie, Susan Jacoby, Katha Pollitt, Annie Laurie Gaylor, and Sikivu Hutchinson. These thinkers have a long history of theory and writing that they are building on, like Mary Wollstonecraft (author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* 1792), Matilda Joselyn Gage (author of *Women, Church and State* 1883), Emina Slenker, Annie Besant, Lucy Parsons, Marian Sherman, Queen Silver, Margaret Sanger, and many more. First-wave feminist icon Elizabeth Cady Stanton famously wrote the 19th amendment of the American constitution, giving women the right to vote, but she also wrote *The Woman’s Bible* (1899), expanding her 1896 essay, “The Degraded Status of Woman in the Bible”. Women’s rights movements and critiques of religion have long been complementary endeavours.

Ernestine Rose, for example, lectured extensively on atheism; her “Defense of Atheism” lecture delivered in Boston in 1861, praised by George Bernard Shaw, included the theory that it is “demonstrable fact, that all children are atheists, and were religion not inculcated into their minds they would remain so. Even as it is, they are great skeptics, until made sensible of the potent weapon by which religion has ever been propagated, namely, fear” (Huberman, 2008, p. 258). A Massachusetts newspaper responded that “We know of no object more deserving of contempt, loathing, and abhorrence than a female atheist. We hold the vilest strumpet from the stews to be by comparison respectable” (Jacoby, 2012). Perhaps these kinds of characterizations help to explain why women today are moving toward the ‘holistic milieu’ and ‘spiritual-but-not-religious’ identity rather than calling themselves out-and-out atheists. (Montgomery 2012: 12)

When asked by Jennifer Aniston “[w]hat do you think the biggest problem with feminism today is?” at the *Makers: Women Who Make America* conference, Gloria Steinem “named religion as one of three ‘biggest problems’ after anti-feminism and income disparity” (Schenk 2014). She said that “religion is just politics in the sky. I think we really have to talk about it” (Schenk 2014).

Femen did not begin their critique of religion by making reference to these feminist giants. When these young Ukrainian teenagers started meeting to discuss their ideas and plan actions, they had never heard of ‘feminism’. They had never been introduced to feminism in schools, at home, or amongst their peers, and they had certainly never heard about it in church. They simply saw that the conditions of life for women around them were deteriorating, and their own options as young women were narrowing as the country became more conservative. They developed a strategy through trial-and-error to address it. They were not in touch with an international or even national discourse on feminist philosophy, and so when they were labelled ‘bad feminists’ in the international press, it was a meaningless insult. Their activism emerged as

a response to personal experience, unlike many contemporary middle or upper class feminists whose consciousness-raising is based in theory, often within universities. Inna Shevchenko epitomizes Rudnytsky's (1987) analysis of working-class Ukrainian dissidents who are first generation intellectuals. For example, she contributed an opinion column to the *Huffington Post* which was theoretically rudimentary, but contained a kind of activism realness that is often absent from contemporary feminist discussions. Her column, titled "Sextremism: The New Way For Feminism To Be!", argued:

The body of the woman is always too much. Or not enough. And this idea has infected up to women themselves. The biggest concern of modern feminism is how to take back the female body from the cultural and financial machine of the patriarchal system, and return it to its rightful owners - using this body, instead, to protect the interests of women across the world. (Shevchenko 2013)

Writers at *Everyday Feminism*, *Feminist Times*, *Jezebel*, or *Bitch Magazine* might look at this comment as a prosaic reinvention of the wheel, but Shevchenko's impoverished upbringing in a dictatorship means that translated copies of classical feminist texts were not available in her school library. As Pyzik points out in *Poor But Sexy: Culture Clashes in Europe East and West*, Femen:

[W]ere dismissed by Western feminists for crypto or even open racism and nudity-obsession, regardless of the context. In this case, both sides misunderstood the delicate circumstances. Intersectional, progressive Western feminists, concerned with the risks of racism and (post) colonialism, speak of Femen's unhealthy obsession with nudity with suspicious disdain, not seeing that behind the admittedly "primitive" methods and controversial approach there's a very specific reality that Femen are fighting. (Pyzik 2014: 41)

Anna Hutsol, a member of Femen since the beginning, explains how Femen has always been excluded from bourgeois feminism. In Femen, there is no "set of strict rules you have to adhere to or you're out. We distinguish ourselves very clearly from feminist organisations with high intellectual standards. For example, if a woman hasn't read a particular book, she can never

be part of that organisation. These types of organisations ignore ordinary women. They are excluded for various reasons. We value all women. Each woman counts for us and can become a fighter and change her life” (*Je Suis Femen*, 2014: 22:22). It is clear that the focus for Femen leaders is on direct action; their feminism is defined in terms of actions rather than verbally supporting or disagreeing with particular arguments. After Amina Sboui posted her solidarity photo, a Facebook group was started called *Feminists against Femen*, filled mostly with ‘men’s rights activists’. Group member Xuan Matta commented on a photo in the group, “I can’t really tell so I have to ask, is this page feminist or anti-feminist?” (Matta 2013). He was not the only one who was confused. In a time of significant social transformation, the line between what is and what is not feminist is blurred.

This shift in solidarities is not only evident within feminism. In a world where communities are striving to be post-racial and post-colonial, new solidarities are forged. *Feminist Times* author Charlotte Raven reported that “Femen are one of many depressing features of the internet age – an international brand with as much name recognition as Hermes that captures attention and doesn’t convert it into anything” (Raven 2013). Meanwhile, Femen women have done the footwork, putting their own bodies and safety on the front lines, inspiring the Maidan Revolution, and even the Occupy Movement. In February 2016, Shevchenko was giving a talk about freedom of speech and women’s rights in Copenhagen, and she was fired at with a Kalashnikov over 200 times. While several people were killed or injured, miraculously, Shevchenko escaped. After receiving countless gruesome death threats, she had been waiting for the day when someone would try to kill her, and she dropped to the floor as soon as she heard shots ring out. The shooter, 22-year-old Omar al-Hussein, was shot dead by police.

What Charlotte Raven is referring to in her disparagement of the internet age is a common criticism of contemporary social media users, sometimes called ‘armchair activists’. Users will share content on their Facebook and Twitter accounts, and write strongly worded comments on articles and blogs about issues they presumably care about, but for some reason their activism does not progress to mobilization. The screen stultifies, and desires for change are soothed by clicking ‘like’ and ‘share’. Mustafa Nayyem, the Afghan-Ukrainian journalist who catalyzed the initial Maidan protest, posted an update on his Facebook page calling out this trend. He wrote: “Come on, let’s get serious. Who is ready to go out to the Maidan [...] by midnight tonight? ‘Likes’ don’t count” (Shore [2015](#)). Facebook users in particular will share post after post about injustices internationally, but never get involved in projects improving those situations. I sometimes refer to this kind of material as ‘sadporn’—users will watch horrifying videos of slaughtered children, police shootings, and Trump rallies, experience an intense moment of sadness, and then go on with their day.

What Charlotte Raven does not seem to realize is that Femen’s actions and their impacts are real, reminiscent of the theatrical and influential street protests of the 1960s and 1970s, which were often criticized for being fruitless at the time. Further, these street movements, whether at Ukrainian Maidan fighting for a democratic revolution, Femen demanding equality for women, Idle No More challenging colonial sovereignty over First Nations in Canada, the Black Lives Matter actions protesting police brutality and systemic racism, or the Fight for 15 strikes against wage slavery in the fast food industry in the United States, represent a powerful return to direct action people’s politics. Youth are tuned in online, as well as ‘unplugged’ in the street irl (‘in real life’), and the media revolution is an integral part of this shift. As Shevchenko says, there is

“no feminism in the street anymore. We are trying to push it” (*Femen - Sextremism in Paris*, 2013: 4:28).

In the *Feminist Times* article, Raven also criticizes Femen for performing for the male gaze. One of the important prospects of post-Beyoncé feminism is that members of Femen are not necessarily performing for the male gaze at all. In Noah Berlatsky’s article for the *Pacific Standard* (2014), he argues that Beyoncé’s fanbase is overwhelmingly comprised of women and gay men. He asks “if Beyoncé’s fans are mostly women and gay men, why the stripteases, the thrusting, the shaking, and the sexualized performances in general? If she’s not on display for the male gaze, who exactly is she on display for?” (Berlatsky 2014). Women and gay men are deriving scopophilic pleasure from Beyoncé’s thrusting and shaking, not straight men, who “have no interest in Beyoncé whatever, and even seem to be averse to her” (2014).

An important aspect of Mulvey’s analysis of the male gaze was the 1930’s Hollywood representations of women in positions of submission and sexual vulnerability. Beyoncé’s sexualized performances are powerful, and probably terrifying¹⁷ to the kind of straight men looking to consume a submissive image. The director positioning Greta Garbo on set to look meek and soft was not impressing the male gaze with sexuality, but with passivity and timidity. Beyoncé may be a heterosexual woman, but the sexuality represented in her performances on stage is not aimed to please heterosexual men in general. Likewise, Femen members are not screaming with their breasts exposed to get boyfriends or to make men happy, and neither are they trying to please feminist groups. Femen aim to inspire women with their brazen and radical

¹⁷ I acknowledge that this is a speculative comment. I was walking in a mall past a Victoria’s Secret underwear store in 2015, and noticed the massive floor-to-ceiling billboards featuring statuesque, bronzed, chiseled women wearing lingerie and standing in power postures. The man beside me gestured to the images, commenting that they were “intimidating and terrifying.” This comment made me question my assumptions about the different purposes, audiences, and intentions of the uses of female bodies for advertising.

actions to step outside the boundaries of what they are ‘allowed’ to do, no matter what other men or women think is appropriate. In that sense Femen are performing radical rebellion for the female gaze. Femen do not care about looking like ‘bad girls’ to politicians, the church, or moralizing women. Their message is speaking to women who are already working to tear down social constraints, and men who are prepared to be allies of women’s freedom of speech (see Figure 27). Building on Mulvey’s analysis, Femen’s public displays ‘destroy the pleasure’ of the image of the naked female body as compliant, vulnerable and private. Further, women, gay or straight, can derive scopophilic pleasure from the sight of Femen’s empowered self-representation, like the women and gay men who love Beyoncé, and who derive non-sexual scopophilic pleasure from her performances.

Femen’s international movement has gained much traction and popular support in social justice movements under repressive regimes, like Tunisia, Ukraine, Belarus, Egypt and Erdogan’s Turkey, but continues to face intense criticism from North American audiences. In May 2014, Neda Topaloski and Delphine Bergeron of Femen Canada protested at the Ottawa March For Life rally. The focus of the 2014 rally was to disallow Canadian women to take pills (called RU-486) which trigger menstruation up to seven weeks after pregnancy.

Neda Topaloski: We were protesting for every Canadian woman to have free access to abortion, in a medical and safe way. We were also protesting against the powerful lobbyists that work all year long to try to make abortion illegal. We want them to stop organizing these events and doing such massive propaganda against women. In a democracy like Canada, people should be stopped and denounced when they make anti-human lobbies. We want to drag the attention to the alliance of church and state on this abortion debate. It is extremely dangerous.

Interviewer: So you believe that church and state are working together here?

Yes, exactly. On Thursday the Archbishop of Quebec was on stage. He was speaking when we intervened. There were a couple members of parliament from Stephen Harper’s Conservative party, as well as senators, all together on one

side. Church and state are supposed to be separate. When you have political and religious leaders organizing these types of things, with history and money and power backing them, it worries FEMEN. Religion is way too close with the government. Together they are trying to achieve legislation against women's rights in general. (Hennessey 2014)

The interview with Vice was posted online, and the comments posted below it are not favourable. Reader Dan Andrew "Canadian Teacher" writes: "Well, as a man who supports feminism this is a total failure. Too bad most women think these two are idiots who went about this entirely the wrong way. Radicalism is for the Taliban not for privileged white women. If you want real change organise respectfully. The whole idea of Femen is to have "more women rebel" thats pretty pathetic [sic]. Way to make women's rights activists look like immature, angry teenagers with an attitude problem" (Hennessey 2014). Reactions to Femen in Canada have been lukewarm on the average.

Femen-style activism is more warmly embraced in countries that more closely resemble Ukraine economically and politically. The group inspires resistance in countries where dictatorships rule. In November 2015, journalist Can Dündar was imprisoned for publishing footage of the Erdogan regime in Turkey providing weapons to the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS, or ISIL in popular media coverage). In December, Inna Shevchenko and Femen France staged an action in support of the imprisoned journalists of Hurriyet, decrying the increasingly authoritarian government of Turkey under Erdogan. The Canadian branch of Femen also participated in this action (see Figure 31). Can Dündar wrote to Femen from prison, to say that the journalists were proud "to see our names written on the most effective rebellion boards of the recent years, on your breasts, just above your hearts. From Silivri with love and thanks, I salute your movement which is always on the side of those who are oppressed. Viva FEMEN! Yours, Can Dündar" (Eye for Protest 2015).

Femen responded that “FEMEN are proud to read those words, FEMEN are proud for the strong spirit and convictions of jailed journalists of Cumhuriyet. Our resistance goes on! FREEDOM TO CAN DÜNDAR AND ERDEM GÜL!” (femen.org).

Femen also organized a campaign of support for Raif Badawi, the Saudi Arabian blogger who was publicly flogged for publishing a website debate forum about the influence of religion on law. In 2012, he was arrested for “insulting Islam through electronic channels” and cited for apostasy, “a conviction which carries an automatic death sentence” (Haidar 2016). He was officially charged with "setting up a website that undermines general security", "ridiculing Islamic religious figures", and "going beyond the realm of obedience" (Haidar 2016). In 2013 Badawi was sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes, because his website "violates Islamic values and propagates liberal thought" (Haidar 2016). In May 2014, his sentence was amended to ten years in prison and 1000 lashes, and he was fined 1 million riyal. In January 2015, he was “flogged 50 times before hundreds of spectators in front of a Jeddah mosque, the first in a series of 1,000 lashes to be carried out in over twenty weeks” (Haidar 2016). This event was so widely publicized and criticized internationally that Badawi’s next scheduled flogging was postponed, and he has since been hospitalized. Badawi’s wife and children are living as asylum-seekers in Quebec, Canada. Many people have made statements of support for Raif Badawi, including Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Noam Chomsky, Sam Harris, and even Bono. Here is Femen’s statement of support:

If one considers that there are heroes in our time, Raif Badawi is definitely one of them. His simple sense of freedom is a threat to the entire dictatorial state of Saudi Arabia, his ideas and words are a revolution for us all. Whereas Saudi Arabia's bloody regime is torturing Raif's body and limiting his freedom through imprisonment, they cannot prevent making his ideas stronger and bigger... Badawi's ideas are everywhere now, in many people, and they are in me as well. Criticising religion is our duty today as Badawi's case proves it. It is what we are supposed to call 'freedom'. My only request will not be to the Saudi Arabian state

to release Raif (it wouldn't be successful anyways) but instead to Raif and everyone including you, to keep these ideas, to spread them more, to be proud of them, so that soon, everyone will be able to enjoy fully his freedom, including the heroic Raif Badawi.
We will win this fight!

Femen (femen.org 2016)

In March 2016, 36 year-old Iranian artist Moujan Mohammad Taher staged a topless action in Tehran with the words “I'd rather be a rebel not a slave” painted on her breasts (see Figure 56). She was speaking out against the Islamic Republic's new anti-woman laws and the increasing influence of religious clerics on governance in Iran. As an artist, she was frustrated that she could not make the kinds of films or art that she dreamed of. She issued this statement to her friend Hessam Yousefi in Germany to share with ‘western’ media:

My message to women is that they can be active inside Iran and demand their rights loudly... This kind of protest can give Iranian women more courage to engage in struggle against current conditions [...] I did this as a representative of all women who are not heard. I did it under very difficult and hard conditions, under the shadow of a government that arrests women who demonstrate, and throws them into prison. Women must have their own organizations and fight against unjust laws. They must support each other and go forward hand in hand. Without power and without knowledge and unity you cannot get anywhere. (Iranwire 2016)

Mohammed was inspired by Femen protests, particularly that of Alia Al Mahdi, the young Egyptian Femen activist fighting against the Islamicization of the Egyptian constitution. One day, after Al Mahdi's action, Mohammed saw that her friend and former classmate Solmaz Vakilpour had participated in a protest in Germany. She writes: “It gave me a very good feeling and I thought that I too could do a protest in a fundamental and radical way. We agreed that if the conditions were right both of us would participate in an act of protest. Almost a year after we talked, preparations were underway in Germany to stage a nude protest on March 8, International Women's Day. I decided to do the same thing in Iran on the same day” (Iranwire 2016).

Close friends who knew what Taher was planning tried to talk her out of it for her own safety, but her biggest critic was herself; she said in an interview with Iranwire that “it was very hard for me to break this taboo in my own head. I had to damage my reputation among close family members. Showing the body of a woman in Iran is breaking a taboo in itself. I very consciously wrote what I wanted to say on my body and got naked, even though I was afraid” (Iranwire 2016). Taher and her friend went to a park together, where Taher, both nervous and excited, took off her clothes while her friend quickly snapped the photograph. The entire action took just a few minutes. What seemed to be a tiny act of rebellion made a huge impact on social media; Taher’s image was shared and viewed by millions of people around the world. This is her perspective on the responses to her photograph:

Some think we should move forward slowly — or as they say, engage in reforms. But I hope the protest will ripple like throwing a stone into stagnant water. I am actually happy about the objections, because they show that my protest has been noticed. I hope that in the same way that Femen’s actions gave me the courage to do such a thing, my act will give others courage. (Iranwire 2016)

When the Femen movement began in Ukraine, the girls had only their own communities to fear. The relocation to France, and the subsequent chapters opening all over the world makes the movement truly international. Shevchenko writes flatly: “I get death threats from Islamists daily, they have murdered my friend and tried to kill me. The only thing I have done is to show breasts and say what I think. I intend to continue” (Dederson 2016). Despite the scathing critics, the challenges of becoming a global feminist movement, and the threats of violence and death from fundamentalists, the Femen movement continues to spread to different cities around the world and to non-violently combat corruption, tyranny, and injustice the best that they can.

Bare Breasts, a Femen Hymn by Paris-based band Western Fiasco

Our cause is human
Our god is woman
Our mission is protest
Our weapons are bare breasts
Our bosom, for freedom
Vagina, our kingdom
Our mind, our battle, a fight

You're the slut, you're the whore
Merciless and hardcore
Male domination in our head
Why don't you stick it in your ass instead?

Our cause is human
Our god is woman
Our mission is protest
Our weapons are bare breasts
Our bosom, for freedom
Vagina, our kingdom
Our mind, our battle, a fight

(Western Fiasco, 2013)

CHAPTER 4

The Goddess and Activism

When I was a student at Cambridge, I remember a professor holding up a picture of a bone with 28 incisions carved in it. 'This is often considered to be man's first attempt at a calendar,' she explained. 'My question to you is this – what man needs to mark 28 days? I would suggest to you that this is woman's first attempt at a calendar.' It was a moment that changed my life. In that second I stopped to question almost everything I had been taught about the past.

—Sandi Toksvig
(“Sandi Toksvig’s Top 10 Unsung Heroines”, 2009)

4.1 God the Father

Don't play stupid, don't play dumb
Vagina's where you're really from
—Pussy Riot
(*Straight Outta Vagina*, 2016)

In 2012 I worked at a program at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario called *Future Quest*. It was intended to promote the Religious Studies program of Queen’s University to interested teens. The program was described in a brochure as a non-denominational “summer experience for youth” which was “exploring community, theology and leadership” (Future Quest 2012). Participants visited a variety of ‘religious centres’ to participate in or observe ritual practices of different groups in the Kingston area. For most of them, it was their first time in a mosque, Cathedral, temple, or non-Protestant community centre.

“I prayed in a mosque,” said one participant to her father when he came to pick her up from camp. “I got down on my knees and prayed to Allah. They pray to God just like us, dad;

we're all one people.” He turned angrily to me as a facilitator and said: “My daughter ain’t no Islam.” The program coordinator explained to me that ‘non-denominational’ for many meant ‘both Protestant and Catholic.’

The group attended a small Catholic service. The priest began by saying that he knew we were a non-denominational group, and that he was open to all the names of god because Catholicism is an inclusive tradition. This made me feel welcome despite not being a Catholic, and during a group prayer that involved reading from a screen, I participated and exchanged ‘Goddess’ for the word ‘God’. The priest was so angry with me that I thought he was going to hit me. I remember how confused I felt. Why was he so angry? I could not understand his reaction. If Catholicism is an inclusive tradition, and if Catholics believe that ‘God’ is just a name for what is a universal deity, then why did feminine pronouns disturb the priest so deeply that I felt like he was going to strike me? Why did the goddess scare him so much?

Since then, I encountered Hanisch’s (1970) feminist slogan, “the personal is political”, and Goldenberg’s (2015) twist, “the religious is political”, and it became clear. There is no such thing as personal religious belief for women. Everything women do with their bodies is a political statement subject to policing; Muslim women can’t wear a scarf without someone potentially ripping it off, everywhere in the world. Calling on the Goddess, whether I chose it to be so or not, was an inherently political act. Invoking the goddess is activism.

Self-described feminist freethinker¹⁸ novelist Katha Pollitt gave a talk at *Women in Secularism II*, a Washington D.C. conference in 2013 entitled “Sexism and Religion: Can the

¹⁸ ‘Freethinker’ is an alternative term for a secularist or atheist. ‘Freethinker’ is different than ‘secularist’ because the latter term preserves a religion/secular binary, which in turn re-inscribes the problematic category of religion. It is different than ‘atheist’ because the movement is not focused on disproving a Christian or Muslim deity, as ‘atheist’ implies, but on turning to science and reason for public decision-making, as well as justice-grounded social theory. For more information about the Freethinking movement, see Annie Gaylor’s work. Gaylor, Annie Laurie. *Women Without Superstition: ‘No Gods, No Masters’*. (Madison, Wisconsin: Freedom from Religion Foundation, 1997)

Knot be Untied?” After the talk, a member of the audience asked her what the world would look like if the ‘end goals¹⁹ of the feminist and atheist movements’ were achieved. She responded that for feminist and freethinking objectives to be realized in society it would mean opening a history book and finding that they had always been popular. Pollitt is describing the feminist (and Critical History) understanding that historical narratives are embedded within a discourse of patriarchal hegemony. In the words of Gloria Steinem’s famous rally refrain, ‘women have always been an equal part of the past, we just haven’t been a part of history’. (Or, more ironically, “the history of the world is but the biography of great men,” to quote Thomas Carlyle in *Heroes and Hero-Worship, The Hero as Divinity*, 1840). For example, the first named author in known history is the Akkadian/Sumerian poet Enheduanna (living in approximately 4300 before present), but her name is little-known, even to historians. Pollitt calls the process of bringing women’s histories into the cultural imaginaire ‘seeking the usable past’ (Pollitt 2013).

Roland Barthes (1972) writes that mythology is depoliticized speech; the de-politicization inherent to the category of ‘history’ is the underlying power relations driving the narrative. When history is called ‘the account of what happened’, the reader has forgotten that, to quote Virginia Woolf, “nothing has really happened until it has been described” (Nicolson 2000). History is a mythology of ourselves—with ‘ourselves’ as the privileged authors and authorities of history-writing. Mythology narrates the plot of the present. According to Pollitt, the scholarship of drawing out the historical significance of women in mythology and history is a necessary precondition for civic rights for women in contemporary times. For example, in ancient Sparta,

¹⁹ Merely as an aside, I want to iterate that while feminist actions or feminist movements may have end goals, such as repealing a particular law, gaining particular human rights like voting, or getting public funding for necessary services, ‘feminism’ as a theoretical discourse does not have ‘end goals’. Theory is fluid, and feminist theory is dependent on context. Feminism shifts as the notion of ‘feminine’ shifts. The goal posts are always moving with the discourse.

women were granted full citizenship at the age of 18, including the right to own and inherit property. Since women lived much longer than men and so many men died in war, a significant portion of the land in Sparta belonged to and was managed by women (Gagne 2013). The Spartan political system was split between the assembly of soldiers, presided over by men aged sixty or more (the *gerousia*), and the two royal houses, where daughters and queens were vocal representatives. In the 2006 Hollywood film *300* chronicling Spartan heroism in the battle of Thermopylae, Queen Gorgo addresses the *gerousia*, and she is chastised for entering a male space. The script reads: “my little whore queen... Remove her from this chamber before she infects us further with her inglorious and shabby self” (*300* 2006). In a previous scene, she was raped by the man who chastises her in the council chamber. (“This will not be over quickly; you will not enjoy this...”) The pop-culture glorification of rape culture combined with the erasure of women as state figures in ancient Sparta in the ‘retelling’ of *300* patterns contemporary misogyny anachronistically onto an ancient context. Proleptically disempowering Spartan women justifies a contemporary environment in which women are disenfranchised from state leadership. Pollitt’s argument is to tell the stories of feminism and atheism in history. These stories form the basis of a new mythology to inspire the present. Andrew Robinson (2011) writes that “they must return to the level of constituent power or the creative social imaginary to generate the new set of myths, and to pit these myths against the fixity, the apparent obviousness and eternity, of the existing social order.” Changing the mythology changes reality. Although the angry priest told me to use whatever inclusive language I wished to use, when I invoked the Goddess he must have felt at some level that ‘religion’ is not some ubiquitous, universal category making reference to an eternal, unchanging deity; the god-image is the god.

What Pollitt and others' work recognizes is that the mythology of a supreme universal male God is analogous to a social conditioning of male supremacy. Carol Christ argues that "[r]eligions centred on the worship of a male God create 'moods' and 'motivations' that keep women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, while at the same time legitimating the *political* and *social* authority of fathers and sons in the institutions of society" (Stone 1978: 365). Mary Daly (1973) argues in *Beyond God the Father* that the term 'mankind' is neither a mistake nor a universal; books and articles which use 'mankind' are referring only to men and must be read as such to be understood.²⁰ Naomi Goldenberg takes this critique one step further, arguing that not only does God the Father reify male dominance, but that "the category of religion is always a support for male hegemony" (2013). According to Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, discourses on religion take place in constant reference to a hegemonic Cultural Christianity, namely Christian notions of governance, sexuality and gender duality policing, patriarchy, personal exclusive relationship to a modern Christian God-image, and particularly Christian notions of secularism (2008). The category of religion, perpetually privileging a Christian framework, inherits and re-inscribes the patriarchal social arrangements advocated by Christian traditions. Pollitt argues that "religious texts are the rulebooks of misogyny", and Nongbri explains how the category of religion itself protects (and even invents) these texts (2012).²¹ The World Religions Paradigm, reducing complex cultural formations to a

²⁰ See Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* for a more detailed explanation of the unreadability of the 'sisterhood of man'.

Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973)

²¹ In *Before Religion*, Nongbri gives the example of the first written mention of "the religion of India" by Henry Lord, an agent of the East India Trading Company and chaplain, who in 1630 wrote about "a booke of theirs called the SHASTER, which is to them as their Bible, containing the grounds of their Religion in written word" (Lord 110-111 in Nongbri 2012: 208). Nongbri writes that "'Shaster' in all likelihood refers to the Sanskrit term *śāstra*, which is a general term for a rulebook rather than the name of a specific text" (2012: 208). This is an example of the way that the category of religion invents examples of 'religion' around a Christian framework, including the textual literalism produced by the Protestant Reformation.

Nongbri, Brent. *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. (New Haven: Yale, 2012)

Christian definition, promotes the most conservative interpretations of these groups as the ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ versions. The further a group moves away from the Christian norm, the less they are validated by the state definition of religion.²² Groups with female deities or no deities at all, non-Christian family social arrangements, or non-preoccupation with death are tenuously marginalized to the fringes of the category as ‘spirituality’ or ‘alternative movements’.

Muslim feminist public intellectuals like Maryam Namazie or Ayaan Hirsi Ali who challenge misogyny in Islam are ignored or attacked as ‘not really Muslim’ by male ‘religious’ leaders, men preserving male power in the state, and even some intersectional feminists who hesitate to support critiques of Islam for fear that they might be racist. Muslim feminists are at times left with little support from some other feminist communities, whose critiques stop at the ideological wall built around the category of religion. This can sometimes be a problem within liberal communities generally; Muslim activist Maajid Nawaz calls this “Islamsplaining”²³ (2016).

Through the counter-extremism organisation Quilliam that I founded, I have spent eight years defending my Muslim communities in Europe, Pakistan and beyond from the diktats of Islamist theocrats. I have also argued for the liberal reform of Islam today, from within. But, in a naively dangerous form of neo-Orientalism, the SPLC [Southern Poverty Law Center] just arrogated to itself the decision over which debates we Muslims may have about reforming our own religion, and which are to be deemed beyond the pale. Let us call it “Islamsplaining.” In a monumental failure of comprehension, the SPLC have conflated my challenge to Islamist theocracy among my fellow Muslims with somehow being “anti-Muslim.” The regressive left is now in the business of issuing fatwas against Muslim reformers. (Nawaz 2016)

²² The Canadian government’s definition of religion is built on a case-by-case basis via precedent. For example, federal Crown attorneys Nicholas Devlin and Donna Polga denied the claims of the Church of the Universe case on the basis that the movement “offers no insight or answers into the existential questions (of) ‘ultimate concern’ which are the chief domain of religion; offers no comprehensive system of belief by which to live and offers no moral or ethical code”.

Saint-Cyr, Yosie. “Defining Religion Under the Charter—Church of the Universe Case.” *Slaw: Canada’s Online Legal Magazine*. (April 15 2010. Accessed February 15 2016. Retrieve at <http://www.slw.ca/2010/04/15/defining-religion-under-the-charter%E2%80%95church-of-the-universe-case/>)

²³ “Islamsplaining” remixes the feminist term ‘mansplaining’, which refers to when a man will patronizingly explain something to a woman that she has well qualified knowledge of.

In public discourse, the category of religion is reserved for what is conservative and regressive, so attempts by Nawaz and others toward reform are fiercely criticized for resembling the ‘occidental secular’ category. Nawaz explains that the SPLC’s characterization of him as “anti-Muslim” is in the best interests of theocrats, “who argue that any internal criticism is but heresy”, as well as the best interests of xenophobes, who argue that “every Muslim is a jihadist in waiting” (Nawaz 2016). The SPLC seeks to reduce Islamophobia, but by defining Islam in particularly conservative ways, they are reinforcing the construction of a ‘straw Muslim’ who is regressive and conservative. Scholars of Religious Studies who struggle to pin down a universal, timeless definition of a thing called ‘religion’, without recognizing the contingency of the term, are condemning all groups to be stuck within the narrow limitations of the category.

Muslim feminists like Riffat Hassan (1979), Fazlur Rahman (1984, 2002), Amina Wadud (1992), Sa’diyya Shaikh (1997), Asma Barlas (2002), Azizah Al-Hibri (2003), and Aysha Hidayatullah (2014) are reclaiming Islam by subverting the patriarchal domination of *tafsir*—exegetical interpretation of Islamic texts—as well as taking aim at the Christianization and patriarchalization of Islam. Hidayatullah’s book *Feminist Edges of the Qur’an* examines the “use of dynamic epistemological tools to challenge the abuse of male power in the interpretation of the Qur’an” (p. 45). The notion of ‘God the Father’ is contrary to the many citations within Muslim texts and traditions expressing the female aspects of Allah. Hassan (1979) investigates the Garden of Eden story in the Qur’an, noting that although it does not include verses about women being made from men’s ribs like the Christian version, some Muslims have been conditioned to believe that it does. Hidayatullah places particular emphasis on contextualizing the suras, noting that “reading the Qur’an historically does not limit its meaning to the context of revelation; rather, reading the Qur’an historically allows the Qur’an to be read in light of

changing historical circumstances, thus making it relevant and applicable universally. In other words, to read the Qur'an in historical context is to uphold the Qur'an's universality" (2014: 66). She also uses the verses about idolatry to discuss equality, arguing that "sexism is a form of idolatry since it attributes a God-like role for men over women (2014: 110). Hassan, Wadud, and Al-Hibri draw inspiration from the figure of Hajar (Hagar in the Christian tradition) as a foremother of Islam and feminist theology icon. Wadud explores the trials of Hajar as a single mother abandoned by Abraham, making her own way and founding a nation. The field of feminist Quranic tafsir defies Orientalist characterizations of Islam by offering a uniquely Muslim methodology for renewing the movement to fit non-Arab contexts.

5.2 Feminist Theology

Rita Gross' (1996) *Feminism and Religion* argues that "when contemporary academic scholars study the history of a religious tradition, they usually focus on what the tradition itself has emphasized—the records of its male heroes" (p. 72). The recourse to patriarchal ways of approaching traditions leaves dismal options for women, and necessitates both critique of these modes of knowledge production and the excavation of women's stories from the accounts.

In his book *God as Woman, Woman as God*, J. Edgar Bruns (1973) excavates a usable past for women by chronicling the story of Pope Joan, a woman who allegedly ascended to the papacy. He wrote that a young woman from England fell in love with a wandering scholar, who took her to Rome disguised as a man named 'John'. John was exceedingly intelligent and attracted a great deal of attention, including a following of brilliant disciples. S/he became Pope from 855-858, but was discovered when she gave birth. Bruns records that the story was widely known "from the thirteenth century to the time of the Reformation. No one seems to have

thought it an unlikely story, and at least three popes could not have found it embarrassing since they made no effort to remove the portrait of Pope John (Joanna) which had been placed in the Cathedral of Siena, where each of them had sat as archbishop before assuming the papal tiara” (Bruns 1973: 74). He writes that Olivetanus (Marius Equicola d’Alveto) argued in the early sixteenth century that the election of Pope Joan was proof that God “wished to make clear that women are not inferior to men” (Bruns 1973: 74). The example of Pope Joan demonstrates the importance of the recovery of usable history; although the contemporary Catholic Church argues that Pope Joan was never real, her story inspired Olivetanus to argue for the personhood of women in the 1500s.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s text *In Memory of Her* demonstrates the importance of feminist exegesis. She writes:

In Mark’s passion narrative, there are three major characters, two well-known men, Judas and Peter, and the nameless, who anoints Jesus. Of her, Jesus says:

“And truly I say to you, wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be retold in memory of her” (Mark 14:9).

The inconsistencies in our New Testament sources indicate that the early Christian traditioning and redactional processes followed certain androcentric interests and perspectives. Therefore the androcentric selection and transmission of early Christian traditions have manufactured the historical marginality of women, but they are not a reflection of the historical reality of women’s participation in the early Christian movement. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995: 52)

This passage of *In Memory of Her* examines the discrepancy between the content of the Biblical quote within the text, Christ commanding that she be remembered, and the erasure of the woman’s name in the transmission of the quote. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that assumptions about the patriarchal organization of early Christian movements are inaccurate and require deeper investigation.

Schüssler Fiorenza draws attention to the nameless women erased from the textual record. Other exegetes make contributions to feminist work through the resurrection of stories of women from Biblical texts, like Karen King's (2003) important translations of Gnostic texts and research on the historical role of Mary Magdalene in her book *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. This book and its implications have profoundly affected studies of Early Christianity. King's work is a reminder that advances in theological scholarship for the voices of women are recent, with much potential for elaboration.

No discussion of feminist theology would be complete without exploring Mary Daly. Daly began her feminist exegetical work by writing a careful and well-evidenced critique of the church in 1968, *The Church and the Second Sex*. By 1973, she decided that the only way for the church to change was for women to leave it in a mass exodus. In *Beyond God the Father*, Daly (1973) used more poetic and mythical language to discuss and develop the ideas laid out in *The Church and the Second Sex*. The chapter "Exorcising Evil from Eve: The Fall into Freedom" critiqued the notion of Eve the sinner and women as sinners. Other themes explored in *Beyond God the Father* include the concept of Christolatry, phallic morality, and the Death of God the Father, as well as the development of 'Sisterhood' as an escape from patriarchal religion. Daly described Sisterhood as a "Cosmic Covenant" that is enacted when women declare themselves witches (1973: 159).

In 1972 Rosemary Ruether named the shift away from doctrinal Christianity in women's spirituality the "awakening of a critical consciousness" in her book *Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power* (p. 164). Ruether developed the theory of woman-church, paralleling the Christian notion of the Church as the bride of Christ. Daly and Ruether's 1970s writings were representative of the growing collective agitation of women

unrepresented in the icons and ideologies of their church traditions. Rita Gross (1996) drew attention to the continued lack of representation of women in institutional worship settings, particularly in Buddhism, her area of focus. She notes:

The female life cycle, including menarche, menstruation, menopause, and even childbirth, is completely uncelebrated and unmarked in most traditional liturgies. Divorce, abortion, lesbian sexual orientation, the trauma of sexual violence—these common experiences of women do not even exist in the vocabulary of most conventional liturgy. (Gross 1996: 205)

What many women felt they were missing in churches they found or built in the Goddess movement. Lithuanian archaeologist and philologist Marija Gimbutas's (1989) work was central to the Goddess movement. Based on her archaeological findings, she developed the Kurgan Thesis, or the theory that Old European societies were goddess-worshipping, peaceful societies which were structured around economic equality, and that these cultures were invaded by Indo-European andocrats in the Bronze Age. Gimbutas photographs and documents over 12,000 female figurines. Proponents of the Goddess movement are motivated by the idea of a 'usable history' for women to cite a mythological narrative of equality that pre-dates the Christian patriarchy narrative. Elinor Gadon (1989) writes "[I]n reclaiming the Goddess, in recovering our full human history as men and women, we can learn other patterns of behavior. We can redress the imbalance between the human species and our natural environment, between men and women, exploring the possibility of living in harmony and justice with all things" (p. xv).

Now, as much as ever, the field of Religious Studies benefits from the research being carried out in feminist theology. As Leslie McCall argues, feminist theory is uniquely positioned to both acknowledge difference and to transgress the limitations of hegemonies (2005: 308).²⁴

²⁴ "[F]eminist researchers [are] acutely aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category. In fact, feminists are perhaps alone in the academy in the extent to which they have embraced intersectionality—the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations—as itself a central category of analysis."

Mary Daly (1973) wrote that the stories of women have historically been treated as “nondata” (p. 11). Through exegesis and tafsir, these stories are heard and understood, making space for mythologies of liberation.

5.3 Why Women Need the Goddess

A woman who echoes Ntosake Shange's dramatic statement, "I found God in myself and I loved her fiercely," is saying "Female power is strong and creative." She is saying that the divine principle, the saving and sustaining power, is in herself, that she will no longer look to men or male figures as saviors. The strength and independence of female power can be intuited by contemplating ancient and modern images of the Goddess.

—Carol P. Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess”
(Christ 1979: 367)

“Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections” is a chapter by Carol Christ in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (1979). Christ addresses the question: “does the emergence of the symbol of Goddess among women have significant political and psychological ramifications for the feminist movement?” (p. 364). In *The Church and the Second Sex*, Mary Daly uses Simone de Beauvoir’s theory from *The Second Sex* that “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman” to explore the role of the Catholic Church in ‘making’ women (Beauvoir 1952: 267). Daly was influenced by the growing Goddess movement, and criticized the Catholic Church for its focus on death. She compared the Tree of Life in the Goddess movement to “the Christian cross, the dead wood rack to which a dying body is fastened with nails” (Daly 1978: 56). Despite her excoriating critiques of the church, Daly considered herself a Catholic feminist theologian, leading the revolution from within the movement. It seems that the Goddess was not a theological object to Daly, but an

McCall, Leslie. “The Complexity of Intersectionality.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. (vol. 30, no. 3. Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2005) p. 308.

analytical tool of symbolic significance. The question of whether or not group members ‘believe in’ the Goddess or ‘merely’ appreciate her as a cultural symbol is frequent within the groups I study. In “Why Women Need the Goddess”, Christ discusses whether the Goddess is “out there”, or is a symbol which represents female power (1979: 368). Following Pollitt’s argument and Barthes’ theory, this distinction—between “out there” and symbolic—is unnecessary because both the literal divine and the Goddess as discourse of power are co-constitutive.²⁵ Christ remarks that discourse “transforms mythos into ethos, symbol system into social and political reality. Symbols have both psychological and political effects, because they create the inner conditions (deep-seated attitudes and feelings) that lead people to feel comfortable with or to accept social and political arrangements that correspond to the symbol system” (1979: 365). She challenges us to imagine not only what God the Mother looks like, but what a society worshipping God the Mother would look like. She argues that “women's unique position as menstruants, birthgivers, and those who have traditionally cared for the young and the dying” would add a dimension to the social and political world ignored by worshippers of God the Father (1979: 369).

“Feminist priestess” Starhawk invoked the Goddess as a feminist statement, practicing “feminist witchcraft” (Christ 1979: 371). She broke down the religion/secular binary by refusing to acknowledge the ideological separation between the Goddess as ‘religion’ and the Goddess as a political symbol. In “The Three Faces of Goddess Spirituality”, Merlin Stone explains the movement from the perspective of the group *The Great Goddess Collective*. She writes:

The first aspect of Goddess spirituality is the emerging interest in the history and prehistory of ancient cultures that worshipped a female deity and in the laws and customs of those societies. Through research in archaeology, history,

²⁵ The distinction—between “out there” Goddess and symbolic Goddess—is unnecessary because both the literal divine and the Goddess as discourse of power are co-constitutive, like male authority in the Church as well as in the state.

anthropology—and using this information to analyze ancient literature and mythology—we have begun to discover that far from the generally accepted idea that the Judeo-Christian religions rescued women from supposedly more barbarian and anti-woman societies, women have actually lost a great deal of status and physical and material autonomy since the inception of these and other male-worshipping religions. [...] The second aspect is that of a growing concern with a feminist perception of spirituality and theology. [...] The third aspect of Goddess spirituality is concerned with the more circumspect observation of the organized male-worshipping, male-clerical religions of today—an examination of the specific ways in which these religions have instituted and maintained a secondary status for women. (Stone 1978: 1-2)

Whether intentional or not, invoking the Motherhood of God is a political statement.

In a paper²⁶ delivered at a conference in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Naomi Goldenberg said “I would like to see a Goddess Movement that is not a religion” (2016). This is how I see Femen—as a collective of women who believe in their power and who are not vestigial. Feminist theology and the Goddess Movement of the 1960s and 1970s manoeuvred at the edges of the religion/secular binary. The contemporary Goddess Movement and feminist theology, as evidenced through groups like Femen, Pussy Riot²⁷, and the Native Faith movement, are moving into a space beyond the binary.

Imagine the ancient Ukrainian goddess Mokosh rising up from the fields, shaking off the dirt and slapping the cold of a long hibernation out of her hands, her feet firmly rooted in the earth. Unafraid and unashamed, she wears nothing but a crown of flowers in her hair. She

²⁶ The paper was called “What is this Slouching Toward Bethlehem?: Is it a New Feminist Defense of Religion?” Goldenberg, Naomi. “What is this Slouching Toward Bethlehem?: Is it a New Feminist Defense of Religion?” Presented at *Feminisms Beyond the Secular: Epistemologies and Politics for the 21st Century*. (Lehigh University, Bethlehem Pennsylvania. March 22 2016)

²⁷ Pussy Riot is a feminist Russian punk band started in 2011. Performers wear colourful balaclavas on their heads and protest the collusion of the church and state, supported by an anarchist collective that helps with the logistics of the performances. They only perform in illegal locations. Their 2012 ‘flashmob’ performance of the song “Punk Prayer: Mother of God, Drive Putin Away” at Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow resulted in two members being sentenced to several years in a Russian penal colony. “We were deeply saddened that you allowed the Church to become a weapon in a dirty election campaign,” they wrote on their blog, referring to Patriarch Kirill’s public endorsement of Vladimir Putin’s electoral campaign. Russia. “Pussy Riot Hit Back at Church Criticism.” *Sputnik News*. (March 27 2012. Accessed March 30 2012. Retrieve at <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20120327172417090/>)

grows larger and stronger to non-violently oppose the destruction of the earth. In the contemporary moment, she looks like Femen. The protest group's larger-than-life, outrageous, and fearless demonstrations are an ode to a contemporary embodiment of the goddess, free of distinctions of secular or religious.

CHAPTER 5

Between Caliph and Republic in Turkey and the Hizmet Movement

5.1 Gezi Park

Don't it always seem to go? You don't know what you got til it's gone; they paved paradise, and put up a parking lot.

—Joni Mitchell

(Big Yellow Taxi, 1970)

In the early morning hours of May 27, 2013, a group of approximately fifty Turkish environmentalists headed to Gezi Park, one of the last large green spaces in the crowded city of Istanbul. The government had decided to raze the park adjacent to fashionable Taksim Square and build “luxury residences and a shopping mall” (Varol, Ferrara, Ogan et al. 2014: 3). The intrepid protesters marched nervously to the park, and sat down in front of the bulldozers. Except for the shouting of a few frustrated workers who just wanted to get on with the demolition, the sit-in was quiet and peaceful. The protesters did not leave. On May 30, 2013, police entered the park with tear gas and water cannons, and applied forceful measures to oust the demonstrators, resulting in several injuries. The use of severe measures against the peaceful protesters sparked outrage in Turkey. Thousands of people joined the protest, building an encampment in Gezi Park, and thousands of protesters were fed each day with donations solicited via the social network Twitter (see Figures 57-59). Some statistics suggest that up to 3.5 million Turks participated in protests and general strikes, not only in Gezi Park, but in major cities across the country in May and June of 2013 (Bellaigue 2013). In particular, a photograph

of a woman in a red dress being blasted with tear gas at close range by an officer became a symbol for the movement (see Figure 60). ‘The Woman in Red’ was shared by millions on social media, and her image was used in posters, on stickers and in advertisements for the movement. Erdoğan called the protesters ‘radical terrorists’; the woman, later identified as Turkish academic Ceyda Sungur, appears to be just an average citizen walking through the park in her simple red dress, a white bag over her shoulder. The contrasting iconography of Sungur against the police officer in riot gear spraying her from a metre away is striking. Her silhouette inspired hundreds of artistic derivatives (see Figures 61 and 62). Pelin Turgut interviews a protester at the park, Ali Riza Gurs:

“It’s grown like an avalanche,” Gurs said, beaming. “I haven’t really slept. I haven’t gone to work. This sense of solidarity is a super feeling.” He is one of thousands who have turned what began as an environmental protest into an experiment in social change. (Turgut 2013)

The threat to destroy Gezi Park was only the beginning; Turkish people came out into the streets to protest police brutality and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s increasingly authoritarian and increasingly Islamist regime. Like the protests following the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine in the 1980s, environmental degradation was the conduit through which many more politically volatile frustrations were expressed. Liberal and moderate citizens were getting nervous about Erdoğan’s turn to right-wing extremism after Turkey’s historic struggles toward secularism. What made this protest different than the well-organized anti-Erdoğan protests by upper-class secularists during the election was that it managed to involve the middle class. Turgut describes the atmosphere in the neighbourhood adjacent to Gezi Park:

My apartment in central Istanbul is now part of the ‘Occupied Zone’. No cars rumble by, just a sea of very cheery people, witty hand-drawn posters, graffiti, tents and makeshift barricades. My friends have become expert demonstrators. They carry goggles and masks in their bags and mix bottles of detergent water against the sting of tear gas. My sister takes her toddler to sit in the park. At 9pm,

everyone in the neighborhood comes outside and bangs loudly on saucepans in protest. The middle class has turned militant and their mood is catching. (Turgut 2013)

The modern state of Turkey, bordering the south of the Black Sea with Ukraine bordering the north, has a long and interesting historical relationship to Islam, a community that was founded in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Abdul-Muttalib ibn Hashim, colloquially referred to as Prophet Mohammed, united Arabia into one large polity, creating an urban legal framework and colonizing diverse indigenous regional systems. He enlisted the support of younger sons of prosperous merchants, and men who had failed to earn higher status within their tribes (Watt 1977: 36). When he died without a male heir, his friend and associate Abu Bakr was elected as the first Caliph, or leader of the community. The position then became monarchical, and the Umayyads, and then the Abbasids ruled. In 1517, Selim I, then Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, conquered the Egyptian Sultanate, annexing the entire caliphate, including the special cities of Mecca and Medina in the Arabian Peninsula. He forced the Abbasids to surrender the title of Caliph, along with the symbolic Mantle of Muhammed and his sword (Latif 2015). These have been kept ever since in Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. According to Paul Pitman, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire was called *padishah* (‘highest king’) by the Persians, the ‘Emperor’ by the Christians after the capture of Constantinople, and “[a]mong the Turks he was, as his nomadic warrior forebears had been, the khan, a master of the tribal ruling class” (1987). After Selim I, the Sultan was also called Caliph by the Arabs, signifying that he was the “chief executor” of Islamic sharia law and master of the Ummah, or the Muslim diaspora (Pitman 1987). Pitman writes that within the cosmopolitan Ottoman Empire “[a]ll offices were filled by his authority, and all legislation was issued by him in the form of a *firman* (decree). He was supreme military commander, and he had basic title to

all land” (1987). The Ottoman system structurally informed later ways of thinking about the role of the caliph.

The region enjoyed several generations of prosperity and expansion, and although the elite class was comprised mostly of wealthy, educated Muslims, the empire supported pluralism. At one time, Christians comprised up to 80% of the population of the Ottoman imperial territory (Alkhateeb 2013). As the empire began to decline, Christian countries to the west began poaching territories of the Ottoman Empire occupied by Christians. At the turn of the twentieth century, nationalist movements, mentioned earlier in relation to Eastern Europe, agitated within imperial borders all over Europe and Asia, and countries like Bulgaria emerged from the Ottoman Empire as independent states with a distinct culture and language. Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II consolidated the remaining Muslim-majority territory in 1900—he could be called the first Islamist, in the sense of galvanizing a protectionist ideology of Muslim nationalism and expelling non-Muslims from the empire (Vogt, Larsen and Moe 2009). Under the direction of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman caliphate committed a mass genocide of the Armenian population within Ottoman borders, as well as the ethnic cleansing of Assyrians and Pontic Greeks. This earned him the title of “Bloody Sultan”, and was the beginning of the end of the empire. In July 1908, the Young Turk Revolution broke out, where a group of young educated ethnic Turks frustrated by censorship and repression revolted against the conservative, old-fashioned caliphate institution, which “stood for ignorance, backwardness, corruption and decline” (Mango 2011: 11). Abdülhamid II capitulated immediately to their liberal reforms, including the restoration of the suspended constitution and lifting restrictions from education. During World War I, Abdülhamid II joined the Central Powers, the alliance of Germany,

Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria. The Central Powers were ultimately defeated by the Triple Entente, and the Ottoman Empire dissolved into several new states.

Mustafa Kemal, an Ottoman military commander who had been fighting the Russians on the Eastern front when the Russian Revolution broke out, had travelled to the German front and realized that the Central Powers would lose the war (“Atatürk” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1987: 490). He resigned his position in the Ottoman army and made plans to create a state of ethnic Turks which he would arm and defend while the Entente forces conquered other Ottoman territories, like Syria, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and others. Kemal founded the Turkish National Movement, and led and won the War of Independence. Mustafa Kemal was given the honorary name Atatürk, meaning “Father of the Turks” (Mango 2011: 1). He founded the modern state of Turkey.

This state was no caliphate. Atatürk was committed to building a modern secular democracy free of dogma, which he felt had led to the decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire. He said “[i]f someday my teachings conflict with science, choose science” (Tyler 2015). He moved to ideologically separate the caliphate from the Sultanate. The caliphate was the judiciary foundation of the Islamic state, and Atatürk did not believe it was an adequate system of governance for the modern state, which required a mechanism of legislative reform to adapt to a rapidly changing world. By separating the Sultanate and caliphate, he was able to overthrow the monarchical political system and its powerful royalty without interfering with the lower-order Muslim administrators who provided social services to the public. He institutionalized the roles of clerics and imams as public servants, and abolished the royal family. Islamic courts were replaced by a legal system based on the Swiss legal code. Atatürk built thousands of new schools, and had a new alphabet created with Latin-derived letters for the Turkish language. Al-

Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin emphasize that the new written Turkish language to be taught in the new public education system would provide a mechanism of Turkification of the new citizenry, so that being Muslim was not the primary identity factor tying them together (2012: 46). Primary education was made compulsory for girls and boys, and all women were granted equal civic rights to men (Tyler 2015). All clerics had to pray and perform the call to prayer in the Turkish language—Atatürk remains the only leader in the world to have instituted this change. He was concerned that Islamism would subsume the Turkish identity within a universalizing ideology. If he rid the state of Islamist politics then he could build a state for the Turkish people, who he saw as culturally unique and pre-Islamic.

Atatürk was charismatic and won widespread support from the Turks, both civilian and military. He was embraced as a powerful conqueror and was offered the position of Caliph, in the same way that Selim I had taken it in the sixteenth century. He refused the title. Atatürk was staunchly opposed to dynastic rule, believing that monarchical systems were corrupt; he intentionally produced no biological offspring, instead adopting many daughters as well as a son and providing them with excellent education. Atatürk was a scientist and felt that ‘sacred texts’ had served their purpose and were now eclipsed by more relevant contemporary philosophies, and he was a socialist who supported building a strong middle class by shifting the burden of taxation off peasants and distributing it more democratically (Mango 2011).

The caliphate continued and Abdülmecid II was elected in 1922. Atatürk immediately became concerned that there would be conflict between the new republican government and the caliphate system when Abdülmecid II attended public ceremonies and engaged in international relations as though he were a head of state. Not only that, but Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin

note that opposition forces were plotting to use the Caliph's authority to overthrow Atatürk (2012: 44).

In 1924 Atatürk abolished the caliphate in Turkey as well, and transferred the personal military and personal treasury of the Caliph's office to the state. The caliphate was made vestigial, and became a private organization separate from the modern state. In May 1926, A Caliphate Conference was hosted in Cairo to discuss the future of pan-Islamism. A resolution was passed that the caliphate was necessary to the future of Muslims, and several candidates came forward from Egypt and Tunis, but no leader or family was selected to take the title (Vogt, Larsen, and Moe 2011). Further conferences were held in Mecca and Jerusalem, but again no decisions were made.

Although Atatürk nominally founded a democracy, he ruled autocratically as the head of a one-party system until his death in 1938. Atatürk never endorsed Communism, but his one-party government, with widespread socialist and liberal reforms, and state management of religious institutions, in many ways mirrored Vladimir Lenin's government in Imperial Russia taking power at exactly the same time. When Lenin died suddenly and Stalin took over the Soviet Union, he jealously guarded the vast imperial borders, divesting a crippling amount of funds and resources into preventing member states from seceding. Atatürk, on the other hand, could see that the Ottoman Empire was over. Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin write:

The realities of the post-First World War world, where the Turkish heartland was surrounded by the Soviet Union, traditionally hostile Balkan states, and British and French colonial forces in Iraq and Syria, made the pursuit of pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic policies virtually impossible. What remained were Turkish nationalism and the safeguarding of new borders. (Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin 2012: 46)

The Ottoman Empire throughout the 1800's was indebted to financiers in England and France, slowly bleeding its economy to death.²⁸ Atatürk's policy of secularism and his clear stance against pan-Islamist foreign policy was a survival tactic. He mapped the boundaries of the Republic of Turkey around borders he could defend, and territory the republic could afford to sustain without colonial patronage, paving the way for a century of security and economic stability. If Stalin had abandoned the imperial borders, like Atatürk, and focused on the Russian federation rather than the empire, modern history may have turned out significantly differently.

The Republic of Turkey flourished modestly, opposing and warding off colonial intervention in Turkey, unlike Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Saudi Arabia and the other Arabian states, who were plagued by colonial forces more intensely after the discovery of massive oil reserves in the area during the Second World War.

In 1950, the United States Sixth Fleet was designated to be stationed in the area to protect imperial interests. In 1969, the fleet was slated to drop anchor just offshore of Istanbul in the Bosphorus Sea. Over thirty thousand left-wing activists, consisting mainly of students, marched on Taksim Square, adjacent to Gezi Park, to peacefully protest the 'friendly' American ships in Turkish waters, which they perceived as colonial trespassers. A police faction and a massive mob of conservative Islamists armed with clubs, Molotov cocktails and other improvised weapons attacked the demonstrators. Several of the leftists were killed and many were injured. Called Bloody Sunday, this was the beginning of right-wing violence in Turkey; it was the prelude to attacks in 1971, the 1977 Taksim Square Massacre, and the context underlying the contemporary Gezi Park protests.

²⁸ "The establishment, in 1863, by British and French capital of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, which would act as a quasi-central bank for the Empire in addition to its commercial operations, further consolidated the position of European capital in the Ottoman financial markets." Pamuk, Şevket. *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 204.

1983 marked a conservative turn in Turkey. Turgut Özal was elected, leading the right-wing Motherland Party, combining Islamist revivalists and fiscal conservatives. According to Nas Tevfik (1992), Özal had worked for the World Bank in the United States and promptly initiated widespread privatization in Turkey, which temporarily supercharged the Turkish economy with foreign interest but led to economic crashes in 1994, 1999, and 2001 (p. 12). Andrew Mango writes that a “nineteenth-century Ottoman reformer wrote that Istanbul might well become orderly and prosperous like Paris or London, but 'we would not be the ones who would profit from or taste these delights... Rather, we would turn up from time to time as sellers of firewood and charcoal and gaze at it sadly'” (Mango 2011: 10). It appears that the colonial financiers that Atatürk had worked to safeguard the Republic of Turkey against had finally found a way in.

In 2001 conservative parties in Turkey amalgamated to form the Justice and Development Party, also called AKP, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a man who had recently been sentenced to 10 months in prison for inciting religious hatred. The party, known for being socially conservative, capitalist and Islamist, has steadily gained power since 2001. With the help of Fethullah Gülen, a powerful Muslim cleric, he was able to increase the executive powers of the presidency, “slowly but surely travelling the dark path toward a presidential dictatorship” (Ibrahim 2014). Erdoğan and the AKP are engaged in a politics of pan-Islamist neo-Ottoman ideology. They are steadily increasing their presence in former territories of the Ottoman Empire, like Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2012 before the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing annexation of eastern Ukraine.

5.2 The Gülen Movement

Like Erdoğan, Fethullah Gülen is critical of Atatürk's suppression of Muslim practice. Gülen is the leader of a Turkish pan-Islamic organization, called the Hizmet Movement. In 2014, I travelled around Turkey with organizers of this movement, learning about their beliefs and structure. They often cited Atatürk's Hat Law as an example of his going too far in separating Islam from the Turkish Republic. In 1925, Atatürk passed a law requiring citizens to wear western-style hats (Mango 2011). Women could not wear headscarves to work in the public service; Atatürk said: "let them show their faces to the world, and see it with their eyes... Don't be afraid. Change is essential" (Mango 2011: 303). Men were banned from wearing the hats of their many cultural traditions, including turbans, the fez, and any other headgear that marked cultural difference in the new republic. Atatürk was not taking aim specifically at Islam, he was trying to build an assimilationist monocultural Turkish identity, where the Republic of Turkey would become a European country and participate in European international conferences. He believed that the only way to protect territorial sovereignty from colonial control was to engage in cultural colonialism. Hizmet is a Wahhabi movement, part of the wave of 1970s Islamist movements which adopted the practice of hijab wearing for women (Ahmed 2011: 68). However, unlike Erdoğan, Gülen is a socialist and staunchly nonviolent. While Erdoğan's fiscally conservative government has opened formerly public social services to private divestment, private enterprises like the Hizmet Movement have filled in the gaps.

Gülen's Hizmet Movement operates public schools for the poorest children in Turkey, and provides disaster relief in times of environmental crisis. The movement is affiliated with over 300 schools around the world, and these schools cater to predominantly lower class students (Bulliet 2016). The movement also runs orphanages, and manages aid operations in the poorest

African contexts through their NGO Kimse Yok Mu, an affiliate of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. They provide food and medical care to inmates in Somalian prisons (*Love is a Verb* 2014). Although there are many organizations associated with the movement, there is no central administration. ‘Hizmet’ means service. The Hizmet Movement is one of the world’s largest civil society organizations, and it is widely considered a world leader in moderate, liberal Islam. It is no surprise that Erdoğan feels threatened by this powerful and wealthy network. Within the Republic of Turkey, Gülenists hold a great deal of democratic power.

Gülen is socially conservative in his support for the modesty of women, and he is an advocate of solidifying the Muslim identity of Turkey, but he supports the pluralist republican state. In an interview with the press responding to criticism of his schools, he said: "[i]f, in these schools, you can show me one word that is against democracy, the Republic or Kemalism and its principles, I shall kiss your hands and feet and I'll say 'close these evil nests'" (Bulliet 2016).

The ‘religious’ Gülen was an outspoken supporter of the ‘religious’ Erdoğan, who ran on a platform of moderation and positive relations with the west from an Islamic perspective. Gülen provided opportunities for Erdoğan to speak at major intercultural dialogue events around the world to build his international reputation. Gülen money funded Erdoğan’s campaign, and in exchange Erdoğan and Gülen worked together to imprison the top secularists of the Turkish elite, making way for religious organizations to take over state services (Karaağaç 2014).

According to Barış Karaağaç, Fethullah Gülen then became too powerful. Tensions between the two “started to increase two years ago [2012], when the Gülen community tried to

take control of the national intelligence agency and they failed” (Karaağaç 2014). Erdoğan arrested members of the Gülen community.

When Erdoğan ordered the police to so violently suppress the Gezi Park protests, Gülen commented: “Is the shopping center that was to be built there worth a single drop of blood?” signaling the end of their allegiance (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2014). Gülen backed the anti-government Gezi protesters by appealing to left-wing sentiment, stating:

Everyone must respect diversity. Freedom of speech and expression cannot be restricted. While the views of the majority certainly deserve respect, the views of minority groups should be treated with the same level of respect as well. If you suppress the masses, this will cause friction along social fault lines. (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2014)

Since the massacre of a generation of left-wing youth in the 1970s, there is a visible lack of a left opposition in Turkish politics today. The 2012 protesters represent the coming-the-age of a new generation of liberal youth. Erdoğan and Gülen represent two brands of conservatives. Gülen is pro-west and supports allying with European and American forces and markets as a Muslim capitalist country, and Erdoğan is leaning toward eastern alliances as a Muslim capitalist country.

December 17, 2013, information was leaked to media about far-reaching corruption in the Erdoğan government. The Gülen community was blamed, and indeed according to Karaağaç, a Canadian specialist on Turkish affairs, was responsible. Top officials and allies of Erdoğan were charged and imprisoned. The Gülen Movement publically criticized Erdoğan’s hard line against Israel. In response, Erdoğan passed a law forcing the closure of the Hizmet Movement’s schools. Both the public and politicians reacted against this measure, because it “would exclude the most disadvantaged students from the most sought-after universities and increase the impact of socio-economic differences on entrance exam results” (Agence France-Presse in Ankara

2015). The court reversed the law, finding it unconstitutional. Karaağaç describes the relationship between Erdoğan and Gülen as “a struggle, a fight over more political power in the country, a struggle, a fight over who controls a larger part of the Turkish state” (2014).

This framing of the relationship between Gülen and the republic is very much focused on the top of the movement’s hierarchy. On the ground, the people driving the Hizmet Movement—the thousands of volunteers who care for orphans, who devote their lives to providing poor children with access to better education, the doctors and the nurses who provide necessary life-saving services—see and express their participation in this organization as their ‘religion’. In the case of Turkey, the secular/religious binary framework of Religious Studies does not clarify analysis of an organization like the Hizmet Movement, so clearly discursively religious, and so clearly discursively political. On July 25, 2016 I was interviewed by SiriusXM about my work with the Hizmet Movement in Turkey. This work was difficult to describe in terms of my field, Religious Studies, because the terminology associated with a movement that otherwise fits so well within the ‘religious’ category does not adequately convey the movement’s political relationship to the state. Fethullah Gülen is described in the Western media as a ‘cleric’, but this title does not effectively communicate who he is. The Hizmet Movement is sometimes described as a ‘civil society organization’. This term does not adequately encapsulate the bureaucratic level of involvement the group has in the workings of the Turkish government, or the charismatic worship aspect of the group. As longtime supporters of Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP), the movement followers are not an official political party either. The Gülenists are socially conservative like Erdoğan, but the recent split makes them disenfranchised outliers.

After the split, Erdoğan's paranoia has only increased. He imprisons those who criticize him, like the Hurriyet journalists Can Dunder and Erdem Gül. International tensions rise as he is criticized for violating human rights, but no measures are taken to do anything about it.

July 19, 2016 newspapers around the world announced that a faction of the Turkish military had staged a coup against the Erdoğan government. The president announced the following day that the coup had been carried out by the military, but was orchestrated by Fethullah Gülen. This could easily be true, but equally plausible is the prospect that the traditionally secularist military establishment acted out against Erdoğan's abandonment of democratic processes and disturbing support for ISIS. The possibility also exists that Erdoğan himself staged the coup to gather and arrest his enemies and free his allies from prison. Although only several hundred people were said to be involved in the coup, upwards of 60 000 people have been arrested, including members of the judiciary who convicted his party members of corruption and teachers at Hizmet schools, and to date (August 2016) the number of targets rises. According to Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, Erdoğan is emptying the country's prisons to make room for all of the arrests (2016). Over 38 000 prisoners have been released.

It is a difficult time in Turkey. The coup represents an attempt to fight back against a regime violating human rights, but it also undermines Turkish democracy. The other powerful player in Turkey, Gülen, is socially conservative. The prospects are grim for a liberal political alternative in Turkey.

I met a Turkish graduate student named Poyraz Kolluoglu at a conference at Queen's University in 2013 who presented a moving talk on his participation in the Gezi Park protests. He described how Muslim practices were observed during the protests, which overlapped with Ramadan. Calls to prayer were performed, and the protesters organized a mass Iftar dinner open

to all. The simplistic characterization of the protesters as ‘secularists’ versus ‘religious Muslims’ by the western media was inaccurate.

Kolluoglu’s talk prompted me to enroll in a program, coincidentally planned and run by the Gülen Movement, to travel to Turkey and learn more about the context of the Gezi events. When I arrived in Istanbul in 2014, I headed straight to Taksim Square, to stay in a hostel at the edge of Gezi Park where these events had taken place. I spent my days chatting with itinerant artists, socialists, stateless refugees and shop owners about the situation in Turkey.

I watched the Gay Pride Parade of Turkey from the second floor of a Taksim coffee shop (see Figure 64). I leaned over the balcony to watch thousands of smiling people waving rainbow flags; half the crowd would shout and the other half would respond, back and forth. I asked the man beside me what they were saying, and he translated for me.

“WHERE IS MY LOVER?”

“HERE I AM!!”

“WHERE IS MY LOVER?”

“HERE I AM!!”

The atmosphere was joyful and optimistic. When I wandered down amongst the people in the crowd after the parade was over, I heard young people talking about Gezi Park. I bought a newspaper from the feminist society of Istanbul, who had set up a table for the parade (see Figure 65). This was a celebration of the young liberals of Turkey. Most of them were Muslims, all of them supported a liberal and democratic Turkey. The event was “the most important LGBT gathering in a Muslim country”, because Turkey has traditionally been a safe haven for gay Muslims in a region of nations where their existence is illegal (Telegraph 2016).

In 2015 the parade was banned, for “safeguarding security and public order” (Gay Pride March 2016). The police descended on the celebration, firing tear gas and rubber bullets at attendees. This year was met with similar violence (Telegraph 2016).

The protest crowd represents a collection of disenfranchised youth from diverse backgrounds, who agree that they want change in their country. Jay Cassano critiques the simplified ‘religion’ versus ‘secularism’ narrative that is so often used in the western media to describe contemporary politics in Turkey.

‘Saying the protest is about secularism or religion misses the point completely,’ says Zeyno Üstün, a demonstrator who participated in the occupation of Gezi Park on the very first night, May 27. Üstün was one of only fifty activists who occupied Gezi Park on the 27th. Now the movement she helped launch has been taken up by hundreds of thousands.

She continued, ‘Sure, there are hardcore secularists in the crowds. But there are also feminists, LGBT activists, anarchists, socialists of various stripes, Kurdish movements’ leaders, unionized workers, architects and urban planners, soccer hooligans, environmentalists, and people who are protesting for the first time! Someone wearing an Atatürk [the founder of the Turkish Republic as a secular, ethnically Turkish nation-state] T-shirt walks alongside another waving a flag of [imprisoned Kurdish leader] Abdullah Öcalan.’ (Cassano 2013)

This description of events mirrors Pomerantsev’s observations of the Maidan. A diversity of interest groups were united through a collective critique of the state of affairs.

In a follow-up talk at Queen’s University in 2016, Kolluoglu discussed a concept of ‘postmodern sacred’; he asked: “Why are protesters trying to maintain and form solidarities in these communal sites despite their sociocultural and political differences? I would argue that the protest repertoires of the 21st century are mostly shaped by the affective ruptures emerging in daily politics and affective ties created by the participants themselves; and urban spaces such as Gezi Park in the Turkish case arise as affective hubs[...] Are these encounters harbingers of post-Islamic values and affective ties in a belated modern milieu?” (2014). His

arguments point to major contemporary paradigm shifts in identity and knowledge mobilization.

Varol, Ferrara, Ogan et al.'s study of social networks and systems mapped a transformation from "a broadcasting model (one-to-many, like radio and TV) to a peer-to-peer (many-to-many) distribution system" (2014: 1). The mass diffusion of communications and information has played a significant role in social uprisings around the world in the 21st century. Government restrictions on journalism and access to information are undermined by peer-to-peer social media networks. Varol, Ferrara, Ogan et al. note that "the use of social media in the Egyptian protests allowed people to make informed decisions about participation in the movement, provided new sources of information outside of the regime's control, and increased the odds that people participated in the protests on the first day" (2014: 1). Technology changes too rapidly for the highly regulated organizational structures of nation states to adapt in time to control peer-to-peer digital 'sharing'.²⁹ Grassroots action is sometimes better suited to the networks of 'religious' organizations than state ones. Indeed, peer-to-peer knowledge mobilization is the communication mechanism of 'elective affinities', the network of identity formation in the 21st century.

²⁹ The increasingly rapid advancement of technological innovation is colloquially referred to as Moore's Law. Specifically, it refers to the rise of silicon semi-conductor electronics and the miniaturization movement. In 1965, Gordon Moore predicted that the number of transistors installed into an integrated circuit would double every one-two years. Increased 'memory', or data storage on digital devices and higher pixel count on digital cameras are tangible examples of this principle, but the near future of Moore's Law holds self-driving cars and sex robots, as well as speculative research in nanotechnology and AI (Artificial Intelligence). Brock, David C. *Understanding Moore's Law: Four Decades of Innovation*. (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Press, 2006)

CHAPTER 6

Theorizing Beyond the Religion/Secular Binary

The chief reason warfare is still with us is neither a secret death-wish of the human species, nor an irrepressible instinct of aggression, nor, finally and more plausibly, the serious economic and social dangers inherent in disarmament, but the simple fact that no substitute for this final arbiter in international affairs has yet appeared on the political scene.

—Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*
(Arendt 1970: 46)

6.1 The Religion/Secular Binary

Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past.

—George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
(Orwell 1949)

In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor (2007) argued that while the church was not the center of twentieth century communities in the same ways it had been in previous centuries in Europe and North America, the identity category of religion firmly and undeniably remained a factor in people's self-descriptions, political platforms, and social organizing. Taylor's argument showed that the systemic aspects of what gets called 'religion' are more deeply embedded in the workings and constitution of what gets called 'secular' than on a simply ideological level.

Foucault writes that:

“[T]he real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them.”

(Foucault 1984: 6)

The political violences operating through the category of religion are obvious to rights activists. The violences operating through the category of secularism are less obvious. What Charles Taylor seems to be concerned about in his articulation of ‘secularism’ is that tearing down the idols of the old gods merely makes room for the idols of the new ones. Specifically, he deplores the gods of “efficiency or cost benefit” of market capitalism (1991: 5). Taylor’s antidote for these heartless gods is a kind of social *communitas* sharing structural aspects with Christianity but based on collectively reached contemporary values; *The Ethics of Authenticity* argues for reaching beyond selfish individualism toward “horizons of significance”, or shared moral commitments to each other and the environment.³⁰ For Taylor’s vision to be realized, the category of religion itself (and the shadow it casts called secularism) must be deconstructed and overcome. Only then can the new idols be critiqued and a contemporary vision actioned.

The category of religion is constructed so that organizations classified within it operate beyond critique. It is necessary to break down the category by putting the history of its development into context to ‘unmask’ the political violence exercised within it. In his book *1984*, George Orwell (1949) theorizes a language called *duckspeak*. This language is the reductionist result of a regime that continuously forbids politically-charged words from being spoken to prevent social uprising. In the book, the activists are unable to vocalize their dissent; they look at each other and feel the unease and injustice, incapable of putting it into words. The histories of many ‘religious’ regimes are marked by periods of silencing dissent, and this silencing is intrinsic to the modern formulation of the category of ‘religion’ itself. The

³⁰ Taylor’s perspective stands in contrast to Habermas, who argues for public recognition of ‘religions’. Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Naturalism and Religion*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008)
See Maria Birnbaum’s critique of “the kind of religion Habermas envisions entering the public sphere and [...] the way in which his postsecular arguments constitute a legitimate speaker under the banner of ‘religion’.”

“ineffability of religion” is the inability to deconstruct the category of religion.³¹ Efforts to deconstruct it should be welcomed by scholars of Religious Studies, both sociologists and theologians, for a clearer understanding of the many composite elements the category strives to encapsulate.

In particular, this dissertation is concerned with unmasking the structural and historical relationship between religious institutions and nation states to better understand movements of dissent which move dangerously and freely in the borderlands of their jurisdictions in defiance of lines of demarcation. Study of these groups is not served by a top-down application of the religious/secular binary which mischaracterizes what McGuire and others call ‘Lived Religion’, or what is lost in the higher-order, abstract definitions of institutional elites (McGuire 2008).

What these case studies of current ideological movements I have outlined in the chapters of this dissertation demonstrate is that the classical Durkheimian definition of religion as binary opposite of secular in the field of Religious Studies does not offer an analytical apparatus which is able to make sense of contemporary post-9/11 globalized identity categories and subject positions.³² Contemporary theories emerging from the impact of postcolonial studies, queer

³¹ “The ineffability of religion” refers to an academic argument which posits that there is an essential object called religion that either *is not* explainable in words or *should not* be explained in words (Scharfstein 1993; Jacobs 2015; Jonas 2016). I am implying here that the history of the ‘ineffability’ runs parallel to the modern development and attempts at definition of the category of religion.

Jacobs, Jonathan D. “The Ineffable, Inconceivable, and Incomprehensible God: Fundamentality and Apophatic Theology.” *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Jonas, Silvia. *Ineffability and its Metaphysics: The Unspeakable in Art, Religion, and Philosophy*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

Scharfstein, Ben-Ami. *Ineffability: The Failure of Words in Philosophy and Religion*. (Albany New York: State University of New York Press, 1993)

³² The ideological religious/secular divide is a mainstream Religious Studies framework. I could point it out in just about any theoretical lineage in the field, but for the sake of specificity, I point to Maria Birbaum’s critique of the work of Jürgen Habermas as “one of the most prominent contemporary liberal theorists” (p. 182). Birbaum argues “that there is a distinctive productive power in Habermas’ argument for the recognition of religion and that he ‘makes’ religion through arguing for its recognition. [...] Habermas’ vision of religion is conservative, that is, reproducing the social and political structures within which this recognition takes place” (p. 183). Her chapter offers resources for further critiques of specific authors reifying a religion/secular binary, including Dressler and Mandair 2011; Joas 2008a; 2008b; Chatterjee 2006; Kehrer 1998.

theory, and feminist theory and methodologies in the field of Critical Religion offer new ways of thinking about and understanding religion.

Secularization Theory (Freud 1907; Weber 1933; Berger 1978; Stark 1999; Bruce 2002) and Postsecular Theory (Mahmood 2005; Habermas 2008; Braidotti 2008; Bracke 2008) present theoretical lenses through which contemporary religious movements can be analyzed and understood. Layered beneath these theories are methodologies fixed in, on one hand, the reductionism of the liberalist secularism narrative (Secularization Theory) and the parochial individualism of identity and the politics of difference (Postsecular). Neither Secularization Theory nor the identity theories make meaningful sense of the proliferation of nationalist religious movements, and new contemporary social orientations which in some ways ‘look like religion’.

Fedor Sivtsov’s reflections of the Maidan experience cannot be expressed in terms of ‘secular’ or ‘religious’. He wrote in his journal after the Berkut had attacked the protesters and failed to disperse the crowd when millions began to sing the national anthem:

Three things happened to me today.

1. I began to believe in God. When the Berkut broke through the barricades and began to push people back, children were brought to the stage, and those who did not fit on the stage were put in the middle of the circle. And people were praying and trying with the last ounce of their strength not to cry out of helplessness and fear. And then suddenly the church bells began to peal in the night. And these bells brought hope. And at that moment I began to believe in God.

2. I became a nationalist.

I saw, beyond Berkut, the soldiers of the interior ministry, my compatriots, people who were supposed to represent and defend the law in my country. They were fulfilling an idiotic and monstrous order that was in the interest of only one person – the president of a neighbouring country, because our president is not recognized here by anyone any longer. These soldiers were pushing the peaceful demonstrators, children, women, older people, and they did not care what they were doing.

Birnbaum, Maria. “Exclusive Pluralism: The Problems of Habermas’ Postsecular Argument and the Making of Religion.” In *Religion as a Category of Governance and Sovereignty*. (Trevor Stack, Naomi Goldenberg, Timothy Fitzgerald, eds. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2015) p. 182-196.

And then I heard a cry from the stage: "They heard us! People are coming to us from all over Kyiv!" And then I looked back and saw an endless stream of people, Ukrainians who care about the fate of their fellow citizens. Ordinary fellow citizens who came to protect peaceful people. At that moment I became a nationalist.

3. I freed myself from fear.

The police and soldiers encircled the square and started pushing us. But they were not strong enough, and we pushed back; and even if we could not move them we could at least hold back the flood of beasts. At that moment I freed myself from fear.

Believe me, I am far from being the most fearless person in this country. But today I will go to Maidan again. For this night, and for these people, for this feeling of pride in being a single and united people – and for the dignity that we defended. (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014)

Sivtsov's experience on the Maidan is expressed through impassioned language invoking discourses of religion, nationalism and emotion. He speaks of his changed identity in the language of conversion. The pealing of church bells in the terrifying moments the night of the demonstration convert him into an ally of the church, and the oceanic feeling³³ of oneness at the sight of all the citizens joining the protest convert him to the cause of the nation which brought them all together. He speaks of this powerful moment in terms of faith, with faith in the church and the nation indistinguishable from one another.

Foucault argues that the subject does not produce knowledge, but that the subject itself is created in discourse. Davies and Harre elaborate on this theory of the subject:

A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the

³³ In 1927, Romain Rolland wrote a letter to Sigmund Freud describing what he called "spontaneous religious sentiment" as 'oceanic'. Freud addressed Rolland's comment in the book *Civilization and Its Discontents*. He argued that humans in the womb have no concept of ego, or conscious separation from their mother, as they are one living organism. He hypothesized that most of men's ego development stems from the separation of the man from his mother. For example, he writes: "the dwelling-house was a substitute for the mother's womb, the first lodging, for which in all likelihood man still longs, and in which he was safe and felt at ease" (18). Thus the 'oceanic feeling' of oneness occurs when men are reminded of the time when they were one living organism with their mother. Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag Wien, 1930)

particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in (Davies and Harre 1990: 46).

The Durkheimian religious/secular binary generates subject positions which are measured in relation to culturally Christian notions of 'religion' and 'the secular'. When examining groups which occupy the margins of this framework of subject positioning, it is possible to see how women's bodies are marked as 'religious' ('obeying' patriarchal arrangements) or 'political' (articulating female power). The religious/secular binary classification limits their agency as subjects of what are called 'religious' identities. As evidenced by Daly, Christ, Starhawk and others, any assertion of 'religion' that reflects a divine female becomes a necessarily politically-loaded feminist gesture.

Queer theory takes apart the categories of masculinity and femininity, and Critical Religion deconstructs the categories of religious and secular, moving the movements operating in the overlapping borderlands of 'religious' and 'secular' discursive territories into frameworks of visibility.³⁴ Movements like Femen, Native Faith, Hizmet, the Gezi Park protesters, and others which operate in these borderland spaces, are very often occupied by women. The subject positions created within the discursive boundaries of 'secular' and 'religious', or 'secular' and 'postsecular' limit women's expression in the three-fold way outlined by Merlin Stone: women's political and social rights in both the church and state are actively denied, and women's self-

³⁴ Naomi Goldenberg writes that "[b]y assuming that religion is an eternal and universal 'it' that identifies a bounded sphere of human life, distinct from what we term 'politics' or 'economics' or 'the secular,' we are doing more than hampering our understanding of epochs in the past. We are also obscuring our ability to see through the veils of ideologies that currently surround us. The task of lifting these veils, or, at least, of making them less opaque is one way to conceive of an objective for 'Critical Religion'."

Goldenberg, Naomi. "Some (Mainly) Very Appreciative Comments on Brent Nongbri's *Before Religion*." *The Critical Religion Association: Critical Approaches to the Study of Religion*. (May 6 2013. Retrieve at <https://criticalreligion.org/2013/05/06/some-mainly-very-appreciative-comments-on-brent-nongbris-before-religion/>)

fulfillment in inclusive theology which reflects female divine power is passively marginalized. Attempts within the field to theorize these marginal spaces fall short when they do not address the ways in which the religious/secular binary, the Christian ideology of religion and its own framework of dissent, has ruptured and been reconstituted in colonial contexts, and has moved and adjusted along with the concepts of the subject, the nation and the state.

Kristin Aune points out that according to a survey she conducted with Catherine Redfern, “feminists are much less likely to be religious” (Aune 2011). In her article “Why Feminists Are Less Religious”, she argues that first-wave feminist movements were heavily influenced by Enlightenment thinkers and Secularization Theory. Liberal feminist theory, then, and atheism have a structural kinship as movements (Aune 2011). Each measures itself in relation to a majority view. Atheism is defined by Richard Cimino as “oppositional identity in a culture of theism”, and feminism is oppositional identity in a patriarchal culture (Cimino 2012). The rise of ‘the postsecular’ in the field of Religious Studies has troubling implications for the subject position of feminists as secularized. While Secularization Theory is being disputed by Rosi Braidotti and others, ‘the secular’ as the categorical mirror of ‘the religious’ has not been deconstructed in writings on ‘the postsecular’. These top-down frameworks do not reflect the realities on the ground where nuns protest arm-in-arm with Femen, Ukrainian muftis stand between protesters and the police at Maidan, and feminists pray in Gezi Park (see Figure 66).

Mary Daly urged women to leave the Church en masse until it would recognize the Motherhood of God. The feminist task of honouring women’s power in mythos requires making a space beyond a religious/secular divide where the conversation is possible. The ‘feminist witchcraft’ of Starhawk and others—like Femen and Goddess-worshipping pagans, as I argue—disavows the boundaries of the ‘religion’ category which reifies God the Father, and the ‘secular’

category, which still does not acknowledge the personhood of mothers. Christian fundamentalists have allied themselves with right-wing politicians in proclaiming the supremacy of God; where is the call to protect the sacred equality of the Goddess?

Women in the nativist movement and feminist ‘atheist’ activists in Ukraine are both using pagan /anti-Orthodox/Goddess symbols in their work. Both groups seek to undermine and critique the close relationship between male heads of state and the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate, a relationship that has historically been detrimental for women (see Figure 67). Where particular ideologies may differ, tactics overlap when working in similar structural systems against structurally similar hegemonic forces. Feminisms, whether categorically ‘religious’ as tasfir, exegesis, or the Goddess Movement, or categorically ‘secular’ as civil society organizations, protest groups or state-involved service providers, are all concerned with telling the stories of women and ensuring that women’s experiences are represented in the social and cultural imaginaire and mythos of the societies in which we work and live.

To imagine a movement that is neither secular nor religious requires imagining a history where there is neither secular nor religious. The field of Critical Religion, and the works of Brent Nongbri and Timothy Fitzgerald in particular, re-tell the history of modernity before the concept of ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ develop, and then trace that development to contemporary articulations. Thus ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ can never be standalone categories; they always operate in a binary. The masked religious/secular binary in contemporary times commits political violence by allowing the state to control what gets to be considered a religion and what does not, thus policing identity obliquely through religion as an Ideological State Apparatus.³⁵

³⁵ Louis Althusser theorized that there are at least eight (including religion, family, academia, etc.) Ideological State Apparatuses that support the supremacy of the State Ideology. The state maintains power through violence or the threat of violence, in the form of police, military, and law. According to Althusser, ISAs, on the other hand, are coercive institutions operating alongside the state to exert nonviolent pressure on citizens to obey the state. He

5.2 Re-orientations of Identity

The democratic nation state subjectifies its citizens and privileges the social capital majority. The identity of the modern subject then, to his core measurement, is the default social capital majority figure (rich/white/able-bodied/male). Identities—ethnicities, religions, or nations within a state—are conceptually bound by shared language, beliefs, and histories which differentiate from the majority, but this leads to what Iris Young calls “the ‘essentialism’ of cultural difference, where either participants or observers take a culture to be a coherent whole, relatively unchanging, and fully separate from other cultures” (2005: 28). This function of the identity category denies the diversity within identity groups, as well as syncretisms, or identity ‘entanglements’, to borrow Betlemidze’s phrasing (2015: 377). Essentialism erases the voices of dissent, the queers, the women, the feminists, and the deviants, or as Foucault puts it, the architects of “subjugated knowledges,” so often present at protests (Foucault 1980: 82). Essentialism also mystifies and makes incomprehensible identities like Mormon feminist, Muslim atheist, or Conservative environmentalist. Globalization loosened the moorings of the hybrid-identity hypothesis (Smith and Leavy 2008), so that the conventional categories of gender, race, sex, age, and religion as markers of difference are, to quote Puar in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, “realigning in relation to contemporary forces of securitization, counterterrorism, and nationalism” (2007: 342). The implication of this idea is that transnational forces, supranational, pan-religious, corporate movements, make use of the

writes that “certain elements of an ideology (the State Ideology) 'are realized in' or 'exist in' the corresponding institutions and their practices”, meaning that while these institutions may seem to develop out of history, culture, or individual desire, they are formed in relation to the state and the state’s ideological aims (1970: 77). Althusser, Louis. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology And Ideological State Apparatuses*. (1970). Trans. G. M. Goshgarian. London: Verso, 2014.

polemics of identity for war and money making. Self-conscious and taboo-shattering critique is necessary to transcend the boundaries of conventional categories.

Femen understands this darker side of identity-baiting. An image was posted on Femen International's Facebook page June 29, 2016, in red white and black, drawn in the style of a wartime propaganda poster. Smoke rises from a black 'X' on a red backdrop where the Islamic State flag and the flag of the *front nationale*, the extreme right party of France, are draped. An angry topless woman, crowned with red flowers stands in the foreground with a message scrawled across her chest: "JOIN FEMEN ANTIFASCIST FRONT" (Femen Movement 2016).

The accompanying text reads:

Because too much blood was shed, and in response, too much hate grows,
Because the superiority of some individuals over others based on arbitrary
criteria is a spreading doctrine,
Because religious identity defines some people's lives,
Because security does not come from the re-assertion of borders nor from the
exclusion of refugees,
Because our values of freedom are fought and betrayed,
And because today hatred has its icons, its names, its banners and its
spokespeople:

FEMEN takes aim at modern fascisms: Islamism and extreme-right political parties internationally.[...] Islamists dream of a Caliphate based on a Sharia ruled by an almost unprecedented bloodthirsty patriarchal system. While this happens, extreme right political mafias, such as the National Front, take advantage of the climate of fear and gain voters seduced by their manly speeches to counter Islamism. Armed with sexist, xenophobic, racist, homophobic ideals, promoting a fantasized Christian supremacy, they are the political representatives of the same totalitarianism, based on division in society and segregation, to ensure the superiority of a group of individuals over others.

The risk of an epidemic of fascist parties coming to power exists throughout Europe (Pegida movement in Germany, Golden Dawn in Greece...). Even the United-States of America are facing the growing popularity of Donald Trump on his racist anti-Black, anti-Hispanic, anti-Muslim, anti-woman crusade. It is obvious that these two forms of fascism, religious and political, Islamism and traditional extreme right, are mutually reinforcing. As long as one exists and develops, the other will grow.

FEMEN has identified and targeted both totalitarian extremisms for several years already. [...] Today, they are our two greatest enemies, toward whom as

people we have no personal hatred, but as pernicious ideologies we have relentless determination to peacefully fight.
(Femen Movement 2016)

To paraphrase the comments of respondent Monica Miller on a presentation I gave at a feminist conference,³⁶ the wealthy trans-national benefactors of the war machine do not care about the nuances of disagreement between interest groups, because the segregation created by the disagreement only makes it easier to control democratic processes (Miller 2016). Ideological divides between Catholics and Protestants, Christians and Muslims, white feminists and Muslim feminists, or Hispanics and lower-class whites are representative of the historical ‘divide-and-conquer’ tactic. In the passage above, Femen asserts that identity categories are manipulated by those who control “the productive power of recognition”³⁷ to pit working-class people against one another (Birnbaum 2015: 188).

In terms of the field of Religious Studies, the categories of ‘religion’ and ‘the secular’ as silo terms are no longer adequate for coping with the complicated re-orientations of identity in the changing context of contemporary forces. In globalized society identities are increasingly fragmented, and in a global digital society of internet communities, identities are even disembodied (Bolter and Grusin 2000). Contemporary methodologies need to address these social transformations. Pamela Dickey Young writes that “method determines outcome...

³⁶ The presentation was titled “Between Sovereignties: Women between Church and State in Ukraine” and the conference was *Feminisms Beyond the Secular: Emerging Epistemologies and Politics in the 21st Century*, at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, March 21-23, 2016.

³⁷ Birnbaum writes that “[R]ecognizing religion in the public sphere does not simply empower it, it does not pull it out of the closet of our privacy, but fixates that which is to be understood as religion. It draws boundaries around that which is supposed to be recognized under the label of religion. As I will show, Habermas recognizes a particular form of religion, one that fits his requirements for a liberal, deliberative democracy. But recognition is not simply productive, it is also conservative. Only those subjects are recognized that are, previous to the recognition, *recognizable*.”

Birnbaum, Maria. “Exclusive Pluralism: The Problems of Habermas’ Postsecular Argument and the Making of Religion.” In *Religion as a Category of Governance and Sovereignty*. (Trevor Stack, Naomi Goldenberg, Timothy Fitzgerald, eds. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2015) p. 188.

method is not separate from the data that give rise to a need for method” (1990: 17). The lack of alternative method in the conceptual space between the categories of secularism and religion restricts examination of the radical contemporary shifts in religion, and understanding religious nationalist movements in particular.

6.3 Theory of Vestigial States

In *Religion as a Category of Governance and Sovereignty* (Stack, Goldenberg and Fitzgerald 2015) Naomi Goldenberg operationalizes the deconstruction of the category of religion within the field of Critical Religion to construct a theory of vestigial states. This theoretical lens sees religions as the vestiges of former sovereignties of regions now controlled by nation states. The modern word ‘religion’ then refers to the hierarchy of this pre-nation system existing as an ideological apparatus within the new state system. Goldenberg gives the example of Judaism; she writes that Jewish people were the people of Judea, indigenous to a particular region with its particular community conventions. When Judea was conquered by the Romans, the continuation of indigenous regulations and practices, such as matrilineal descent, and a shared ethnic identity formed around the continuation of these practices are what constituted ‘Judaism’. This was not a belief-based conversion group, but a community who shared a language and ancestral stories. In her article “There is No Religion in the Bible”, Goldenberg writes that “[i]n the ancient, social worlds spoken of in the Bible, religion has not yet been invented. Instead of narratives about groups and individuals interacting in arenas of life that we now differentiate as religious or secular, governmental or ecclesial, political or clerical, we are presented with stories and reports in which these distinctions have no meaning” (Goldenberg 2016b). Thus the terms ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ are anachronistic when applied to the Biblical

context. Goldenberg continues that “[c]ontemporary dualistic formulae of religious/secular or religious/political had no meaning in the societies that produced the Bible. When these terms are applied to biblical history and literature, they distort our understanding of ancient peoples by presenting their ways of organizing and describing authority as too similar to our own” (Goldenberg 2016b).

Vestigial state theory makes sense of modern systems which get called ‘religions’ as the vestiges of former sovereignties within a new government. A vestigial state encompasses more than what is categorized as ‘religion’, rather than being a substitute for the term. This means that ethnicities, neo-imperial politics, nationalist movements, religions, and other ideological movements emerging from former sovereignties can be understood within the theory of vestigial states. Goldenberg writes:

By designating religions as vestigial states, I am identifying them as the structures of former sovereignties that continue to operate with differing degrees of autonomy within present-day governmental domains. Vestigial states called religions are composed of discursive and institutional practices similar to those of fully functioning states. However, the particular non-vestigial states that contain their predecessors determine the parameters of the vestigial varieties: religions are accorded limited powers and special privileges by the states in which they operate. (Goldenberg 2015: 8)

As can be seen in the contemporary case study of the Druid Network outlined by Suzanne Owen and Teemu Tara in their article “The Category of ‘Religion’ in Public Classification: Charity Registration of The Druid Network in England and Wales”, vestigial states are only ‘accorded the powers and privileges’ of being classified as a religion by the nation state in relation to their emulation of a dominant Christian model (2015). Owen and Tara demonstrate in their work on the Druid Network that the contemporary category of religion is predominantly defined by the state. In parliamentary democracies, and other contemporary government systems, groups designated ‘religions’ receive exemption from particular taxation. They also

receive allowances, like rights to collect money, provide social services and have charitable status. According to Owen and Tara, druids were the members of Celtic society who were teachers, managed medical treatments, and made laws. After the Romans invaded the British Isles, the new administration took over those functions. The symbols and stylings of druids became symbolic of the old order, rather than socially functional. When the Roman Empire receded from bureaucratic control of the Isles, the Christians established their own administration of teaching, medicine and law. When English law developed, Christian symbols and stylings became ritualistic rather than functional the way the druid social arrangements had become vestigial under Roman rule. Contemporary British people practice Druidry, as well as Christianity, ritualistically rather than functionally within the jurisdiction of England. Owen and Tara write that Christian groups are afforded the tax exemptions and other benefits of the status of 'religion' by the Charity Commission in Britain, and the Druids sought the same status and benefits. Owen and Tara explain that establishing Druidry as a religion in Britain required arguing that Nature could be God: "the rhetorical excess of religious-sounding key words in the application, such as spirit, deity, divine and sacred... helped TDN's argument that nature can be regarded as a supreme being" (2015: 5). This metric based on the Christian framework requires vestigial states seeking 'religion' status to emulate Christianity. England's policy on categorizing religion, then, is an evangelical policy, requiring all groups seeking status to become systemically Christian.

Timothy Fitzgerald writes, "we are rendered impotent by our ignorance of the semantic and ideological bias of our tools of analysis... we do not notice that the very elusiveness of the definitional problem in religion is a sign of its disguised ideological function" (Fitzgerald 2005: 53). This disguised ideological function is particularly troubling for women, considering that the

administrations of organizations called religions are the most patriarchal in the world, following the model of the Vatican's anti-woman policies.³⁸ Goldenberg explains that “[b]y moving the category of religion into the sphere of statecraft, by understanding that gender arrangements derive from the histories of earlier forms of government rather than from inscrutable structures of mystery, piety might be paralleled more closely with politics and the inferior position of women within the once and future states named religions might be supported with less conviction” (2015: 22-23).

This universalizing function of the category of religion is evident when looking at ‘interfaith dialogue’ events. After a talk in April, 2016 about colonial formulations of ‘world religions’ in a Christian-dominant society, an Afghani Muslim visiting graduate student pointed out that random Canadian imams are invited to speak at interfaith events and act as representatives of Canadian Islam, but within her community, these imams were merely responsible for organizing group prayers, not for acting as leaders or ambassadors of the community at large. Muslim imams in Canada are constructed by the hegemonic knowledge producers of the category of ‘religion’ in Canada. They are modelled after priests, and thus compelled to emulate the patriarchal hierarchy of the College of Cardinals of the Catholic Church, and all within a supposedly ‘secular’ state. Sheila Jeffreys (2012) argues that homophobia is re-inscribed by this ecumenical Interfaithism as well.³⁹ In the case of Tunisian activist Amina Sboui who posted the topless photo of herself on social media, several imams

³⁸ The anti-woman policies of Vatican City include barring women from decision-making roles, women are not allowed to vote in the College of Cardinals, and women living in the state are only eligible for citizenship through marriage to their male husbands. Vatican City is one of two countries in the world that bans divorce, and one of six countries that prevents women who need abortions from accessing medical care (as of 2016).

³⁹ In his book *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, Khaled El-Rouayheb argues that the term ‘homosexuality’ is anachronistic in the Arab-Islamic context before European intervention. Laws against gay sex appear in many regions colonized by the British only after Britain imposed them onto the legal system. El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

called for her to be lashed and stoned (Adamson 2015). These men were not representatives or ambassadors of specific Muslim communities the way that a priest is considered the spokesperson of ‘his flock’; they were individual conservatives voicing their own opinions outside of an institutional authority. The fatwas of these fringe radicals are given more weight in the international news media than by Tunisians themselves. The category of religion carries the structural baggage of Christianity.

An important aspect of Goldenberg’s theory of vestigial states in the notion of ‘once-and-future states’. By this she means that just behind the organization’s non-state status is the aspiration or potential for future sovereignty. This can be seen in the contexts of both the collapsing Soviet Union and the collapsing Ottoman Empire. Andrew Mango writes:

There was this difference between Christian and Muslim communities: among the former... clerics often encouraged or even took part in violent action; among the Muslims, nationalism developed in opposition to religion. The Muslim religious establishment stood for the whole Muslim community (ummet), and not for the nations that were arising in its midst. On the other hand, the Greek, Serbian, and Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the Armenian Gregorian Church, had become by the end of nineteenth century bearers of their respective nationalist ideologies. (Mango 2011: 10)

The term ‘religious’ in the passage above obscures the author’s meaning, but reimagining the passage outside of the religious/secular binary opens up productive possibilities. Applying the theory of vestigial states, it is possible to see that the Armenian Gregorian Church, for example, formed the proto-government structure of the later attempts to build an Armenian state. In that case, there is no need to call the movement ‘religious’ or ‘secular’—the binary becomes irrelevant to understanding the history.

The Gülen Movement is a fitting contemporary example of how a so-called religious group operates closely parallel to the nation state. After the falling out of Turkey’s great political allies, Fethullah Gülen and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Justice and Development Party

of the Turkish government classified the Gülen Movement, and all affiliated networks, as the Gülenist Terror Organisation (Fetullahçı Terör Örgütü, FETÖ) or Parallel State Organisation (Paralel Devlet Yapılanması, PDY). Erdoğan accurately evaluated the Gülen Movement as a challenge to the existing nation state with their state-like social services and influence in all levels of jurisdiction, whether intentional or not on the part of Gülen.

Perhaps this kind of insight on the part of the republic of Turkey derives from their history of separation of Sultanate and caliphate. However, Christendom is seemingly forgetful of the similar history of the Catholic Church. The Papal States, a small empire which survived almost a thousand years (754 CE – 1870 CE) encompassing parts of what is now modern Italy and France, was a sovereign nation which was conquered by the Kingdom of Italy in the nineteenth century, transforming it into a vestigial state, or once-and-future-state. Subsequent popes, who still wielded a significant amount of popular control despite being overthrown, refused to cooperate with the Italian state. The State of Vatican City was made a micro nation in the Lateran Treaty by Benito Mussolini in 1929.

A precondition of the negotiations was destruction of the parliamentary Catholic Italian Popular Party. Pius XI disliked political Catholicism because he could not control it. Like his predecessors, he believed that Catholic party politics brought democracy into the church by the back door. The demise of the Popular Party caused a wholesale shift of Catholics into the Fascist Party and the collapse of democracy in Italy. (Concordat 2016)

In a speech following the finalization of the treaty, Mussolini stated that “[i]nside the State the Church is neither sovereign nor free... We have not resurrected the temporal power of the popes: we have buried it” (Concordat 2016). In *God in the Tumult of the Global Square: Religion in Global Civil Society* by Mark Juergensmeyer, Dinah Griego, and John Soboslai, the authors write that in “the political instability that rose at the end of the twentieth century, with the dawn of the global era, secular leaders have recruited religious ideologies and leaders to their

side, hoping that the legitimacy of religion would shore up their flagging power” (2015: 25).

This description of trends could easily describe the Lateran Treaty between Mussolini and Pius XI. However, the use of the terms ‘religious’ ideologies and ‘secular leaders’ actually obscures the context of events. The analysis of Juergensmeyer, Griego and Soboslai would be more precise if they explained exactly what they mean when they use the term ‘religious ideologies’. Discussing these movements systemically reveals a great deal about their significance.

The Islamic State (often called ISIS in the media) is similarly a contemporary attempt in a longtime project to resurrect the Muslim caliphate’s sovereign domain. Al-Rasheed, Kersten and Shterin describe how the caliphate became vestigial:

Ultimately, once the sultanate was abolished and the republic was declared, the caliphate became an anomaly. The Caliph's position in, and relation to, the emerging national state was never clearly defined.[...] With its inherent extraterritorial dimensions, the institution of the caliphate was in total contradiction to the conception of the state that was being implemented in the Turkish Republic. From the point of view of its creators the modern Turkish state could no longer shoulder the responsibilities that the caliphate implied. (Al-Rasheed, Kersten, and Shterin 2012: 47)

The possibilities are vast in the potential application of vestigial state theory in the context of the former Ottoman Caliphate states. Andrew Mango explains that the term *millet* in Turkish was the word used to describe Christians, Jews, Armenians, and other non-Turk minority groups within the Ottoman Empire (Mango 2011: 4). Brent Nongbri’s work explores indigenous terms which are later translated as ‘religion’, but in this case, the word *millet* is later translated as nation:

The Ottoman state was Muslim, dynastic, and medieval in its organizing principles. Its government was based on Muslim religious law (*sharia*, in Turkish spelling *şeriat*), which was supplemented by royal ordinances (*kanun*) and customary law (*örf*), and stretched, sometimes beyond reason, to cover day-to-day requirements. In accordance with that law, non-Muslim monotheists who submitted to Muslim rule were given protected status and allowed to run their communal affairs. The three main non-Muslim confessional communities--Greek

or Eastern Orthodox Christians, Armenian Gregorian (Monophysite) Christians and Jews-- were known as *millet*, a term which later acquired the secular meaning of nation. (Mango 2011: 4)

Mango's use of the word 'secular' in the passage quoted above is unnecessary as it is anachronistic. The *millet* was a group or tribe of people identifiable as part of that particular group—*millet* was a "cultic distinction", to use James Diamond's term (2004). The modern nation state with its unmoving territorial borders did not apply to the pre-republic context. Atatürk used the term *millet* to describe the Turkish nation. For example, he said that "unless a nation's life faces a peril, the war is a murder", translated from "*millet hayatı tehlikeye maruz kalmayınca, savaş cinayettir*" (Adana 1923). It is difficult to say whether or not he meant the Turkish people or the Turkish sovereign territory, but Atatürk himself marked the shift in the meaning of *millet*.⁴⁰

Goldenberg explains how the word 'religion' is applied strategically when referring to post-caliphate Muslim community contexts. She writes:

Innovative vocabulary pertaining to Islam has blossomed in recent years. Terms such as political Islam and Islamism are invented to cordon off appropriate forms of Islam from those that are considered dangerous to public order as defined by ruling governments. I suggest that Islam is in the process of being turned into a religion – i.e. of being made vestigial – within some contemporary states at the same time that it functions non-vestigially in other parts of the world. Debates about Islam illustrate how religion as a discursive category operates as a regulatory description in Western democracies. (Goldenberg 2015: 5-6)

Ukraine has struggled in and out of once-and-future statehood since the eighth century. Ukraine was declared a sovereign nation in 1991, but the current (as of 2016) war with Russia demonstrates that Ukraine may become vestigial once more. It is no coincidence that in 1990, on the brink of Ukraine's 'secular' declaration of independence, Stepan Ivanovych Skrypnyk

⁴⁰ *Milliyet* means 'nationality'.

returned from exile in Canada and the United States after 46 years—as ‘Patriarch Mstyslav I of Kiev and all Ukraine’—to declare independence from the Russian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate and lead nationalist rallies as the head of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). If the modern state of Russia reconquers all of Ukrainian territory, perhaps the vestigial state of the UAOC will be all that remains of the Ukrainian state. More likely, the UAOC will be banished, their leaders rounded up and executed, as was the case 46 years before Skrypnyk’s return, because once-and-future states, whether labelled ‘religious’ or ‘secular’, are ‘states-in-waiting’.

Today, Russian President Vladimir Putin is strengthening ties with the Moscow Patriarchate, contributing to theories of the postsecular about people becoming ‘more religious’. These contemporary developments make more sense when analyzing the historical context through the lens of the governmentality of religion. Why did Vladimir Putin forge an alliance with Kirill I, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church? Putin declared that he had been secretly baptized as a child and he then paid to resurrect 23 000 churches, in Russia and the West (which here means Ukraine) (MacKinnon 2014). A decade later, Putin invaded Ukraine with soldiers and guns. Vladimir Putin knows that Ukrainian nationalism, or an identity of Ukraine as separate from Russia, is professed in the pews of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. I am not arguing that Putin’s turn to religiosity was insincere, and I am not arguing that Patriarch Kirill I was meddling in politics. I am arguing that those verbal distinctions here, religious and secular, actively mischaracterize the patriarchal governmentality of these organizations. The distinction of religious and secular is irrelevant to the women whose homes have been burnt down in the War in Donbass, to the women who go to a church to get emergency care while Ukrainian state social services are withdrawn from the seceded territories, and when Putin’s ‘secular’ democratic

government made it a crime for people who are gay to show it in public in 2013 to the applause of the Russian Orthodox Church, the religious/ secular categorization did not matter either (MacKinnon 2014).

In December 2015, Ukrainians yearning to shore up their relationship with the European Union protested against Russian military attacks on their Eastern border by celebrating Christmas on December 25th, the Western holiday, instead of January 7th, the Cyrillic calendar date. Jürgen Habermas (2008) might cite this as evidence of the postsecular, and Grace Davie (1994) or Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005) might call it shifting rather than declining religiousness, but these theories do not account for the governmentality of religion. Again in December 2015, a children's theatre in Crimea—recently annexed from Ukraine into Russian control—called Palace of Child and Youth Art was closed for promoting “Ukrainian nationalism and western symbols” (Kolokoltsev 2016). The play which attracted the attention of local authorities was called *Songs of the Amazon*, written by Crimean author Viktor Stus to celebrate St. Nicholas Day. The story invokes the popular mythology of pre-Christian Ukrainian warrior women of the Steppes “battling evil and fighting for freedom and the independence of their native land” (Kolokoltsev 2016). The theatre owner Oleksandr Polchenko reported that officials took “particular offence at the costume of a young girl wearing a golden crown and impersonating the sun, which he says they saw as a reference to New York's Statue of Liberty,” despite the fact that all of the oldest churches in Ukraine have sun goddess symbols carved on them (Kolokoltsev 2016). Polchenko notes that “[t]hey were indignant, they asked what kind of propaganda of western values we had staged for the holiday [...] They also described the embroidered clothing and the Ukrainian-language scenario as brazen Ukrainian nationalism” (Kolokoltsev 2016). The banning of Ukrainian mythology, language and embroidery are

chillingly reminiscent of the laws leading to the Soviet genocide in the region just a few generations before. These Soviet-era tactics of repression are troubling for the future of freedom of expression in Russian-annexed territories. Expressions of culture, nationalism and faith are in this context indistinguishable. As one protester at Maidan avowed, “Maidan was a singular experience, when everyone felt real unity, real patriotism, and felt the presence of God” (1:32:54).

This is why the examination of religion as a category of governance and sovereignty is necessary within the field of Religious Studies. The theory of vestigial states is the kind of contemporary framework needed to build and develop understandings of post-9/11 developments in the category of religion. Goldenberg’s theory of vestigial states facilitates examining and understanding the systemic similarities between the case of Ukraine and the case of Turkey.

6.4 Supernational Entities

As nations struggle through war and economic decline, the ‘once-and-future-states’ linger on the borders of the state’s jurisdiction. They can participate in revolutions by leading anti-state protest movements or galvanizing support through populist politics, or they can wait for fiscally conservative governments to cede control of public services and bleed the state slowly.

If the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are marked by disillusionment with vestigial states called religions, Weber’s *entzauberung*, then the twenty-first century is characterized by disenchantment with the state.⁴¹ The ‘post’s described by James Diamond (“post-modern, post-

⁴¹ I am calling this a disenchantment with the state because of increasingly disenchanted voters declining to participate in democratic elections, and the rise of leftist libertarian small-state communalist movements on one hand, and the success of big business conservative politicians canvassing against big government (for privatization) on the other. My analysis is an extension of Karl Polanyi’s 1944 assessment of Late Capitalism. Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944)

colonial, post-Communist, post-Christian. [...] post-Holocaust, post-Zionist, post-denominational. [...] post-secular”) can add to their roster post-national on the crumbling fringes of colonial borders, and post-local as they are re-constituted internationally. American presidential candidate Donald Trump’s call to “Make America Great Again” is the populist politics equivalent of the Postsecular—a call to imagine the resurrection of a vast spectre through its most grotesque characterizations of empire. Pan-Islamic movements, Brexit, neo-Ottoman politics, and the imperial aspirations of the modern Russian state are symptoms of the attending anxieties of Golden Age Thinking in a world of ‘post’s. As Polish theorist Agata Pyzik writes, “[i]f the Soviet Union 23 years into its existence wasn't called post-tsarist, why are we still defined as ‘post-communist’, and why is it relevant?” (Pyzik 2014). New alternatives are yet to be theorized. So far, the ‘Supernational Entities’ which loom over contemporary international politics are international neo-imperial conservative movements. Perhaps, in the fray of the occupied square, collectives of peer-to-peer grassroots mobilizers will conceive of new ways of thinking and being that we cannot yet imagine.

The international rise of protests in public spaces, whether by feminists, environmentalists or others, signifies the disenfranchisement of citizens of these disenchanted nation states. Disenfranchisement is the failure of the state’s essential democratic task of providing public mechanisms of critique and accountability. Citizens protesting with their bodies—putting their bodies at risk of ridicule, pain, and death—particularly in a digital age, should be of concern to governments invested in preserving democratic conventions. In an interview in 2016, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak tells Steve Paulson about the death of her mother’s aunt:

I discovered that my mother’s aunt hanged herself in 1926 when she was 17 because she was part of an anti-imperialist group. She was unable to kill, so

therefore she killed herself. But she waited four days until she menstruated so that people would not think that she was killing herself because of an illicit pregnancy. In her action she wanted to say that women do not just belong to men. (Paulson 2016)

Spivak uses the story to explain the last resort of a subaltern woman, whose voice is so silenced that only perhaps in her martyrdom could she share a message. The darker side of disenfranchisement in the twenty-first century, the consort of disenchantment with the state, is the return of terrorism in the international arena. Hannah Arendt's 1948 work on twentieth century revolutions points to the need for avenues of expression for marginal members of society. She writes:

What proved so attractive was that terrorism had become a kind of philosophy through which to express frustration, resentment, and blind hatred, a kind of political expressionism which used bombs to express oneself, which watched delightedly the publicity given to resounding deeds and was absolutely willing to pay the price of life for having succeeded in forcing the recognition of one's existence on the normal strata of society. (Arendt 1948: 30)

A democratic state government's purpose as an institution is to provide and maintain stability. This goal is achieved through orchestrating the distribution of wealth, and minimizing corruption. When corruption is rampant and the system of wealth distribution needs revision, people feel disenfranchised and distrustful of government, leading to protest. As Maidan protester Andrij Bondar reflected: "[t]he Maidan today is a laboratory of the social contract. The social contract is what the broad masses of Ukrainian society have not had for so many years. We do not need a Father or a Leader. We need liberty" (Snyder and Zhurzhenko 2014).

Every program and project of the democratic state should reflect the aim of reducing corruption and facilitating wealth distribution. During a Femen action against a right-wing rally in France, a Vice reporter spoke with a participant who had this to say: "Feminists have betrayed the cause of nationalism. Feminists are paid to disturb the nationalist movements of every

country” (Vice 12:50). What this man did not seem to understand is that challenging and changing the state’s corruption will create a more robust government capable of withstanding the coercive pressures of the old empire. More specifically, socialist measures to expand the middle class creates the class which champions the state. In *Overstating the Arab State*, Nazih Ayubi notes that studies of the politics of the Middle East are incomplete without an understanding of indeterminate national identity and approaches to the nation-state system which are different from the European framing. He writes that perhaps what “Bin Abd al-’Ali sociologically described as an obsession with national identity might be explained by ‘the absence of a championing social class?’” (2001). The tottering divide between Ukraine’s millionaires who profited from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the impoverished masses, pushed to further extremes by economic turmoil and state corruption, all but depleted the middle class in Ukraine. As Russia advances on the eastern border in the War in Donbass, annexing the territories of Crimea, and the oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk, the sovereignty of Ukraine as a state is in jeopardy. Femen demands closer political and economic ties between Ukraine and the European Union, and distance from Eastern alliances, for the anti-corruption assurances that democracy promises, and for the threat of violence against invaders that membership in the European Union would provide. Evidenced by the non-interference of the European Union and the United Nations in the war on Ukraine’s eastern border with democratic Russia, Ukraine is a borderland for the taking, as it was for the Roman Empire and for Hitler from the west, and as it was for Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union from the east. The international rise in religious nationalist movements, both socialist and conservative, is inextricably linked to the jurisdictions of nation states and their colonial histories.

The notion of secularism as a universal ideology which societies move toward and away from, in opposition to religion as a universal ideology that societies move toward and away from is simplistic and does not encapsulate the relationship of tension between empires felt by Ukraine, north of the Black Sea, and Turkey, to the south of it, as the borderland territories between Europe and Asia. This is all the more obvious in the visual microcosm of the protest rally.

‘Religion’, or identity groups categorized within the ‘religious’ umbrella of movements, has historically been a space to challenge the state. Canadian First Nations and ecological groups are working together to challenge the state’s jurisdiction over unindustrialized territories; as in Ukraine, these movements could also be described as Native Faith Movements, eco-paganism, neo-paganism, or Religion of the Ancestors. However, the particularly mystifying construction of the religion category depoliticizes these movements in ways which undermine their sovereignty and political aims.⁴² Examining the category of religion in relation to categories of governance moves ‘private’ religious practice into the realm of public evaluation and understanding. Thus, the feminist slogan “the personal is political” can be borrowed and remixed here to read, “the religious is political”⁴³ (Hanisch 1970).

⁴² See Michael Ruecker, “Dances With 'Religion': A Critical History of the Strategic Uses of the Category of Religion by the Government of Canada and First Nations, 1885 to 1951”, for a more detailed examination of Canadian depoliticization of First Nations sovereignty. Suzanne Owen also briefly discusses how political recognition is denied or made invisible by the application of the World Religions Paradigm to First Nations. She gives the example of how the Canadian census shows that a majority of Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland and Labrador are Catholics, with only 50 respondents checking the ‘traditional spirituality’ box, but that studying community practices tells a different story (2011: 260).

Ruecker, Michael. “Dances With 'Religion': A Critical History of the Strategic Uses of the Category of Religion by the Government of Canada and First Nations, 1885 to 1951.” *Unpublished thesis*. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2015)

Owen, Suzanne. “The World Religions Paradigm: Time For a Change.” *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*. (vol. 10 no. 3 (2011): 253-268. Retrieve online at <http://ahh.sagepub.com/content/10/3/253.full.pdf+html>)

⁴³ The phrase “the religious is political” was used by Naomi Goldenberg in a Women in Religion course at the University of Ottawa.

Goldenberg, Naomi. “The Religious is Political.” *Women in Religion*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2015.

How then are we to move beyond the religious/secular binary? To move beyond the secular is to move beyond the mega-state, and the concept of a network of empires peopled with secular subjects. The so-called 'postsecular' signifies the Grand Narrative of the empire being eroded by the once-and-future sovereignties of religious nationalist movements. The imperial boundaries of colonizing forces are hazy in the mists of the dream of new empires—these once and future states are the sovereignties of the postsecular age.

When imperial systems collapse or decline into gradual collapse, religions and other identity groups fill the spaces. This erosion by postcolonial identity groups in contemporary times is exciting because it leaves spaces for feminist reinventions of sovereignty; it is also terrifying, because the cautionary tale of history warns that the vacuum will be filled with new dictators. Let us not forget that when the subjects of Imperial Russia were sick of war and the bourgeoisie in 1917, and the Tsar was away fighting wars on the Western front, every woman rose up from her seat in the factories fueling the war effort. They walked out into the street, fifty thousand women whom the army would not shoot, and the Empire fell. And just sixteen years later, Stalin declared Freedom of Religion, along with criminalizing homosexuality and abortion. These women were promised a voice in the new order, and once that new order was established, they were cast aside in favour of the oldest old boys club, the Russian Orthodox Church.

While discussing the difference between violence and power, Hannah Arendt writes that violence is ultimately controlled by the state through police, military and mechanisms like juridical process, but power lies in the consent and consensus of groups. Power comes not from crazy individual citizens or dictators acting alone, but from networks of people energetically supportive of the solidarity of their movement. No matter how many men with guns are on the ground, drones are in the air, or bases are set up to colonize foreign territories, power cannot be

killed with violence (Arendt 1970: 83-87). Power rests in ideas. Governments that rely entirely on violence cease to have power.

Arendt makes use of the example of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia to illustrate this point. No matter how much force Russia used, or how many implements they had at their disposal, the power of the idea of Czech and Slovakian ethnic sovereignty persisted against all odds, making the occupation ultimately unsustainable (and horrific for both sides). The power of religious national movements is not to be underestimated (Arendt 1970: 83-90).

When asked, “What was your experience of the Orange Revolution of 2004/5?” Inna Shevchenko responded:

I was 15 or 16, studying in the school in the small town where I was born in the south part of Ukraine. For me, it was a revolution that you could see everywhere. You would go out on the street and you hear people, like the neighbours you've known for 15 years of your life, talking about something they never talked about before. You look at your mother and she is watching news that she never was interested in... I believe revolution isn't physical. It's in the mind. One of the main goals in any revolution is to change the minds of people. The Orange Revolution brought completely new ideas to my society. (Macnab 2014)

Shevchenko splashes her message across social media by any means necessary, even by flashing her eye-grabbing breasts to the world, because in the age of mass media, she knows that people must see it and share it to make the movement grow. The most eloquent and properly formatted essay in the world would not get more headlines than a bright image of Shevchenko lowering her panties and urinating on a poster of a man's face, in this case, Viktor Yanukovich, or a video of her screaming triumphantly about Joseph Ratzinger's resignation from the Papacy. These tactics, called Sextremism, are spreading Femen's ideas around the world.

Whether targeting the state or the church, Femen is taking aim at systemic power. This characteristic of their movement is shared with the Gezi Park protesters, who felt pushed to their

limits by the tightening strictures of the ruling class, both ecclesiastic and civilian. Shevchenko's description of her childhood reflections on the Orange Revolution describes 'normal' people who are stirred into otherwise uncharacteristic mobilization. This is mirrored in the story of the Woman in Red at Gezi Park, who was not a masked hooligan, but a sensible academic roused into involvement by the conditions of the time in which she was living.

The Gezi Park protests began with the simple aim of a few environmentalists to stop the destruction of a public green space in Istanbul. Nativist Movements are similarly motivated by the protection of nature and the dream of idyllic pastoral life without the pressures of modern war and politics. While these movements at first may seem theologically different, they share the same deconstructive roots. Can we set aside their religious/secular positioning to recognize their strategic correspondence?

Stalin allied with the Russian Orthodox Church to build a mega-state wielding both violence and power. Today, Russian President Vladimir Putin is emulating this model and renewing ties with the Moscow Patriarchate. Like Stalin, he is criminalizing homosexuality⁴⁴ and annexing Ukraine. Ukrainian women are hardly interested in whether this is a religious project or a secular project; the nativists are desperate to build a national identity separate from Russian settlers, and Femen, participants in the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, are fighting for the support of NATO to oust the Russians from their eastern provinces. When the time comes and sovereignties are reconstituted, will the women whose labours and love built the empire and also the women whose labours and love bolstered the religious nationalist movements be left behind again?

⁴⁴ See The Council for Global Equality website for a list of the measures taken recently to restrict the free movement and choices of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans Russians. "The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia." *The Council for Global Equality*. Accessed February 15 2017. Retrieve at <http://www.globalequality.org/newsroom/latest-news/1-in-the-news/186-the-facts-on-lgbt-rights-in-russia>

Women are intimately involved members of the anti-imperial resistance; this is evident cross-culturally and historically, from the February Revolution, to the Orange Revolution, to the Woman in Red, to the little girl dressed as a sun goddess at the Crimean Palace of Child and Youth Art. To their dismay, when the Empire loosens its iron hooks and independence is declared, the new state, with the help of the church, is thoroughly patriarchal. Inna Shevchenko was impelled into action with Femen when Ukraine's 2010 conservative government appointed an all-male presidential administration, mirroring the administration of the Orthodox Church. Femen are not calculating their resistance by the measurement system of religion versus the state, and they are not respecting the categorical boundaries between Ukrainian rulemakers in the Church or in the legislature. To Femen, women unrepresented by the church as well as the state, these institutions are part of the same patriarchal brotherhood which excludes them.

Where twentieth century scholars hypothesized the evolution of religion into nationalism, and indeed leaders like Ataturk and Lenin orchestrated such projects on a megalithic scale, the category of religion includes a universalizing valence which goes beyond the carefully patrolled borders of territorial sovereignty. The ideological jurisdiction and once-and-future valence of both states and religions and their twin histories map the slippages between the colonial and evangelical intentions of world leaders in contemporary times. In an age of globalization, identities are fragmented by the convergence of a mass of information and mass pluralism beyond the 19th and 20th century post-war configurations of the nation state. From these splinters of multiplicitous identity, multinational organizations emerge in a great reordering: NATO, the European Union, Facebook.com. Supernational identities emerge as well: pan-Islamism, feminism, 'Western culture'—these ideologies are mobilized through online networks beyond national lines. What comes after the age of 'post's'?

Femen activist Oksana Shachko sits on a train to the city, contemplating the future. She says:

I'm not prepared to accept society as it is and the rules it imposes on us. I am prepared to fight to the bitter end even though I know that it won't lead to huge changes in my generation. I know that it's a start, and we are part of a long tradition of people who have fought and protested... There have been so many beautiful grand ideas which aimed to liberate the people and help them realize their ambitions. In the end, capitalism corrupted a lot of these ideas so now we see them in a distorted light and not as they really are. But I think our organization, our ideology, our outlook on the world will not crack under that pressure. (*Je Suis Femen* 2014: 1:25:05)

6.5 Subjugated Knowledges

Foucault examines the history of l'hôpital de la Salpêtrière, the French institution that was built to address the diseased, the mentally ill, and the poor in the 18th century, developing a theory of subjugated knowledges (1980). He writes:

Subjugated knowledges are those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism - which obviously draws upon scholarship - has been able to reveal[...] It is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges (such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, the delinquent), and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge (*le savoir des gens*) though it is far from being a general commonsense knowledge, but is on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it - that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. (Foucault 1980: 82)

Where better to find the subjugated knowledges of a nation or a religion than amongst its protesters, terrorists and dissidents? Femen members counter-performing powerful social taboos against women's bodily autonomy were considered so radical that people described them as both mentally ill and delinquent. Their life experiences created a need to express themselves this

way, and many observers with different life experiences were unable to relate to the subjugated knowledges of these “poor but sexy” women and their particular circumstances (Pyzik 2014: 1). These ‘disqualified’ women operationalized taboo-breaking as a way to claim power.

Pagan knowledges are diffuse, and as Foucault describes, they are a “local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it” (1980: 82). Contemporary pagans often live in intentional communities which defy capitalist restraints, bartering or offering in-kind services and sharing resources. Some pagan communities share childcaring, or practice alternative ways of organizing families. This kind of organization requires flexibility and adaptation to context, defying systemic unanimity. There is a systemic kinship between indigenous peoples, pagans, and the Occupy Movement, one which evades study within a purely belief-based understanding of identity and community. Resisting and opposing “the harshness” of the kyriarchal framework of western post-Christian cosmology and social ordering goes beyond a ‘religious’ or ‘secular’ classification.

A combination of Foucault’s notion of subjugated knowledges and the concept of once-and-future-states is well expressed in the essence of the “Pagan National Anthem”, *We Won’t Wait Any Longer*, by Bard Gwydion Pendderwen (1982).

We Won't Wait Any Longer

We have trusted no man's promise,
We have kept to just ourselves;
We have suffered from the lies
In all the books upon your shelves
And our patience and endurance
Through the Burning Times and now
Have given us the strength
To keep our vow.

We won't wait any longer
We are stronger than before
We won't wait any longer
We are stronger

You have grazed away the heather
And have razed the sacred grove;
You have driven native peoples
From the places that they love.
Though your greed has been unbounded,
You have felt the pangs of shame
Every time you trod
Upon the Mother's name.

We won't wait any longer
We are stronger than before
We won't wait any longer
We are stronger

Though you thought you had destroyed
The memory of the Ancient Way,
Still the people light the bale fires
Every year on solstice day.
And on Beltane Eve and Samhain
You can find us on the hill
Invoking once again
The Triple Will.

We won't wait any longer
We are stronger than before
We won't wait any longer
We are stronger

Through the ages many races
Have risen and have gone,
But dispersed among the nations
Of the world—
We linger on.
Now the time has come to take
The sacred Cauldron of Rebirth
And fulfill our ancient
Pledges to the earth.

We won't wait any longer
We are stronger than before
We won't wait any longer

We are stronger...

Concluding Statement

Oksana Shachko, the girl from a small town in Ukraine who once wanted to become a nun, traveled to the famous city of Paris to participate in a Free Amina demonstration. While in the city, she visited museums, marvelling at the paintings featuring breasty women carrying banners above armies, muses of the French Revolution, beside angels in heaven and Mary, mother of God, also topless (*Je Suis Femen*: 2014: 37:41). These beautiful figures of cultural mythos were all sources of inspiration for her art and activism, undivided by categories of ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’.

The religious/secular binary fails to make sense of religious nationalists and protest movements, particularly in colonial and post-colonial contexts. In these contemporary times of shifting identities, a theoretical framing which includes an analysis of sovereignty and the state is necessary. In this dissertation I presented a comparison of several case studies—Native Faith and Femen in Ukraine, and the Gezi Park protesters and the Gülen Movement in Turkey—through the lens of contemporary theory within the fields of Religious Studies and Feminist Theology aiming to transcend the religious/secular binary. The purpose of theorizing beyond the religious/secular binary is to work toward an understanding of the stakes of religious nationalist movements, both for participants at the level of individual identity, and for society at large in an age of shifting global sovereignties.

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