

WARM BEER - COLD WOMEN

ANTI-ROMANTIC
MANIFESTO





Warm beer – cold women anti-romantic manifesto

Tom Waits enters the bar crushed. The woman he loved broke his heart, what else. Strangers in the bar are indifferent to his suffering. The beer is lukewarm, and the women have platinum blonde hair and aren't touched by his blues. They refuse to be there for him, blink their eyes with understanding, or condemn that woman for saying 'enough'. Tom has no place in this dead hole where he has to bother people for a crumb of attention, where these women refuse to make up for what one of them failed to give him - unconditional, lasting emotional labour, immediate responding to his every little need.

"Female" love for men is easily measurable. A beloved woman doesn't even have to be sexually available all the time. A man can understand that. But what he can't understand is that a woman, even if she loves him, can be perfectly indifferent, for one reason or another, to his emotional needs. If she is like that, it must mean something is wrong with her. That she is COLD.

Throughout life, even from earliest childhood, romantic love is served to us as the meaning of life. Already in kindergarten and school, within the institutional discipline of the classroom, we are forced to write the names of our 'crushes' (which must be of a different gender from ours) on heart-shaped papers. During adolescence, and long before that, we are told that we have to adjust to the expectations of the "opposite" sex in order to find a girlfriend / boyfriend as

soon as possible. In that game of finding a relationship, we are told to accept every cheeky, creepy and violent behavior of the boy as sweet and romantic (*he does that because he likes you!*). Finally, when we achieve this famous romantic relationship, it is understood that we are ready to sacrifice the last bit of our own freedom and autonomy in the name of love - it means that we must not love anyone else in the same way, have a spontaneous and free sex life and in fact any personal life other than with the person we are in a romantic relationship with (there must be no secrets between us). The person who quasi loves us becomes a modern inquisitor to whom we must confess all of our secrets in order for them to establish whether our behavior and thoughts are in accordance with the orthodoxy of the modern romantic relationship, whose goal is to maintain the discipline of a monogamous heteronormative couple / household. If we say no to any of that, or protest minimally, we are declared cold bitches who do not respond with admiration to the slightest sign of attention from cute romantic men.

chivalry and other romantic crap

One of the more irritating things is when men keep the door open for you despite all indications that you are perfectly capable of opening the door on your own. If you are a person with impaired mobility or if you are coming from shopping with your hands full of bags, and someone wants to help you because you are another human being who needs a hand, perfectly fine. But, except in such cases, it is pure passive aggression.

Once a guy was holding my door at the dorms where I was living, after which I thanked him and smiled slightly. After that he followed me to my room on the top floor without a word. Really creepy. So I came to a conclusion that there was no need to answer at all, but even that was a mistake. The next time an older guy opened the canteen door for me. I just rushed by him and his group of friends, so he started commenting out loud and yelling after me how terribly rude I was. I felt uneasy because I couldn't get too far from them, and they were in a group. So when a guy opens the door for you there is no right thing you can do or say to stop them from bothering you. There's no way to not be a bitch. Both being grateful and ignoring them lead to additional harassment.

Opening doors, hand-kissing, and paying for drinks are a bit more sophisticated versions of pulling hair, pushing, and insulting that, as we are told during childhood and adolescence, are signs of liking and sympathy. We must calmly accept them all and continue to participate in the game so that the boys won't be frustrated and sad that their 'effort' did not bear fruit. That way we are taught to jump at every

smallest sign of attention from men and forgive annoyance and violence so that they do not have to overwork or 'humiliate' themselves in expressing feelings and desires, and to give them an easier way out of the awkward situation of rejection. We are taught that our desires and choices are irrelevant here.

More than one time I have experienced that if I don't react to a guy who was hitting on me, he would tell me seductively - "why are you so shy?". It's assumed that I am reserved because I'm shy (because I'm "impressed" that some guy is even talking to me), and not because I just don't want to talk to him and he pisses me off.

Even if we agree to that game, it must proceed according to his plan. When we are being hit on by a group of guys, we are not the ones who can say what we would like. It is solely up to their internal agreement to pick the girls they want. We can never have the initiative and set our own terms without being seen as crazy.

Once a guy told me I was a crazy bitch just because I was the first to suggest sex.

All of this socializes us to accept violence and mind fucking as a normal part of romantic relationships, especially romantic relationships with men. What is the expectation that opening a door or paying for drinks results in sex other than mind fucking?, since it is implied that women are so stupid and worthless that they'll agree to something they didn't want at first (sex), just because someone did something to them - opened the door or paid for a beer - which they can easily do themselves. It is a preparation for what awaits us in relationships, marriages, families.

romantic love and labour

In my early youth I had multiple small relationships with guys that I liked and that would last a couple of weeks, which was the amount of time I then needed to realize that there are some working obligations, and also the time needed to process the fact that I, actually, am not obliged to perform them. To my disappointment, those small, but to me nonetheless exciting romances, ended soon with bewilderment from both sides. It wasn't until much later that I realized what their statements like 'what's wrong with you?', 'you are so cold' really meant.

Unlike the notions we have about friendship, expectations from romantic relationships are usually very specific. The content of what men actually expect is work and high emotional commitment. When they call friends at home to watch football, they are not expected to wash the dishes after that, while the girls are spared from washing dishes only on the first few dates. These are not just the expectations of some terribly traditional men, but also the many 'punks' we had an opportunity to be in an emotional relationship with.

I was once with a boyfriend and his folks on vacation. When he and his father made barbeque, they assigned me to peel some potatoes. I did a great job with that complicated task, so his father praised me and mocked my boyfriend's ex along the way as being this "poor" girl who, when she came to visit them, did not know how to peel potatoes with an ordinary knife like the one they gave me, but only with a potato peeler. When my boyfriend came visiting my family he never had to do anything.

What kind of work is expected from us in relationships and marriages? Physical work - cooking, washing, tidying up, sex (without consent, with consent but without mutual desire), pregnancy and childbirth (and everything that goes with that for the rest of our lives) etc., and the so-called emotional work - raising children, caring for the elderly, listening to your partners' whining, accepting complains on this or that, watching exactly that one film the he likes, remembering everyone's birthdays, facilitating conflict with other family members and friends, being always on his side, maintaining relationships with mutual friends, etc. All this is an everyday (and everynight) constant work that requires constant commitment. Anyone who has ever worked in an institution providing care for children, the elderly or the sick knows how exhausting it is to intensively take care for someone and that this kind of care presupposes a specific relationship and dynamics between the care-provider and the "recipient" of care. For that reason, the everyday free provision of such care to a partner and the family requires a particular type of motivation – love!

Capitalism could not function (or it would be significantly more difficult for capitalism to survive) without the huge amount of free labour that is predominantly (according to statistics for croatia and the world) performed by women. Without that work, workers would not be able to go to work to be exploited every single day. That is why it is necessary to constantly build and renew the ideology of romantic love to motivate women for huge amounts of daily toiling without pay.

Such division of labor does not only happen in traditional families. In many autonomous and anarchist groups girls often tidy up spaces, cook, and perform the emotional work of giving advice, facilitating communication, and calming conflicts. When some shit happens, we are the ones who have to endlessly debate and explain things to somehow smooth the situation out so that nobody would feel hurt.

One dude goes to fetch some drinks to the bar, the other will do the sound check, while me and the other girl from the team are left with just the task of cooking for the band - unless a dude who is very into cooking shows up, then he takes on the role of the chef and assigns us with smaller tasks and checks if we have chopped the onion finely enough.

romantic love and violence

When romantic love as a motivation for toiling fails, it is violence that takes the stage! Love and violence are two sides of the same coin of the romantic love ideology. Violence often fits well into the story of passionate romantic love. An example of this is when women claim that a man beats them precisely because he loves them and cares too much so he doesn't shy away from physical (*I drove him so crazy that he slapped me*) nor various kinds of psychological violence (emotional blackmail, pressure, outbursts of jealousy, etc.).

Workers working in the public sphere are disciplined by bosses, the police, unions and various institutions. Workers in the private sphere are firstly disciplined by the husband / partner, and only secondly by the state. The state cannot place a cop in every house nor can it by itself secure the complex relationships that are required for somebody to devotedly perform emotional labour on a daily basis. Therefore, the function of supervision is partially delegated to men who then become the cops, the judges and executors. The way the police handle reports of domestic violence and violence within romantic relationships, miserably low penalties that men receive for domestic violence, the small numbers of cases that are prosecuted at all, as well as public morality which suggests that it is a private matter that women need to accept, say much about how the state and society practically give men immunity to resort to violence if they think that the love contract is broken.

This is exactly what one croatian minister said in response to a case of domestic violence: 'that's how it is in the family'. True, let's not be fooled that the family is a place of love. We would just specify 'that's how it is in capitalism'.

Moreover, it is also opportune for the state and capital to delegate violence to men because in this way the systemic nature of violence is concealed by the family and relationships, and the antagonism of women is directed against men. That is why much of the feminist movement is directed exclusively against men and not against the state and capital.

However, for women and for queer people, addressing violence is the prerequisites for the possibility of organizing against the state and capital. Violence in everyday life is what discourages and holds us back in place. But when we dare to address violence in our own collectives and scenes, then we are told that we are making a fuss for no reason, and that by doing this, we are weakening the movement (*one punk told us that it is because of feminists like us, that "we lost in Spain in 1936"*) and that the answer is 'only love!' However, violence among ourselves is what weakens the movement, not the people among us addressing the violence! That 'love' that is supposedly the answer to everything is just a way of silencing.

romantic love and gender roles

The division of labor within a couple needs to be presented as something natural, so it seems obvious that a certain task will be done by a person of a certain gender, because it stems in some way from their very nature to do this task. The largest part of housework should therefore be presented as naturally feminine work. That is why one of the functions of romantic love is to strengthen and reproduce gender roles. However, the role of romance is not only to reproduce the division of labor and violence between men and women. Because it rests on the principle of the binary, because it is presupposed that only two people are in a romantic relationship at once, romantic love reproduces gender binarism. Think about how same-gender couples are often asked: *and who is the man in your relationship?*

No matter what kind of couple we are in, our desires, libido, bodies and imagination are locked into a given scenario with strictly predicted gender roles. For us, being in an emotional relationship with girls does not mean less physical and emotional work, and for some of our acquaintances it also meant experiences of violence.

For those of us with a non-binary or fluid gender experience, narratives of romantic love create a feeling that we will never be able to be adequate partners, and we know some trans people who experienced violence in a relationship during their own transition because this potentially meant a change of dynamics in the relationship that their partners didn't want to adjust to (*if you want to be a woman now, then*

get used to be beaten up). We might think that we are free from patriarchy in our queer relationships, but the cis-heteronormative society and ideals of romantic love impose impossible demands on us in every romantic relationship.

romantic love and the body

The norms of romantic love do not only dictate the division of gender roles. They also create clear ideas about how our bodies should look. It's not just about that men expect their partners to look a certain way, or that the couples in which the woman is taller than the men are being mocked. The most brutal expression of these notions is the practice of surgery on intersex children very soon after birth. Intersex people are people whose physical characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, primary and secondary sexual characteristics) cannot fit into the categories 'male' or 'female'. There are very different bodies, experiences and identities among intersex people. However, our society believes that a person whose body is not clearly male or female would have so many serious problems in life that it is justified to surgically adjust their body to one sex. The doctors choose the gender for the child shortly after birth. Although those operations are purely aesthetic, always completely medically unjustified and bringing to intersex people a whole range of traumas and health problems for the rest of their lives, heteronormative romantic relationships are often the only thing used as an excuse for such interventions.

One person from Croatia had the experience of having a doctor decide a few months after the birth that she should be a girl and because of that she underwent a series of difficult surgeries and unpleasant examinations without her consent during her childhood and adolescence. In addition, on one examination she was told she has to expand her vagina so she can have sex with cis men in the future, even though it had nothing to do with her wishes: *if you think I'm going to go through five hundred surgeries for sex ... and like ... by the way I sleep with girls, so I don't need it ...*

In addition, these surgeries do not take into account at all if the person will be able to have sexual pleasure later in life, since many surgeries, such as clitoral reduction surgery, often result in complete loss of the ability to experience sexual pleasure. Nominal romance is important, and not pleasure. Not only is it assumed that all people are either men or women, not only do they impose a gender identity on someone, but they also assume that all people are heterosexual and ready to sacrifice their own body parts, health and sexual pleasure in the name of a future 'normal' sex and romantic life.

against romance, for punk comradeship and anarchy

So we see how, as one of the tools of domestication of people to make them malleable to the laws of the state and capital, romantic love provides severe penalties for the violation of gender roles, that span from a feeling of inadequacy to violence and body mutilation. In the same manner as open police violence and repression is used to break the resistance of workers and other rebellious people in the public sphere, romance serves to continuously break the resistance in the private sphere. The specific perfidy of romantic love pertains to the fact that everyone thinks that romance is their own choice, something that they always wanted and something they aspire to. In the alienation of contemporary life, it is our partner that comforts us, it is only in this relationship that we can be who we truly are. We are willing to sacrifice the last bit of our freedom and autonomy, because we think that we are getting something so much better in return.

Make no mistake, "alternative" ways of life such as couples who refuse marriage, who refuse to have children and so called polyamory do not escape domestication and the horror of gendered life. By no means! These relations not only often keep strict gender roles, but under the slogan of ethics and transparency, advocate an even bigger attack on our autonomy: everyone can love and have sex with other persons as long as all the people involved are informed about absolutely everything and constantly have to discuss it.

Of course, having said all that, we do not mean that people should not love and care for each other and consider other people's emotions. What we are trying to say is that intimate, loving and caring relationships should not be limited to one or more persons with whom we are in a romantic relationship. When it is limited to the reproduction of atomized couples, families and their children, love is labour in the service of capitalism, the state and the nation. When it is about friendship and our anti-political communities, love can be subversive.

We all had friends who ditched us when they found a romantic partner, later to come back to us when having troubles in the relationship or after a breakup. That is because a romantic relationship must have a priority. At the same time, if we are in some sort of relationship, our friends automatically assume that we become unavailable to them.

It often happens that my male friends or acquaintances give up hanging out with me once they realize that I am in some sort of "relationship" at that moment. Obviously, it is assumed that hetero friendships always have to imply the possibility of romantic love, otherwise they make no sense.

For all these reasons (everyone being busy with their partner and children), many people, especially childless and queer people, often end up alone and isolated, which can become especially hard when we get older. This is the way society tells us that anyone who is not productive and does not reproduce the existing relations and norms, should fuck off and die.

Again, we are not against love. We are against love being a labour and a sort of service that is offered to romantic partners, while everyone else is excluded from that dedicated attention and care. We are not cold for our friends and comrades. We are cold towards the idea of emotionally and physically servicing one person, and the idea of servicing men in our collectives disproportionately more than women and queers. Instead of emotionally servicing one person or cis men, how about friendship and comradeship being the models of relationships in which we invest our energy and love?

Friendships provide us with emotional and practical support, but do not expect that our entire universe revolves around them. Although we can sometimes be jealous about of a friend, we, however, usually won't stage a jealous scene at them or try to control their lives. Why couldn't we practice this same autonomy that we base our friendships on also with persons we have an emotional and sexual relationship with? Or, why wouldn't all our close people, regardless if we have sex with them or not, just be our friends and comrades? Friends for whom we care about and whom we love, but we respect their autonomy and expect them to respect ours. Comrades whom we support so that we could fight capitalism and the state together.

Friendships are here for us, but they do not impose working obligations. They empower us, but they don't take away our freedom. Authentic emotional relationships are relationships of friendships, those that are not defined by the laws of the market, the rhythm of labour, emotional or economic blackmail, imposed feelings of guilt and duty, psycholog-

ical and physical violence... The true friendships that we want to affirm exist only outside the dictate of quantified exchange, they are not commensurable, calculated, and no one is forced to make sacrifices. They are synonymous with freedom and autonomy, they are the only thing that is authentically ours in a world colonised by the market and the spectacle. Friendship is the only possible basis of a libertarian community, "romantic relationships" are its negation – they are a reflection of the society that trades with emotions.

Anti-political communities and movements cannot be built without comradeship, love and support. But it has to be a love that is not mediated by the norms of monogamous romantic love. Let's get rid of this bleak romance! Let's live punk comradeship and anarchy today!



GOODNIGHTMACHOPRIDE@PM.ME