

BURN IN FLAMES

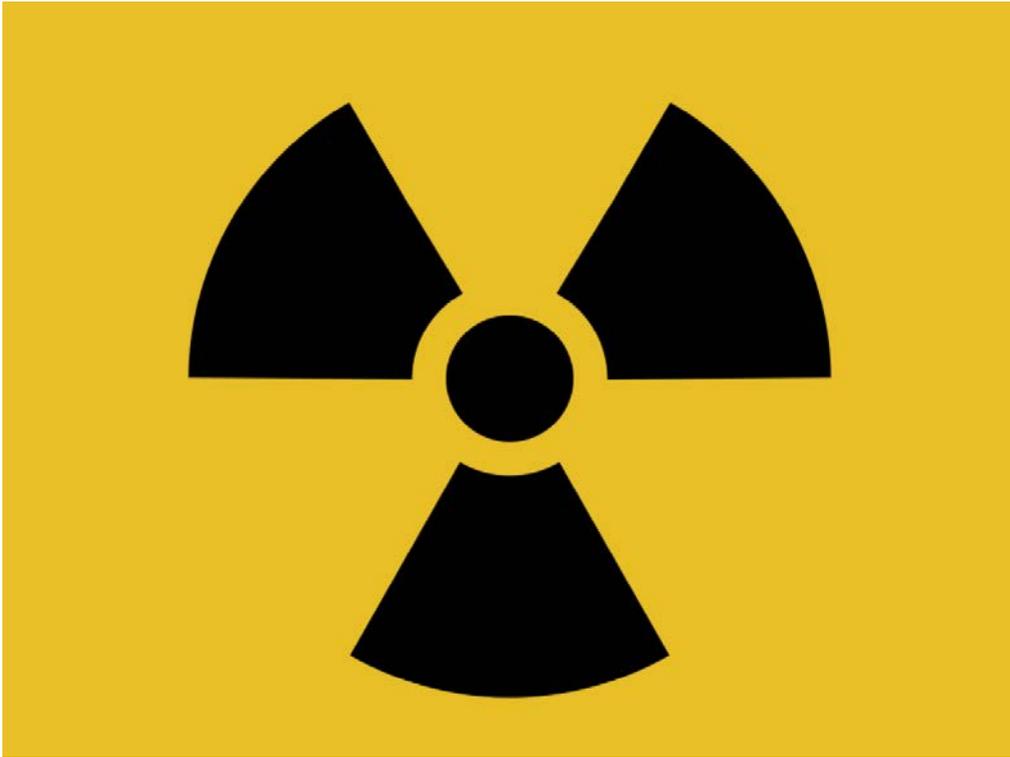
POST - PATRIARCHAL ARCHIVE IN CIRCULATION

Sarah Browne and Jesse Jones*

We're here to introduce you to the **Burn in Flames Post-Patriarchal Archive in Circulation**. This is part of a larger collaborative project we're working on, called *In the Shadow of the State*. This archival aspect of the project is one of a number of critical feminist tactics we're developing. These are tactics of resistance and defence against the regulation of the female body under the nation state and capitalism.

This archive exists for a future moment after the fall of patriarchy. It's a way of processing what we see as ideologically poisonous material, and labeling it as hazardous for future generations.

* Sarah Browne and Jesse Jones are artists based in Ireland. Email: nurseofarrell@gmail.com. Sarah Browne's website: <http://www.sarahbrowne.info/>. This is the transcript of a presentation made at the Mixing Feminism, Legality and Knowledge seminar, June 2016, at the School of Law, Queen Mary University of London, UK.



This archive is designed to highlight and draw attention to these hazardous materials, locations and objects.

The material from the archive exists all around us: we don't try to collect it or try to keep it. We begin by identifying and naming physical evidence of patriarchy, whether trivial or profound:



Objects are identified, stamped and placed back in circulation. Our initial tool in the procedure is a legal stamp, which acts as a way for us to process materials. The objects in the archive can fit in the palm of your hand, or they can be architectural, or even larger in scale. As a first point of action, we looked around our kitchen table:



We found materials for stamping including images, printed matter, like political leaflets, consumer items,





...even state documents:



Passport stamped: view video [here](#).

We can also stamp non-physical materials like laws and institutions, as well as material from the media for recirculation:



Abortion debate stamped: view video [here](#).

We distribute these stamps to other women who want to contribute ideas, which inform the standard. We also share the results online on our twitter account, @pparchive. There, hashtags can be used as a digital stamp also. Examples include:

#archiveincirculation
#feministadmin
#migogynisttimemachine

This is a way of seeing where that poisonous material circulates, and interrupting that circulation.

We've made this presentation a number of times. Previously we've focused on objects that are easy to recognize and stamp, and this has moved into more thematically-focused presentations, such as unpacking the construction and pathologization of so-called "feminine hygiene" practices. At the moment, we're thinking about the archive in relation to time itself, and how we might stamp specimens of time and temporal processes that we consider as patriarchal in the quality of time and experience that they enforce:



Angelus stamped: view video [here](#).

Time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance. Time may give form to relations of power or create a sense of political alignment, shared within a culture or nation. Time is fundamentally about repetition and counting. Therefore it is also about who defines the terms of measurement, and how the counting is done.

The women's movement is filled with temporal references, from conceptions of intergenerational time, to the value of labour relative to time, such as the wages for housework campaign, and the ongoing attempts to periodize the women's movement as a sequence of waves.

We can also date the idea of the 'biological clock' precisely to 1978, just as the backlash to second wave feminism was beginning. In research for her book *Labor of Love* (2016), author Moira Weigel points to this shorthand for women's ever-degrading fertility to a 1978 *Washington Post* article by Richard Cohen. Titled "The Clock Is Ticking for the Career Woman," he

describes what it's like to sit across a lunch table with a woman whose biological clock is ticking:

"You hear it wherever you go," Cohen writes. He conjures up an image of a "composite woman" between the ages of 27 and 35: pretty, with a "nice figure." Everything in her life is described as wonderful, except for one thing: She wants to have a baby. He writes that this need for children overshadows everything else in a woman's life; and that this business of wanting children is "where liberation ends."

The Clock Is Ticking For the Career Woman

COMPOSITE WOMAN (actually, several women at different times) is coming to lunch. There she is, entering the restaurant. She's the pretty one. Dark hair. Medium height. Nicely dressed. Now she is taking off her coat. Nice figure. She sits and begins with a status report. The job is just wonderful. She is feeling just wonderful. It is wonderful being her age, which is something between 27 and 35. And the fact of the matter, in case you should wonder, is that there is a new man in her life and he, like everything else, is truly wonderful. Then she looks down.

Is there something wrong? Composite Woman says nothing. I ask again. Again she says nothing. Finally I do the you-can-talk-to-me bit.

"Off the record?"

"Absolutely."

"I want to have a baby."

Sometimes, the composite woman is married and sometimes she is not. Sometimes, horribly, there is no man in the picture. What there is always, though, is a feeling that the clock is ticking. A decision must have to be made. A decision that will stick forever. You hear it wherever you go. Women all over are singing their own version of September song.

I've gone around, a busy bee of a reporter, from woman to woman, the ones in the office and the ones I meet elsewhere. Isn't it interesting, I say, this business about the biological clock? How do you feel about it?

They say, few of them, that it means nothing to them. If the mood hits them to have a child, they will adopt. From them, you get the message: There are already too many children in the world. I thought that once, too. Then I thought there was room for one more—mine.

Anyway, most of them did not say that. Most of them said that they could hear the clock ticking. Some talked about it in a sort of theoretical sense, like the woman who said she wanted five children and didn't even have a boyfriend yet. She had to get something going, she said, and you could tell that she resented the fact that a deadline had been imposed on her. Some women talked about it the way farmers talk about the weather, with a sort of resignation. Unfair, yes, but out of their control—an important word. Up to now, they've been able to postpone it to go to college and have

See COHEN, BS, Col. 1

Biological Time Clock Can Create Real Panic

COHEN, From B1

a career and do all the things that men traditionally have done and now they face this biological clock. One woman who has definitely decided not to have children put it in strong terms.

"It's unfair" she said. "It doesn't make me resent men; it's just unfair. Everything has changed since I was 20 years old. And I know without a doubt now to be sure that I don't know how I will feel 5 years from now. Fifteen years from now I might desperately want a baby."

I was being wonderfully dispassionate and reported a lady over men a gentleman, but she caught an edge in my voice and opened up on me.

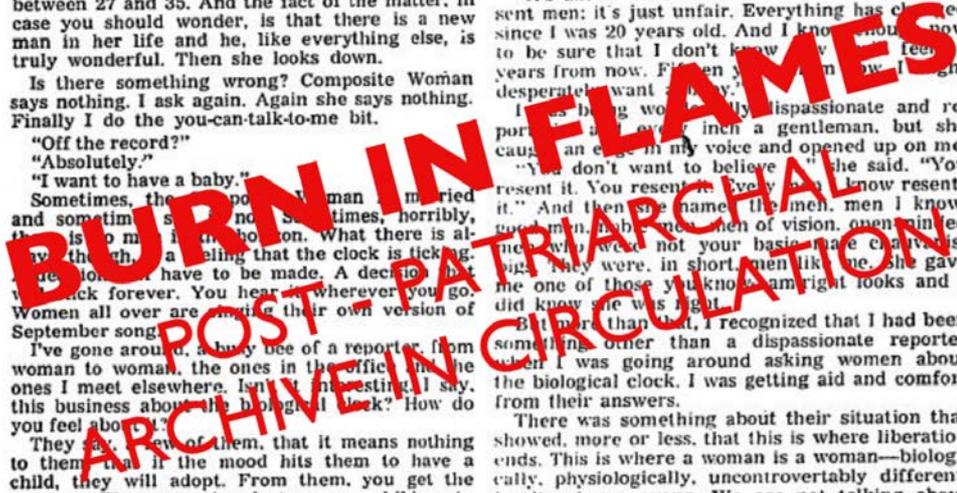
"You don't want to believe," she said. "You resent it. You resent it. I've never known resent it." And then she named the men, men I know, good men, noble men, men of vision, men I admired and who were not your basic male chauvinist pig. They were, in short, men like me. She gave me one of those you-know-I-am-right looks and I did know she was right.

But more than that, I recognized that I had been something other than a dispassionate reporter when I was going around asking women about the biological clock. I was getting aid and comfort from their answers.

There was something about their situation that showed, more or less, that this is where liberation ends. This is where a woman is a woman—biologically, physiologically, uncontrovertably different. Don't get me wrong. We are not talking about recognizing a difference and being glad that some of us are on the "right" side of it—the side of Charlie Chaplin and Pablo Picasso and all the other senior citizen fathers, the side that needs no clock.

But there is something else here: once you recognize the difference, you also have to recognize that the difference produces advantages and handicaps. Little about it is simply neutral. This is important because there is now something in the air about women having won their fight for equality and even something about how it was always harder to be a man, anyway. But there are some things we never had to worry about.

Like the ticking of the biological clock.



We know that the measuring of time has legal and criminal implications. The criminalization of abortion only occurred in the late 1800s in the UK and Ireland, at the time when the womb's interior could be visualized and the foetus seen. Prior to that, "the quickening" was the moment when the woman felt the baby kick inside her, and this defined the beginning of the pregnancy. Conception was thought of as an obstruction to menstruation, and prior to the quickening, women might "induce the menses" which was not legally conceived as an abortion. Therefore time was felt rather than seen, and the law relied on women's knowledge and experience of their own bodies.

We're concerned with a middle time between the time that is felt and the time that is seen.

As part of *In the Shadow of the State*, we've commissioned material culture historian Lisa Godson to explore the history of the vaginal speculum. She proposes a user-centred design critique that radically focuses on the female as the user of the device – she who is touched and touches the device, rather than the medical practitioner who uses it to see. As such we see the speculum as a hinge between felt time and seeing time. A key part of Lisa's research focuses on the Sims speculum, a design from the 1800s still in use today that was developed through experimentation on slave women in the Southern states of America.

The post-patriarchy archive is concerned with experimentation and aesthetic disruptions to the material culture and modes of political domination that surround us, as part of the larger project we're working on titled *In the Shadow of the State*. We will be making the final performance of the project with Artangel in London in November 2016.



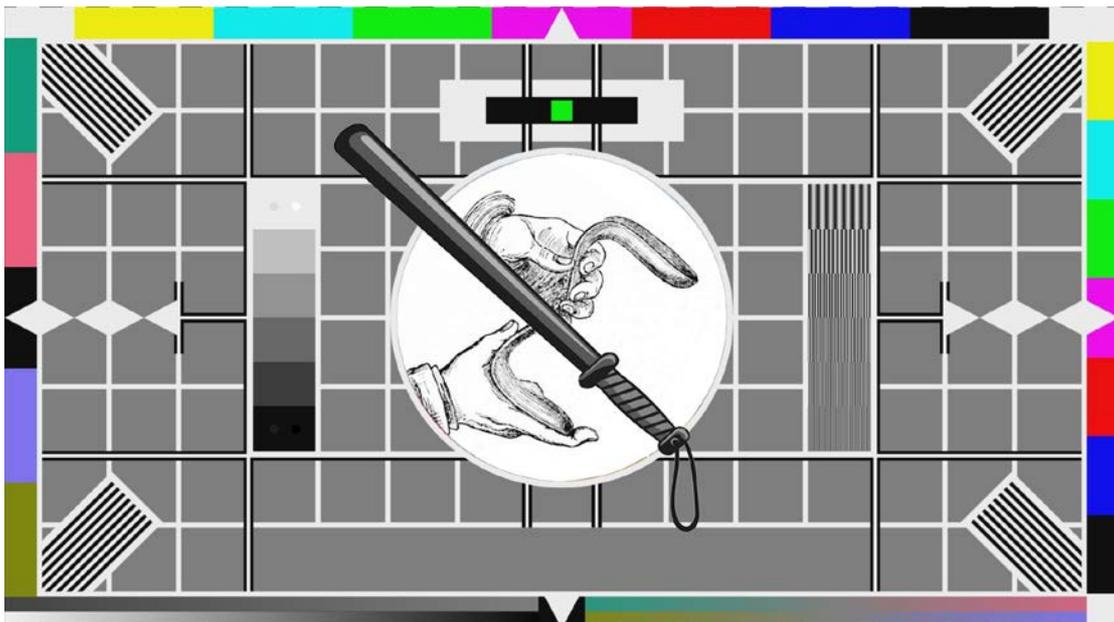
Television broadcast time is a special kind of time to intervene into. Broadcast time can create a sense of alignment between diverse domestic and public spaces. It can operate as a mode of state instruction and time-keeping, telling us when to have time for leisure within patterns of routine and employment – prime time, “women’s hour”, after the watershed.

How can we mobilize the shared experience of cultural time in order to spill over the boundaries of state time?



Sinead O'Connor: view video [here](#).

The next performance of this project is a workshop titled *The Truncheon and the Speculum* that will be streamed online from the radical community bookshop in Liverpool, News from Nowhere, on Thursday, July 21st 2016,



This broadcast will be freely available online to allow for a transnational dialogue. We hope that this online space will open up the potential for shared knowledge and skills, counteracting the terrestrial illegalities of reproductive rights of women as well as challenging how the broadcast medium is typically used. Its title is a reference to the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, which permitted the compulsory gynaecological inspection of women suspected to be prostitutes, in the interests of protecting the male soldiers of the Empire from venereal disease.

Lisa Godson will present her research into the vaginal speculum. Klau Kinky of Catalan collective GynePunk takes a DIY hacktivist approach to de-colonizing the female body. So-called 'cyborg witch' Klau proposes a take-back of sexual health through reclamation of suppressed forms of bodily self-knowledge.

With this event, we're interested in supplanting the role of the state broadcast into domestic spaces, thinking not only about the space of discussion at the kitchen table but also all the other rooms of the house. We're inviting anyone who is interested to host an evening in their home (or organization) to watch the broadcast together with a gathering of friends, wherever in the world you are. We're imagining these satellite events like anti-capitalist tupperware parties where nothing is for sale – or a Eurovision party, where pop culture rubs up against submerged political histories.

If this is something you'd be interested in, please get in touch with us and let us know so that we can be in contact.

@pparchive

www.intheshadowofthestate.org

The Truncheon and the Speculum broadcast, made after this presentation, is archived for viewing online [here](#).