

TERFism, Zionism, and Right-Wing Annihilationism

Toward an Internationalist Genealogy of Extinction Phobia

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Abstract This article traces the emergence of what the author calls predation TERFism to the development of US Jewish-identified feminism and, in particular, Zionist lesbian separatism. This historical connection is reflected in the rhetorical and ideological similarities between predation TERFism and Zionism, both of which are defined by an “extinction phobia” that confuses oppressor and oppressed, presenting the subordinate party as capable of eliminating the dominant one. This extinction phobia transforms into “right-wing annihilationism” via a dehumanization of the subordinate party as innately harmful and therefore requiring elimination; hence the hallmark predation TERF abjection of trans women as rapists of cis women and the Zionist abjection of Palestinians as “savage” and/or “terrorist.” These connections can be obscured by the siloization of social justice movement work in the United States, wherein anti-colonial and anti-imperial organizing is often separated from organizing for gender and reproductive justice and sexual freedom. Recognizing the continuities, however — whether historical, material, or ideological — between predation TERFism and Zionism offers useful lessons for understanding not only the power of the contemporary global anti-trans resurgence, but also how we might build solidaristic, anti-colonial movements to defeat it.

Keywords TERFism, Zionism, US feminism, lesbian separatism, Jewish feminism

The pronounced rise of trans-exclusionary radical feminism (TERFism) around the world in the last half-century is indisputable. Widely imagined (or hoped) to be a political perspective that would die off with its progenitors, 1970s American and British radical and lesbian feminists, TERFism has found new allies in right-wing Catholic and Evangelical researchers, scholars, activists, and figureheads, reinventing itself as “gender critical” feminism that casts doubt on “gender ideology” (Greenesmith 2020a; Martínez and Rojas 2021). Despite the new terminology, however, this TERFism is both eerily reminiscent of and actually dependent on the founding views of that same small group of white second-wave lesbian and radical

feminists. This tiny number of people (Chapman and Du Plessis 1997: 174) have exerted outsized influence not simply on US feminism and its global reception but also, increasingly, on the broader right wing of which it has become a part.¹

It nevertheless remains controversial to observe that TERFism is a reactionary or right-wing political position. This is due, at least in part, to its association with feminism, a movement to end sexist oppression (hooks 1984). The trickiness of this overlapping association occurs variously across multiple issues, but nowhere so unambiguously as at another, seemingly unrelated, site of vexed political contestation: Zionism and anti-Semitism. Just as critics are reticent to point out the reactionary character of TERFism because of its proximity to an oppressed group, women, and their movement for liberation, feminism, so too are critics reticent to point out the reactionary character of Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, due to its proximity to a historically oppressed group, Jewish people, and what has been cast as its liberation movement, Zionism (Cable 2022).

The connections between TERFism and Zionism are not simply rhetorical, however. They are also historical, insofar as the “classic” TERF analyses are themselves implicated in Zionist commitments and presuppositions. In contrast with the standard explanation that Catholicism or Catholic theology lie at the root of feminist transphobia (given that its primary US exponents, Mary Daly and Janice Raymond, are Catholic theologians and ethicists), I instead trace the genealogy of US TERFism through the advent of Jewish-identified feminism and, in particular, Zionist lesbian separatism. This genealogy reveals that the significant factor in TERF analysis is not actually religion so much as what Lynne Stahl (2021) calls “extinction phobia.” Extinction phobias are existential beleaguement narratives that cast political opponents as threats to survival, describing those opponents in objectified and dehumanizing terms that characterize them as innately threatening evil or “savage.” Elsewhere, I have argued that extinction phobias are a version of Nietzschean slave morality (Schotten forthcoming, 2016); one can also recognize elements of moral panic, as theorized by Gayle Rubin (1984), at work here. Whether described as slave moralities or moral panics, however, extinction phobias are reactionary because they are ideological: they obscure the actual functioning of power by reversing hierarchy’s material realities. In other words, rather than recognize their own power or position of superiority in relation to the political enemy they identify, exponents of extinction phobias instead insist on their own marginalization and victimization, instrumentalizing claims of oppression in order to wield them against their actually marginalized political opponents, whom they objectify and dehumanize as innately threatening.² The version of TERFism I identify in this article, which I call predation TERFism, is an extinction phobia to be sure. But so too is the Zionism that coexists alongside TERFism’s historical emergence and also serves as one of predation TERFism’s

ideological resources. Rereading the history of US Jewish-identified feminism, which is developing at the exact same time as TERFism and has as one of its offshoots the remarkable development of Zionist lesbian separatism, offers a strikingly clear articulation of an extinction phobia that overlaps, informs, and facilitates the development of predation TERFism. It is here, I argue, that we should look for the origins of predation TERFism and its reactionary character.

The connections between these two seemingly unrelated ideologies—TERFism and Zionism—can be obscured by the siloization of progressive/Left social movement work in the United States. Indeed, there is a real divide between those parts of the Left that prioritize anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism and those that focus on ostensibly more “domestic” or “cultural” issues of gender justice, reproductive justice, and sexual freedom. Similarly, right-wing watchdog groups do not always make the necessary connections between white Christian nationalism (which includes Christian Zionism) and the Jewish Zionist lobby, neoconservatism, and the Islamophobia network (Ali et al. 2011; Duss et al. 2015). While contemporary TERFism may be funded in large part by the Evangelical and Catholic Right and Zionism by the neoconservative (and largely, but not entirely, Jewish) Right, the continuity in their arguments—specifically on the existential question of survival itself—suggests not only that these different parts of the Right have more in common than it may initially seem, but also the importance of understanding and taking imperialism and colonialism seriously in US social justice movement work. This hitherto unexplored link is thus significant in its own right and offers useful lessons for understanding the power of the contemporary anti-trans resurgence and its continuing ability to stymie and confuse otherwise well-meaning and progressive people about the legitimacy of trans people’s existence and resistance—not to mention the continuing legitimacy of the existence and resistance of the Palestinian people.

I. Predation TERFism and Extinction Phobia

TERFism takes at least two different positions on the basis of women’s oppression.³ For more Marxist- or socialist-minded TERFs, the basis of women’s oppression is the exploitation of specifically female-sexed bodies in the forms of (forced) childbearing, child-rearing, sterilization, prostitution and sex work, and so forth, and forms of physical violence or abuse that are (claimed to be) specific to female-sexed bodies, for example, (vaginal) rape, sexual harassment, (father-daughter or brother-sister) incest, and (once again) prostitution and sex work. These feminists view this analysis as “more radical” than socialism alone because it recognizes the oppression of women by men, rather than the oppression of labor by capital, as the primary social antagonism and the foundation on which capitalist exploitation is built. These socialist-minded TERFs argue that gender transition, while

necessary or important for many people, is an individual choice, not a collective action, and thus not a political solution to the problem of women's oppression. Moreover, gender transition does not alter the terms of "gender" itself, which these feminists view as a counterproductive term because it obscures the basis of women's oppression—biological sex, which in their view cannot be changed—and potentially colludes with that oppression insofar as it appears to subscribe to and thus perpetuate binary "sex roles" (their term for gender). As the 2013 open statement from radical feminists puts it, "We look forward to freedom *from* gender," not flexibility to move between its two options (Hanisch et al. 2013).

By contrast, the more famous version of classical TERFism, exemplified by figurehead Janice Raymond and her book *The Transsexual Empire* (albeit not limited to her or this text alone), argues a bit differently. For these TERFs, the basis of women's oppression is the behavior and, perhaps more precisely, simply the very nature of people assigned male at birth: these feminists hold the penis itself to be the root of and reason for women's oppression. Sheila Jeffreys—in some ways Raymond's British counterpart and a near contemporary—explicitly names this theory "penile imperialism," which she defines as "the rule and control over women under male dominance through the wielding of the penis" (Engle 2006). It is evidenced throughout her anti-trans screed, *Gender Hurts* (Jeffreys 2014), wherein the presence of "complete" or "intact" male genitalia is considered sufficient to convey if not also enact violence and harm to (cis) women. And some radical feminist and lesbian separatist analyses (Cowan 1978; Gorgons 1978; Gutter Dyke Collective [1973] 1988) attribute all violence, racism, war, and environmental degradation to the doings of men, understood as persons with "prick power" (Gorgons 1978: 396). As Jennifer Earles (2018: 247) notes, these TERF analyses "conflate bodies with gender so that the penis became a symbol of patriarchy, male socialization, and unwanted heterosexuality."

Both TERF views agree that so-called women's space should be preserved solely for cis women because they also agree that trans women are not women. However, trans women's exclusion from "women's space" takes a different character in each view. For socialist-leaning TERFs, trans women are simply irrelevant to the problem of women's oppression. They are not "real" women, so they are not subject to women's—that is, female, that is, biological sex-based—oppression. Trans women can therefore be legitimately excluded from "women's spaces" not because they are a threat or problem but simply because they are not women or oppressed as women, and it is the right of oppressed people to gather and forge community absent the external constraints of the oppressors, whose world they seek to undo.

By contrast, for predation TERFs, trans women are agents of (cis) women's oppression and constitute active threats to (cis) women by their very existence.

This is based on the premise that, like “gay men, fetishists, transvestites, transsexuals, bisexuals, sado-masochists, necrophiliacs, scatologists, pederasts, [and] those who practice bestiality” (not to mention drag and butch/femme), trans women are simply “extensions of the sexual objectification/power/dominance way that men in this society relate to everything” (Alice et al. [1973] 1988: 392). As the latest ingenuity of patriarchal ideology, in other words, trans women represent yet one more male stratagem to infiltrate, undermine, divide, and destroy (cis) women, lesbians, and feminism. This claim may seem at odds with the predation TERF focus on the penis as the emblem and agent of patriarchal oppression. But it is easily resolved via the additional TERF assertion that removal of male genitalia and/or taking female hormones is insufficient to “make” a (cis) woman (see, e.g., Cowan and House 1977b: 34; Marty et al. 1983a: 344; Raymond [1979] 1994: 104; Raymond 1977: 13). In other words, trans women are men in predation TERF analysis.

Raymond agrees with these views, which is how and why she can conclude that trans women are in fact rapists of (cis) women. Since trans women, by their very existence, both constitute and enable a patriarchal takeover of the female body, they are therefore innately threatening to cis women. This assertion is typically considered Raymond’s ([1979] 1994) distinctive contribution to predation TERFism. It is the most notorious of the many incendiary claims she makes in *The Transsexual Empire*; the passages wherein she asserts it (104, 118) are among its most repudiated and most reproduced. Too frequently overlooked, however, is Raymond’s argument that trans women portend not simply the rape of cis women and lesbians but also their actual elimination. This is made abundantly clear in Raymond’s cheap, trite, and solely rhetorical association between trans women and Nazis, or the “transsexual empire” (i.e., the medical establishment) and Nazi doctors. Raymond acknowledges the cheapness and triteness of this very association, noting that “the example of the Nazi camps has often been cited in ethical arguments that attempt to sensationalize and disparage opposing views” and “throw sand in people’s eyes about such issues as abortion and euthanasia.” However, she proceeds to do just this, excusing her reliance on this hackneyed rhetorical tactic by denying it is a “direct” comparison between “transsexual surgery” and “what went on in the camps but rather” a demonstration that “what did go on there can be of value in surveying the ethics of transsexualism” (148).⁴

Raymond’s “argument” here is twofold: 1) referencing Thomas Szasz, Raymond claims that the medical establishment undertaking the treatment and care of trans people “is a science at the service of a patriarchal ideology of sex-role conformity in the same way that breeding for blond hair and blue eyes became a so-called science at the service of Nordic racial conformity” (149); and 2) the

commodified search for scientific knowledge incentivizes trans medical treatment, which is otherwise “unnecessary surgery, performed in part because of the ‘objective’ knowledge that it offers to researchers and technicians on a subject that is not knowable from other sources” (150). Trans health care, in other words, is a kind of gender eugenics driven by an insatiable scientific will to knowledge. The rest of this section purports to substantiate these claims via a series of bizarre allusions and circumstantial associations, including factoids such as the first person to perform “sex-conversion surgery” was German; Magnus Hirschfeld’s Institute of Sexual Sciences studied “transvestitism (and probably transsexualism before it was named as such)”; Magnus Hirschfeld was . . . German. Despite these cited incidents predating the Nazi regime, Raymond nevertheless goes on to allege that “one transsexual operation was done in the camps,” which she confusingly uses as evidence to claim that such medical practice originates with Nazism and, to return to her first point (she does not make the connection herself), this consequently means that transsexual surgery is a eugenics program intended (via a comparison that is not, remember, a direct comparison) to eliminate or weed out cis women entirely (“in the same way that breeding for blond hair and blue eyes became a so-called science at the service of Nordic racial conformity”).⁵

As Susan Stryker (2017: 107) aptly notes, this is one of the “more lurid yet logically incoherent sections” of *The Transsexual Empire*, relying on “a string of false syllogisms, inferences, and analogies that work to associate transsexuality with Nazism without actually asserting that transsexuals are Nazis or Nazi collaborators.” Not only this, but if we were to take Raymond’s noncomparative comparison seriously and hold it to some sort of consistency, we would be forced to conclude that, in this bizarre scenario wherein “the doctors” are “the Nazis,” trans people electing surgical care would be “the Jews” insofar as they are “the victims” of the doctors’ “medical experimentation.” Yet Raymond doesn’t actually argue this, of course; her claim is rather that trans women are the agents (i.e., “the Nazis”) of a patriarchal medical and scientific edifice (Nazism?) that is bent on destroying (cis) lesbians, feminism, and lesbian feminism.

Underappreciated is how much of this and other of Raymond’s hallmark “analyses” are present in the work of her mentor and PhD dissertation director Mary Daly (Kelly 2016).⁶ Indeed, Raymond’s focus on the medical establishment may very well derive from Daly’s singular focus on gynecologists “of both body and mind” as the distinctly American face of patriarchal gynocide. Most significant for my purposes is the fact that both use Nazism as the relevant model or comparison to illustrate the harms done to (cis) women by “the transsexual empire” (Raymond) or “gynecological gynocide” (Daly 1978: 305). As we have seen, Raymond puts equivocal qualifiers on her own use of this rhetorical tactic. By contrast, Daly is much less restrained. Referencing Hannah Arendt ([1963] 1994), Daly (1978: 304–5) notes that

the “banality of evil” is not an unfamiliar theme to women struggling to refuse all of patriarchy’s bad medicine. . . . We have seen gynocidal practices and operations become acceptable to and accepted by women who are filled with self-loathing, and who are unable to bond with the loathed mirror-images of their decaying selves. Such fashioned and fashionable women are not caked with mud and feces [as Nazi death camp prisoners were], but are encrusted in the mold of man-made femininity.

If readers are taken aback by this graphic comparison of American women’s suffering with those of Nazi death camp prisoners, Daly concludes this is because of a refusal to accord the horrors of both American gynocide and the Nazi Holocaust their proper due:

Nowhere does the mechanism of banalizing of evil function more smoothly and insidiously than in gynecology. A symptom of this is the predictable re-action of outrage at an analysis which dares to expose the common roots and similarities between Nazi medical atrocities and American gynecological practice. Since the degradation of women is as commonplace and acceptable as the neighborhood drug store, this is perceived—if it is perceived at all—as minimally offensive. By contrast, the Nazi atrocities are recognized *as atrocities*. Yet the latter *are* belittled in the sense that they are seen as isolated events. Since their radical origin in patriarchal myth and social reality is not acknowledged, their deep roots are not eradicated. It is precisely the isolation of those genocidal atrocities from the reality of patriarchal gynocide, particularly in its most lethal modern manifestations, which should elicit outrage, for it minimizes the horror of the Holocaust, allowing its uneradicated roots to grow unnoticed, to sprout again elsewhere. This resistance to seeing connections, this scorn for integrity of vision re-presents/re-enforces the triumph of the banality of evil. (306)

In short, what happened to Jews in 1940s Europe is happening to American women right now (i.e., in 1978). This is because Nazism is in fact an offshoot of the depravities of medical (mal[e])practice: “patriarchal gynocide . . . is the root and paradigm for genocide” (298). But if Nazism is a by-product of patriarchal gynocide, it is difficult not to conclude that the end goal of male domination, whether it is called “gynocide” or “the transsexual empire,” is the elimination of (cis) women, just as the aim of Nazism was the extinction of the Jews.

To my knowledge, Jeffreys does not invoke either Nazism or the Holocaust to describe trans people or the medical establishment, but she does repeatedly assert that the existence of trans people portends the eradication of (cis) women and lesbians. In this sense, her work is an update on Raymond’s, who limits her

analysis to trans women only, alleging without evidence that most trans people are trans women. By contrast, Jeffreys (2003: 122) asserts (also without evidence) that there is a new “epidemic” of trans men that constitutes an “emergency for lesbian politics.” The emergency, however, is actually just the same old crisis, since, for Jeffreys, the existence of trans men also results in the elimination of (cis) women and lesbians, since, in trans surgery, “lesbians are physically destroyed . . . and their lesbianism is removed along with female body parts” (122). Although removal of the penis was insufficient to “create” a (cis) woman for predation TERFism, removal of breasts or the uterus is now apparently sufficient to “create” a [cis?] man. And a straight man no less: validating the old subcultural lesbian TERF chestnut that “all the butches are becoming men,” Jeffreys goes so far as to claim that if the trans man is partnered, two lesbians are “eliminated” via surgery, because one transition results in two heterosexual people (chap. 6). This inconsistency depends not on any clear definition(s) of sex or gender in predation TERF analysis, but rather and solely on extinction phobia: regardless of which trans gender is under consideration, the end result is always the same—the patriarchal elimination of cis women/lesbians—because cis women’s extinction is both the premise and the conclusion of predation TERF analysis.

The invocation of Nazism and the Holocaust to situate and explain the threat posed to (cis) women by trans people is not simply a particularly outrageous (if also banal) rhetorical tactic. It is also distinctly revelatory of a defining aspect of predation TERF analysis that Stahl (2021) identifies as “extinction phobia,” an ideological and psychological phenomenon that exceeds the bounds of mere antipathy or xenophobia. It is instead a terrified anxiety about the ability of the demonized other to eradicate oneself and one’s people. What renders it reactionary is its reversal of the relationship of oppressor and oppressed, presenting the weaker or more marginalized party as capable of eliminating the oppressor. This reversal is facilitated by the essentialization and dehumanization of the more marginal party as inherently predatory and incapable of anything other than violence, destruction, and harm by their very nature. Thus the flip side of extinction phobia is a kind of counterdiscourse that I call right-wing annihilationism. If, in fact, trans people pose an existential threat to cis women and lesbians owing to their inherently invasive and predatory nature, then safety requires their eradication—the elimination of the would-be eliminators. Therefore, as Raymond ([1979] 1994: 178) famously argues, the best response to transsexuality is to “morally mandate it out of existence.” She claims this is neither as authoritarian as it sounds nor a kind of lawfare. It includes “First Cause legislation” (e.g., mandating nonsexist public school education [179–80]) to alleviate sex-role conditioning and consciousness-raising-based therapeutic treatment for

trans people. Although these proposals may not sound annihilatory, in an article version of *The Transsexual Empire* published in *Chrysalis* about two years prior, Raymond (1977) lists questions she believes should animate “consciousness-raising counseling” for trans women. While they all appear wholly rhetorical in nature, the last one is particularly pointed: “Is transsexual surgery a male-defined, male-perpetuated, and male-legitimated mode of happiness? . . . Can one then view the transsexual ‘solution’ as the beginning of a world where men not only dominate women but become women—and perhaps even try to eliminate and surpass us?” (22). The correct answer to this question, and the extinction phobia underpinning it, are of course obvious. Although Raymond (2014) consistently complains that she is unfairly misconstrued as advocating the “elimination” of transsexuals, true to form she offers an explanation that only implicates her in the very thing of which she is trying to exonerate herself: “I want to eliminate the medical and social systems that support transsexualism and the reasons why in a gender-defined society, persons find it necessary to change their bodies. Nowhere do I say, ‘transsexuals should be eradicated on moral grounds,’ which has over-tone of ethnic cleansing. It’s like saying I want to eliminate women in prostitution because I want to eliminate the system of prostitution.”⁷ In the face of Raymond’s clearly articulated extinction phobia, however, the notion that advocating elimination of the “system” of transsexuality (or prostitution) is somehow different from seeking the elimination of transsexuality or transsexual people (or prostitution and prostitutes) seems tendentious at best.⁸ Predation TERF extinction phobia becomes right-wing annihilationism, then, when and as it casts trans people—trans women in particular—as innately existential threats to (cis) women. Locating the source of women’s oppression not in structures of power, inequality, or exploitation, Raymond and other predation TERFs identify the “fact” of maleness—whether understood most commonly as the presence of a penis or, when pressed, can extend to anything from XY chromosomes, a history of male experience, or the endurance of male divisiveness, energy, and entitlement—as the fount of domination. In so doing, they become right-wing annihilationists, advocating reactionary political solutions such as trans exclusion or—in some radical feminist excesses—actual extermination campaigns to eliminate trans people entirely.

Extinction phobia is also at the heart of much Zionist rationalization of the state of Israel. To connect predation TERF extinction phobia with Zionist extinction phobia, however, we must first take a detour through second-wave US feminism. It is at precisely the moment that predation TERF analysis is being articulated that there are “intensive disputes among U.S. feminists in the late 1970s and early 1980s about the differentiated lived experiences of racism, Zionism, and anti-Semitism” (Feldman 2015: 21).

II. Zionism in Twentieth-Century US Feminist and Lesbian Separatist Movements

The years 1967 and 1982—respectively, the beginning of the “official” Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and Israel’s brutal, second invasion of Lebanon—split the US Left in the late 1960s and the US feminist movement in the later 1970s and early 1980s (Feldman 2015; Fischbach 2020). Israel’s 1967 war with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria mobilized American Jews to the cause of Zionism like never before. Subsequently known as the Six-Day War, it was presented to the world as a pre-emptive battle waged by an endangered Israeli David against a Goliath of Arab armies massing to destroy the Jewish state. Jubilant at Israel’s quick military victory, “American Jews felt that Israel had just dodged the bullet of genocide” (Fischbach 2020: 60). American Jews’ loyalty to Israel increased markedly at this moment, as did their understanding of the state as a necessary haven to protect Jewish people from another Holocaust (Balint 2010; Feldman 2015; Fischbach 2020). Even as both Israeli and US leaders, both at the time and since, acknowledged that Israel was under no credible existential threat by Arab armies in 1967, this war consolidated the now-common understanding of Israel as essential to protect Jews from eradication. Concomitantly, anti-Semitism was inflated into an innate principle of either human nature or world history, understood as both historically and globally ever-present, and always potentially genocidal in intent (Feldman 2015; Fischbach 2020; Zertal 2005).

By contrast, the US feminist movement did not become concerned with Judaism, anti-Semitism, Israel, or Zionism until a bit later. Some claim the turning point was the 1975 United Nations Women’s Conference in Denmark (Milstein 2016), where controversy erupted over a proposed resolution declaring women to be “natural allies in the struggle against any form of oppression,” including Zionism alongside racism, colonialism, and apartheid. The conflict over this resolution, which came to be known as the “Zionism is Racism” resolution, stretched throughout the UN Decade for Women (1975–85) and erupted at each of the three UN Women’s Conferences held that decade. Others view 1982 as the turning point: the year of Israel’s (second) war on Lebanon—which included the now-infamous massacres of hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps (al-Hout 2004)—as well as a spate of public writings on Zionism and anti-Semitism in feminist periodicals, some of which predated this war (Cantarow 1988; Feldman 2015; Fischbach 2020; Bourne 1987).

For many American Jews, it came as a shock when US New Left movements named Israel a colonial power and defended Palestinians as victims of the same sorts of imperial domination and racial oppression as the Vietnamese abroad and African Americans at home (Feldman 2015; Fischbach 2020). Some American Jews claimed this critique was anti-Semitic insofar as it questioned

Israel's right to exist, Jews' status as an oppressed people, and Zionism's character as a national liberation movement. To question these things, for some, "constituted nothing less than an existential threat to Judaism" (Fischbach 2020: 61). Many Jewish-identified feminists also took this same position, even in the wake of the Lebanon invasion, "an event that signaled broadly across the Israeli and US Left the paucity of the existential vulnerability narrative to legitimate military violence" (Feldman 2015: 195). As Jenny Bourne (1987: 5) puts it,

It was the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and especially the massacres of innocent Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila that finally threw Israel and everything it stood for into stark relief. How could a country set up as a refuge for the persecuted itself turn persecutor? How could a state whose leaders had faced extermination be a party to the extermination of other people? Where did securing one's borders end and aggressive colonization begin? Everything about Israel was now put in question, from its permanent war-footing to the racism of its Law of Return, from its support of South Africa to its dealings with the Chilean fascist junta.⁹

Needing to make sense of Israel's excesses in the face of an unquestioned Zionism ideologically established by the looming threat of a second Holocaust, American feminists turned to Jewish identity to shore up their commitment to Israel, transforming the question of Zionism into the question of anti-Semitism and insisting that both were fundamentally existential questions regarding Jewish survival.

The most forthright example of this is *Ms.* magazine editor Letty Pogrebin's (1982) article, "Anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement," published just before the Lebanon invasion. Pogrebin writes, "Like many Jews, I have come to consider anti-Zionism tantamount to anti-Semitism because the political reality is that its bottom line is an end to the Jews" (65). She explains,

To me, Zionism is simply an affirmative action plan on a national scale. Just as legal remedies are justified in reparation for racism and sexism, the Law of Return to Israel is justified, if not by Jewish religious and ethnic claims, then by the intransigence of worldwide anti-Semitism.

Because nations tend to be capricious about protecting Jewish rights, our survival has been tenuous throughout the ages. . . . Given virtually every country's record of treating us as surplus citizenry, the survival of Israel is vital to the survival of Jews. It's that simple. (65)

Pogrebin's is the most frequently cited article on this subject, but evidence suggests hers was not a minority position within the women's movement. Bourne

(1987: 10) provides an elaborate exposition of the many ways Jewish feminists dodged or equivocated on Zionism, noting that “what gained ascendancy” in the women’s movement “from 1982 onwards was the charge that anti-Zionism equaled anti-Semitism.” Similarly, Ellen Cantarow (1988) observes, “My own experience as an outspoken critic of Israeli policy was that among feminists there was snail’s-horn sensitivity about matters Jewish. The constant assumption was that criticizing Israel meant being anti-Semitic.”

Anti-Semitism became conflated with anti-Zionism as a result of Jewish feminists’ turn to Jewish identity, which they understood as analogous to, if not identical with, race and racialization. So, for example, Pogrebin (1982: 46) laments “how often I had noticed Jews omitted from the feminist litany of ‘the oppressed.’ And I began to wonder why the Movement’s healing embrace can encompass the black woman, the Chicana, the white ethnic woman, the disabled woman, and every other female whose existence is complicated by an extra element of ‘outness,’ but the Jewish woman is not honored in her specificity?” (cf. Taylor and Oppenheimer 1982: 6). Similarly, in an interview about her then-new book, *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*, Evelyn Torton Beck (1982a: 9) notes, “I didn’t really become very Jewish-identified until I was deeply immersed in lesbian feminism and working on racism, trying to integrate women of color into all my courses. . . . I became very aware of the fact that the one group that was not visible in terms of its own cultural heritage were Jews.” Moving beyond analogy and toward identification, many feminists observed Jewish women identifying themselves as “Third World” women (Smith 1984: 75; WAI 1982: 20). Judith Stein, in a discussion among Black and Jewish women published in *Conditions*, notes, “I don’t feel like I’m white people. . . . And sometimes I talk about feeling dark in situations even though I am fair-skinned and light-eyed. And that to me is that I’m not like other white people” (Smith, Stein, and Golding 1981: 38).¹⁰ And well before the Lebanon invasion, in 1977, Liza Cowan and Penny House (1977a: 20) argued that “no matter how any Jew feels about being Jewish, she can never be an ex-Jew. Judaism is more than a religion: it is a race and a culture. . . . The oppression of Jews is not based on an adherence to religious dogma but on racial heritage.” In sum, a significant number of Jewish-identified feminist women committed themselves to Jewish identity via analogizing or identifying their experiences with the racial oppression of Black people and people of color in the United States.¹¹ This connection made it possible for Jewish women to understand (and present) themselves as victims of racial oppression as Jews in the United States. It also facilitated the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, since critics of Israel could be understood as animated by racial animus or an interest in eliminating the only safe place where Jewish people could be free from racial oppression and genocide. Eliminating Israel, in other words, became equivalent to annihilation of the Jews, Judaism, and/or Jewish-identified American women.

Notably, Jewish lesbians¹² took up this tactic as well but applied it slightly differently: rather than (or, sometimes, in addition to) asserting that Jewishness was “like” Blackness or race, they also asserted that being Jewish was like being lesbian, seeing an analogy between anti-Semitism and lesbian/woman hatred. The remarkable consequence, for these women, was an analogizing of Zionism with lesbian separatism. This connection is downplayed or overlooked by scholars who assert a more straightforward division in the women’s movement between heterosexual Zionist feminists and anti-Zionist lesbian feminists (Lober 2019); what seems more accurate is that a contingent of specifically lesbian feminist separatists understood their lesbianism as analogous to their Judaism, leading them to construe Zionism as parallel to lesbian separatism, both being intentionally homogenous community-building efforts necessary to insulate themselves from harm, threat, and, ultimately, annihilation.¹³ For example, in 1977, an article by Jewish lesbian Janet Meyers appeared in the short-lived lesbian/feminist/separatist periodical *Dyke: A Quarterly*, commissioned as part of its “ethnic lesbians issue.” Lamenting the existence of Israel as a “tragic necessity,” Meyers (1977: 14) argues,

Nevertheless, as a Jewish lesbian, I think I understand the psychological and political motivation for such a choice [to create the state of Israel]. Jews and lesbians share the experience of having the centrality of their lives denied every day. Before Israel one did not have the sensation, as a Jew, that one’s own ethnic world is the norm, the center, the hub. With few exceptions throughout the world this experience of centrality is available [to] every other group no matter how terribly oppressed they might be in other ways. Lesbians have no doubts about the exceptional nature of our lives and we have always been characterized as peripheral, fringe, *queer*. Especially after the Holocaust, Jews understood that it was necessary for them to regroup, to heal, but most importantly to learn what it is to experience ourselves as the norm, the center, as no longer a minority but a prevailing atmosphere. (cf. Pogrebin 1982: 46; Beck 1982b: xv)

For Meyers, the shared Jewish and lesbian experience of marginality, of living or being outside the bounds of normativity (“*queer*”), explains the impulse to separatist space. Meyers also sees connections between Left criticisms of Zionism and the feminist movement’s critiques of lesbian separatism:

Somehow Jewish nationalism is seen, especially by the Left, as the worst, most “sinful” kind of nationalism. It inspires a special kind of wrath in lots of people who barely ever mention Black nationalism in West Africa or Latin American Nationalism or even Arab Nationalism. Separatists are the pariahs of the women’s movement, often without any notice being taken of the many definitions women

have of what separatism means. It seems that the notion of demons, monsters and devils, bonding together for the subversive purposes of fun, self-affirmation or survival is too terrible for the world to bear. (14)

Defying New Left analysis by setting Jewish nationalism beside the nationalist and anti-colonial movements of global South peoples, Meyers manages to present Zionists as doubly victimized: by an anti-Semitic world that would deny a liberatory expression of Jewish nationalism (13–14) and by US leftists who fail to recognize Zionism as a liberation movement akin to other anti-colonial nationalisms.

These connections become even more explicit later on, after Israel's war on Lebanon. For example, at the opening of the second Jewish Feminist Conference,¹⁴ held in 1982 in San Francisco and attended by more than seven hundred women (both Jewish and non-Jewish), Teya Schaeffer and Meryl Lieberman McNew (1982) delivered a speech entitled "Statement to Gentiles," which clearly invokes the existential fears mobilizing American Jewish Zionism at the time (McNew is lesbian; Schaffer is not). They argued that, "since the days of exile from Israel and Judea, we [Jews] have experienced all the persecutions that humanity has ever invented, that nowhere has there been a place of security for us," and warned their audience to "never allow a discussion of zionism to forget that the creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948 was a direct consequence of the Holocaust" (7). This is a straightforward rehearsal of the narrative of eternal and universal anti-Semitism to justify Israel and Zionism (cf. Beck 1982a: 9; Meyers 1977: 13–14). Meanwhile, in their report on the conference for *off our backs*, Jewish lesbians Melanie Kaye and Irena Klepfisz (1982: 3) note, "In the course of the conference, some of us realized that just as we had learned to confront homophobes by calling ourselves *dykes* and to defy male 'radicals' scorn of feminism as 'bourgeois' by proudly calling ourselves feminists, that now it is important to clearly name ourselves *Zionists*; that it is time to claim this particular yellow star." Identifying themselves as members of the "Jewish lesbian/feminist collective" Di Vilde Chayes (Yiddish for "The Wild Beasts"), the authors here conflate *dyke* with *Zionist* as terms that repurpose stigma into expressions of liberatory defiance; moreover, that stigma is explicitly associated with Jewish genocide insofar as both terms are described as "yellow stars." Thus the perceived existential threat that anti-Semitism always portends is here analogized with homophobia, implying the annihilatory character of both and implicitly suggesting the need for a lesbian separatist space, or a kind of "Israel" for lesbians.¹⁵

Not everyone found the conference so empowering. Lesbian separatist attendees, outraged by a perceived marginalization of separatism at the conference, came together at the end of the three-day event to strategize and organize. One result of this meeting was a nine-point statement of unity, quickly drafted

and agreed to by all participants. In the statement, separatism is cast as a minoritized and embattled position that received little support at the conference (point 7) but is nonetheless essential for Jewish lesbians' safety and a "right" of both lesbians and Jews as oppressed people:

3. We believe as a political principle that any oppressed group can separate themselves from their oppressors. And as lesbians, we claim that right.

The statement then goes on to explicitly analogize Zionism with lesbian separatism:

5. The lesbian and feminist communities say many of the same things about separatists as non-Jews say about Jews. We encourage Jewish womyn here today to think about it; you might find a lot of similarities between lesbian separatism and zionism.

It then reprimands conference participants for failing to support separatism, in that, as mostly Jewish people, they should understand the reasons and rationale for separatism:

6. Jewish people have understood for centuries the need for separatism as Jews. The lack of separatist support at this conference is appalling.

And criticism of separatism—whether Jewish (Zionist) or lesbian—is warded off in the final plank:

9. It is offensive to Jewish lesbian separatists to make any comparison between separatism and nazism or racism. Don't. ("Lesbian Separatist Statement" [1982] 1988: 93–94).

Of course, allegations of racism were frequently leveled at lesbian separatists, whose solution to male power was to withdraw from men entirely and create all-women's communities. Ability to do so was considered an upper-class privilege and a simultaneous symptom and disavowal of whiteness: because white men are the oppressors, white women separating from them may indeed be a confrontation with their own, primary oppression. But because they do not suffer from racism, they do not need the comradery, community, or solidarity of men who are also racialized and oppressed, as many women of color felt they did (Combahee River Collective [1977] 2017). Some lesbian separatists dismissed this criticism as "divisive" and an attempt to distract women from the primary problem of male domination (Lucia-Hoagland and Penelope 1988). Regardless,

this statement's final plank, a preemptive banning of this particular criticism of separatism, suggests not simply the critique's frequency but also, perhaps, some sense on the part of the authors that there may be some validity to a different set of parallels to be made between Zionism, lesbianism, separatism, and racism other than those being asserted by Jewish lesbian separatists.

In the months immediately following both the Jewish Feminist Conference and Pogrebin's *Ms.* article, Israel proceeded with its murderous attack on Lebanon, and an intense exchange of statements took place between Women Against Imperialism (WAI), a San Francisco-based organization of "anti-imperialist women," many of whom were Jewish, and the Jewish lesbian feminist collective Di Vilde Chayes (DVC). WAI's (1982: 20) statement, entitled "Taking Our Stand against Zionism and White Supremacy," was occasioned by their being "very disturbed at the growing tendency to use the issue of anti-semitism to justify Zionism and the colonization of the Palestinian people." Acknowledging the existence of anti-Semitism and the enormity of the Holocaust, WAI nevertheless asserted that the wrong conclusions were being drawn from this history: "For Jews and for all of us who know that genocide is not just a word, it is critical to recognize that it is colonized peoples not Jews who face genocide in the US today" (20). DVC took umbrage at this statement, responding with an equally pointed "Open Letter to the Women's Movement." They begin from the same starting point of Jewish insecurity in the face of ever-present anti-Semitism, arguing that "since 1948, Israel has served as a place of refuge and safety for Jews all over the world" (21). And, while they concede that Israel and its government are not perfect regimes, they nevertheless unequivocally affirm that

Israel has a right to exist. *Zionism is one strategy against anti-Semitism and for Jewish survival. Anti-Zionism is Anti-Semitism.* Criticism of Israeli policy is not in and of itself anti-Semitic, nor is it anti-Zionist. But *anti-Zionism demands the dissolution of the state of Israel.* This would mean the destruction of Jews within Israel (European, African and Middle Eastern Jews);¹⁶ it would also mean the destruction of a refuge for Jews suffering persecution in other countries. Ultimately, the dissolution of Israel would give license to increased anti-Semitism throughout the world and would endanger all Jews wherever we might live. *Any anti-Zionist position is, therefore, anti-Semitic.* (21)

Finally, as if their position were not clear enough, DVC conclude by stating that "Anti-Semitism must be a concern of our movement. To state that it is not as serious as other oppressions is to imply that Jews have no right to complain until we are being marched to the gas chamber" (21). Feminist failure to foreground or prioritize anti-Semitism, in other words, colludes with the potential genocide of Jewish women/lesbians.

Separatism, therefore, is a matter of survival—and this whether it is Jewish separatism or lesbian separatism. It is unsurprising, then, that the most vocally Zionist lesbians in the women's movement were also separatists. What makes this rehearsal of feminist and lesbian Zionism relevant for this article is its perhaps unexpected proximity to TERFism. To return to Meyers's essay, for example, it is worth noting not only the explicit connections she draws between lesbian separatism and Zionism but also the placement of this essay in *Dyke: A Quarterly*, a lesbian separatist periodical founded and edited by Jewish lesbian separatists Liza Cowan and Penny House. In this very same issue is an astonishing article that is not at all about "ethnic lesbians" but rather trans women, who are definitely not being cataloged as either ethnic or lesbian. Entitled "Can Men Be Women? Some Lesbians Think So! Transsexuals in the Women's Movement," this piece consists of a long introduction by Cowan and House, which prefaces an interview with psychologist Edna Lerner about the etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of transsexuality, and concludes with a conversation about that interview among Cowan, House, Meyers, and Alix Dobkin (Cowan's then-partner), all Jewish lesbian separatists.

Why might an article considering "Transsexuals in the Women's Movement" be included in a lesbian separatist periodical issue celebrating "Ethnic Lesbians"? Cowan and House (1977b: 30) declare its impetus in the very first paragraph: "When we heard that Olivia Records had hired a transsexual to be their recording engineer, and we began to hear of more and more male transsexuals [*sic*] invading the women's movement, our reaction was repugnance." Citing the predation TERF belief that removal of the penis does not "make" a (cis) woman, Cowan and House assert that not only are transsexuals disgusting, but they are threatening to overtake the women's movement. Cowan and House thus take it on themselves to educate *Dyke* readers about this new, menacing phenomenon. They claim to not want to broach the subject, noting that "some women have told us that they are already sick of reading and thinking about transsexuals. We, too, wish that we could stop thinking about it. It is painful in the same way that it is painful to think about women in prison, battered wives, genetic control and rape, but we recognize that it is vital for the community at large to deal with these issues" (30). Casting the existence of trans women as one of among many violations of (cis) women's rights and bodily integrity, including incarceration and domestic violence, Cowan and House insist that feminists not turn away from these considerations, no matter how upsetting they may be, because (cis) women's oppression cannot and should not be ignored. Moreover, it is no longer feasible to defer this conversation, since, "now that male transsexuals [*sic*] are trespassing in Lesbian communities, we must deal with them before a trickle becomes an avalanche" (30). Covering this subject in *Dyke*, then, even if a diversion from the issue's theme,

is necessary not simply to ward off the horror trans women pose by their very existence but also to prevent the looming specter of their takeover of the women's movement.¹⁷

It is but a short step from here to the characterization of trans women as predators and existential threats to (cis) women/lesbians, a step that indeed gets taken over the course of the article. Moreover, this analysis is not actually tangential to the subject of "ethnic lesbians" after all, at least insofar as Jewish lesbians (as construed by Cowan, House, and Meyers) are concerned, because the consequence of this predation TERF investigation is the necessity of women's/lesbian separatism. Lerner does not go so far as to characterize trans women as dangerous or threatening, staying true to type as a psychologist in this historical moment in her account of transsexuals as "crazy," "psychotic," "narcissistic," or unable to accept the fact that they are actually homosexual men.¹⁸ In their postinterview discussion, however, Meyers, Dobkin, Cowan, and House together construct an argument for lesbian/women's separatism, declaring that trans women are not women but rather predators created by the patriarchal medical establishment to eradicate (cis) women. From the outset, Cowan insists on the importance of being able to distinguish between "what is male and what is female" (34), the basis of her separatist philosophy (Cowan 1978). Meyers then ups the ante, noting that "most Lesbians come to the women's movement because they understand that there is something intrinsically *other* about being a woman and that is necessary for women to get together in order to understand what that means" (34). From here emerges the rationale for a separatism that is free of trans women. Cowan offers,

What galls me so much is that we are just beginning to understand what it means to be a woman, really just beginning to be able to understand that there is something different that we are not fully conscious of yet about what it means to be a woman, and these *men* say that *they* are women, meaning that they know what it means to be a woman, and they are it. And now they want to participate in defining and creating women's culture. (34)

To this remark, Meyers responds, "I think there is probably something to the point that this is preparatory to dispensing with women entirely." Trans women are thus not simply interlopers in the women's movement, but their existence threatens to render (cis) women superfluous. Where Cowan, House, Dobkin, and Meyers go with this argument—the necessity of women's/lesbian separatism—is related as much to their Zionism as to their transphobia, insofar as Zionism offers a ready-made template and example of an ostensibly liberatory separatism created to provide protection from existential threat.

III. Right-Wing Annihilationism and Contemporary Predation TERFism

Keith Feldman (2015) has argued that Palestine functions as the “constitutive absence” in the American postwar period that enabled both its imperial culture and defined its race relations, whether within the Jewish and socialist left, the Black Power movement, or the feminist movement. I think this “shadow over Palestine” may well be recognized in Zionist lesbian separatists’ engagement with the figure of the trans person—the trans woman in particular—who, like the Palestinian for Zionists, is the unthinkable, existential threat to the survival and integrity of a community, a culture, and indeed an entire people. First, and most evidently, predation TERFism was popular among a subset of lesbian separatists who also happened to be Jewish Zionists. I don’t think this is coincidental; both lesbian separatism and Zionism have the same exclusionary impulse toward an ostensibly liberatory self-segregation that results in the radical, potentially annihilatory exclusion of “others” owing to a fear of their innate violence and predation. Second, while the formative predation TERFism of Raymond and others lacks any sort of international focus, much less a theorization of empire or colonization, there is a distinct echo of Zionist themes in Raymond’s and Daly’s casting of “the transsexual empire” and American gynecology as equivalent to the medical experimentation conducted in Nazi death camps. Elsewhere I have described this theme as “Holocaust Exceptionalism” (Schotten 2018), a Eurocentric worldview that obfuscates the history of racism and colonization by singling out the genocide of Jews in twentieth-century Europe as historically, morally, or politically unprecedented and unparalleled (Mamdani 2005). Regardless of the relative (de)merits of Raymond’s and Daly’s comparing patriarchy with Nazism, what is significant is not simply that they do so but also the way that they do so, which is by relying on the same mistaken interpretation of Arendt’s now-famous phrase “banality of evil” to interpret the comparison. Both take Arendt to be saying that the “evil” of the Nazi Holocaust was trivialized at the Eichmann trial and mobilize this misinterpretation to claim that the predation and degradation of (cis) women is similarly trivialized in the United States, a trivialization they seek to end. Of course, Arendt offers this phrase to describe not the Holocaust at all but, rather, the unremarkable person of Adolf Eichmann himself, who is not a vicious monster, raving lunatic, or brainwashed fanatic but an ordinary (if perhaps especially diligent) worker and party officer. But Daly’s and Raymond’s misinterpretation makes clear the real reason they offer a comparison between “gynocide” or the “transsexual empire” and Nazism, namely, to exploit an implicitly exceptionalist claim to unique Jewish victimization via the Holocaust, an exceptionalism they seek to apply to their feminist analyses of the exceptional victimization of (cis) women.¹⁹ As we have seen, this effectively casts trans women as (complicit with) Nazis and as subjecting cis women—cis lesbian feminists in

particular—to a genocidal extinction scheme, thus bolstering the view that trans women must be eliminated if cis women are to be safe. While Raymond and Daly are neither Jewish nor demonstrably Zionist, their use of this Zionist rhetorical gesture is significant and would not have been possible at all were it not for the post-1967 Zionist ideology of ever-present Jewish victimization and its uptake in US identity politics at the time. As we have seen, Raymond even acknowledges her use of this tactic and its overuse, already in 1979.

As familiar and seemingly plausible as Zionist extinction phobia and Holocaust Exceptionalism may seem to be, it is important to remember that both are historically recent ideologies, deployed purposefully by Israeli and US elites to advance the causes of Israeli occupation and American empire (Finkelstein 2003; Kaplan 2018; Novick 1999). This version of Zionism, which casts Israel as forever threatened by a genocidal anti-Semitism, not only provides a rationale for Israel's creation—which resulted in the ethnic cleansing of 700,000–800,000 indigenous Palestinians and a current refugee population of over 7 million, whom Israel refuses to allow to return—but also justifies any abuse, massacre, torture, incarceration, or home demolition as fundamentally an act of self-defense. The transfer of threat from Germany and Europe to Palestine and the Arab World that occurred in this post-1967 Zionist emergence makes it possible to “Nazify” (Zertal 2005) Arabs and Palestinians as the new existential threat to Israeli existence, which also and simultaneously becomes Jewish existence insofar as Israel is claimed as a “Jewish state” created to protect Jews from genocide (conveniently eliding the distinction between “Jewish” and “Israeli” and sidestepping the fact that almost 25 percent of Israel's population is not Jewish). Despite, then, being massively more powerful—in 1948, 1967, and still so to this day—than the Palestinians whom they have displaced and turned into refugees and besieged, occupied people, in this ideological version of reality, Israel is the victim, the embattled and beleaguered party living in fear of extermination by an all-powerful and demonized enemy, Palestinians and/or Arabs, whose rage and despair at Israel's colonization, occupation, and apartheid regime become expressions of their fundamentally irrational, “savage,” and violent nature. This is most commonly and familiarly rendered as a narrative about Palestinian “terrorism,” which is understood not as legitimate political violence waged in response to colonial and military occupation but, rather, as the willful destruction of Jews by mindless savages who do not respect the rules of warfare, the nature of democracy, or the value of life (Schotten 2018).²⁰

Similarly, in the case of predation TERFism, cis feminists cast themselves as the beleaguered victims of trans women, whose infiltration of (cis) women's spaces, communities, and movements constitutes both rape as well as an existential threat. The pivot that transforms their extinction phobia into right-wing annihilationism is an essentializing and dehumanizing abjection of trans women

as innately predatory, thereby justifying their deliberate exclusion from feminism and even, as we have seen, their outright elimination. As Carol Riddell (2006: 152) notes, in one of the first trans feminist critiques of *The Transsexual Empire*,

Nowhere in her book does Ms. Raymond give any accounts of trans-sexual life experience. . . . None of them emerges as a real person with a biography. No sensitive or caring collective account of the life experience of trans-sexuals, either pre-operative or post-operative, is presented. Instead, the most damning quotations possible are put together. Sometimes totally irrelevant information is presented as if it made a point. . . . I consider that to be dishonest.

In other words, trans women are either completely absent from predation TERF analyses or show up only in the most ugly and caricatured forms as epiphenomena of an all-encompassing patriarchal power that seeks nothing less than the elimination of cis women tout court.

Arabs and Palestinians were similarly absented in Zionist feminist and lesbian separatist analysis (Feldman 2015: 195). Returning to Meyers's (1977) article for a moment, recall her complaint that both Zionists and lesbian separatists are vilified by the Left. She concludes this complaint with the remark that "it seems that the notion of demons, monsters and devils, bonding together for the subversive purposes of fun, self-affirmation or survival is too terrible for the world to bear" (14). Dismissing the notion that (cis) women or Jewish people might be doing harm via their respective separatisms, Meyers implies that Zionism and lesbian separatism are benign projects of collective "fun" and "self-affirmation." Yet one is tempted to ask, with Edward Said ([1979] 1992), how this collective endeavor might be viewed "from the standpoint of its victims." Is lesbian separatism, in the case of predation TERFism, simply a harmless exercise in "fun" and "self-affirmation"? In the case of Jewish separatism, is the creation of the state of Israel simply a "withdrawal of energy" from an oppressor (as lesbian separatism was often described)? Or were these separatist communities both, albeit in different ways, communities constituted via the exclusion and abjection of a dehumanized other, justified by incredible allegations of potential extinction on the part of those doing the excluding? To be clear, not all lesbian separatisms were trans exclusionary. By contrast, the founding of the state of Israel was an act of colonial conquest, plain and simple. This fact is illegible in Zionist feminism and denaturalized in Jewish lesbian separatisms that equate Zionism and lesbian separatism.²¹ Moreover, Meyers's seamless merger of "fun" and "self-affirmation" with "survival" as the shared purposes of Jewish and lesbian separatisms blends very different political projects, rendering separatism as a means of community building indistinguishable from separatism as a means of dispossession, ethnic cleansing,

segregation, militarism, and apartheid. The comparison renders Zionism benign and lesbian separatism an aggressive ideological project with potentially annihilatory aims. In both cases, the anxiety voiced earlier about separatism being likened to “racism” or “Nazism” is unwittingly realized, insofar as the necessity of clear and strict boundaries is essential, not simply for “fun” and “self-affirmation” but also for “survival,” an existential stake that makes this “fun” deadly serious.

These connections—like predation TERFism itself—have unfortunately not gone away. They have not gone away insofar as predation TERFs remain predation TERFs: Raymond and Jeffreys are as convinced of the correctness of their views as ever. The recently deceased Alix Dobkin contributed a chapter to the latest predation TERF anthology, *Female Erasure* (Barrett 2016) and is quoted in her *New York Times* obituary as saying, “It’s OK to be a Jew, it’s OK to be a lesbian—as long as you don’t mention it. And what we also have in common is that we were never supposed to survive.”²² Meanwhile, Bev Jo (2008), militant West Coast lesbian separatist and predation TERFer, continues to publish her views on her blog and even in academic journals.

Yet even as the progenitors of predation TERFism inevitably age and pass away, they leave behind a legacy that far exceeds that of the twentieth-century women’s movement, with significant and dire consequences for the twenty-first. Of course, 1970s predation TERFism did not have the backing of any state or military apparatus, whereas Zionism is a deliberate propaganda project deployed to advance the interests of the Israeli state and US empire. This seems to be changing, however, at least insofar as funding is concerned: the current TERF resurgence, figureheaded by Lierre Keith’s Women’s Liberation Front (WoLF), is funded by the Alliance Defending Freedom, itself funded by the National Christian Foundation, and working in tandem with a network of Catholic and Evangelical foundations, think tanks, and legal organizations including the Family Research Council, the Family Policy Alliance, and Focus on the Family (Greenesmith 2020b). While these organizations and their agenda would seem to have nothing to do with either Judaism or Zionism, other noteworthy members of this funding network include the Heritage Foundation, the Bradley Foundation, and the Sarah Scaife Foundation, all of which, historically, have been crucial players in the US neoconservative movement, the US Islamophobia network, and right-wing, pro-Israel movements more broadly (Ali et al. 2011; Bulkin and Nevel 2012; Duss et al. 2015; Heilbrunn 2008; IJAN 2015). Meanwhile, donor-advised funds like Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund and Donors Trust, which serve to anonymize donations made by known billionaires like the Koch and DeVos families, have directed money to a wide variety of Right-wing groups, organizations, and foundations, including not just TERF and SWERF organizations like the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Family Research Council, but also

neoconservatives, the Islamophobia Network, and Zionist organizations like the David Horowitz Freedom Center and Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy.²³

In short, the alternative genealogy of predation TERFism offered here suggests that this overlap of Right-wing funders and organizations is more than just coincidence. While the white Christian nationalist funding of contemporary predation TERFism is not obviously in service to US empire (or, at least, those connections have not yet been clearly established), the presence of Zionist, neo-conservative, and Islamophobia Network funders and organizations supporting contemporary TERFism raises the question of if, in fact, it somehow is in the service of foreign relations interests—not only US empire but also the Israeli colonization of Palestine. These connections, however, have yet to be fully articulated, due to not only the lack of transparency involved in these vast dark money systems but also the siloization of our movements into “international” vs. “domestic” concerns and an enduring reticence on our part to name or investigate Jewish-identified right-wing elites, organizations, and institutions (Gelman 2021) for fear of being labeled anti-Semitic. Thus, for example, there is a reasonable amount of Christian Zionism tracking, but little to no monitoring of the Jewish Zionism that is responsible for enormous harm to our movements, including Black liberation, women's liberation, queer liberation, Arab and Arab American liberation, and the list goes on (Drop the ADL Working Group 2020). Moreover, with few exceptions (e.g., Orly and Brenneman 2021), Christian Zionism is criticized or condemned for its anti-Semitism, but not at all for its Zionism—that is, for its total disregard for Palestinian people, who barely register as existing, much less worthy of freedom and liberation. The unfortunate ironies here are, first, that it is precisely a tactic of Jewish Zionist propagandists to label any and all criticism of Israel or Jewish elites anti-Semitic; and second, when the primary failing of Christian Zionism is consistently considered to be anti-Semitism, we unwittingly collude with the Zionist erasure of Palestine and Palestinians and the real harms of Zionism unfolding every day. That our movements falter here, at precisely these junctures, shows just how powerful the Jewish Zionist lobby is in controlling the discourse of liberation and forestalling an actual reckoning with just who, exactly, is being excluded from what.

It is crucial that these different parts of the Left recognize the historical, ideological, and material continuities between and among seemingly very different sectors of the Right so that we can build solidaristic movements able to account for the ways that all of our freedom is necessarily bound up together (Davis 2016) and so we do not perpetuate the shadow existence of Palestine and Palestinians in our work for trans liberation. None of us is free until all of us are

free, and this includes Palestinians as much as it does transgender women as much as it does the transgender kids currently being targeted by newly ascendent TERFisms around the world.

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Notes

1. It is both the continuity and seeming intractability of these views that justifies their (re)examination here; unfortunately, it also reinforces their political hegemony. Such rehearsal also shores up the misinterpretation of 1970s US feminism as significantly defined by transphobia rather than—or also—liberatory, trans-led and trans-identified, feminist activism (Enke 2018; Stryker 2017). Thus let me be clear that, while TERFism originates with a small subset of 1970s feminists, it was never widespread within US feminisms, not even the white women's movement from which it originates; nor was it a hegemonic ideology within US feminisms, lesbian feminisms, or lesbian separatisms, about which more below (Heaney 2016; Stryker 2017; Williams 2016). With this article I intend to contribute to neither the continued hegemony of TERFism nor the too-common disparagement of 1970s feminism as uniformly transphobic; rather, I hope to provide a different entry point into the origins of TERFism within 1970s radical feminism to better combat the former and appreciate the latter.
2. Thus extinction phobias are not versions of what Wendy Brown (1995) calls "wounded attachments" in her critique of so-called identity politics. In this famous essay, Brown fails to distinguish between oppressor and oppressed, thereby naturalizing oppression as the inevitable deserts of oppressed people whose critiques of power are somehow failed or moralistic (Schotten 2020). Extinction phobias, by contrast, are necessarily the beleaguered cry of the oppressor and, as such, neither a diagnosis nor criticism of "identity politics."
3. I do not offer a comprehensive inventory of either radical feminisms or TERFisms here. However, to isolate the extinction phobia driving what I call predation TERFism, it is

necessary to distinguish it from the more socialist-inclined TERFism with which it is often elided.

4. It is unclear what the difference is between a “direct comparison” and a “demonstration of value,” not simply because Raymond seems obviously to be doing the former.
5. Raymond ([1979] 1994: 152) offers another disclaimer here, stating that she does not seek “to exploit the very real difference between a conditioned ‘voluntary’ medical procedure performed on adult transsexuals and the deliberate sadism performed on unwilling bodies and minds in the camps.” Yet, in a perhaps compulsive exercise in self-betrayal, Raymond names precisely what she has done and, in doing so, exposes the inanity of the claim.
6. Including not just the rape claim but also the cumbersome disparagement “male-to-constructed-female” as well as the claim that “Dionysian boundary violation” is the mythical origin and explanation of trans women’s existence. Daly (1978: 1) acknowledges in *Gyn/Ecology* that the work of “Jan Raymond” has “been so intertwined with my own for so long that it has often been impossible to tell whose ideas are whose”; meanwhile, Raymond ([1979] 1994: ix) dedicates *The Transsexual Empire* to Daly, noting, “It is difficult for me to separate my words and ideas from her own.”
7. It is no accident that prostitution surfaces here; Raymond is cofounder and former board member of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), which bills itself as an antitrafficking organization but has, as its driving purpose, the elimination of the sex trade. Singling out sex work as uniquely harmful to cis women and girls (and side-stepping the fact that trafficking is a problem for workers globally), CATW and other “abolitionist” feminist organizations are a by-product of the feminist porn wars (Levine and Meiners 2020: 129), use the same radical feminist analysis that generates predation TERFism, and rely on the same donors that fund contemporary TERFism (not to mention contemporary Zionism—more on this in the conclusion).
8. Thus “abolitionist” feminist antitrafficking organizations are often described by the parallel acronym SWERF (sex worker–exclusionary radical feminism).
9. The Law of Return, passed in 1950, stipulates that any Jewish person has the right to emigrate and become an Israeli citizen. Israel denies this same right to Palestinians, however, who were made refugees as a result of the ethnic cleansing and ensuing war involved in Israel’s creation. For an account of Israel’s creation as a “procedural democracy” at the expense of the removal of the indigenous population—as simultaneously a liberal and settler colonial regime—see Robinson 2013.
10. In response to Stein’s confession, Elli Johnson, a Black lesbian, says, “She [Johnson’s former Jewish lover] used to talk about that too, about being dark, and that used to make me angry. I’d say, ‘What do you mean, dark? You know you’re not dark, you’re white. I’m dark’” (Smith, Stein, and Golding 1981: 38). Stein responds by transforming Jewishness into a racial category, arguing that Johnson’s attraction to her former lover was an attraction to her difference from “regular Christian white people” (38).
11. On the “ethnic turn” in white second-wave feminism more broadly, see Jacobson (2006: chap. 6), who argues it was part of a broader cultural turn toward ethnicity on the part of white people in the US postwar period, an ethnic revivalism that evaded white privilege and reconsolidated American nationalism. Indeed, at the time, many feminists argued that the newfound focus on anti-Semitism in the women’s movement was a response to the rise of women of color feminism, an imitation of it, and/or a desire on the part of Jewish women to “participate in the politics of the oppressed” (Rosenfelt et al. 1983: 12; cf. Smith 1984: 78–79).

12. Pogrebin (1982: 69) and Morris (2017: 429) argue that the turn to Jewish-identified feminism was spearheaded by lesbians.
13. Sometimes this connection was made by heterosexual women as well; for example, Phyllis Chesler notes, “I am saddened and angered by feminists who would never call a separatist coffee house or women’s center sexist, but who are quick to call the Law of Return racist” (quoted in Pogrebin 1982: 65).
14. For discussion of the first Jewish Feminist conference (1973), see Lober 2019.
15. It is worth noting that both women later became critical of Israeli occupation and broke publicly with aspects of Zionism. It remains unclear to this author, however, to what degree either has maintained the view that anti-Semitism is an existential threat that justifies Zionism. For a consideration of the limitations of Adrienne Rich’s later critique of Israeli occupation after she had previously deemed criticism of Israel anti-Semitic, see Cable 2022.
16. Evident here is a different strategy to analogize Jewishness with race and/or people of color, namely, by arguing that Israeli Jews are not all white but instead a diverse mix of people from all over the world, including Africa and the Middle East (cf. Taylor 1982).
17. Cowan and House’s argument is consonant with Raymond’s, and they refer readers to her *Chrysalis* (1977) article (which they mistakenly cite as “The Transsexual Hoax”). This article appears to have received broad circulation in the women’s movement, as evidenced by not only this *Dyke* piece (New York City) but also an article in Minneapolis’s *Lesbian Insider/Insighter/Inciter* (Kazia and Thrace 1980) and a short transphobic piece by Gloria Steinem (1977) in *Ms.* that references the transsexual interview research of “Jan Raymond.” On Raymond’s influence in the women’s movement, see Stone 2018.
18. It is uncanny just how well this psychologist’s testimony conforms to the form, style, and content Sandy Stone ([1987] 2006) incisively analyzes in her canonical essay on this subject, a direct response to Janice Raymond, predation TERFism, and the predation TERF attacks on her person as the Olivia Records sound engineer in question.
19. It is worth noting that Arendt ([1963] 1994) explicitly rejects any sort of Jewish exceptionalism throughout *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which is where the expression “banality of evil” occurs (albeit only once, at the very end of the book).
20. Directly tied to this is the long-standing trope that Palestinian mothers’ greatest wish is for their sons grow up to become suicide bombers (Shibli 2017) or Benjamin Netanyahu’s more recently infamous declaration, during Israel’s 2014 massacre of Gaza, that Palestinians deliberately seek to produce “telegenically dead babies” to garner the world’s sympathy and support for their cause (Buttu 2014).
21. It also raises important questions about, for example, the ways in which notions of “women’s land” are inevitably caught up in and reproductive of settler colonial tropes and imperatives of dispossession (Morgensen 2011). See Weier 2021 for the disconcerting connections between predation TERF lesbian separatism and settler colonial ideologies at work in the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.
22. Michigan Women’s Music Festival historian Bonnie Morris (2017: 463–64) notes that Dobkin made this statement before the third song of every performance, and “singing, after that statement, in Yiddish, Alix wove two threatened identities together, a fist in Hitler’s eye.” Morris herself, meanwhile, a convener of the Jewish tent at Michfest for many years, likens the festival to a romanticized notion of Israel (434–39), complains that its legacy has been reduced to the controversy over trans inclusion, and compares *TERF*

to PEP (progressive except for Palestine) as a term that functions essentially as a slur rather than a description of a political position: “Some Jewish lesbians lament the dubious change from being called dyke and kike to TERF and PEP” (Morris 2015: 14).

23. See www.unmaskingfidelity.org.

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