

My Preferred Gender Pronoun is Negation

Bash Back

2009

Note: This text was originally written in September of 2009 in the aftermath of the protests of the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, speaking to the actions undertaken by the black bloc participants in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood, which later became known as the Bash Back! Black Bloc, because of its queer composition. It became an influential text in queer and trans anarchist circles of the early 2000s, and has been republished in several publications, including the zine *Dangerous Spaces: Violent Resistance, Self Defense, & Insurrectional Struggle Against Gender* by Untorelli Press, and the book *What is Gender Nihilism?* by little black cart.

Thursday night, following a radical queer motivational speech about rioting, a black bloc emerged as the fourth round of the day's street fighting. This particularly vicious bloc (later named the Bash Back! black bloc) moved through Oakland smashing countless windows, overturning dumpsters and setting them on fire.

A friend remarks: what is so queer about that? People just wore black and burned things in the street. We counter: the practice of wearing black and destroying everything may very well be the queerest gesture of all.

In fact, it cuts to the heart of the matter: to queer is to negate. At this intersection of our deviant bodies we experimented in becoming-mob, prolematizing our very bodily boundaries. Fairy wands, tiaras, hammers, and masks were annexed into our limbs as dangerous prosthetics. Rocks, dumpsters, and black sequined dresses were profaned and put into use – thrown through windows, set on fire, and draped over our shoulders as a more fabulous take on riot attire. Our thresholds-of self dissolved further into a floor of shattered glass and smoldering garbage across the field of play.

Without hesitation, queers shed the constraints of identity in becoming autonomous, mobile, and multiple with varying difference. We interchanged desires, gratifications, ecstasies, and tender emotions without reference to the tables of surplus value of power structures. Muscled arms built barricades and broke shit to the imagined anthems of riot grrrl (or was it La Roux?).

If the thesis is correct that gender is always performative, then our performed selves resonated with the queerest gender of all: that of total destroy.

Henceforth our preferred gender pronouns are the sound of shattering glass, the weight of hammers in our hands and the sickly-sweet aroma of shit on fire.

Address us accordingly.

The march continued its rampage down Forbes, encountering some two-bit would-be queer-basher calling us faggots. Before he could realize his mistake, we enacted a particularly cold-blooded sadism on the fool. He was shown his error in a shower of kicks, punches, and a copious dousing of pepper spray. Before he even hit the floor, the immunitary logic of biopower was turned inside-out. His power to shape our bodies and to expose them to death was collapsed into itself.

Yes, our bodies have been shaped, but into monstrous vessels of potential and revolt. He was instead made our object and was exposed to our violence. An amalgamation of our crude delinquency and nasty desires unapologetically saturated the streets (and bathrooms and hotels and alleys) of Pittsburgh this past week. With ribald irresponsibility we wrecked, fucked, fought, and came all over politics' symbolic terrain, synchronized only in our lust for disorder.

Using our bucking bodies against restraint itself, we had no message – choosing instead to leave behind ruins of boundaries and a tangible path of demolition. Our unleashing of violent aspirations upon homophobic frat boys and lifeless-daily-addictions spilled over as we pursued further stimulation onto each other. We got wet and came hard in a pile of dirty money, corrupting every inch of sterility with the funk of our perspiring bodies – aching with impure satisfaction. Our scheming, pleasure-seeking bodies came into conflict with lesser realities and emerged victorious. We left strains of the queerest kind all over the broken bits of capital graced by our presence.

Two questions were raised this summer. In Chicago: “to barricade or not to barricade?” And in New York: “does she give a fuck about the insurrection?” Thursday answered both definitively in the affirmative. To the question of barricades we answer that we only correctly concern ourselves with how to make them taller, stronger, more terrible. To the latter, we offer a form of life that could be read as a reuniting of barricades and unshaven legs.

But what's more, a synthesis of strap-on-cocks, hammers, outlandish wigs, bricks, fire, pepper-spray, licking, fisting, and always ultraviolence.

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