

THE SPIT!

MANIFESTO READER

A SELECTION OF HISTORICAL AND
CONTEMPORARY QUEER MANIFESTOS

Frieze Projects 2017

SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)

Carlos Motta, John Arthur Peetz, Carlos Maria Romero

The *SPIT! Manifesto Reader*, a reader of historical and contemporary queer manifestos is the second component of the Frieze Project by SPIT! (Carlos Motta, John Arthur Peetz, Carlos Maria Romero) and was published on the occasion of Frieze Projects 2017 at Frieze London, 5–8 October 2017. The first component is a series of performative interventions by a group of performers (Daniel Brathwaite-Shirley, Joshua Hubbard, Claudia Palazzo, Malik Nashad Sharpe, Carlos Mauricio Rojas, Despina Zacharopoulou) that take five original manifestos written by SPIT! as a point of departure and that were performed daily at Frieze London.

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PART I INTRODUCTION

THE SPIT! MANIFESTO READER INTRODUCTION

Author: SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)
Carlos Motta, John Arthur Peetz, Carlos Maria Romero
Year: 2017

The SPIT! Manifesto Reader brings together a selection of historical and contemporary queer manifestos¹ to create a dialogue between radical queer histories, past and present. Arguably, queer histories can be narrated through these declarative statements of discontent with political systems that are inherently patriarchal, discriminatory, biased, racialised, class-based, or gendered. We consider these excerpted texts manifestos insofar as they are statements of intent, demands for visibility, or calls for autonomy in reaction to oppressive political environments. Ranging from the late 1960s to the 2010s, these texts express a progression of intersectional concerns and practices in the sexual and gender rights movements: from the sexual and gender liberation of the 1970s, to the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, to the activism around identity politics during the 1990s, and the rejection of the international LGBTQI movement’s assimilationist agenda and its capitalist incorporation in the 21st century. We hope that this reader can be used as a linear timeline upon which to reflect or understand the progressions that have taken place in the queer and human rights struggles that have lead us to the present. We also hope that this reader can serve as ideological evidence that underscores the urgency and importance of action, voice, and visibility in our social inheritance as queer people, asserting ourselves and the place of our desires in the world.

In addition to the historical manifestos published in this reader, the SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!) Collective has produced five original queer manifestos to be performed and distributed on the occasion of the 2017 Frieze Projects in London. SPIT! consists of three cultural producers hailing from different disciplines – Carlos Motta from the visual arts, John Arthur Peetz from art writing, and Carlos Maria Romero from dance and live art – who share a long-standing interest in histories of queer activism and sexual and gender politics. SPIT! wants to consider what has been deemed ‘progress’ (social, legal, and cultural) and think

about the shifts in strategy and urgency that have taken place over the last four decades in search of social equality for queer people. Our collective is interested in thinking about *critical difference* as a productive way of challenging entrenched systemic discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. While the framework of ‘equality’ has succeeded in finding ways to be included and assimilated in society (marriage equality, inclusion in the military, etc.), it has failed to transform an inherently oppressive and violent system.

In a time of unprecedented visibility and advancement of legal rights for LGBTQI people in the West, SPIT! is concerned with the ways in which the strategies of tolerance and inclusion have only carved inroads into existing societal norms and institutions, and have left many of our most vulnerable behind (namely those who are not rich, white, gay, and male). While these moderate social trophies may represent ideas of political progress, we aren’t satisfied with the ways in which historical patterns of discrimination and exclusion have been cyclically reproduced. The radical raging ethos of sexual and gender liberation, and our demands for a truly just and emancipated society seem to have been mollified with crumbs from a table at which we don’t even want to sit. The acknowledgement of our struggle as a human rights battle, the recognition of our sexual practices, and the vindication from our social status as vectors of disease are milestones that have taken place only within the past decade in the Western world. We queers have been societal, moral, political, and religious scapegoats for centuries and, make no mistake, we still are. Being able to marry or serve in the military doesn’t necessarily improve the lives of impoverished queer people of colour who don’t have access to basic health services; or of queer incarcerated people who are unjustly detained without due process; or of trans sex workers who are battered on the streets and elsewhere; or of undocumented queer immigrants who are prosecuted on the basis of their ethnicity – these individual’s lives are still regarded as disposable. We have compiled these manifestos to remind our communities that our social protections are precarious and not guaranteed. SPIT! urges our communities to WAKE UP! and to fight for and produce systemic changes that will benefit those beyond our immediate social circles.

¹ *The SPIT! Manifesto Reader* largely focuses on American and European struggles and histories and we acknowledge that there are a number of other voices and manifestos from around the world that deserve equal recognition but unfortunately remain out of our purview.

THE SPIT! MANIFESTOS

WE THE ENEMY...

Author: SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)
Year: 2017

We the sodomites, the perverts, the inverters, the faggots, the deviants, the queers, the keepers of spoiled identities, the tribadists, the promiscuous, the popper sniffing fist fuckers, the bottoms and the tops, the vers, the queens and the fairies, the nellies, the nancies and the fannies, the lady boys, the butch lesbians, the leather angels, the dykes, the daddies and the bulldaggers, the crossdressers and the drag queens, the auntie men, the Kikis, the trannies, the celesbians, the clones, the dykes on bikes, the sissies, the bone smugglers, the muscle marys, the jocks, the twinkies, the bears and the otters, the sex pigs, the handballers, the gym queens, the hung, the carpet munchers, the pussy punchers, the fudge packers, the fruits, those who are light in the loafers, those who have sugar in the tank, the cocksuckers, the daffies, the friends of Dorothy, the bent, the poofs, the poofers, the buggers, the Uranians, the pillow biters, the sisters of Sappho, the silver foxes, the temperamental, the homophiles, the masters and the slaves, the tatted and pierced queens, the tightly-bound, the Lavender Menace, the pansies, the go-go boys, the hustlers, the trades, the chapstick lesbians, the lucky Pierres, the rough trades, the lacies, those who are queer as a three dollar bill, the mother superiors, the ring snatchers, the kissing fish, the tinkerbelles, the Ursulas, the vampires, the punks, the agfays, the ass bandits and the butt pirates, the beefcakes, the yard boys, the Zanies, the muff divers, the golden boys, the ten percenters, the sperm burpers, the boys in the band, the disordered, the dysfunctional, the diseased and the destructive, the bitches, those on the down low and the low down, the drag kings, the Tammies, the he-shes, the fishy girls, the cunts, the cut and the uncut, the bum bandits, the lipstick lesbians, the hard and the soft butches, the flammers, the gender benders, the butt huggers, the chicken hawks, the femme, the fuck boys, the gaylords, the masc for mascs, the no pic no chats, the tranny chasers, the homos, the baby dykes, the gold stars, the gender queers, the pillow princesses, the studs, the bug chasers, the barebackers, those who PnP, the campy queens, the sword swallowers, the confirmed bachelors, the members of a Boston marriage, the shims, those who read Playboy for the articles, the Rosies, the people who are batting for the other team, the AIDS carriers, the undetectables, the pozzies, those on PrEP, the weak and morally sick wretches, the deplorables, the sinners, the hedonists, those with the aristocratic vice, those who enjoy the bourgeois decadence, the Catamites and the Calamites, the cake eaters, the chubby chasers, the midnight cowboys, the daffodils, the fey, the Ganymedes, the limp-wristed, the salad tossers, the ponces, those who are swishy, those of the reprobate mind, the hermaphrodites, the chicks with dicks, the chemsexers, the bearded ladies, the serodiscordants, the heartthrobs, the theatrical types, the admirers, those who aren't 'clean', the freaks, the cum guzzlers, the cumdumps, the tea dancers, the momma's boys, the hot messes, the batty bois, the degenerates...are and will always be the enemy.

THE ANTI-ASSIMILATION MANIFESTO

Author: SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)

Year: 2017

WAKE THE FUCK UP! Resist the liberal constructs of ‘dignity’, ‘respectability’, ‘the good human being’, ‘the moral subject’, and the general framework of human rights as requirements for the advancement of civil liberties. We demand a revolutionary politic that would fundamentally transform the system. We no longer want to beg for inclusion and accommodation. FUCK THEIR TOLERANCE!

WAKE UP! Modern societies are founded upon a scapegoat mechanism and we are unwittingly cultivating ourselves as lambs for slaughter. We are and have always been the enemy! The pariahs! The outcasts! Don't think for a second we won't be targeted again when the shit hits the fan! OUR LIVES ARE NOT DISPOSABLE!

WAKE UP! We must acknowledge the failure of marriage equality as a symbol of equality. Its placement at the centre of LGBTQI political struggles – primarily by white, affluent gay men – has drained resources and distracted from more important intersectional issues and inequalities in our communities. It obfuscates a system that continues to embolden discrimination and encourage segregation. FIGHT BACK!

WAKE UP! We are being instrumentalised! Multinational bodies of governance would prefer to use us and our notional ‘rights’ to further their own political and social agendas. They use ‘tolerance’ as camouflage for their racist and nativist pink-washing in order to push imperialism and colonialism. DON'T PLAY IN!

WAKE UP! We can't let straight society appropriate our language, artistry, physicality, bodies, and culture to profit and buttress their own communities. We cannot let pop culture instrumentalise queer culture to hawk products and perpetuate economies of consumption. Corporate sponsorships and partnerships are the anathema of queer politics: they are parasitic relationships designed to flourish off of our labour and desires. REFUSE! RESIST! RISE UP!

WAKE UP!

We demand multi-faceted and nuanced self-representation!

We demand access to the meritocracy, not simply representative tokenism!

We demand a vibrant, separate culture that is not reproducing archaic norms of social acceptability!

We demand a gay agenda that rejects patriarchal segregation and uncritical inclusion!

We demand reparative justice for the victims of hate crimes!

We demand a culture and political system that values critical difference!

We reject the tyranny of the legal framework as the constitutive centre of gay visibility!

We reject stigmas around diseases associated with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases!

We reject the inclusion of gays in the military as a symbol of social acceptance!

We reject the reductive narratives of violence and trauma associated with sexual and gender difference!

We reject the glorification of gay and lesbian individuals as freaks and entertainers!

We reject that you use our sex workers, but don't care to protect them!

We refuse the gift of bourgeois privileges associated with marriage and adoption!

We refuse marriage tax laws as a way to confine us!

We refuse to practice sex in socially sanctioned spaces!

We refuse to be a sexual and social example of irresponsibility!

We refuse to give heterosexuals praise for portraying our struggles!

We refuse differentiated friendship!

We refuse to be rewarded for ‘coming out’!

We refuse to wait until ‘it gets better’!

We won't barter our allies, sexual practices, and social spaces for the illusion of protection!

PREP MANIFESTO

Author: SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)

Year: 2017

Why PrEP?

Because AIDS is not over

Because AIDS is a crisis erroneously perceived as ‘controlled’ in the developed world

Because AIDS has redefined the boundaries between class and race, rich and poor, white and brown

Because AIDS has redefined the boundaries between north and south, urban and rural, healthy and ill

Because the PrEP regime has significantly impacted the political, social, and cultural bedrock of HIV/AIDS

Because AIDS and PrEP treatments have engendered pharmaceutical greed in the form of access to treatment

Because PrEP is a deal with the devil of capitalism and the devil likes to barter with the privileged and affluent first

Because the price of PrEP is not dictated by the people most affected by the disease

Because the ability to end an epidemic that decimated a generation has existed but has been consciously withheld

Because it is inhumane to kill for profit

Because PrEP is the product of the years of labour of AIDS activism

Because PrEP embodies at once the liberatory sexual ethos of the pre-AIDS crisis while retaining HIV/AIDS stigmatisation of the 80s, 90s and 2000s

Because of how PrEP is situated in regards to the criminalisation of HIV status non-disclosure

Because PrEP may reiterate the stigmatisation of disability

Because PrEP has taken the anxiety of death and mortality out of some of our sex lives

Because PrEP is the saviour of the cocksucker

Because AIDS discourses has shaped the ethics of sexuality

Because PrEP is the bridge between the serodiscordant, the infected and the uninfected, the positive and the negative

Because PrEP gave us negative statuses, and AIDS medications gave us viral load undetectability

Because gay desire shouldn't be confined by moralism, religion, stigma, and shame

Because we should fuck whoever and however many people we want

Because we want to bareback and get loaded, seeded, and bred without being shamed

Because our desire is the backbone of our communities

Because PrEP has changed digital cruising culture

Because PrEP has altered the representation of sexual identities

Because PrEP has shifted the negotiation of sexual encounters

Because PrEP has affected the disclosure of status

Because PrEP has influenced practices of consent

Because PrEP has changed gay porn and the sex industry

Because PrEP regimes have made permissive what was once considered ‘transgressive’

Because PrEP protects sex workers

Because PrEP isn't just a men's issue

Because AIDS and PrEP form and dissolve communities at an equal rate

Because PrEP continues to be constrained by the social politics of inequality

Because we refuse the hierarchy of health crises

Because there is no such thing as a health crisis that is bigger or lesser or more or less important

Because PrEP has been hailed as a victory for the assumed ‘end’ of the AIDS epidemic

Because we are the survivors and the inheritors of a plague that has killed millions

FAGGOT MANIFESTO

Author: SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)

Year: 2017

A faggot is not just a cock sucking ponce. They gave us this name in reference to *fagot* – a French term for a small bundle of sticks. Why the fuck did that become our shorthand? There are two equally and very real truths about the word faggot. On the one hand, these bundles of sticks are the building blocks of civil engineering. The faggots fortify the structure and provide a solid core upon which you build out. We are the unbending core, the culminating product of peasant labour, and the chosen symbol of Mussolini's fascism. We are a metaphor of strength in numbers – only when bound together. On the other hand, us faggots inherited the name from the bundle of sticks used as kindling that would start the fires that burned heretics alive. Every time we say 'faggot' we invoke our history, our persecutions. When you hear the word faggot you should feel the flames licking your face. Our name is a reference to our perceived deviance, and it evokes public punishment by immolation, the way they burn diseased bodies to stop a plague.

This is a call to reclaim faggot, a term which has been used to identify, demean and oppress us. This is a call to reclaim it in order to empower, embolden and radicalise us. Faggot embodies the worst and the best of our qualities: the polite and the crass, the basic and the nuanced, the most self-destructive and the most lionising. We've been on this road before, but we were derailed by the struggle to fit in, to make nice, to be well mannered and settle for the social contract. We have fooled ourselves into believing that in order to obtain basic rights we need to participate in Gay Inc.

A faggot is not a corporation. A faggot is not a polite citizen. A faggot is not a commodity to be traded. A faggot is not sanitary. A faggot is not just a white rich gay man. We faggots have neutered ourselves in exchange for a politically correct acronym. The alphabet soup of political identities, the LGBTQI identifiers, have produced border policing within the spectrum of faggotry. A faggot resists being tolerated. A faggot isn't a cage.

The future is a faggot. The future is an unapologetic pariah. The future is thirsty and queer. The future challenges your civility and ideas of respectability. The future demolishes acceptable values and traditions. The future broadens notions of family and tradition. The future restructures social accessibility on our terms, for each and every faggot. In the future, everybody is a faggot, and domination and submission are only consensual sexual practices.

THE SEPARATIST MANIFESTO

Author: SPIT! (Sodomites, Perverts, Inverts Together!)

Year: 2017

STRAIGHT PEOPLE, THESE WORDS ARE NOT FOR YOU. THIS MANIFESTO IS FOR QUEERS BY QUEERS: PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD MARKED BY HISTORIES OF DISCRIMINATION, VIOLENCE AND ABUSE THAT RESTRICT AND DEFINE OUR EXPERIENCES, POLITICS, BODIES, AND DESIRES.

WE ARE MASTERS OF CODE: WE RE-CODE AND ENCODE TO STAY ALIVE. WE SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER INVISIBLY AND STAY CHAINED TO A SYSTEM OF STRAIGHT DOMINANCE THAT FORCES US TO BEHAVE LIKE FREAKS. OUR DESIRES ARE THE ETHOS OF OUR COMMUNITIES YET WE ARE FORCED TO EXPRESS THEM IN SECRET. WE MUST DISIDENTIFY WITH THE OPPRESSIVE STRUCTURES WE HAVE INHERITED. BURN THEM DOWN!

WE ARE SICK OF JUST SURVIVING! WE MUST SEPARATE AND THRIVE ON OUR DIFFERENCE. SEPARATISM IS A STRATEGY FOR THE OWNERSHIP OF OUR DESIRES. DON'T TELL US WHO WE SHOULD BE, HOW WE SHOULD FEEL, WHO WE CAN LOVE, AND WHERE WE CAN BE SAFE. ASSERT OUR TOTAL INDEPENDENCE TO START CREATING THE WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN!

WE ARE DIFFERENT, NOT EQUAL: CLAIM OUR DIFFERENCE AND EXPRESS OUR SUPERIORITY! LIVE OUR FLAWED PERFECTIONS! RESIST THE IGNORANT FUCKS! REJECT THE CORPORATE COOPTATION OF OUR CULTURE! DEFY THE TRAITOROUS POLITICS OF INCLUSION! SHOW OFF OUR LIMITLESS APPETITES! DREAM OUR EXQUISITE DREAMS! OVERTHROW THE OPPRESSORS! TAKE TO THE STREETS! FIGHT BACK! DEFILE THE MORAL CRUSADERS! TAKE OUR PEOPLE OUT OF PRISON! MEDICATE OUR SICK BODIES! ERADICATE THE GENDER BINARY! EMBRACE OUR BODIES IN TRANSITION! STOP THE BRAINWASHING OF OUR PEOPLE! PROTECT OUR PEOPLE FROM MURDEROUS HETEROSOC!

WE DON'T WANT SYMBOLIC GESTURES, A TALK-SHOW HOST, A MILITARY UNIFORM, A WEDDING BAND, OR A FLAG. WE WANT TO TRANSFORM THE SYSTEM: WE WANT THE WHOLE FUCKING COUNTRY! WE ARE HERE, WE ARE QUEER, AND WE ARE SICK OF SHARING!

The following section includes a number of complete and excerpted manifestos which SPIT! considers to be important readings in an anthology of historical and contemporary queer manifestos. Due to issues surrounding re-printing permissions, we have not been able to include all the texts we would have liked to. However, we have decided to list the bibliographic details of these missing texts in order to provide readers with access to these materials.

1960S

1—

Title: The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm (excerpt)

Author: Anne Koedt

Year: 1968

Publication: First published in the journal

Notes from the First Year, New York Radical Women, 1968.

1970S

2—

Title: Lesbian Aesthetics

Author: Barbara Hammer

Year: c.1970 (slightly corrected for grammar

(not content) in 2017)

Publication: Found in Hammer's paper archive at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Lesbian Aesthetics are the particular set of qualities in making art that come from women artists who are lesbians. The close personal intimacy that women-identified-women share with each other directly leads to expression in their artwork. This expression is more personal, loving towards women, and more circular in form, more mirror reflective (contains a consciousness of the other that is similar to the self), comes from the core of being that is strong and has been reconditioned to self-love. Lesbian art is sensual, sensitive, particularly feminine (that is, has the inherent personal qualities of the artist/filmmaker).

Other characteristics of lesbian art are (and these are not in hierarchical order but are contingent points on a continuous circle): reaffirmation of the body; sexualised imagery and language; reader or audience is the centre not the other; continuous imagery of the subjective eye; imagery from before the girl child was socialised; connection with mother pre-separation (fetal connection, before original sin of the 'Fall', i.e., subject/ground relationship; equality; the responsibility for oneself (the independent woman who accepts pain and joy as part of life)); the non-alienation from nature (landscape identification with the body); the muse as female and lesbian; and finally, the inspiration and expansiveness comes within the context of small groupings.

3—

Title: Goodbye to All That (excerpt)

Author: Robin Morgan

Year: 1970

Publication: *Rat*

4—

Title: The Woman-Identified Woman (excerpt)

Author: Radicalesbians

Year: 1970

Publication: First published by Know, Inc., 1970. Also appears in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, New York University Press, 1972/1992.

5—

Title: THE GAY MANIFESTO (excerpt)

Author: Carl Wittman

Year: 1970

Publication: Red Butterfly, New York, 1970.

6—

Title: GAY REVOLUTION PARTY MANIFESTO

Author: Gay Revolution Party

Year: 1970

Publication: *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, New York University Press, 1972/1992.

7—

Title: What We Want, What We Believe

Author: Third World Gay Revolution

Year: 1971

Publication: *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, edited by Karla Jay and Allen Young, New York University Press, 1972/1992.

8—

Title: LA PUISSANCE OU LA JOUISSANCE?

Author: Copi

Year: 1971

Publication: *Rapport Contre la Normalité* by the Front Homosexuel d'action Révolutionnaire (FHAR), 1971. Also appears in *Homosexual Desire* by Guy Hocquenghem, Duke University Press, 1993.

9—

Title: Y'ALL BETTER QUIET DOWN

Author: Sylvia Rivera

Year: 1973

Publication: Delivered by Rivera at the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally, New York. Later published in *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, Untorelli Press, 2009.

Y'ALL BETTER QUIET DOWN

I've been trying to get up here all day, for your gay brothers and your gay sisters in jail. They write me every motherfuckin' week, and ask for your help, and you all don't do a god-damned thing for them.

Have you ever been beaten up, and raped, and jailed?

Now think about it.

They've been beaten up and raped. And they have had to spend much of their money in jail to get their self home and try to get their sex change.

The women have tried to fight for their sex changes, or to become women of the Women's Liberation, and they write STAR, not the women's group. They do not write women. They do not write men. They write to STAR because we're trying to do something for them.

I have been to jail. I have been raped and beaten many times by men, heterosexual men that do not belong in the homosexual shelter. But do you do anything for them? No! You all tell me, go and hide my tail between my legs.

I will no longer put up with this shit.
I have been beaten.
I have had my nose broken.
I have been thrown in jail.
I have lost my job.
I have lost my apartment.
For gay liberation.
And you all treat me this way?
What the fuck's wrong with you all?
Think about that!

I do not believe in a revolution, but you all do. I believe in the Gay Power. I believe in us getting our rights, or else I would not be out there fighting for our rights.

That's all I wanted to say to y'all people.

If you all want to know about the people that are in jail – and do not forget Bambi l'Amour, Andorra Marks, Kenny Messner, and the other gay people that are in jail – come and see the people at STAR House on 12th Street, on 640 East 12th Street between B and C, apartment 14.

The people who are trying to do something for all of us and not men and women that belong to a white, middle-class, white club. And that's what y'all belong to.

REVOLUTION NOW!

Give me a G!
Give me an A!
Give me a Y!
Give me a P!
Give me an O!
Give me a W!
Give me an E!
Give me an R!
GAY POWER!
Louder!
GAY POWER!

10—

Title: The Effemist Manifesto

Authors: Steven Dansky, John Knoebel, and Kenneth Pitchford

Year: 1973

Publication: First published by Templar Press, 1973. Also appears in *We are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, edited by Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan, Routledge, 1997.

11—

Title: Radicalqueens Manifestos

Authors: Radicalqueens

Year: 1973

Publication: *The Radical Queen: The Magazine of the Non-Man*, 1973. Reprinted in *Smash the Church, Smash the State!: The Early Years of Gay Liberation*, edited by Tommi Avicelli Mecca, pp.113-15, City Lights Books, 2009.

12—

Title: Promiscuous Rage

Author: John Rechy

Year: 1977

Publication: *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary A Nonfiction Account, with Commentaries, of Three Days and Nights in the Sexual Underground*, Grove Weidenfeld, 1977.

13—

Title: The Combahee River Collective Statement (excerpt)

Authors: Combahee River Collective

Year: 1977

Publication: *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* by Zillah R. Eisenstein, Monthly Review Press, 1979. Also appears in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, edited by Barbara Smith, Rutgers University Press, 1983.

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We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974. During that time we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organisations and movements. The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of colour face.

We will discuss four major topics in the paper that follows: (1) the genesis of contemporary Black feminism; (2) what we believe, i.e., the specific province of our politics; (3) the problems in organising Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; and (4) Black feminist issues and practice.

[...]

2. What We Believe

Above all else, our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy. This may seem so obvious as to sound simplistic, but it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement

has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression. Merely naming the pejorative stereotypes attributed to Black women (e.g. mammy, matriarch, Sapphire, whore, bulldagger), let alone cataloguing the cruel, often murderous, treatment we receive, indicates how little value has been placed upon our lives during four centuries of bondage in the Western hemisphere. We realise that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work.

This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. In the case of Black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that anyone is more worthy of liberation than ourselves. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognised as human, levelly human, is enough.

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.

Although we are feminists and Lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalisation that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.

We realise that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organised for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation. We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class relationships that takes into account the specific class position of Black women who are generally marginal in the labour force, while at this particular time some of us are temporarily viewed as doubly desirable tokens at white-collar and professional levels. We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives. Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic

relationships he analysed, we know that his analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women.

A political contribution which we feel we have already made is the expansion of the feminist principle that the personal is political. In our consciousness-raising sessions, for example, we have in many ways gone beyond white women's revelations because we are dealing with the implications of race and class as well as sex. Even our Black women's style of talking/testifying in Black language about what we have experienced has a resonance that is both cultural and political. We have spent a great deal of energy delving into the cultural and experiential nature of our oppression out of necessity because none of these matters has ever been looked at before. No one before has ever examined the multilayered texture of Black women's lives. An example of this kind of revelation/conceptualisation occurred at a meeting as we discussed the ways in which our early intellectual interests had been attacked by our peers, particularly Black males. We discovered that all of us, because we were 'smart' had also been considered 'ugly', i.e., 'smart-ugly'. 'Smart-ugly' crystallised the way in which most of us had been forced to develop our intellects at great cost to our 'social' lives. The sanctions in the Black and white communities against Black women thinkers is comparatively much higher than for white women, particularly ones from the educated middle and upper classes.

As we have already stated, we reject the stance of Lesbian separatism because it is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been socialised to be in this society: what they support, how they act, and how they oppress. But we do not have the misguided notion that it is their maleness, per se – i.e., their biological maleness – that makes them what they are. As Black women we find any type of biological determinism a particularly dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic. We must also question whether Lesbian separatism is an adequate and progressive political analysis and strategy, even for those who practice it, since it so completely denies any but the sexual sources of women's oppression, negating the facts of class and race.

[...]

4. Black Feminist Issues and Projects

During our time together we have identified and worked on many issues of particular relevance to Black women. The inclusiveness of our politics makes us concerned with any situation that impinges upon the lives of women, Third World and working people. We are of course particularly committed to working on those struggles in which race, sex, and class are simultaneous factors in oppression. We might, for example, become involved in workplace organising at a factory that employs Third World women or picket a hospital that is cutting back on already inadequate health care to a Third World community, or set up a rape crisis centre in a Black neighbourhood. Organising around welfare and daycare concerns might also be

a focus. The work to be done and the countless issues that this work represents merely reflect the pervasiveness of our oppression.

Issues and projects that collective members have actually worked on are sterilisation abuse, abortion rights, battered women, rape and health care. We have also done many workshops and educationals on Black feminism on college campuses, at women's conferences, and most recently for high school women.

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white women's movement. As Black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, colour, and Black history and culture. Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.

In the practice of our politics we do not believe that the end always justifies the means. Many reactionary and destructive acts have been done in the name of achieving 'correct' political goals. As feminists we do not want to mess over people in the name of politics. We believe in collective process and a nonhierarchical distribution of power within our own group and in our vision of a revolutionary society. We are committed to a continual examination of our politics as they develop through criticism and self-criticism as an essential aspect of our practice. In her introduction to *Sisterhood is Powerful* Robin Morgan writes:

I haven't the faintest notion what possible revolutionary role white heterosexual men could fulfil, since they are the very embodiment of reactionary-vested-interest-power.

As Black feminists and Lesbians we know that we have a very definite revolutionary task to perform and we are ready for the lifetime of work and struggle before us.

14—

Title: THE GAY LIBERATION FRONT MANIFESTO (excerpt)

Authors: Manifesto Group of GLF

Year: 1971 (revised 1978)

Publication: First published by Russell Press, 1971. Reprinted by Gay Liberation Information Service, 1979.

15—

Title: We All Can't Die in Bed (excerpt)

Author: Guy Hocquenghem

Year: 1978

Publication: *Schizo-Culture*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp.28-31, Semiotext(e), 1978.

Also appears in *Hatred of Capitalism: A Semiotext(e) Reader*, edited by Chris Kraus and Sylvère Lotringer, MIT Press, 2001.

16—

Title: Gay Guerrilla

Author: Julius Eastman

Year: 1979

17—

Title: A Call to Gay Brothers: A Spiritual Conference for Radical Faeries

Author: Harry Hay

Year: 1979

Publication: First delivered at 'A Spiritual Conference for Radical Faeries' held at a desert sanctuary near Tucson on Labor Day Weekend, 1979.

1980S

18—

Title: Towards a Gay Communism (excerpt)

Author: Mario Miele

Year: 1980

Publication: Originally the last chapter of Mario Miele's book *Homosexuality and Liberation: Elements of a Gay Critique*, first published in Italy as *Elementi di Critica Omosessuale* (Giulio Einaudi, 1977). An English translation of the entire book was made by David Fernbach (Gay Men's Press, 1980). The same year, this chapter was reprinted as a pamphlet (Pirate Productions, 1980). A new edition of Miele's book (restoring the full text of the original Italian, which was cut for *Homosexuality and Liberation* in 1980) will be published in the coming months by Pluto Press.

I believe it follows from the arguments put forward in these pages that only those who find themselves in opposition to the institutionalised Norm can play a fully critical role. In other words, only feminist self-consciousness and homosexual awareness can give life to a vision of the world that is completely different from the male heterosexual one, and to a clear and revolutionary interpretation of important themes that have been obscured for centuries, if not actually proscribed by patriarchal dogma and the absolutising of the Norm. Women represent the basic opposition potential to male 'power', which, as we have seen, is in every way functional to the perpetuation of capitalism. And if it is the male heterosexual code that prevents us achieving that qualitative leap leading to the liberation of transsexuality which desire fundamentally strives towards, we cannot avoid accepting the potential and now actual subversive force of homosexuality in the dialectic of sexual 'tendencies', just as we cannot deny the revolutionary position occupied by women in the dialectic of the sexes.

To those anti-psychiatrists who have worked to understand the repressed transsexual nature of desire, I would maintain that the liberation of a transsexuality that has up till now been unconscious cannot be obtained by a male and heterosexual redeployment of the classical psychoanalytic categories (substituting for Oedipus, for example, an Anti-Oedipus), but only by the revolution of women against male supremacy and the homosexual revolution against the heterosexual Norm. And only the standpoint of women and gays – above all, of gay women – can indicate the very important nexus that exists between their subordination and the general

social subordination, drawing the thread that unites class oppression, sexual oppression and the suppression of homosexuality.

In women subjected to male 'power', in the proletariat subjected to capitalist exploitation, in the subjection of homosexuals to the Norm, and in that of black people to white racism, we can recognise the concrete historical subjects in a position to overthrow the entire present social, sexual and racial dialectic, for the achievement of the 'realm of freedom'. True human subjectivity is not to be found in the personification of the thing par excellence (i.e. capital and the phallus), but rather in the subject position of women, homosexuals, children, blacks, 'schizophrenics', old people, etc., to the power that exploits and oppresses them. This revolutionary or potentially revolutionary subjectivity arises from subjection.

There are here a series of serious contradictions, which have to be overcome so that the true Revolution can be achieved. Still today, in fact, the subversive potential of the majority is held in check by their adherence to one form of power or another. Too many proletarians, for example, and too many women as well, still keenly defend the heterosexual Norm, and hence male privilege and the domination of capital. And yet Elvio Fachinelli can already say: 'We are not far from the day when the peaceful and moderately efficient heterosexual will find himself fired upon by his homosexual comrade'.

But Fachinelli knows better than I do that the gun is a phallic symbol. We queens have no intention of shooting anyone to bits, even if we are prepared to defend ourselves as best we can, and will

be better prepared in the future. Our revolution is opposed to capital and its Norm, and its goal is universal liberation. Death and gratuitous violence we can willingly leave to capital, and to those still in thrall to its inhuman ideology. Fachinelli, as a good heterosexual, fears gays armed with guns because he fears homosexual relations. It is only to be hoped that this heterosexual fear will be transformed into gay desire and not into terror, forcing us really to take up the gun. I believe the movement for the liberation of homosexuality is irreversible, in the broader context of human emancipation as a whole. It is up to all of us to make this emancipation a reality. There is certainly no time to lose.

19—

Title: Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence

Author: Adrienne Rich

Year: 1980

Publication: *Signs*, Vol. 5, No. 4, "Women: Sex and Sexuality", Summer, 1980, pp.631-660.

20—

Title: Guilt, Morality and Sex Negativity; Love; and Some Closing Thoughts (excerpts)

Authors: Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz (under the supervision of Joseph A. Sonnabend, M.D.)

Year: 1983

Publication: *How to Have Sex in an Epidemic: One Approach*, News from the Front Publications, 1983.

21—

Title: Poetry Is Not a Luxury

Author: Audre Lorde

Year: 1984

Publication: *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, pp.36-39, Crossing Press, 1984.

22—

Title: Sex Pot

Author: Hudson

Year: 1986

Publication: From the performance *Sex Pot* (1986), in *Against Nature: A Group Show of Work by Homosexual Men*, edited by Dennis Cooper and Richard Hawkins, p.16, LACE, 1987.

Also appears in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Queer*, edited by David J. Getsy, pp.64-65, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016.

Ipsa facto.

All homosexuals should carry guns and, with the conscience of acting, not be afraid to use them. A majority of Supreme Court Justices should be burned in effigy – nightly – in front of their homes forever and in as many other places as possible while butt-fuckers and oral copulators go at it on every street corner, in every public building, in front of churches and when the cops come to bust 'em, just blow 'em away. Dynamite their cars. Take no prisoners.

It's going to take too much money and too much effort to right this; and what's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong and we're the one.

Mr President, we know where you live. We know your every fear. Assassination plots thicken. Strike forces are in place and we're going to get you. We're going to get you and fuck you up the ass with a pecker AIDS virus bigger than John Holmes. Mr President, we know where you live. We know your every fear. Assassination plots thicken. Strike forces are in place and we're going to get you. We look like everyone and we are everywhere and like a rat running across the road looking for a hole we're going to find your hole and fuck it up with a pecker AIDS virus bigger than John Holmes.

After we roll you in a thick garbage juice – the kind that sloshes out the backend of trash pick-up trucks when they take corners.

This is an idea whose time has come like so many men have come before. No one knows about the relationship between god and me.

We like flowers, rocks, bunnies, families, dinner parties, nice clothes, the outdoors, cars, tv, shopping, books, movies, records, live concerts, dogs, cats, grandparents, government, pornography, love, sex.

sex is great
it's 86
This is not a symbolic gesture; we are the living sign.
Wet or dry we're not holding back and when the shit hits the fan –
Muck.
The tables are turned.
When you walk without eating
in the cell of your heart
a horrible, a horrible dream,
your precious seed a wine factory
pussy foot
deep in debt
cumulative effect
real shock busters
no salt added
plastic surgeon

23—

Title: SILENCE = DEATH

Author: Silence = Death Collective (Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Charles Krelloff, Christopher Lione, Jorge Socarras, Oliver Johnston (d.1990))

Year: 1987

Publication: Posters plastered around New York City.



24—

Title: THE HOMOSEXUAL MANIFESTO

Author: Michael Swift

Year: 1987

Publication: Reprinted from The Congressional Record of the United States Congress. First printed in *Gay Community News*, February 15-21, 1987.

25—

Title: So that Sex under the Bridges Doesn't Die

Author: Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis

Year: 1989

Publication: Originally published in *Revista Trauko*, No. 16, August 1989. This version translated by Lissette Olivares and published in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Queer*, edited by David J. Getsy, pp.68-70, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016.

My beloved boy:

In this sausage country where everything is settled with its back to the pedestrian's gaze, in this venomous winter; the deaf old lady, the retired crip, the traffic of UGLYVISTA¹, the incarcerated cop, the change for a cigarette, Alameda ALAMEDA²... walking alone, Chilean-mares, the maricovento³ of Pancho-Pedro, art bottoms seeking a country, a corner of macho men to raise their glass to sodoma, the great whore. MY-SODOMA, the hunted... SAN CAMILA-MON AMOUR⁴... fags forever, rights for the small hole, the standard ass, the pamphlet ass, the homos and the 'bread, work, justice, liberty'⁵... Now that everything is changing, we, the tragic dolls became the DANGEROUS DELINQUENTS⁶, we play these times, we show our face and declare 'A HOMOSEXUAL PROJECT', a sidewalk for transvestites, a trace of the river, a retirement fund for whores, our unconditional allies; so that sex under the bridges doesn't die, so that they don't turn on the lights at the Capri Cinema⁷, for reclining seats in public bathrooms... Fuck the underground, the rich kids who pay five hundred in MATACAMAS⁸, with premature ejaculation, singing 'GAY DOGS', those kids that aren't hard. Rather they are kids who are troubled and say 'LET'S GO TOGETHER' and it's a lie because now we're not going anywhere together⁹. The tribes manage themselves: the gypsies, the lumpen, the gígalos, those disgusting hippie-snobs of SAN ALFONSO¹⁰, sudacas¹¹, the PUNK boy I fucked one night¹², the PATRIOTIC front (from the front)¹³, the only anarchist balls, in the end (sigh)... CHILITO BALLS¹⁴ castaway soup, little virgin of huff, CHILITO-FAGGOT¹⁵, beating transvestites for the visit of the POPE, dirty money trafficking ALLENDE

under the tear gas... CHILITO-RED who kicked us out of the LONG LIVE THE PEOPLE.

'In the communist party there's no fags!' they screamed at us almost in fear, two homosexuals against a stadium¹⁶, we wanted to offer a manifesto to the MAIRA and VOLODIA TRIBUNALS¹⁷, the pretorian security almost made us into mashed-mare, the sign that we couldn't open said 'HOMOSEXUALS FOR CHANGE' like MARE STROIKAS and it had no ORTOgraphic¹⁸ mistake, but they didn't understand... get it?

Affectionately,

Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis

¹ *Uglyvista* references Bellavista ('beautiful view'), the bohemian neighbourhood in Santiago de Chile. In this neologism, the emphasis is on its antithesis – 'ugly view' likely to refer to the availability of 'ugly' or queer sex work and workers in this district.

² *Alameda* is the colloquial slang for Avenida Libertador General Bernardo O'Higgins, the most central and important avenue in Santiago.

³ *Maricovento* queers the word *convento* (convent). Here, Pedro Lemebel and Francisco Casas (Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis) conflate it with *maricón* (fag) as the prefix.

⁴ 'My beloved San Camila' refers to San Camilo, a neighbourhood where sex work proliferates and trans people transit, a site that Lemebel and Casas return to in *La Última Cena de San Camilo* (1989), *Casa Particular* (1989) and *Estrellada* (1989), which document and pay homage to trans-feminine culture. As is consistent throughout their writing, Lemebel and Casas modify the gender of masculine nouns here, from Camilo to Camila.

⁵ Slogan of the Chilean communist party.

⁶ *Patos malos*, a feminine noun transformation from the more traditional and masculine *patos malos*, taken from *coa*, Chilean prison/street slang, which translates literally as 'bad ducks' and refers to delinquents.

⁷ Pornographic cinema in downtown Santiago, popular as a cruising site.

⁸ *Matacamas* is a neologism that translates literally as 'kills [in] the bed' (perhaps a play on Atacama, a territory in the North of Chile).

⁹ 'Let's Go Together' was one of the slogans used in the campaign for democratic transition.

¹⁰ Refers to San Alfonso del Mar, a bourgeois beach near Santiago.

¹¹ *Sudaca* merges *sud* (south) and *caca* (shit): shit from the south – a derogatory insult used to refer to people from South America, often directed at migrants from the Americas.

¹² The verb is *comí*, literally 'ate', but in the context of Chilean slang the meaning is sexual.

¹³ Refers to the revolutionary group Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), abbreviated as El Frente, who were responsible for the assassination attempt of Augusto Pinochet in 1986.

¹⁴ The suffix *ito*, which is common in Chilean slang, makes the noun diminutive, i.e., little Chile/little Chilean, but it is also used as a term of endearment, as in 'beloved'.

¹⁵ The original term used is *hueco* which translates as 'hollow', in reference to an unfilled cavity, thus its use as Chilean slang for 'faggot'.

¹⁶ Refers to a mass event that celebrated the arrival of democracy in March of 1990, which was held at the National Stadium.

¹⁷ Luis Maira is a recognised socialist politician. In 1989 he was the president of the Chilean Party of the Christian Left (Partido Izquierda Cristiana de Chile) and an active leader in the democratic transition. Volodia Teitelboim is a national literature laureate and was the president of the Communist Party from 1989-94.

¹⁸ *Orto* is used in Chile as a vulgar synonym for the anus. Here, the word is employed as a homophone or 'Ortho' (in orthographic), with the intention of creating a double entendre. In its original Spanish use there is no spelling mistake.

How can I tell you. How can I convince you, brother, sister that your life is in danger. That everyday you wake up alive, relatively happy, and a functioning human being, you are committing a rebellious act. You as an alive and functioning queer are a revolutionary. There is nothing on this planet that validates, protects or encourages your existence. It is a miracle you are standing here reading these words. You should by all rights be dead.

Don't be fooled, straight people own the world and the only reason you have been spared is you're smart, lucky or a fighter. Straight people have a privilege that allows them to do whatever they please and fuck without fear. But not only do they live a life free of fear; they flaunt their freedom in my face. Their images are on my TV, in the magazine I bought, in the restaurant I want to eat in, and on the street where I live. I want there to be a moratorium on straight marriage, on babies, on public displays of affection among the opposite sex and media images that promote heterosexuality. Until I can enjoy the same freedom of movement and sexuality as straights, their privilege must stop and it must be given over to me and my queer sisters and brothers.

Straight people will not do this voluntarily and so they must be forced into it. Straights must be frightened into it. Terrorised into it. Fear is the most powerful motivation. No one will give us what we deserve. Rights are not given they are taken, by force if necessary.

It is easier to fight when you know who your enemy is. Straight people are your enemy. They are your enemy when they don't acknowledge your invisibility and continue to live in and contribute to a culture that kills you.

Every day one of us is taken by the enemy. Whether it's an AIDS death due to homophobic government inaction or a lesbian bashing in an all-night diner (in a supposedly lesbian neighbourhood), we are being systematically picked off and we will continue to be wiped out unless we realise that if they take one of us they must take all of us.

[...]

ANGER

'The strong sisters told the brothers that there were two important things to remember about the coming revolutions, the first is that we will get our asses kicked. The second, is that we will win.'

I'm angry. I'm angry for being condemned to death by strangers saying, 'You deserve to die' and 'AIDS is the cure'. Fury erupts when a Republican woman wearing thousands of dollars of garments and jewellery minces by the police lines shaking her head, chuckling and wagging her finger at us like we are recalcitrant children making absurd demands and throwing a temper tantrum when they aren't met. Angry while Joseph agonises over \$8,000 a year for AZT which might keep him alive a little longer and which makes him sicker than the disease he is diagnosed with. Angry as I listen to a man tell me that after changing his will five times he's running out of people to leave things to. All of his best friends are dead. Angry when I stand in a sea of quilt panels, or go to a candlelight march or attend yet another memorial service. I will not march silently with a fucking candle and I want to take that goddamned quilt and wrap myself in it and furiously rend it and my hair and curse every god

religion ever created. I refuse to accept a creation that cuts people down in the third decade of their life. It is cruel and vile and meaningless and everything I have in me rails against the absurdity and I raise my face to the clouds and a ragged laugh that sounds more demonic than joyous erupts from my throat and tears stream down my face and if this disease doesn't kill me, I may just die of frustration. My feet pound the streets and Peter's hands are chained to a pharmaceutical company's reception desk while the receptionist looks on in horror and Eric's body lies rotting in a Brooklyn cemetery and I'll never hear his flute resounding off the walls of the meeting house again. And I see the old people in Tompkins Square Park huddled in their long wool coats in June to keep out the cold they perceive is there and to cling to whatever little life has left to offer them. I'm reminded of the people who strip and stand before a mirror each night before they go to bed and search their bodies for any mark that might not have been there yesterday. A mark that this scourge has visited them. And I'm angry when the newspapers call us 'victims' and sound alarms that 'it' might soon spread to the 'general population'. And I want to scream 'Who the fuck am I?' And I want to scream at New York Hospital with its yellow plastic bags marked 'isolation linen', 'ropa infecciosa' and its orderlies in latex gloves and surgical masks skirting the bed as if its occupant will suddenly leap out and douse them with blood and semen giving them too the plague. And I'm angry at straight people who sit smugly wrapped in their self-protective coat of monogamy and heterosexuality confident that this disease has nothing to do with them because 'it' only happens to 'them'.

And the teenage boys who upon spotting my Silence=Death button begin chanting 'Faggot's gonna die' and I wonder, who taught them this? Enveloped in fury and fear, I remain silent while my button mocks me every step of the way. And the anger I feel when a television program on the quilt gives profiles of the dead and the list begins with a baby, a teenage girl who got a blood transfusion, an elderly baptist minister and his wife and when they finally show a gay man, he's described as someone who knowingly infected teenage male prostitutes with the virus. What else can you expect from a faggot? I'm angry.

[...]

I HATE...

I hate Jesse Helms. I hate Jesse Helms so much I'd rejoice if he dropped down dead. If someone killed him I'd consider it his own fault. I hate Ronald Reagan, too, because he mass-murdered my people for eight years. But to be honest, I hate him even more for eulogising Ryan White without first admitting his guilt, without begging forgiveness for Ryan's death and for the deaths of tens of thousands of other PWA's – most of them queer. I hate him for making a mockery of our grief. I hate the fucking Pope, and I hate John fucking Cardinal fucking O'Connor, and I hate the whole fucking Catholic Church. The same goes for the Military, and especially for Amerika's Law Enforcement Officials – the cops – state sanctioned sadists who brutalise street transvestites, prostitutes and queer prisoners. I also hate the medical and mental health establishments, particularly the psychiatrist who convinced me not to have sex with

men for three years until we (meaning he) could make me bisexual rather than queer. I also hate the education profession, for its share in driving thousands of queer teens to suicide every year. I hate the 'respectable' art world; and the entertainment industry, and the mainstream media, especially the *New York Times*. In fact, I hate every sector of the straight establishment in this country – the worst of whom actively want all queers dead, the best of whom never stick their necks out to keep us alive. I hate straight people who think they have anything intelligent to say about 'outing'. I hate straight people who think stories about themselves are 'universal' but stories about us are only about homosexuality. I hate straight recording artists who make their careers off of queer people, then attack us, then act hurt when we get angry and then deny having wronged us rather than apologise for it. I hate straight people who say, 'I don't see why you feel the need to wear those buttons and t-shirts. I don't go around telling the whole world I'm straight'. I hate that in twelve years of public education I was never taught about queer people. I hate that I grew up thinking I was the only queer in the world, and I hate even more that most queer kids still grow up the same way. I hate that I was tormented by other kids for being a faggot, but more that I was taught to feel ashamed for being the object of their cruelty, taught to feel it was my fault. I hate that the Supreme Court of this country says it's okay to criminalise me because of how I make love. I hate that so many straight people are so concerned about my goddamned sex life. I hate that so many twisted straight people become parents, while I have to fight like hell to be allowed to be

a father. I hate straights.

[...]

GET UP, WAKE UP SISTERS!!

Your life is in your hands.

When I risk it all to be out, I risk it for both of us. When I risk it all and it works (which it often does if you would try it), I benefit and so do you. When it doesn't work, I suffer and you do not.

But girl you can't wait for other dykes to make the world safe for you. STOP waiting for a better more lesbian future! The revolution could be here if we started it.

Where are you sisters? I'm trying to find you, I'm trying to find you. How come I only see you on Gay Pride Day?

We're OUT, Where the fuck are YOU?

[...]

WHY QUEER

Well, yes, 'gay' is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using 'queer' is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalised in the straight world. We use queer as gay men loving lesbians and lesbians loving being queer. Queer, unlike GAY, doesn't mean MALE. And when spoken to other gays and lesbians it's a way of suggesting we

close ranks, and forget (temporarily) our individual differences because we face a more insidious common enemy. Yeah, QUEER can be a rough word but it is also a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from the homophobe's hands and use against him.

27—

Title: Riot Grrrl Manifesto

Authors: Riot Grrrl

Publication: *Bikini Kill Zine*, No. 2, 1991.

28—

Title: Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration (excerpt)

Author: David Wojnarowicz

Year: 1991

Publication: *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*, pp.153-4, 160-62, Vintage, 1991.

Words can strip the power from a memory or an event. Words can cut the ropes of an experience. Breaking silence about an experience can break the chains of the code of silence. Describing the once indescribable can dismantle the power of taboo. To speak about the once unspeakable can make the **INVISIBLE** familiar if repeated often enough in clear and loud tones. To speak of ourselves — while living in a country that considers us or our thoughts taboo — is to shake the boundaries of the illusion of the **ONE-TRIBE NATION**. To separate tribes in this illusion called **AMERICA**. To keep silent even when our individual existence contradicts the illusory ONE-TRIBE NATION is to lose our own identities. **BOTTOM LINE, IF PEOPLE DON'T SAY WHAT THEY BELIEVE, THOSE IDEAS AND FEELINGS GET LOST. IF THEY ARE LOST OFTEN ENOUGH, THOSE IDEAS AND FEELINGS NEVER RETURN**. This was what my father hoped would happen with his actions toward any display of individuality. And this is the hope of certain government officials and religious leaders as well. When I make statements like this I do not make them lightly. I make them from a position of experience — the experience of what it is to be homosexual in this country. What it is to be a man who is capable of loving men, physically and emotionally.

[...]

'If I had a dollar for health care I'd rather spend it on a baby or innocent person with some defect or illness not of their own responsibility; not some person with AIDS...' says the health-care official on national television and this is in the middle of an hour-long video of people dying on camera because they can't afford the limited drugs available that might extend their lives and I can't even

remember what this official looked like because I reached in through the T.V. screen and ripped his face in half and I was diagnosed with AIDS recently and this was after the last few years of losing count of the friends and neighbours who have been dying slow vicious and unnecessary deaths because fags and dykes and junkies are expendable in this country. 'If you want to stop AIDS shoot the queers...' says a politician in Texas on the radio and his press secretary later claims that the politician was only joking and didn't know the microphone was turned on and besides they didn't think it would hurt his chances for re-election anyways and I wake up every morning in this killing machine called america and I'm carrying this rage like a blood-filled egg and there's a thin line between the inside and the outside a thin line between thought and action and that line is simply made up of blood and muscle and bone and I'm waking up more and more from daydreams of tipping amazonian blow darts in 'infected blood' and spitting them at the exposed necklines of certain politicians or government health-care officials or those thinly disguised walking swastikas that wear religious garments over their murderous intentions or those rabid strangers parading against AIDS clinics in the nightly news suburbs there's a thin line a very thin line between the inside and the outside and I've been looking all my life at the signs surrounding us in the media or on peoples' lips; the religious types outside st. patrick's cathedral shouting to the men and women in the gay parade, 'You won't be here next year — you'll get AIDS and die ha ha', and the areas of the u.s.a. where it is possible to murder a man and when brought to trial one only has to say that the victim

was a queer and that he tried to touch you and the courts will set you free and the difficulties that a bunch of republican senators have in albany with supporting an anti-violence bill that includes 'sexual orientation' as a category of crime victims there's a thin line a very thin line and as each T-cell disappears from my body it's replaced by ten pounds of pressure ten pounds of rage and I focus that rage into nonviolent resistance but that focus is starting to slip my hands are beginning to move independent of self-restraint and the egg is starting to crack america seems to understand and accept murder as a self defence against those who would murder other people and it's been murder on a daily basis for eight count them eight long years and we're expected to pay taxes to support this public and social murder and we're expected to quietly and politely make house in this windstorm of murder but I say there's certain politicians that had better increase their security forces and there's religious leaders and health-care officials that had better get bigger fucking dogs and higher fucking fences and more complex security alarms for their homes and queer-bashers better start doing their work from inside howitzer tanks because the thin line between the inside and the outside is beginning to erode and at the moment I'm a thirty-seven-foot-tall one-thousand-one-hundred-and-seventy-two-pound man inside this six-foot body and all I can feel is the pressure all I can feel is the pressure and the need for release.

Title: I want a president...

Author: Zoe Leonard

Year: 1992

I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance and I want someone who grew up in a place where the earth is so saturated with toxic waste that they didn't have a choice about getting leukemia. I want a president that had an abortion at sixteen and I want a candidate who isn't the lesser of two evils and I want a president who lost their last lover to aids, who still sees that in their eyes every time they lay down to rest, who held their lover in their arms and knew they were dying. I want a president with no airconditioning, a president who has stood on line at the clinic, at the dmv, at the welfare office and has been unemployed and layed off and sexually harrassed and gaybashed and deported. I want someone who has spent the night in the tombs and had a cross burned on their lawn and survived rape. I want someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, who has made mistakes and learned from them. I want a Black woman for president. I want someone with bad teeth and ~~an attitude~~, someone who has eaten ~~that nasty~~ hospital food, someone who crossdresses and has done drugs and, been in therapy. I want someone who has committed civil disobedience. And I want to know why this isn't possible. I want to know why we started learning somewhere down the line that a president is always a clown: always a john and never a hooker. Always a boss and never a worker, always a liar, always a thief and never caught.

Title: The Dyke Manifesto

Authors: Lesbian Avengers

Year: 1993

Publication: Distributed as palm cards and broadsheet.

lesbian avengers **DYKE MANIFESTO** lesbian avengers
CALLING ALL LESBIANS
WAKE UP! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!

IT'S TIME TO GET OUT OF THE BEDS, OUT OF THE BARS AND INTO THE STREETS
 TIME TO SEIZE THE POWER OF DYKE LOVE, DYKE VISION, DYKE ANGER
 DYKE INTELLIGENCE, DYKE STRATEGY.

TIME TO ORGANIZE AND IGNITE. TIME TO GET TOGETHER AND FIGHT
 WE'RE INVISIBLE AND IT'S NOT SAFE—NOT AT HOME, ON THE JOB, IN THE
 STREETS OR IN THE COURTS
 WHERE ARE OUR LESBIAN LEADERS?

WE NEED YOU

WE'RE NOT WAITING FOR THE RAPTURE. WE ARE THE APOCALYPSE.
 WE'LL BE YOUR DREAM AND THEIR NIGHTMARE.

LESBIAN POWER

BELIEVE IN CREATIVE ACTIVISM: LOUD, BOLD, SEXY, SILLY, FIERCE, TASTY
 AND DRAMATIC. ARREST OPTIONAL.

THINK DEMONSTRATIONS ARE A GOOD TIME AND A GREAT PLACE TO CRUISE
 WOMEN. DON'T HAVE PATIENCE FOR POLITE POLITICS. ARE BORED WITH THE
 BOYS. BELIEVE CONFRONTATION FOSTERS GROWTH AND STRONG BONES.
 BELIEVE IN RECRUITMENT. NOT BY THE ARMY; NOT OF STRAIGHT WOMEN.
 ARE NOT CONTENT WITH GHETTOS: WE WANT YOUR HOUSE, YOUR JOB, YOUR
 FREQUENT FLYER MILES. WE'LL SELL YOUR JEWELRY TO SUBSIDIZE OUR
 MOVEMENT. WE DEMAND UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE AND HOUSING. WE
 DEMAND FOOD AND SHELTER FOR ALL HOMELESS LESBIANS. WE ARE THE
 13TH STEP. THINK GIRL GANGS ARE THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

LESBIAN SEX

THINK SEX IS A DAILY LIBATION. GOOD ENERGY FOR ACTIONS. CRAVE,
 ENJOY, EXPLORE, SUFFER FROM NEW IDEAS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS:
 SLUMBER PARTIES, POLYGAMY, PERSONAL ADS, AFFINITY GROUPS.
 USE LIVE ACTION WORDS: lick, waltz, eat, fuck, kiss, bite, give it up, hit the dirt

LESBIAN ACTIVISM

THINK ACTIONS MUST BE LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL, GLOBAL, COSMIC.
 THINK CLOSETED LESBIANS, QUEER BOYS AND SYMPATHETIC STRAIGHTS
 SHOULD SEND US MONEY.

PLAN TO TARGET HOMOPHOBES OF EVERY STRIPE AND INFILTRATE THE
 CHRISTIAN RIGHT.

SCHEME AND SCREAM AND FIGHT REAL MEAN

the lesbian
AVENGERS



THE LESBIAN AVENGERS: WE RECRUIT

31—

Title: At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament (excerpt)

Author: Derek Jarman

Year: 1992

Publication: *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament*, first published by Hutchinson, 1992.

32—

Title: Good Luck...Miss You (excerpt)

Author: Gran Fury

Year: 1995

Publication: Flyer available during the exhibition *Temporarily Possessed: The Semi-Permanent Collection*, the New Museum, 1995.

Life at the end of every century is typified by fear and anxiety. Apocalypse theories abound: nationalism and xenophobia encourage isolation. Urban violence, economic decline and AIDS have contributed to a reactionary environment where progressive thought is anathema.

The circumstances surrounding AIDS activism have radically changed since its beginning in 1986. Both the Executive Branch and the Congress have changed hands. America is in 'decline'. Communism is 'dead'. Internationally, politics have moved further to the right, and the citizenry of the United States has become more insular.

The lesbian and gay community has also changed. Embattled, fragmented and burned out, gay activists have adapted to the apparent permanence of the AIDS crisis. The notion that AIDS is here to stay threatens to overpower the idea that it should be fought. This shift away from seeing AIDS as a political crisis gained momentum once it became obvious there would be no quick solution for it. Our horizons thus re-drawn, we are shunning the political questions and searching for new methods of coping: practical ones, personal ones.

Our culture is run on carefully crafted words and images. They are given tremendous authority, and have the power to shape society's responses. It is worth noting that the images which have endured through the AIDS crisis are not ones of activism. Rather, they are symbols of remembrance and reprieve: quilts, ribbons and angels. The symbols and symptoms of our acceptance of AIDS, our acceptance of death. Acceptance may be an appropriate response to the tragedy of AIDS. It is not a political response.

What does it mean when personal responses are confused with civic ones?

In the case of AIDS, we are left without solutions for a constellation of woes far beyond the tragedy of human loss – such as the economics of health care, society's marginalisation of individuals in need, the skewing of scientific research along lines of class, gender, and race, and the depletion of entire communities.

Our culture's acceptance of these images denotes a complicity between individual citizens, AIDS organisations and our government, where the responsibility for AIDS is consistently transferred elsewhere. Our government wants the responsibilities privatised. When these images are backed by philanthropic organisations, it enables the government to steer responsibility from governments to Gods.

Since the beginning of the AIDS crisis, we've been reminded by historians and spiritual leaders that death by plague is the way of nature. But AIDS is not simply an act of nature, a fact of life. It is also the business of government, the media world of infotainment, the propaganda of religion and the industry of science.

In America, science and rationalism are paramount. When privileged AIDS activists were introduced to scientists on the battlefield of AIDS, they discovered a fellowship. By including activists in the inner circles of the research establishment, the system which activist set out to change neutralised their dissent. Now, when scientists suggest there is no relief in sight (an assertion based on limited scientific criteria) activists working within the system concur.

Meanwhile, the media presents the picture that our society has matured with respect to AIDS. Both film and television have taken on the subject, although their analyses generally ignore the political

implications. Their spin is reductive, almost irrelevant: that the human capacity to deal with loss is ennobling. The cultural prognosis for AIDS is dismal. The drama of AIDS has been replaced by its normalisation. In terms of elections and economics, the true determinants of our nation's soul, AIDS is a very low priority. If we ever cared about it, we appear to have given up on it. In inside circles, talk of a cure is rare.

If the original strategies of AIDS activism are in fact outmoded, this is as much a by-product of the social context as it is of the varied personal responses which have overtaken the impulse which led to activism in the first place: the impulse to stop the disease cold. What is not outmoded is the need for action: action of all sorts and on all levels.

2000s

Countersexuality is not the creation of a new nature, but rather the end of Nature as an order which legitimates the subjection of some bodies to others. Countersexuality is first a critical analysis of the difference of gender and sex, product of the heterocentric social contract, whose normative performances have been inscribed in bodies as biological truths. Secondly, countersexuality points to a substation of this social contract which we call Natural by a countersexual contract. Within the framework of the countersexual contract, bodies recognise themselves not as men or women but as speaking bodies, and they recognise others as speaking bodies. They recognise for themselves the possibility to accede to all meaningful practices, as well as to all the positions of enunciation, as subjects, that history has established as masculine, feminine or perverse. Consequently, they renounce to not only fixed and naturally determined sexual identity, but also to the benefits that they may gain from the naturalisation of the social, economic and juridical effects of their meaningful practices.

The new society takes the name of countersexual for at least two reasons. One, and negatively: the countersexual society dedicates itself to the systematic deconstruction of the naturalisation of sexual practices and the gender system. Two, and positively: the countersexual society proclaims the equivalence (and not the equality) of all speaking subjects-bodies that commit themselves to the terms of the countersexual contract dedicated to the search for pleasure-knowledge.

[...]

Countersexuality is also a theory of the body that situates itself outside the oppositions of man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexuality/homosexuality. It defines sexuality as technology and considers that the different elements of the system sex/gender denominated 'man', 'woman', 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', 'transsexual', as well as its practices and sexual identities, are nothing more than machines, products, instruments, apparatuses, tricks, prostheses, networks, applications, programs, connections, energy and information flows, interruptions and switches, keys, laws of circulation, borders, constraints, plans, logics, equipment, formats, accidents, detritus, mechanisms, uses, detours...

Countersexuality affirms that in the beginning was the dildo. The dildo precedes the penis. It is the origin of the penis. Countersexuality employs the notion of 'supplement'... (Derrida) and identifies the dildo as the supplement that produces that which it is supposed to complement.

Countersexuality affirms that desire, sexual excitation and the orgasm are nothing more than the retrospective products of a certain sexual technology that identifies the reproductive organs as sexual organs, in detriment of a sexualization of the totality of the body.

It is time to stop studying and describing sex as part of the natural history of human societies. The 'history of humanity' would benefit if it were to re-baptise itself as the 'history of technologies', with sex and gender being apparatuses inscribed in a complex technological system. This 'history of technologies' is nothing but the effect of the permanent negotiation of the borders between human and animal, body and machine (Donna Haraway), but also between organ and plasticity.

Countersexuality renounces a reference to an absolute past where could be found a lesbian heterotopia... that would be a kind of separatist radical feminist utopia. We do not need a pure origin of masculine and heterosexual domination to justify a radical transformation of the sexes and the genders.

[...]

Countersexuality plays on two temporalities. A slow temporality in which the sexual institutions seem to never have suffered any changes. In this temporality, the sexual technologies present themselves as fixed... This plane of fixed temporality is the metaphysical foundation of all sexual technology. All the work of countersexuality is directed against, operates and intervenes in this temporal sphere. There is also however a temporality of the event in which each fact escapes linear causality. A fractal temporality constituted of multiple 'times' that cannot be the simple effects of the natural truth of sexual identity or of a symbolic order.

[...]

Countersexuality has as its goal the study of technological transformations of sexed and gendered bodies. It does not reject the hypothesis of the social and psychological constructions of gender, but it re-conceives them as mechanisms, strategies and means in a broader technological system.

With the desire to denaturalise and demystify the traditional notions of sex and gender, countersexuality has as its principal task the study of the

sexual instruments and apparatuses and accordingly the relations of sex and gender that are established between the body and the machine.

[...]

Sex, as organ and practice, is neither a precise biological place, nor a natural impulse. Sex is a technology of heterosocial domination that reduces the body to erogenous zones in function of an asymmetrical distribution of power between the genders (feminine/masculine), making coincide certain effects with certain organs, certain sensations with specific anatomical reactions.

Human nature is an effect of social technology that reproduces in bodies the spaces and the discourses of the equation nature=heterosexuality. The heterosexual system is a social apparatus for the production of femininity and masculinity that operates through the division and fragmentation of the body.

The sexual roles and practices that are naturally attributed to the masculine and feminine genders are an arbitrary conjunction of regulations inscribed in bodies that assure the material exploitation of one sex by another.

[...]

The sex-gender system is a system of writing.

[...]

Countersexuality has as an aim to identify the false spaces, the fissures in the structure of the text (intersex bodies, hermaphrodites, the mad, women truck drivers, fags, dykes, hysterics, outers or

the frigid, hermaphrodykes...), and reinforce the power of deviations and shifts in relation to the hetero-centred system.

[...]

The heteronormative social technology... can be characterised as a machine of ontological production that functions by means of the performative invocation of the subject as a sexed body.

Sexual identity is not the instinctive expression of the prediscursive truth of the flesh, but the effect of the reinscription of gender practices on the body.

[...]

Gender is not simply performative... It is before all else prosthetic, that is, it is not given except in the materiality of bodies. It is purely constructed and at the same time entirely organic. It escapes the false metaphysical dichotomies between body and soul, form and matter. Gender is like the dildo, because they are both more than imitation. Its carnal plasticity destabilises the distinction between the imitated and the imitator, between truth and representation of the truth, between reference and the referent, between nature and the artificial, between the sexual organs and the practices of sex. Gender could result from a sophisticated technology that manufactures sexual bodies.

[...]

Sexual organs as such do not exist. The organs that we recognise as naturally sexual are already the product of a sophisticated technology that prescribes the context in which the organs acquire

their meaning (sexual relations) and their appropriate use, in accordance with their 'nature' (heterosexual relations). The sexual contexts are established by means of a biased spatial and temporal delimitation. The architecture is political. It is it which organises and qualifies the practices: public or private, institutional or domestic, social or intimate.

[...]

The architecture of the body is political.

[...]

The workers of the anus (e.g., those who practice fist-fucking) are the new proletarians of a possible countersexual revolution.

[...]

The anus presents three fundamental characteristics that transform it into the transitory centre of a labour of countersexual deconstruction. One: the anus is a universal erogenous centre situated beyond the anatomical limits imposed by sexual difference, where the roles and registers appear as universally reversible (who has no anus?). Two: the anus is the primordial zone of passivity, a centre for the excitement of excitement and pleasure that does not appear on the list of prescribed orgasmic points. Three: the anus constitutes a space of technological labour; it is a factory for the re-elaboration of the posthuman, countersexual body. The work of the anus does not point to reproduction, nor does it ground a romantic nexus. It generates benefits that cannot be measured in a heterocentred economy. For the anus, it doesn't give a shit for the traditional

system of representation of sex/gender.

The recuperation of the anus as a centre of countersexual pleasure has moments in common with the logic of the dildo: each location on the body is not only a potential plane across which the dildo may move, but also an orifice-entry, a point of escape, a centre of discharge, an axis of action-passion.

35—

Title: Find God in Dark Alleys from *Queer God* (excerpt)

Author: Marcella Althaus-Reid

Year: 2003

Publication: *Find God in Dark Alleys from Queer God*, p.33, Routledge, 2003.

...Pope John Paul II...condemn[ed] state-recognised same-sex unions as parodic versions of authentic families, 'based on individual egoism' rather than genuine love. Justifying that condemnation, he observed, 'Such a "caricature" has no future and cannot give future to any society'. Queers must respond to the violent force of such constant provocations not only by insisting on our equal rights to the social order's prerogatives, not only by avowing our capacity to promote that order's coherence and integrity, but also by saying explicitly what Law and the Pope and the whole of the Symbolic order for which they stand hear anyway in each and every expression or manifestation of queer sexuality: Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorised; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital L's and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop.

We might like to believe that with patience, with work, with generous contributions to lobbying groups or generous participation in activist groups or generous doses of legal savvy and electoral sophistication, the future will hold a place for us – a place at the political table that won't have to come at the cost of the places we seek in the bed or the bar or the baths. But there are no *queers* in that future as there can be no future for queers, chosen as they are to bear the bad tidings that there can be no future at all: that the future, as Annie's hymn to the hope of 'Tomorrow' understands, is '*always/ A day/ Away*'. Like the lovers on Keats's Grecian urn, forever 'near the goal' of a union they'll never in fact achieve, we're held in thrall

by a future continually deferred by time itself, constrained to pursue the dream of a day when today and tomorrow are one. That future is nothing but kid stuff, reborn each day to screen out the grave that gapes from within the lifeless letter, luring us into, ensnaring us in, reality's gossamer web. Those queered by the social order that projects its death drive onto them are no doubt positioned to recognise the structuring fantasy that so defines them. But they're positioned as well to recognise the *irreducibility* of that fantasy and the cost of construing it as contingent to the logic of social organisation as such. Acceding to this figural identification with the undoing of identity, which is also to say with the disarticulation of social and Symbolic form, might well be described, in John Brenkman's words, as 'politically self-destructive'. But politics (as the social elaboration of reality) and the self (as mere prosthesis maintaining the future for the figural Child), are what queerness, again as figure, necessarily destroys – necessarily insofar as this 'self' is the agent of reproductive futurism and this 'politics' the means of its promulgation, as the order of social reality. But perhaps, as Lacan's engagement with Antigone in Seminar 7 suggests, political self-destruction inheres in the only act that counts as one: the act of resisting enslavement to the future in the name of having a life.

If the fate of the queer is to figure the fate that cuts the thread of futurity, if the jouissance, the corrosive enjoyment, intrinsic to queer (non)identity annihilates the fetishistic jouissance that works to *consolidate* identity by allowing reality to coagulate around its ritual reproduction, then the only oppositional status to which our queerness could ever lead would depend on our taking seriously the place of the death drive we're called on to figure and insisting, against the cult of the Child and the political order it enforces, that we, as Guy Hocquenghem made clear, are 'not the signifier of what might become a new form of "social organisation",' that we do not intend a new politics, a better society, a brighter tomorrow, since all of these fantasies reproduce the past, through displacement, in the form of the future. We choose, instead, *not* to choose the Child, as disciplinary image of the Imaginary past or as site of a projective identification with an always impossible future. The queerness we propose, in Hocquenghem's words, 'is unaware of the passing of generations as stages on the road to better living. It knows nothing about "sacrifice now for the sake of future generations" ... [it] knows that civilisation alone is mortal'. Even more: it delights in that mortality as the negation of everything that would define itself, moralistically, as pro-life. It is we who must bury the subject in the tomb-like hollow of the signifier, pronouncing at last the words for which we're condemned should we speak them or not: that we are the advocates of abortion; that the Child as futurity's emblem must die; that the future is mere repetition and just as lethal as the past. Our queerness has nothing to offer a Symbolic that lives by denying that nothingness except an insistence on the haunting excess that this nothingness entails, an insistence on the negativity that pierces the fantasy screen of futurity, shattering narrative temporality with irony's always explosive force. And so what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively – to insist that the future stop here.

Title: WE WILL NOT PROTECT YOU (excerpt)

Author : Pink Tank

Year: 2005

Publication: Booklet distributed anonymously during the Gay Pride Parade in New York City, June 26, 2005.

We Stand In Resistance To:

GOVERNMENTS THAT LIE

BULLSHIT TALKING HEADS PLANTED BY
THINK TANKS

GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASES
MASQUERADING AS 'NEWS'

POLITICAL HACKS

ANYTHING THAT QUESTIONS OUR SPIRIT

DISTORTIONS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

DE-GAYIFICATION OF ALL HISTORY

WILFUL DESTRUCTION OF OUR PUBLIC
SCHOOL SYSTEM

HIRING MERCENARIES TO FIGHT IN OUR
NAME

NAPALM ON FALLUJAH

DESTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE
RIGHTS

DEMONISATION OF GAY PEOPLE AND THEIR
FAMILIES

DESEXUALISATION OF QUEER LIFE

TORTURE OF ALL KINDS

ANYONE WHO CLAIMS TO SPEAK FOR US

DRINKING YOUR KOOL AID

ASSIMILATION

CENSORSHIP

SELF-HATRED

ABSTINENCE MASQUERADING AS SEX
EDUCATION

IMMORAL 'MORAL VALUES'

RELIGION AS A WEAPON

DEATH ROW

GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

RACISM CLOAKED AS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

HOMO-HATRED AS A VALID RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Title: Mamaist Manifesto

Authors: The Toxic Titties (Julia Steinmetz, Heather Cassils, and Clover Leary)

Year: 2005

Publication: Delivered by The Toxic Titties at Bricktops in July 2005. Also appears in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Queer*, edited by David J. Getsy, pp.136-37, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016.

1. We want to shout the pursuit of pleasure, the glory of euphoric stroking.

2. The essential elements of our movement will be fearlessness, audacity and revolution.

3. The Art World, up to now, has magnified cancerous apathetic immobility and bourgeois decadent pomposity. We want to exalt actions of feverish creation, the shredding of moralistic tyranny, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow and the fist. Followed by Fisting.

4. We reject the myopic petty greed of the establishment, engorged with its own power and appetite, devouring the dissidents, the radicals, and feeding on the blood of artists.

5. We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: The beauty of variance: A delicate scar across the chest from the removed breast, the darkened stain of the groin suspended in spandex, soaked in sweat. Exertion emphasised: Puddles on the Dance floor, on the street, and in open mouths. This liquid, this jizem as an expression is more beautiful than any glossy preened prediction of what our desire is supposed to be: Manicured, unquestioning, uncritical and compliant.

6. Magnificence exists only in struggle! There is no masterpiece that has not an aggressive character. Art must be a violent assault on the forces of fascist hegemony. Force them to kneel before Mama!

7. We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of

looking to the cannon at the very moment when we must thrust open the doors of radical transformation? This suburban puritanical reality is an illusion, all the despair and decay spreading beneath the surface like a plague. Reject it! Tear away. Free yourselves and your comrades from these repressive constraints.

8. Oh Mama! We will glorify action – the only cure for the world. We will fight constricting morality, paternalism and all insipid opportunist and utilitarian cowardice!

9. And oh yes! We will demolish that art that hangs above the designer furniture in the estates of the ruling class. Oh wretched luxury commodity! Oh vapid insidious object, pandering, grovelling, despicable!

10. We will sing of the great crowds who reject the dribble running through their television monitors, who instead embrace pleasure and revolt; the multi-coloured polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals: the un-recorded vibration of the outraged multitude, banging their fists against the impenetrable fortresses that distribute mass media lies. We will expose the gluttonous art institutions as they devour their colour field paintings. We will speak of artists setting fire to established models of production, animating questions of subjectivity, thrusting off the bondage of commodification. Creation is a revolutionary act! The constraints of representation will be suspended from the clouds by the ephemeral threads of their smoke.

11. Oh Yes! We will form Collaborative bridges with the leap of gymnasts. All

together now! We fling ourselves forward. A non-hierarchical working dynamic invested in process and experimentation, both conceptual and formal, across the diabolic rivers of ego and authorship: our great muscled chests, punching the bag of the banal like enormous steel boxers, gloved with untameable desire, and the gliding distance under our feet propelled by a heart that sounds like the flapping of a new flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds!

12. All together now! We are the Mamaists: a force of pleasure, dissent, determination and will! Individuals, united in purpose, exposing and dismantling systems of authority and control. Join us or move aside, but do not stand in our way!

13. When you cast off the shackles of loathsome heteronormativity, your world, torn asunder, will be open for you, ripe and quivering. Taste the flavour of autonomy as it drips down your chin. Now is the moment to act. Mamas! We dare you; we challenge you! Place your hot palm on the buttocks of the mama next to you. Do it now! Note the sensation: the balance of muscle and softness. As your fingers probe you are slick and feverish with barely restrained desire. Taste now each other's mouths and spread the word. Feel the flesh and the breath that heats your skin. Every hair on your body stands at attention. Attention! Taste, Smell, Lick, Swell, Fingers Grasping, Blood Pounding. Never doubt: To fuck is a revolutionary act!

39—

Title: AMIFESTO

Author: K8 Hardy

Year: 2006

Publication: *LTR*, No. 5, 2006. Also appears in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Queer*, edited by David J. Getsy, pp.171-72, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016.

we do not operate within the comfort zone. that's a fight. this is daily agonistic with a refusal to hide. we are not bored

we fight our insignificance. feminist. we move around in silence and speak to the shock. it's shocking to laugh, it's shocking not to take any shit. it's insane to say no.

needing desperately those safe boundaries within heterosexuality, we give no thanks. no pleasantries nor apology.

no gratitude to those who hide in the safety of heterosexual language. it is not a sanctuary. there is no more space to move around there, only to hide.

hope works best as a lie or calming device. they call it future, they say it's useful for us. everything is not ok. don't give a shit about being an artist, give a shit about making someone mad maybe just making. we die fast. and we don't hide.

what is the gesture? As loud as these words. aesthetics can be killed over and over and over, that's it. genius is patriarchal. do not be controlled by fears of hurting feeling. with your political beliefs.

language, biology, is not destiny. destiny can be a dreamy trip. a nice fiction the facts.

the limits exclude, we know.

we read we write we think we look and
what we have made.

i want to be a mess against this tradition
of progress.

i do not exclude productivity.

we look at our patterns of movement and
touch and feel and grab you,

bite you, leave a mark; indelible.

we move and we can not stop we will not
be stopped.

reading is radical.

producing, making. activist projects.

not sitting on yr ass.

passivity, where does it take you?

conversations. old books. i'm on the
phone.

out on the street, out.

we will play the game, players for the
team.

don't hate when you can jump in any
moment.

happily, we pass the ball(s).

it's heavy. it's intense.

don't take it easy.

40—

Title: Homotopia

Authors: Eric Stanley and Chris Vargas

Year: 2006

Publication: Opening monologue to the film *Homotopia*, 2006.

For far too long we have been
disappeared by the crushing violence of
heteronormativity. Our bodies beaten and
bruised. Our mind and cultures left to die.
We have let our desires be disciplined
by a capitalist economy and normative
sexual discourse. They offer us the false
hope of pleasure in exchange for cash.
For far too long we have let our friends
and lovers meet their death alone. We, in
too great a number, sit idly by as the HIV/
AIDS genocide ravages our lives while
the medical industrial complex fills its
pockets with profits boiled in our blood.
Too many have kept silent while we are
brutalised, buried in shallow, unmarked
graves, set on fire, and strung up on fence
posts. We hide so that we don't meet the
same fate and because it is written on our
bodies that queer life, in the shadows of
global capitalism and imperial fantasies,
is nothing more than bare life. The closet
will not keep us safe, nor has it ever.
Attempting to live a straight life may give
some of us access to privilege but at
whose expense? Gay marriage does not
challenge transphobia, or stop racist cops
from murdering us in cold blood. Rainbow
flags will not stop the bleeding. Privilege
given can always be taken back. We work
towards radical change without ends and
towards a world where oppression will not
be replaced with other forms of violence
under the name of 'progress'. Our tactics
are as varied as our genders, our activism
as hot as our sex and our resistance as
untethered as our desires. By detonating
our interior colonies and struggling against
all those who work towards our end we
open new spaces of creativity and pleasure.
Our love is a fugitive practice of destruction
and deviance, liberation and difference.

Love revolution, not State delusion,
Homotopia.

41—

Title: Ética Marica: Proclamas Libertarias para una Militancia LGBTQ (Faggot Ethics: A Liberation Proclamation for an LGBTQ Militancy) (excerpt)
Author: Paco Vidarte
Year: 2007
Publication: *LGBTQ Solidaridad: La Usurpación de un Término (LGBTQ Solidarity: The Usurpation of a Term)*, p.155, Editorial Egales, 2007. Translated by Julia Morandeira.

42—

Title: Stonewall was a Riot – Now We Need a Revolution (excerpt)
Author: Merle Woo
Year: 2008
Publication: *Smash the Church, Smash the State!: The Early Years of Gay Liberation*, edited by Tommi Avicolli Mecca, pp.282-294, City Lights Books, 2009.

43—

Title: Ecstatic Resistance (excerpt)
Author: Emily Roysdon
Year: 2009
Publication: *Ecstatic Resistance*, Grand Arts, 2009, exhibition catalogue.

Ecstatic Resistance expresses a determination to undo the limits of what is possible to be.

[...]

Ecstatic Resistance develops a positionality of the impossible as a viable and creative subjectivity that inverts the vernacular of power. By exposing past impossibilities, the actor of history is thus revealed as the outcast of the contemporary. Ecstatic Resistance works to change this by celebrating the impossible as lived experience and the place from which our best will come. Alongside the vitalisation of the impossible life, Ecstatic Resistance asserts the impossible as a model for the political. Politics is a system of that which is forbidden and cannot be done. When politics is framed as ‘reason and progress’ it disguises the primacy of oppression. Changing the perspective of politics away from a positivity and pointing to its limitations and selective applications, reorganises the hierarchy of political actors. The impossible always arrives.

[...]

Ecstatic Resistance postulates the necessity of a new imaginary. The potential of this new imaginary is to move forward from a place that is unrestricted by patriarchal rationality and historical oppositions that serve only the man who is a man and looks like a man and wants to be a man.

Great feminist thinkers have long written the desire to unbound sexual difference in the imaginary,

to overthrow the rule which creates the world in which ‘the woman is a defective man’. A world in which the idea of a different body is unspeakable within a system of meaning and recognition. Within this limited frame people have continuously composed their bodies in opposition – living, moving, struggling and improvising meaning. The persistence of these multi-valiant subjectivities has produced many things over time, but it is no longer possible to move forward without amending the imaginary harboured in our bodies and the language that comes forth from there. In order to develop this new imaginary we must be willing to disrupt our knowledge of self, and to risk unrecognisability.

This new imaginary is the recently returned phantom left hand of the impossible. It is our body map changing and reconnecting our idea of self to that which was considered impossible – to feel things that can’t be seen, to believe in a body outside the limits of the intelligible.

[...]

Ecstatic Resistance asserts the centrality of plasticity – profoundly acknowledging the ability of brain, body, and culture to reorganise itself. Plasticity is the subterranean quake to the caked shell of modernity. It’s the cross-dressing, cell splitting, boundary shifting, apology giving, friend making mirror. Getting ready for an evening when the plasticity principle pushes up on the pleasure principle and says ‘Think again. Think again. Your mind has changed as quickly as the clock. The world is not

pleasure, pain, and gratification, we breathe struggle, improvisation and collaboration’.

[...]

Ecstatic Resistance fundamentally alters the image and process of the political by developing strategies that bypass and subvert entrenched theoretical constructions that set the limits of the intelligible. Ecstatic strategies unearth the potential to find new ways of being in the world.

Working to renegotiate the vernacular of power and resistance, the limits of representation become scenes of improvisation in which the process of consolidation and the fallacy of transparency give way to the lived experience of contradiction and simultaneity.

Implicit is a critique of representation; explicit is the demand to recognise these strategies as significant contributions to the field of aesthetics and social change.

2010s

44—

Title: Deep Lez I Statement

Author: Allyson Mitchell

Year: 2011

Publication: *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 18(1), pp.18-21, 2011. Revised for *Documents of Contemporary Art: Queer*, edited by David J. Getsy, pp.68-70, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016.

45—

Title: We Who Feel Differently: A Manifesto

Author: Carlos Motta

Year: 2011

Publication: Appears in *We Who Feel Differently*, edited by Carlos Motta and Cristina Motta, Ctrl+Z Publishing, 2011.

Build an agenda based on the needs of **queer** minorities
Reject the **politics** of assimilation, stop begging **for** tolerance
Welcome **the celebration of** sexual and gender diversity
Demand *the transformation of* the system
Truly desacralize democracy and demoralise the judiciary
Define our **emotional and sexual** needs on our own terms
Value critical **difference** instead of false *equality*

46—

Title: Conclusion: A Call for Sexual-Political Interdependence (excerpt)

Author: Abby L. Wilkerson

Year: 2012

Publication: Appears in *Sex and Disability*, edited by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, pp.203-205, Duke University Press, 2012.

In mainstream discourse, the term ‘sex’ signifies magnetism, an inherently irresistible natural force that pulls bodies together the way gravity pulls us toward the ground. Paradoxically, however, particular cultural associations of sex with a given social group often serve as a wedge, separating that group from others, as we all vie for the title of most worthy and respectable. Such competition unfailingly undermines solidarity; it also keeps people silent when faced with other groups’ struggles related to sexual agency. It is extremely difficult to create coalitions around these issues of sexual oppression. Oppressed people usually have been handed more than enough shame and disgrace already to feel prepared to take on someone else’s scandalous sexual predicament. Yet without facing these mainstream discourses of shaming head on, we are at an impasse when it comes to resisting the power of normative sex. Moreover, as we have seen, when we take these histories into international contexts, it is difficult not to posit our own culturally specific narratives – whether radical, neoliberal, or conservative – as the yardstick of others’ progress or well-being, and doing so can undermine the very agency we presumably seek to foster.

The medical and social erotophobia manifested in the medicalisation of intersexuality clearly demonstrates the centrality of sex, gender, and sexuality concerns to the disability movement, and thus its stake in challenging not only compulsory able-bodiedness but also compulsory heterosexuality and the sex/gender binary that supports them both. Disability studies has illuminated the importance of interdependence, both as a description of situated human life and

as a social value to be promoted. If we are serious about valuing interdependence, I believe that we must push the meaning of this term further than we have thus far; in recognising the inextricability of intersex, transgender, and disabled people's oppression, we must also envision a *sexual-political* interdependence: a politics, that is, that emphasises our interdependence as allies and that values the potential of the sexual to enable this interdependence to flourish.

The genesis of the intersex movement illustrates the promises of sexual-political interdependence. Many intersex people who also identify as queer describe a need to also 'come out' as intersexual. [Cheryl] Chase writes: 'The word "hermaphrodite" was horribly wounding; it drove me to the brink of suicide. I thought back to my earlier process of coming out as lesbian. The way out of this pain was to reclaim the stigmatised label, to manufacture a positive acceptance of it. This second coming out was far more painful and difficult'. In her earlier coming out, Chase recalls, her search for signs of lesbian existence paid off, and she was able to find and participate in lesbian community. However, Chase writes: 'No such help was available to reclaim my intersexuality. The only images I found were absolutely pathologised case histories in medical texts and journals, close-ups of genitals being poked, prodded, measured, sliced, and sutured, full body shots with the eyes blacked out' – signalling the object of a gaze meant to travel only in one direction, in ways that are all too familiar in disability contexts.

Though it is now – controversially – defunct, Chase founded the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA). She drew on her experience of lesbian community as a model for the kind of activism that eventually opened a space for public conversations on intersexuality, eroticising practices, desires, and identities that had been stigmatised, thus deepening a sense of solidarity, which in turn enabled political organising and resistance. Alliances between intersex and queer communities might be said to restore the 'magnetism' attributed to sex in dominant cultural discourses and to apply this magnetism to a 'perverse' end. Rather than drawing together two normatively beautiful, heterosexual, non-disabled, white, middle-class bodies to perform a specific set of predictable acts that qualify as 'sex', the sexual magnetism that enables and arises from coalition building shatters the presumed supremacy of normate sex. It brings, for example, the thrill of sexual pleasure to the guilt 'by association' in which Dougherty revels when she walks down the street with her lover.

And coalitions are often key conditions for political change. The queer history of ISNA played a central role in bringing reform to intersex medicalisation, however tentative and fledgling that reform may be. The collective action of groups like Hermaphrodites with Attitude led to modes of organising with allies in academic and medical circles, who together are beginning to reach the medical profession. Chase's work indicates that queer and intersexual movements may be distinct but are not separate... None of this is to deny the difficulties of coalition building. But disability studies and activism have demonstrated the folly of relying on atomistic visions of self-determination, which are based on autonomy at the expense of interconnection. Perhaps it is time to succumb to the perverse pleasures and challenges of sexual interdependence.

47—

Title: Twee & Sympathy: A Manifesto**Author:** Vaginal Davis**Year:** 2013**Publication:** Appears in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Queer*, edited by David J. Getsy, pp.221-22, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016.

48—

Title: Malta Declaration: Public Statement of the 3rd International Intersex Forum***Year:** 2013

*Between 29 November and 1 December 2013, the 'Third International Intersex Forum' (supported by ILGA and ILGA-Europe) took place in Valletta, Malta. This event brought together 34 activists representing 30 intersex organisations from all continents.

49 & 50—

Title: HERm toRSO T0o**Author:** Del LaGrace Volcano**Year:** 2013**Publication:** Address for 'Gender Talents: A Special Address', Tate Modern, February 2, 2013.**Title:** BoDieS tHaT QueeR**Author:** Del LaGrace Volcano**Year:** 2011**Publication:** Address for 'Gender Talents: A Special Address', Tate Modern, February 2, 2013.

HERm toRSO T0o

Writing and performing work about *the* queer body is a kind of *Mission: Impossible*. Because one cannot talk about *the* queer body as if such a thing actually exists. Even if the body in question – the body I make the most use of – belongs to me. You see, the moment we try to define the queer body, we make it promise to be that thing, now and forever. And as we all know, promises are meant to be broken.

The queer body is a body that is always in transition. 'Transmogrification, not conversion', according to my friend Jay Prosser. A monstrous and sublime mutation, according to me.

Queer is often used as a noun, as in *a* queer or *the* queers. But to me, queer is not a noun – it's a verb in drag *passing* as an adjective. Of course it is much sexier to talk about what queer *does* than what queer *is* – but sometimes... a herms' gotta do what a herms' gotta do.

Queer bodies are 'Bodies That (don't) Matter'. Bodies that are *disposable* and often *disowned*. Bodies that are not valued or valuable. Bodies that through the simple act of existence embody resistance. If bodies are sites of resistance, then queer bodies are sites where the resistance is (most) fertile.

Queer bodies are vulgar bodies, plebeian bodies, street bodies, bodies that don't know the meaning of discipline, bodies that reject the adage 'one can never be too rich or too thin' (or too white). Queer bodies create the template for cultural disgust and teach us what we must *not* want to have or to be.

Queer bodies are bodies that refuse regulation and resist commodification, at the same time

creating spectacles of themselves. Queer bodies are bodies that aren't pampered or pilated. Bodies that seldom swim in public and feel forced to choose passing over personal comfort. Queer bodies are bodies that are confined to spaces where access is available (and access needs to mean so much more than just a handicap toilet).

Consider trans bodies. 'Clothed, I am a man. Naked, I am a question', says Lazlo Pearlman, a performance artist who employs his own naked hyper-masculine trans body as an antidote to the obligatory gender dysphoria transpeople are required to perform, like puppies desperate for their mother's tits. Context is everything.

Consider racialised bodies. Consider Caster Semenya, the South African runner with a body that, had a white woman possessed it, would have been celebrated rather than offered as a sacrifice on the altar of normalcy; fodder for the hungry but ignorant and racist masses.

Consider disabled bodies. Consider Bob Flanagan, Super Masochist. His body refused to renounce pleasure or apologise or behave (as a sick person should). A body with orifices that leaked and demanded to be filled, with wounds that opened and refused to close, reminding us painfully of our own.

Consider intersex bodies. Consider *my* body. A body that has chosen to amplify rather than erase its *inter-sex-iness*. A body that is unwilling and unable to conform to claustrophobic cultural definitions of female OR male. A body that puts itself on the line to be judged by you.

Consider the fact that a socio-medical industrial complex continues to have the power to regulate and *reform* our bodies, to cut into or away our

ability to experience genital pleasure or to reproduce ourselves in all our amBIGuous glory.

What does the queer body do? It performs abjection and performs it with power and with pride. It shows us how to love all that we are taught to hate. Through this act of repudiation, the queer body screams: Look at me and love me...if you dare.



BoDieS tHaT QueeR

Bodies that queer are bodies we fear to *have* and to *hold* to watch become old.

As we wrinkle and flake we must not forsake, bodies that queer are bodies that break.

But break though we might queer bodies are strong. Like everyone else we want to belong.

But belong to what? (I hear your brain scream.) What kind of queer

fits into a scheme?

Bodies that queer are de-fi-ant-ly strange (But that doesn't mean we're never the same.)

Queer bodies are bodies that cannot belong to families that hate us or just make us feel wrong.

No matter how much we're told to have 'pride' we must not be reduced or co-mod-ified.

Queer bodies are bodies that refuse to restrain or retrain our pleasures, our fuck ups, our pain.

HERM bodies are measured, prodded and poked. We're cut up and sold as a cultural joke.

We're told we're disorders That need to be fixed That doctors will cure us So we're no longer mixed.

Queer bodies disturb. This cannot be denied. Our queerness is sexy and unspecified.

Bodies that queer are a fet-ish-ist's dream. And many of us are a part of that team.

Drag Queens & Drag Kings Nightwalkers and Knaves Extremely camp followers,

Jolly Sex slaves.

Queer bodies are hot. We will always exist. Why not give up attempts to resist?

Queer bodies *are* 'bodies that queer'. We do it in spite of, *because* of our fear.

Queer bodies, *our* bodies, we must not forsake. Queer bodies, *OUR* bodies, are the bodies we make.

DELIVER US FROM GAGA!

RESISTANCE IS FERTILE!



A system of racialised gender norms operates as social control. It creates narrow places where people can be – very specific roles and routines and expressions for specific types of people. These roles are heavily policed. These roles line-up to create a system of gendered racialisation that cultivates the life of white people, men, settlers, and owners, while others – people of colour, indigenous people, people with disabilities, immigrants, queer and trans people, women, workers, and poor people – are exposed to hunger, homelessness, violence, pollution, imprisonment, policing, and deportation. Enforcing and policing these lines is an urgent and complex matter. It happens everywhere: in schools, courts, health centres, welfare offices, at checkpoints, in families, at jobs, in the media, in therapists' offices, in shelters, and jails, and prisons. People who don't fit into their prescribed categories and roles or who are hard to read are considered suspicious and face surveillance, criminalisation, and violence. Or they are considered disruptive and excluded from the programs and institutions that operate through these binaries.

Our relationships to these categories is a matter of life and death. Trans politics is a politics of resistance against violent gender norms. Trans people have been told that we are impossible, that we do not exist, that we are not who we say we are, that we are incomprehensible, and that we must be left out or left behind because our issues are not politically viable. We demand the impossible – our own survival.

But there are some significant dilemmas for trans politics, like other contemporary political struggles. We're encouraged to direct our energies

towards reform projects that won't actually help us. We're told that if we can get the law to say good things about us, we'll be free. We are primed for this message, living in a culture that pretends that racism, ableism, and sexism are over because of civil rights laws. We're told we're all equal now, there's nothing to complain about; if you're having a hard time, it's your fault. We're told that the solution to transphobia is to get the law to declare us equal – that that is the most important change we can make. But we know better. In reality, during the period when legal equality was supposedly delivered, when sexism, racism, and ableism supposedly became forbidden, material inequality has worsened.

And things have gotten especially worse for women, people of colour, people with disabilities, poor people, immigrants, and prisoners. The wealth gap has widened. Wages have lowered. More people work as temporary workers, less have healthcare or retirement benefits, and more are facing foreclosure. Laws have been changed to make it harder to strike or use our collective power against our bosses. Welfare programs have been slashed. Record numbers of anti-abortion laws have been proposed and passed. And the apparatuses of racialised control have grown – like imprisonment, immigration enforcement, and war for profit. The US has become the most imprisoning country in the world, having only 5% of the world's population, but 25% of the world's prisoners.

The imprisonment of immigrants has quadrupled since 2001, and the Obama administration has deported more people than any prior administration. Meanwhile, resources

are directed at record-breaking long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that are killing and destroying millions so that war profiteers can make big money. We know that these systems of criminalisation, immigration enforcement, and warfare target people of colour, people with disabilities, women, indigenous people, queer and trans people, and immigrants at home and abroad.

We know that the declaration of legal equality is a shoddy window-dressing for growing violence, imprisonment, warfare, and material inequality. Trans politics demands our survival. And we're asked to turn that demand into a demand for legal rights that will not deliver relief from poverty and violence.

We're supposed to put all of our energy and rage and creativity into a narrow demand for anti-discrimination laws and hate crime laws. These interventions rest on assumptions that we can't afford and don't believe. The police and courts and prisons will never protect us.

They are our most significant predators. Legislative declarations that say people can't fire us won't work. They haven't resolved the racial wealth divide or the gendered pay gap. They haven't stopped housing discrimination against people of colour or people with disabilities, and they do nothing to address the biggest dangers facing marginalised groups. They don't intervene on neoliberal economic policies that transfer wealth upwards. They don't stop increasing criminalisation. They have no impact on an immigration system designed to make some lives nearly impossible so that others can be enriched.

What we need is a critical and discerning trans politics – one that rejects invitations to inclusion in systems, arrangements, and institutions that are deadly and monstrous. We are already practicing that politics. We have to. We are already doing work to help each other survive these conditions. We are already doing work to dismantle the systems that shorten our lives. And we're doing work to build alternatives to the systems that exist – to build a world that we actually want.

The survival work is not social work-style paternalism. It refuses to separate the deserving from the undeserving. It refuses to blame you for your homelessness or poverty or unemployment or deportation. It will not do a background check on you, make you pee in a cup or take a pill, or tell a certain story in order to deserve shelter or food or a bus fare. It is based on solidarity and mutual aid. It invites those facing the violence of contemporary conditions to come get some help and to join others looking at the root causes of those conditions and taking up collective action to transform them. The dismantling work is about evaluating the systems that are feeding our people into the monstrous jaws of displacement, imprisonment, and deportation, and figuring out how we can take those systems apart, brick by brick.

Efforts to decriminalise sex work, to stop gang injunction laws, to stop police collaboration with immigration agencies, to decriminalise drugs and get rid of three strikes laws and mandatory minimum sentences are good examples. Many of these efforts are about changing laws, but they're not about adjusting the cover story to get the law to say something different about us. We don't

believe what the law says about itself. Instead, we're looking at what the law actually does to us – how it really works – and focusing on strategies that eliminate poverty and violence.

This is a matter of life and death – of who will be deported, who will be caged, who will have shelter, and who will survive. We know that existing systems are motivated by empty promises of safety and economic well-being, but actually deliver brutal violence. We need to build systems and ways of being together that will really deliver what we need.

We need to build health care that doesn't normalise a narrow understanding of a healthy body, mind, or gender. We need to build food systems that support the land and our bodies and make sure everyone has good food.

We need ways of dealing with conflict that don't rely on the idea of caging or exiling anyone.

We are working on building these. To do that, we are also building ways of working together – practicing how we want the world to be right now: democratic, collaborative, horizontal, care-based – not competitive, hierarchical, or cut-throat.

We are experimenting, which we're good at, since we're smart and lively and creative.

Critical trans politics has big demands and they are emerging all over. We want an end to prisons and borders and poverty. We want to have decision-making power about our lives. We don't want bosses or corporations or the politicians they own telling us how we will work, live, or be together. We want to come up with the answers that work for people, collectively, together.

Our trans politics must be based

on solidarity. If it is aimed at our survival, it cannot be, is not, and has never been separate from a politics that opposes colonialism, racism, sexism, and ableism.

Freedom from gender norms is impossible unless we dismantle everything that co-constitutes gender systems. We will be invited to justify and legitimise those systems: to have criminal penalties enhanced in the name of protecting us, to have new prisons built, designed especially for us, to serve in their militaries, to embrace prosecutors and corporations and police and politicians because they say something nice about us, to support wars that won't benefit us but can be waged in our names.

We will reject these invitations, demanding transformation that reaches those in the worst circumstances.

We will make this violence impossible, not just slightly more palatable.

We're not interested in becoming the complacent spouses, the patriotic soldiers, the border guards, the police, the obedient taxpayers.

We seek to abolish those roles and the systems that create them.

I disclaim gay cinema! I renounce those who have eroded the humanity of gay and lesbian liberation and replaced it with lavender media consumerism. The New Festival, Frameline, and all lesbian and gay film festivals which now foster assimilation into the death culture: all of you gay volunteers for America: keep your hands off my films! I am withdrawing all of my work in this country. My screening at Millennium next month will be my last. You can have your Queer Hollywood! You can keep your apolitical assimilationism! Enjoy your corporate sponsorships! Watch your boring, stupid, irrelevant, gutless, artless 'gay and lesbian movies'!

I have made films since 1970, when I first met Jonas Mekas and he inspired in me the belief that a moving image art was possible. Though I realise that not all of my films have been the most revolutionary in vision or scope, I HAVE tried for 31 years to create a body of work which is based upon integrity, placing the emphasis on the value of the human individual, which in this case, happens to be a gay male. Somehow, over the years, as my generation of queer men died off from AIDS, a different value system has sprung up, and the practitioners of what I would describe as a 'gay media culture industry' have become ensconced in management.

This gay media culture industry derives its values from the worst of American culture. It is built upon a consumerist ethic, tossing aside works of art after one screening, always seeking the new, the novel, and the irrelevant, divorcing itself from the genuine community which can only exist through an honest historical perspective; it is ageist, anti-intellectual, fame-obsessed, careerist, and money-hungry.

I'm not saying that artists must starve or live in obscurity, but in the face of a mainstream culture which dehumanises and destroys the only sacred thing: the human being, some measure of social and cultural responsibility is required. This is especially so for people who through whatever this sexual difference is about, have borne some of the hatred and bias of this culture. As this country rises up to defend its 'way of life', I must withdraw my work from involvement with the 'gay/lesbian culture' which seeks only to become part of the death-machine in exchange for the satisfaction of 'belonging', and having Laura and George Bush say that 'gay is ok'.

Enjoy your gay movie celebrations. America gives you itself reflected in your own image: good little queers, feeding the culture which would exterminate you.

They say we're sick.

The year I gained a breast, my mother
lost one to breast cancer.

The year I gained my voice, my mother
was losing hers to dementia,

brought on by chemo and twenty years of
antipsychotics for her schizophrenia.

The doctors say we're sick,
myself and my mom.

We each take our pills everyday from
little amber bottles.

But I don't feel sick

and that gives me some feeling of

solidarity, empathy, something I can't find
words for,

for my mother.

It makes me wonder if my mom feels
sick?

I remember her smile when I last visited
her, in North Carolina,

which I can't do often.

Laughing with her, I started to relate to
her in a new way,

as a person, as a femme who wore
poodle skirts and now uses a wheelchair,

who loved my Colombian father and his
thick accent.

Getting in the car, my mom held my hand

in hers and said

we have almost the same colour of nail
polish on,

the day was beautiful and so painful

I struggled not to cry, for her.

In a way we're all sick, but we're all also
caretakers,

family members, chosen and biological,

and we are all there for one another,

in need or to offer help,

in a society that would leave each of us in
isolation,

we are finding ways of existing together,
interdependent,

and however difficult it may be at times,
with love.

In an article discussing Lea T's fall advertising campaign for Givenchy and Lady Gaga's fashion shoot as Jo Calderone in *Vogue Hommes*, the *New York Times* declared '2010 will be remembered as the year of the transsexual'. In *Gaga Feminism*, J. Jack Halberstam describes 'the very recent rise in popularity of the term "transgender"' and states that 'the tendency to read gender variance in non-Western contexts as a sign of anachronism has not been particularly productive, nor has the tendency to read all gender variance as "transgenderism"'. Following this claim, one can ask: What is lost in the transgender movement's increasing mainstream success, and who is left behind? How does the media's representation of transgender people in a positive light serve to normalise and regulate the image of gender nonconformance and limit the range of political possibility?

A news article describing Lana Wachowski's speech at the Human Rights Campaign awards illustrates this limiting in action. The *Hollywood Reporter* article is titled 'Lana Wachowski Reveals Suicide Plan, Painful Past in Emotional Speech (Exclusive Video)'. The title performs the common narrative surrounding transgender people, the narrative that supports the model of medical intervention: we are sick, mentally ill, and without medical intervention we are suicidal. A disability studies critique is useful here when philosopher of disability Abby L. Wilkerson states, 'Intersexualisation illustrates the ways in which sexual disabilities are constituted in and through social environments'. One can ask, is being suicidal our condition, or is that condition created by the violence of a transphobic society?

The Wachowski article goes on to describe an image of transgender people that fits well within what Wilkerson describes as ‘normate sex’: married, white, thin, financially successful, monogamous. Wilkerson points to the ‘desperate need for alliance building’ between the disability rights movement and the transgender/intersex/genderqueer movements. She calls for ‘a sexual-political interdependence: a politics, that is, that emphasises our interdependence as allies’. Such an alliance allows for a transgender movement that does not only follow a normative model of medical transition but that openly questions the narrative of pathologisation placed on transgender and gender-nonconforming people and that questions the Western biomedical model of medicine, which only treats illness instead of focusing on healing and well-being. While transgender people can claim a disabled status based on our medical diagnoses and frequent interactions with the medical-industrial complex, such a claim risks appropriation and the diluting of claims for justice from other disabled people. Transgender people can work in solidarity, or interdependence, with disabled people by joining the disability movement’s strategy of critiquing the authority that defines illness, opening up a decolonisation of medicine that can imagine other models of health based on desire and liberation, not illness and correction to norms. At the same time, transgender people who identify as disabled should be supported by their communities when they publicly identify as disabled and speak out in solidarity with other kinds of disabilities. I am sick too. On top of having the diagnosis of ‘transsexualism’, I was diagnosed with

ADHD as a child, and it persists in having a major influence on my life.

The transgender rights movement can learn from women of colour feminism, that not only are coalitions essential for success, but recognising and embracing difference within our movements is key to creating movements that perform the world we want now. The risk of not building solidarity between disability rights and transgender politics is demonstrated by movements such as Occupy Wall Street, whose focus on an economically reductive definition of the 99 percent versus the 1 percent created a movement in which sexual assault occurred and camps were divided into racial and class ghettos. Queer of colour critique builds on women of colour feminism to demonstrate how these issues are inseparable. Roderick A. Ferguson, in *Aberrations in Black*, states: ‘The decisive intervention of queer of colour analysis is that racist practice articulates itself generally as gender and sexual regulation, and that gender and sexual differences variegate racial formations’. One could transpose this to state that ableist practice articulates itself as gender and sexual regulation, or transphobic practice articulates itself as the regulation of illness. Either way, such a conjunction helps one understand that the need for solidarity between disability activists and gender-nonconforming activists is not just strategic; it connects the roots of our struggles, deepening our claims for liberation and opening the way to a decolonial vision of healing justice.

Nominations of ambiguity are nothing more than declarations of resignation. We call something ambiguous when we give up on it and when we avoid committing to learning about all that does not fit into our categories. Objects, people, texts, events, and acts are not themselves ambiguous. They are particular, unassimilable, unorthodox, unprecedented, or recalcitrant. To invoke ‘ambiguity’ is to flee from the confrontation with something that does not easily fall into one’s patterns of knowing. This act of exhausted reading disrespects the particularity of that which is before us and instead writes it off as being at fault – as being unknowable, indiscernible, and incompletely categorisable. ‘Ambiguity’ is safe to invoke, because it places blame for our own limitations elsewhere. It is a method of deflection and scapegoating. It enables us to throw up our hands and lead a hasty retreat from confronting how limited our categories and systems are. After all, what do we really mean when we say something or someone is ambiguous? We mean that we cannot read, cannot identify, and cannot classify. Instead, I want to uphold the particularity and inscrutability that the backhanded slur ‘ambiguous’ attempts to manage. I want to see that particularity as a challenge to systems of knowing.

I’ve recently been writing about abstraction and ways in which gender nominations are vexed by abstract, non-figurative, and non-objective forms. My aim has been to show the limitations of binary accounts of gender by using art’s rich history of debating what counts as an adequate figure (or a feasible departure) against compulsions to assign (binary) gender. When the body is invoked but not imaged, gender

nominations become open for debate and contestation, and it is in the dialogic situations of discord or successive nominations that gender's openness, mutability, and multiplicity can be manifested. This is *not* due to the ambiguity of the abstract form. Rather, it is because of the ways in which the same intransigent form means differently for different viewers. To call this situation 'ambiguous' is to fall back into hopeless subjectivity and avoidance. Instead, let's call this situation 'competing' to show how much it is in the viewer's incomplete attempt to classify that differences emerge and supposedly stable taxonomies unravel amidst contestations and divergences of reception. The difficulties of reading abstract art resulted from its withstanding attempts to categorise based on resemblance or the exterior. Instead, the limitations of a binary system of gender erupted repeatedly as viewers negotiated their divergent identifications with forms that resisted easy legibility. For me, such debates were deeply informed by the politics of transgender history and its demand that we look for suppressed evidence of non-binary genders and accounts of self-determination and successive personhood. This history again and again demands recognition that people are not ambiguous. People are themselves, for themselves. Mischaracterising any particularity for 'ambiguity' is a means of making their endurance of your scrutiny into a form of subservience to your desire for comfortable intelligibility.

'Ambiguous' as an invocation or description merely signals the limitations of the one who would deploy that term. This does not mean I want everything clear and in its place. Quite the opposite: I want to embrace the radical particularity that always exceeds and undermines taxonomies. This is a queer stance, for it denies the applicability or the neutrality of those taxonomies as adequate representations of the world's complexity. Rather, they are artificial impositions of normativity more concerned with policing boundaries than with engagement. To take this term to task is to demand that we see the greater structural limitations that its invocations hope to mask. 'Ambiguity' as a description is not just lazy. It's chauvinistic. More to the point, its deployment keeps us from recognising and embracing the chance to see beyond the categories that are nothing more than blinders forcing us to stay on a narrow path.

Especially today, we cannot afford ambiguity. We must attempt to embrace inscrutability and particularity, and we can defiantly exceed or jam the taxonomic protocols that seek to delimit and define us. The undertow of ambiguity is complacency and surrender, and it is misapplied to acts of refusal and self-definition.

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Title: Untitled

Authors: Silence = Death Collective (Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Charles Kreloff, Christopher Lione, Jorge Socarras, Oliver Johnston (d.1990))

Year: 2017

What does Trump's presidency tell us about the state of queer America? Do you really think marriage rights and elections protect you?

Queer power is the power to change the world. Turn Anger, Fear, Grief into Action.

Be Vigilant. Refuse. Resist.

SILENCE = DEATH

We don't want a disaster for president. We don't want a person who did not even say AIDS on the campaign trail for president and we don't want someone who hates fags for vice president and we don't want someone who is going to make it harder for us to get health care. We don't want someone who grew up in a time and a place where global warming is obvious but they choose to deny its existence anyway. We don't want a president who is going to make it difficult for a 16-year-old to get an abortion and we reject this candidate who was the greater of the two evils and we don't want a president who after a painful elective surgery on his scalp pulled his wife's hair and forced himself on her. We don't want a president who has always had air-conditioning, a president who has never stood in line at the clinic, at the DMV, at the welfare office, and who has uttered the words 'You're fired', 'Grab them by the pussy', and 'fake news'. We don't want a president who mocks people with disabilities and wants to build a wall to keep out immigrants and create a registry to discriminate against Muslims. We don't want someone who tweets instead of talks and who supports cross-burners and anti-semites. We don't want someone who seems only to have love for himself and who is angered by calls for accountability, who doesn't respect nasty women, or sex, and who denies his own mistakes and never seems to learn from them. We don't care about a politician's teeth, or their experiences with hospital food, or if they cross-dress, have been in therapy or do drugs. We want to know when we started learning somewhere down the line that we needed a president. Why can't we, as clowns, johns, hookers, bosses, workers, whistleblowers, liars, thieves, work together to doula the world we have into the world we need? We want to be lead by each other. And we want to know why this isn't possible?

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We

the sodomites, the perverts, the inverters, the faggots, the deviants, the queers, the keepers of spoiled identities, the tribadists, the promiscuous, the popper sniffing fist fuckers, the bottoms and the tops, the vers, the queens and the fairies, the nellies, the nancies and the fannies, the lady boys, the butch lesbians, the leather angels, the dykes, the daddies and the bulldaggers, the crossdressers and the drag queens, the auntie men, the Kikis, the trannies, the celesbians, the clones, the dykes on bikes, the sissies, the bone smugglers, the muscle marys, the jocks, the twinkies, the bears and the otters, the sex pigs, the handballers, the gym queens, the hung, the carpet munchers, the pussy punchers, the fudge packers, the fruits, those who are light in the loafers, those who have sugar in the tank, the cocksuckers, the daffies, the friends of Dorothy, the bent, the poofs, the poofers, the buggers, the Uranians, the pillow biters, the sisters of Sappho, the silver foxes, the temperamental, the homophiles, the masters and the slaves, the tatted and pierced queens, the tightly-bound, the Lavender Menace, the pansies, the go-go boys, the hustlers, the trades, the chapstick lesbians, the lucky Pierres, the rough trades, the lacies, those who are queer as a three dollar bill, the mother superiors, the ring snatchers, the kissing fish, the tinkerbelles, the Ursulas, the vampires, the punks, the agfays, the ass bandits and the butt pirates, the beefcakes, the yard boys, the Zanies, the muff divers, the golden boys, the ten percenters, the sperm burpers, the boys in the band, the disordered, the dysfunctional, the diseased and the destructive, the bitches, those on the down low and the low down, the drag kings, the Tammies, the he-shes, the fishy girls, the cunts, the cut and the uncut, the bum bandits, the lipstick lesbians, the hard and the soft butches, the flamers, the gender benders, the butt huggers, the chicken hawks, the femme, the fuck boys, the gaylords, the masc for mascs, the no pic no chats, the tranny chasers, the homos, the baby dykes, the gold stars, the gender queers, the pillow princesses, the studs, the bug chasers, the barebackers, those who PnP, the campy queens, the sword swallows, the confirmed bachelors, the members of a Boston marriage, the shims, those who read Playboy for the articles, the Rosies, the people who are batting for the other team, the AIDS carriers, the undetectables, the pozzies, those on PrEP, the weak and morally sick wretches, the deplorables, the sinners, the hedonists, those with the aristocratic vice, those who enjoy the bourgeois decadence, the Catamites and the Galamites, the cake eaters, the chubby chasers, the midnight cowboys, the daffodils, the fey, the Ganymedes, the limp-wristed, the salad tossers, the ponces, those who are swishy, those of the reprobate mind, the hermaphrodites, the chicks with dicks, the chemsexers, the bearded ladies, the serodiscordants, the heartthrobs, the theatrical types, the admirers, those who aren't 'clean', the freaks, the cum guzzlers, the cumdumps, the tea dancers, the momma's boys, the hot messes, the batty bois, the degenerates...are and will always be the enemy.