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Tegan Eanelli
Bash Back! is Dead; Bash Back Forever!
Concluding Notes
2007–2011

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about “queer anarchism”; Jack Halberstam seeks to valorize the negative and trace the anti-social turn; a class at the University of California is called ”criminal queer” (yet the instructor denounces the activity of insurrectionaries on that very campus)—one after another queer academics line up to jump on the negativity bandwagon. Each appropriates the activity of insurgents toward the ends of strengthening their own careers. They take anti-social activity and use it to reproduce the Academy as a central engine of society itself. This is the ultimate treason. In theorizing about the activity of Bash Back! it is my ambition to demonstrate real queer assaults upon the social order. In doing so, this collection should clearly expose those for whom negativity and revolt are mere matters of image.

Queer insurrection demands that each of us become a theoretician. More importantly, it demands that the anti-social turn, the turn against society, remains in the streets. Our revolt and our theory must be inseparable from our daily life. Toward this end, Bash Back! can be read as an attempt to expropriate queer theory from the Academy and put it toward the service of queer revolt; to dynamite the distinction between theory and life. For the sake of organizing this book, we split the texts between essays and communiqués. To a large extent this is a false dichotomy that doesn’t accurately describe the activity of Bash Back!, which never recognized a distinction between its theorists and its combatants. Rather, it sought to queer this distinction and offer a praxis wherein theory is embodied in the very activity of those who theorize. A book that declares NO FUTURE offers only words. A riot that declares the same demonstrates a step toward insurrection.

Death to the Academy!

Tegan Eanelli
Fall 2011

THE REAL ANTI-SOCIAL TURN IN QUEER THEORY

123 – The proletarian revolution is predicated entirely on the requirement that, for the first time, theory as the understanding of human practice be recognized and directly lived by the masses. This revolution demands that workers become dialecticians, and inscribe their thought upon practice; it thus asks much more of its men without qualities than the bourgeois revolution asked of those men with qualifications that it enlisted to run things ... It is thus the very evolution of class society into the spectacular organization of non-life that obliges the revolutionary project to become visibly what it always was in essence.

124—Revolutionary theory is now the sworn enemy of all revolutionary ideology—and it knows it.

society of the spectacle

Those who keep up with academic queer theory will surely be aware of the self-described "anti-social turn" in Queer Theory. It seems that the newest trend within the queer academy is to focus on the queer negativity, to critique society, and to refuse traditional politics. At a time when society itself is falling apart, when unprecedented amounts of human beings are recognizing that they have NO FUTURE and are proceeding accordingly, we must call this academic trend by its name: recuperation.

Some idiot tries basing his thesis on the queer riots at the G20; Judith Butler delivers a speech at a conference at the New School

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was successful in locating the crises within the lives of its participants and materially acting to resolve each. Queers needed housing, self-defense, nice things, and pleasure. Consequently they occupied houses, communized weapons, and trained together, looted as much as possible, and organized parties and riots and orgies. At this point, any struggle that doesn't immediately implicate the very lives of its participants is doomed to irrelevance.

One can see these developments thriving to this day: queers squats, sex worker self-organization, queer street gangs, transgender prison gangs, queer contingents within militant street marches, marches that leave occupations and auto-reduce the cover as they reach the party. One can imagine ways that these strategies could be deployed as more and more aspects of life under capitalism are thrown into crisis. When funding disappears for AIDS drugs, new forms of expropriation will become appropriate. As the nuclear family is not an option for many—the crisis will force queers to forge new, non-familial modes of communal existence. As reactionary groups begin to assert themselves on the street, queers will strike back with new weapons and self-defense formations. As society falls apart, we will discover ever more decadent ways to push the contradictions and dynamite the ruptures.

While there are strong criticisms to be made of autonomous marxism as well as of essentialist notions of the category of women and their position within capitalism, autonomist methodology is helpful here. In the tradition of Selma James, I'd like to identify two major currents of queer activity. On the one hand, anarchists who happen to be queer; on the other, queer people who are militants of queer issues. To understand Bash Back! the first way would be to reproduce CrimethInc's assertion that such activity is "queer themed" or to just ignore it altogether. To understand Bash Back! within the second current reduces it to the level of Gay Shame's issue-specific, reform-oriented street theater. We refuse both conceptions.

Bash Back! must be understood to be a concrete attempt to critique society from the perspective of queer experience, and then to find methods of attack that stem from that position. In this way, Bash Back! Is the queer answer to autonomist-feminism. The experiments can be categorized into two broad strategies. The first—to open up queer space within conflictual action. The second—to apply insurrectionary strategies to the daily struggle intrinsic to queer life. Examples of the first would be the queer blockade at the RNC, the riots at the G20, solidarity attacks with other struggles and insurrections, etc. The second is exemplified in attacks on queer bashers, arson at the houses of murderers, the dissemination of self defense information, distribution of pepper spray, squatted queer-youth centers and queer dance parties that ended in broken police cruisers. The synthesis of these categories is the beginning of a living-and-fighting practice that I call queer autonomy.

I want to take a moment to emphasize that this queer-anarchy after leftism must also mean a total break from activist logic. At a time when its former proponents have backed away from so-called 'lifestylism', Bash Back! is a return to hyper-lifestylism! I refuse to see queer life as secondary to queer politics. Rather, I'm interested in documenting, exploring, and articulating an anti-politics that takes life itself as its field of struggle. Toward this end, Bash Back!

Bash Back! is Dead; Bash Back Forever!

It is awkward to speak of Conclusions—to announce the end of a project, to walk away. What's harder is to reflect on our activity, to learn from our mistakes and recognize our achievements. Regardless, this is a skill anarchists need to develop. At a time when the old models of anarchist organizing are decaying, and bizarre permutations of anarchist tactics and ethics are spreading like wildfire, a practice of self-criticism could prove to be a most dangerous weapon. What follows is one participant's attempt at such a balance sheet of the broadly defined Bash Back! tendency, written in the pursuit of a more ferocious queer insurrectionary tendency. If you find my words chaotic, I hope you'll understand this chaos to be a reflection of the queerness and anarchy intrinsic to this project.

ON THE PARTY

To speak of the death of an organization generally connotes a negative event, but this relies on the assumption that organizational permanence is a good thing. Moving past this assumption, the question becomes: have we accomplished our goals with this organization, this means, this tool? If the answer is affirmative, if the organization has been pushed to its limits, perhaps its death is deserved. If Bash Back! is dead, the resurgence in anarchist queer activity and networking remains. Relationships now exist that would not have existed had Bash Back! never formed. When our projects reach the end of their usefulness, letting them go is no cause for concern.

on the demise of bash back!

The difficulties of conclusion are exponentially complicated when dealing with a subject as diffuse and evasive as Bash Back! Throughout its existence, there were always a plethora of interpretations of what Bash Back! was. A network of queer anarchists, a gang, a tendency, a gay terrorist organization, a *form-of-life,* a theory group: the answer differs depending on who one asks. Perhaps the correct answer is that Bash Back!, true to queer form, problematizes each of these categories. Any analysis of Bash Back! fails if it doesn't recognize the need to understand each of these possibilities independently and yet all at once.

As a formal network (one that, say, could be named as a defendant in a lawsuit) Bash Back! is certainly dead. As the terrorist-lovely of the christian right and queer left alike, it of course never existed outside of a spectacle. As a theoretical tendency, the core

QUEER-ANARCHY AFTER LEFTISM

I celebrate many achievements of Bash Back!, but for me the greatest is the way in which Bash Back! shows the possibility for a queer-anarchy that has no attachment to the dinosaurs of queer leftism. Radical queers will critique reform, the State, and non-profit organizations endlessly. And yet, at the end of the day their politics are still focused on different issues to be reformed, different demands upon the state and the same tired rhetoric and reliance on the non-profit industrial complex. Bash Back! concerned itself with none of this.

In attempting to articulate this form of queer anti-politics, I'll borrow briefly from Selma James in her introduction to Mariarosa Dalla Costa's *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. James locates two mainstream trends within the Women's Movement of the '70s. On the one hand, there are the Marxist Men who happen to be Women and on the other are the militants of women's issues. Women in the first camp simply reiterate the party line, but without specific reference to the position of women under capitalism. Women in the second focus on this or that issue concerning women, but without indicting capital itself as "a social relation which we struggle to destroy". The position of James, Dalla Costa and other autonomist-feminists is to refuse both of these positions, to seek an analysis of capitalism that is specifically rooted in women's position within it and then from that position to discover its undoing.

gender-freaks of all stripes. Many found themselves unburdened of their previous subjective attachment to Straightness. Queers and all those assigned-victim-at-birth, engaged in a practice of refusing victimization, and in doing so refused the foundational principle of their role in this gendered society.

Insurrectionary theory tells us that an insurrectionary process is based on attack and experimentation to open up the way to society's undoing. Queer theory tells us that queering is a verb, a process which eternally problematizes and undoes normative roles. I locate Bash Back! at the intersection of these processes and understand them to be the same.

assumptions at the heart of Bash Back! continue to thrive—*queer negation, gender mutiny, not yr cister, baedan, filth and glitter, outlaw bodies*—so many vessels and masks for an invariant and unrelenting commitment to what is negative and rebellious at the heart of queerness. As a set of gang tactics, Bash Back! undoubtedly lives on. Even as we do the work of anthologizing, our task is endlessly proliferated: more nazis getting their skulls opened by faggots, more queers rioting simply for the joy of it, another church attacked, a bewildered journalist reporting about a particularly violent queer gang in the inner city. Lawyers to pay, re-imprisoned comrades to write to, relationships to heal, friendships to sustain, lovers to embrace—in many ways this eulogy for a name only conceals a zombie-intercourse that is ongoing for many involved with the project. In as many ways as Bash Back! can be declared dead, its essence thrives beyond the grave; haunting the straight world. This is why we say that "Bash Back! is dead" and at the same time "Bash Back Forever!"

What is our purpose? The answer to this question prefigures and determines all the rest. Do we want a nicer, friendlier, more diverse, inclusive, radical, hyper-mediated, less-fucked-up version of this society? Or do we want to watch it burn? Are we interested in progress or are we interested in rupture? Will we settle for all this but a little different? Or are we insatiable? If you desire a queer capitalism, please stay home. If you want to destroy capitalism, we'll see you in Denver!

questions to be addressed before denver

While the unique and indeterminate form of Bash Back! is largely responsible for its rapid spread and also its unpredictable energy, it surely also carried within it the seeds of its eventual schisms and ultimate disbanding. Other pieces in this anthology do a thorough job of articulating the rise and fall of Bash Back! as a project and are worth reading in their entirety (namely

"On the Demise of Bash Back!" and "Questions to be Addressed Before Denver"). Rather than continuing to quote these analyses at length, I've attempted below to draw out and navigate the specific problems and tensions that flourished within Bash Back! and to celebrate the potential within them. Toward this end, in the following pages I articulate a narrative of these conflicts specifically around the issues of Violence and Identity.

It should be noted that perhaps one of the most dangerous indistinctions in Bash Back! was related to the form itself. More noteworthy than any schisms over violence and identity were the oscillations between above ground and clandestine activity. From a security perspective, the attribution of the same name to both potlucks and felonious attacks is probably not very wise. And yet from the perspective of wild experimentation in conflict, it is precisely this indistinction that made Bash Back! so interesting.

In our revolt, we are developing a form of play. These are our experiments with autonomy, power, and force. We haven't paid for anything we're wearing and we rarely pay for food. We steal from our jobs and turn tricks to get by. We fuck in public and have never come harder. We swap tips and scams amid gossip and foreplay. We've looted the shit out of places and delight in sharing the booty. We wreck things at night and hold hands and skip all the way home. We are ever growing our informal support structures and we'll always have each other's backs. In our orgies, riots, and heists, we are articulating the collectivity of and deepening these ruptures.

criminal intimacy

A way to describe this potential would be through the concept of form-of-life, defined by Giorgio Agamben as a life that can never be separated from its form. "It defines a life—human life—in which the single ways, acts, and processes of living are never simply *facts* but always and above all *possibilities* of life, always and

point for the construction of an anti-essentialist, anti-identitarian force to combat patriarchy. In the context of the re-emergence of second wave feminism in insurrectionary anarchist/communist circles, this way of thinking is beautiful. It offers a roadmap to how we might build the type of war-machine that can destroy gender. This is why I do not conceive of Bash Back! as being rooted in queer identity. Rather, I understand it to be an experiment in building an offensive constellation of queer positions.

We are the people who aim to destroy the social order from which we've been excluded. We are the people seeking to end our imprisonment. We are the people who hate gendered-capitalism and heteronormativity. Our position is hyper-attuned to our lived experience. Our understanding of ourselves and our position names our enemies!

In a crucial point of emergence long ago, woman established herself as existent rather than plunging the monist world of Man into the void from which she came. In another, the proletariat struggled to secure its autonomous liberation from the bourgeoisie rather than destroy the bourgeoisie and itself entirely. On the stage set by the present order, the queer force is making itself busy with the proliferation of identities rather than the utter negation of them.

preliminary notes on modes of reproduction

While outsider perspectives may only be able to understand Bash Back! through the logic of identity, I understand it as a series of experiments toward identity's undoing. In the same way that the Oscar Grant Riots in Oakland, CA created unlikely alliances against the racial order, so too did Bash Back! result in a sequence of material attacks against all the subject positions within the hetero-normative identity matrix. Many who began their engagement with the project found themselves seduced by its way of war. Straight people found themselves destroying gender alongside

of society and subjugate them to their self-appointed representatives.

-Identity Politics are fundamentally reformist and seek to find a more favorable relationship between different subject positions rather than to abolish the structures that produce those positions from the beginning. Identity politicians oppose "classism" while being content to leave class society intact. Any resistance to society must foreground the destruction of the subjectifying processes that reproduce society daily, and must destroy the institutions and practices that racialize and engender bodies within the social order.

-Identity Politics are deployed by, inherently refer to, always valorize and are in and of themselves the State.

Taking this analysis to heart, Bash Back! can be seen as an attempt to forge a resistance practice of lived experience outside the logic of Identity Politics. Though not authored by participants in Bash Back! we've included a text by anarcha-feminists in San Francisco entitled "Anarcha-Feminists take to the Streets". This piece, published concurrently with the identity crisis of Bash Back! offers an outstanding and unique way to conceptualize patriarchy and resistance to it. To quote:

Ironically, despite our critiques—and sometimes hatred—of identity politics, we find ourselves coming together around a (somewhat loose) identity: We are some people who no longer want to be victims of gender tyranny and misogyny. Within this grouping we are hoping to circumvent, to a certain extent, our gender and what that means for us when we are living our lives in this Man's World so we might gain some insight as to what it might look like to not have gender dynamics influence every interaction. We come together to fight for a reality where identities such as "man," "woman," and "trans" are logical impossibilities.

I'll follow the author(s) of the Anarcha-Feminist communiqué as they understand themselves to be unified in their desires and dispositions, rather than their identities. Without reference to a shared or stable subject, the authors of this piece offer a starting

above all power." In following this definition I wish to articulate a non-activist and non-identitarian way of understanding and talking about the subject that was shaped through the Bash Back! project.

In describing those participants in Bash Back! as a *form-of-life* I'm making an effort to discard a whole range of concepts and ways of thinking that should be entirely useless to us moving forward. In particular, I want to totally be done with the notions of identity politics and identity activism. Bash Back! shouldn't be understood as a sequence of activist endeavors, nor as an articulation of a militant identity politic (to the extent that it can be identified that way, it was a failure). Bash Back! was never about queer issues or queer politics. Instead, the project took as its point of departure the lives of its participants. Rather than the motifs of victimization and charity regurgitated ad nauseum in activist circles, the Bash Back! tendency took as its starting point queer life itself. Those within the tendency organized a space within which they could genuinely live, and a network by which to defend that space. I experienced Bash Back! as an amalgamation of desires, dispositions, acts, processes, gestures, and complicities. Bash Back! is as much wrapped up in criminal acts as in sexual practice, as much in strategy as in style. The process of Bash Back! and the emergence of its corresponding form-of-life demands to be read less as a what or a who but instead as a *how*. This *how*, is the *how* of organization, but also of survival, of violence, of love, of life itself. And so, whatever the limitations of what Bash Back! was, it is the *how* that truly demonstrates the insurrectionary potential that I celebrate.

HOW NON-VIOLENCE PROTECTS THE STRAIGHT

A fag is bashed because his gender presentation is far too femme. A poor transman can't afford his life-saving hormones. A sex worker is murdered by their client. A genderqueer persyn is raped because ze "just needed to be fucked straight". Four black lesbians are sent to prison for daring to defend themselves against a straight-male attacker. Cops beat us on the streets and our bodies are being destroyed by pharmaceutical companies because we can't give them a dime.

towards the queerest insurrection

As I sit to write these concluding notes, a troubling sequence of events is unfolding around the world. A bizarre left-populist movement has emerged, one which appropriates anarchist language ("occupy everything!") and form (consensus, assemblies, etc) and yet has emptied these vessels of any anarchic content. Rather the majority sentiment among the new occupiers appears to be some extremely confused yet dogmatic adherence to "non-violence". In most of the new occupations this has played out as strict almost obsessive obedience to the police; an absurdly a-historical refusal of past resistance struggles, and a vehement (and ironically, violent) denunciation of anyone who dares challenge the pacifist hegemony.

In the context of such sycophantic shit and malaise, it is refreshing to revisit the texts anthologized in this book. Bash Back! the name bears within itself everything that is to be said about vio-

that those who share a set of experiences under capitalism will have a natural head-start in forging alliances against society. This is the kernel of truth at the heart of identity. Sadly, this kernel is obscured by layer upon layer of abstraction and mystification produced by identity politics. Any effort to build autonomous power based on one's position within and against society must begin by disillusioning itself of the baggage of Identity Politics.

Here is a quick sketch of certain anti-identity politics positions distilled from Bash Back!.

-Identity Politics are always based on flattening out experience, making the critique of society abstract rather than lived.

-Identity Politics promote cross-class alliances, thus offering those with more power (and thus an interest in the proliferation of class society) to silence the most marginalized within these alliances.

-Identity Politics are rooted in the ideology of victimization, and thus celebrate and comes to enforce norms surrounding what activity people are allowed or able to participate in. This plays out by reinforcing certain mythologies about struggle (i.e. "only cis-white-men participate in black blocs or "oppressed people are incapable of certain strategies of revolt").

-Identity Politics are always based on the fallacy of coherent communities. Some French people once said that "there are greater ethical differences within communities than between them." That is to say that those trapped within certain "communities" or identity confines often have less in common with one another than they do with those who they are purported to be opposed to. This fallacy thrives on abstraction of experience rather than analysis of lived experience itself. A queer in prison has more in common with their straight cellmate than with some scumbag gay senator, and yet the mythology of the "queer community" serves to suffocate enemies

both at once. I'm going to avoid a lot of the specifics of these conflicts, as many of them need to remain abstract, and others are not mine to tell. Rather I'll focus on the theoretical grounding of this confrontation and will leave space for those who experienced it to locate themselves within this reading.

This problem within Bash Back! is quite fitting insofar as it is a queer problem. Queerness itself is a contested territory, open to endless debate and critique. For a certain camp of people, queerness is a positive project, with it own set of norms and community-forms. For others, queerness can only be conceived of negatively, as that which exceeds or fails to meet a set of norms. In this way Queer comes to be a catachresis, or a name wrongly given to that which cannot be named. A label given to that which cannot be labeled. Positions within Bash Back! took their starting points from any number of positions within this complex theoretical matrix. There is an argument to be made that one's position on the debate was often directly descendent from one's own (anti-political) background. Those who came to Bash Back! from gender studies tended to conduct themselves as the militant shock-troops of whatever doctrine they picked up from their professors. Those enmeshed in insurrectionary anarchist circles tended to have a strong (if at times perhaps too harsh) aversion to identity-based struggle, focusing instead on locating points of conflict within identity. Those who came from established queer scenes brought with them a whole range of expectations in regard to people's behaviors and language – expectations that were often alien to those not familiar with such cliques. What is so queer about the set of conflicts at play within Bash Back! is that each of these positions was permeated with the other, and a wide array of perversions emerged.

I'd like to offer that a certain synthesis emerged out of many of these conflicts that could prove beneficial for anarchists in coming struggles: experience must be the basis of struggle. If we expect to engage in material struggles against the social order, we must begin from the ways in which we experience that order. This means

lence; a violent set of activities that responds to a primary violence. Rather than something to be feared or rejected, Bash Back! takes as its starting point the reality of violence in the context of queer life. This is why we say that within the Bash Back! tendency there really wasn't a question of violence. Not a moral or political issue, for the participants within the network, violence has been experienced as a lived reality, a set of tactical questions, an ethics of war.

This anthology carries with it an entire discourse on violence that is unique to the milieu it arose from. These voices locate themselves within a reading of the history of queer resistance, a reading that embraces the overflowing of violent moments. Texts such as *Toward the Queerest Insurrection* and "Chronology of Genderfuck Insurrection" explore overlapping and divergent historical tendencies of forgotten queer violence, from genderqueer medieval uprisings in Europe to the Compton's Cafeteria riot and the White Night rebellion in San Francisco. Though such attempts to chronologize this resistance will always suffer from generations of silence and erasure, they succeed in articulating a trans-historic current that streams through the present and washes over the lived experience of the authors and readers. This reading of history could prove to be a valuable tool for queer anarchists as they attempt to navigate and disrupt the sea of shit that is the Pacifist rewriting of resistance blanketing current social struggles.

The daily use of violence by queers for the purposes of survival, self-defense, or vengeance is often hidden or obscured through a whole array of closeting apparatuses. Generations of queer street gangs, armed whore communes, bank-runs to support AIDS victims, brick-hurling queens—these have been forgotten by all, except in the form of heretical mythology passed from lover to lover. More than anything, this collection of communiqués should serve to illustrate a new way of communication regarding violence. For Bash Back!, the use of violence as a part of resistance and survival is always something to celebrate. The violence claimed in these communiqués spans from the hyper-personal to the overly political:

bar fights with assaulters, bats to homophobes and fascists, distribution of pepper spray to queers, queer summit riots. At times, the oscillation from personal to political can make one's head spin: queerbashers attacked within a riot or a police station attacked as atonement for a lifetime of trauma. In sharing these stories, Bash Back! acted to expose the silent yet raging social war that permeates the lived experiences of many queers. This communication itself is a radical act, one that seeks to draw lines to connect individual struggles into a constellation of ultra-violence in the service of queer life. Teen suicide, queerbashing, AIDS genocide, exclusion at borders, enslavement in prisons: the violence experienced by queers is multiform and evolving. As such, resistance to that violence must also be fluid and diffuse. This collection doesn't pose a singular answer, but it offers a whole lot of suggestions.

It is also worth noting that Bash Back! didn't solely concern itself with explicitly queer violence. Rather the discourse emphasized a *queering of violence*. This is to say that participants sought to highlight and show solidarity with all who rupture the fabric of hegemonic violence. Starting from the insurrectional maxim that *solidarity means attack*, Bash Back! cells carried out solidarity actions with a variety of other struggles. They made destroy in solidarity with the December Insurrection in Greece, despite straight people insisting that insurrection had nothing to do with queerness. They celebrated the rebellions in the streets of Oakland and on University of California campuses, even when their struggles were often ignored by anarchist participants in those same struggles. They were the first anarchist groups to issue statements in support of the shooting of five police officers in Oakland, while many others were too timid to do so. All of this is to show that a queer theory of violence must concern itself with the ways that the attack-form can destabilize static identity, and chart paths toward unheard-of channels of communication and solidarity.

Is our violence of substance or of image? Are we joking when we write about violence? What is meant by that picture of beautiful peo-

IDENTITY CRISIS

It is clear that, because identities shape our experiences, we cannot write off identity as unimportant. However, it is equally clear that we cannot afford to maintain the identities imposed upon us. Thus, an apparent contradiction arises between the necessity of recognizing socially constructed identity while simultaneously trying to destroy the class society that enforces those identities. This contradiction proves difficult, with a range of responses from a disregard for the destruction of class society to a disregard for identity, and many other arguments somewhere between these two positions.

Identity, Politics and Anti-Politics

As mentioned in the above section, after certain circles within Bash Back! had thoroughly rid themselves of liberal-pacifist tendencies, future conflict would be staged between militants or insurrectionists who differed in regard to the question of identity. Though the above conflicts over violence often played out in ways that were parallel to discussions of identity, I concern myself with those discussions of identity that take violence as a given. This will serve to illuminate a set of questions and conflicts that emerged as unique to Bash Back! A way to view this conflict is to understand the partisans as, on the one hand, Militants of Identity Politics – and on the other, anti-identitarians. One side takes identity as a given and a precondition that must shape our organizing and struggle, the other locates identity as the enemy itself. Positions within this conflict were not stable – individuals and groups within the Bash Back! tendency could embody either of these positions or

insurrectionary activity by self-declared queer-anarchists. The article went on to absurdly critique the valorization of violence by "insurrectionists" who CrimethInc describes as having never experienced violence – a critique that is only possible to make by totally ignoring the existence of Bash Back! and the experiences of its participants. Some will perhaps point out that in the third issue of *Rolling Thunder* CrimethInc published an article about queer riots that happened decades ago. We applaud them for their gesture, but the questions remain: why would an anarchist publication focusing on contemporary anarchist struggles ignore what is one of the largest anarchist networks in the United States? Why is it safe to acknowledge queer insurrectionists of previous generations, but not to show solidarity or report on their struggles in the present? Puzzling.

While we have no interest in offering excuses for this attitude on the part of either "radical queers" or straight anarchists, they are simply pawns in what is a much larger hegemonic discourse surrounding violence. Queers are marked as victims while violence is understood to be only the tool of the masters. The queer anarchist project embodied by Bash Back! is first and foremost a refusal of victimhood and a reclamation of the violence taken from us by progressive ideology and used against us by queerbashers and the State. It was a crucial shift for Bash Back! to break with those who refused to recognize the importance of this reclamation. It served to cohere and solidify the insurrectional queer tendency around the question of violence while foreshadowing the coming splits. From this point, conflicts between tendencies (specifically around the question of identity/politics) were disputes between differing theoretical dispositions wherein a disposition towards violence was assumed.

ple holding baseball bats and sledge hammers? Is this symbolism? Is it real? Does it mean anything to bash back? The road forks here. Will radical queers continue down the path of the image of militancy; of irrelevance? If so, we can expect many more films and photo shoots displaying a glamorous armed struggle (like the red army faction with glitter). We can expect more celebration of riots forty years ago and uprisings across the ocean (accompanied, of course, by condemnation of riot in the here and now – by crying over broken windows and over-tipped newspaper boxes). Violence will be acceptable as long as it takes the form of abstraction, an artform, a historical occurrence or a blip on the global news feed – when it is separate from us. It will always be refused on the level of our daily lives, when we become its agents.

questions to be addressed before denver

While the editors of this anthology, and the pieces we have selected, present a coherent tendency relating to violence (bashing back!), it is important to contextualize this coherence as a result of a very real conflict within Bash Back!, one that was centered primarily around the 2009 convergence in Chicago. Though it was the second such gathering in Chicago, it was the first since Bash Back! had taken center stage in the theater of queer revolt. Consequently there was a remarkable influx of people who hadn't been involved with the initial emergence of Bash Back! in the Midwest. Many of these people came from the coasts. More significantly, they came from a different world of queerness. The initial project of Midwestern and Southern Bash Back! chapters was to carve out queer space within anarchist struggles in primarily straight and heteronormative anarchist space. To the contrary, these coastal newcomers largely came from established "radical queer" social scenes and/or gender studies programs at liberal arts colleges. For many, their backgrounds hopelessly marred their analysis of vio-

lence. Rather than strategies of active and autonomous resistance, they emphasized non-violent communication, stifling consensus process, and tame (if perhaps colorful) sidewalk marches and street theater. In Chicago, these worlds collided.

The centerpiece of the ensuing shit show was a train dance-party occupation that turned into a spontaneous march through boystown. As is to be expected, partiers threw shit in the street and got wild. But to the utter horror of the Bash Back! insurgents, participants in the march dragged objects back out of the street and wailed about peaceful protest (not unlike those dogmatic pacifists currently attempting to police an occupation movement that is rapidly spinning out of their control). The result of this exchange was a firestorm of screaming matches and internet tirades that signaled the first major split in Bash Back! Other works in this anthology more thoroughly document this division (specifically A Response to the Anarcho-Liberal Takeover of Bash Back! and Questions to be Addressed before Denver.)

For those who fell on the total-destroy side of things, the conflict was entirely unexpected. We were aware of the existence of tired leftist queers, but we didn't realize that so many of them disguised their pacifism within confrontational aesthetics. As a matter of fact, many of these sheep-in-wolves-clothes had previously been the inspiration for many within Bash Back! (Groups such as Gay Shame in San Francisco and the Naughty North in Maine speak endlessly of histories of queer revolt and make films and texts glorifying violent resistance, and yet denounce those who sought to struggle with them in the here and now. They celebrate revolt that is separated from them by decades or oceans, all while actively sabotaging such efforts where they live.) We were shocked that those who make films about bombings and jailbreaks or wear patches of guns would demonize those who engage in property destruction or violent self-defense. The reality: the hip queers who seek to make their careers as radical queer academics and filmmakers are in fact servants of abstraction. They seek to socially and monetarily capitalize on the image of queer revolt while contributing nothing to its possibility.

This attitude, the one that silences and forecloses on the possibility of queer violence, is not unique to so-called radical queers. It is equally prevalent among straight people, even our straight anarchist comrades. Notable examples of this trend can be seen in the behavior of straight-dominated anarchist groups such as the RNC Welcoming Committee and CrimethInc. Prior to the riots at the Republican National Convention in 2008, members of the Welcoming Committee (the aboveground anarchist organizing body for the protests) publicly referred to the planned Bash Back! blockade as "fluffy" compared to the presumed militancy of the hetero-barricades. This was in spite of the fact that all propaganda for the Bash Back! blockade leading up to the convention made explicit reference to historic queer riots, and to the intention of Bash Back! folks to fiercely resist the Republicans and the police. The blockade went on to clash with horse cops and to attack members of the Westboro Baptist Church. The blockade gained but a single mention in an entire issue of *Rolling Thunder* (CrimethInc's magazine) that was dedicated to resistance to the RNC. This was only the an early example of CrimethInc's refusal to acknowledge the possibility that their queer comrades were capable of insurrectionist activity. In their magazine-length coverage of the rioting at the G20 protests in Pittsburgh, they describe the march for queer liberation (which went on to be the wildest and most destructive at the summit) as "bash-back-themed", their only acknowledgment of the riot's queer content. That is to say, queer struggle was a token slogan for rioters, rather than the elan of the riot. While offering endless analysis of the organizing and strategy that went into said street conflict, they ignored the fact that this was the most violent queer riot in America in a generation. The insult was further exacerbated by CrimethInc's article "Say You Want an Insurrection". In their critique of american insurrectionary anarchism, there is not a single mention of Bash Back! or the tremendous sequence of