

Queer Anarchy Coming Out

Anarcho-faggots Demand to be De-manned: A (de) Manifesto

Sissy Sabotage
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Once upon a time in the future, perhaps closer than we dare dream, parents do not own children. Children are exposed to a kaleidoscope of possible relationships, and grow up in a world where they witness and freely experiment in consensual, sensual acts of their choosing. Wimmin safely and comfortably fondle and lick each others' breasts in public, and in full view of passing "families," men suck each other's erect fingers.

In this day and age, the entire body is eroticized and daily life is libidinized. None have jobs. Providing food, clothing, shelter, and piles of hay to roll in, requires minimal effort. People have lots of time to intertwine their bodies, and no clocks to measure the average length of orgasm. Marriage has disappeared as an institution, except for the informal marriage of queerness and anarchy. This vision has been erased from the discourse of the present, but this geography of hysterical ecstasy lives in our dreams.

"The faggots and their friends live best while empires are falling. Since the men are always building as 'many empires as they can, there are always one or two falling and so one or two places for the faggots and their friends to go. When an empire is falling, the men become so busy opposing the rebellions elsewhere... that they have no time to watch the faggots and their friends at home. the populace, tired of hearing only of foreign defeats, allows the faggots room to play...The men, desperate over the ingratitude of the foreigners and their declining fortunes at home, forget and let the faggots play."

Beyond Old Discussions to Forge a New Flaming Discourse

The recent discussions of AIDS in the Fifth Estate, along with many concurrent debates and events, re-emphasized to us the need for queer anarchy. We are anti-authoritarian faggots who have experienced alienation in both "gay/lesbian/bi/transgender" and "anarchist" settings. We have wondered on more than one occasion if we were not totally isolated, and have longed for the creation of egalitarian, libertarian community among radical queers.

The term "queer," suggesting defiant and radically inclusive theory and action, has in many politicized circles replaced "gay and lesbian" or "bisexual." Like "faggot" or "dyke," "queer" has the power of transforming an insult into a tool for liberation. The "queer" notion has been discussed in every possible cultural and political context from academic journals to photocopied leaflets, making it a remarkably fluid term. Due to its overwhelming popularity, especially in the media, some critics assert that "queer" has already lost its radical tone.

Some feminists fear that "queer" may go the way of "gay," since the inclusion of dykes and fags under one banner often serves lesbophobia and the sexism which still permeates many gay men's attitudes. Is the young bisexual man who recently "came out," frequently kisses men in public and is flamboyantly political about his sexuality "more queer" than the middle-aged lesbian who's lived most of her life in the closet because of fear? While "queer" acts

as a galvanizing spark among theorists and activists, it fails to answer all the complex questions about gender and oppression that a bitterly sexist and homophobic society has created.

In her 1992 Guardian article, "What's queer?," Amanda Udis-Kessler writes: "Queerness is defined as much by what it is not as by what it is: Queers are not only not straight, they exclude those lesbians and gays who seek to assimilate into straight culture." The political aspect highlights the profound desire among many activists to resist mainstream acceptance as the apex of "gay liberation."

The impetus of this new radicalism has often been ascribed to the "in-yer-face" tactics and gender-bending sensibilities of groups such as Queer Nation and ACT-UP. While this thrust appears to include many anti-authoritarian ideas and tactics, an actual anarchist analysis has not been articulated, leaving outrageous desires unfulfilled or co-opted into traditional reformist politics, such as lobbying to have the price of toxic AZT reduced.

While militant queers are attracted to bold gestures of action, many are shocked when such tactics result in police brutality because their participation is grounded in the symbolism of such acts rather than in a coherent radical critique. Only a thorough comprehension of the role of the police and the state as enemies of radical sexual freedom make it possible to create a long-lasting context for liberation without authority or laws to protect us.

We've found the ignorance of anti-authoritarian ideals flourishes amid abundant radical posturing just as liberal apologism abounds among Clinton cheerleaders, queer patriots, gay marriage advocates and assimilationists, ad nauseum. Unfortunately, the sense of otherness we feel among our queer peers is still present when we engage in activities with those who share our critique of the state.

Homophobia, seen in insulting "jokes" excused with haughty rhetoric or at other times in incidents of out and out bashing, has reared its reactionary head in almost every anarchist project we've encountered. Not surprisingly, it seems most anarchist newspapers, community centers and collectives are predominantly run by heterosexuals. (It's not that we mind heterosexuals, even if they flaunt it; some of our best friends are straight!)

Despite such obstacles, we share the desire for queer anarchy. We should ignore the liberals as they try to seduce us with money and political power and laugh at leftist groups like the Michigan-based Revolutionary Workers League and Maoist International Movement who continue to churn out tired rhetoric to help recruit queers as yet another group of oppressed workers:

We want non-hierarchical community, the post-nuclear extended family, the circle of erotic and social realization. In moments at radical faerie and anarchist gatherings we have seen an eroto-egalitarianism emerge as superficial exteriors dissolve in convivial exchange. This dream furthers the transformation of daily life.

"The faggots have never been asked to join the vanguard. The faggots, it was noticed, do not know how to keep a straight face and the vanguard demands constantly straight faces. The faggots, it was noticed, want only to eat so they can play love play while the vanguard demands endless talk about the hunger of others and the seriousness of work. The faggots, it was noticed, are too quick to believe that the revolution had come and so too quick to celebrate. The vanguard demands that the revolution go on forever and so demands that the celebration only be planned. never enacted."

What's in a name?

Much of the existing discourse on sexual deviance and difference relies on terms imposed by western intellectualism. Relying on linear logic and a severely limited Kinsey-style scale (the textbook sexology continuum), "either / or" thinking discolors a polysexual lavender into black and white labels of "homo" or "straight."

While the Kinsey scale suggests an almost universal bisexuality, it also poses same-sex desire and heterosexual desire as opposites. Many bisexuals who experience their various urges and affections harmoniously would shudder at the thought of pitting the "homoself" against the "heteroself." Because we understand that gender and sexual orientation are interrelated, it becomes clear to us that more genders and orientations exist than our current vocabulary and political situation allow. We must constantly reinvent language. We can learn from the several different words that Native American societies use to describe the she-man and man-woman.

Both “queer” and “anarchy” as terms contain an odd amalgamation of assertion and negation. Just words—invented by the old social order, stolen from the vicious vernacular of social control—to describe our vision to overthrow authority. Queer anarchy is a limited term that seeks to terminate limitation.

Queer anarchy welcomes, depending on who you talk to, sex radicals of many stripes including sex workers, cross-dressers, intergenerational lovers and the S&M and leather communities. Queer anarchy suggests a reclamation of everything explicitly homosexual, “camp” and outrageously “genderfuck.”

As inclusive as we want to be, queer anarchy may be exclusive by choice, to meet specific needs at specific times. We may not welcome anarcho-liberals or queer-sympathetic heterosexuals into our circles. When a specific context of solidarity is called for, queer-only, wimmin-only or men-only events can be empowering and liberating. As one lesbian feminist queer has written: “Who is ushered in under this [queer] banner depends a lot on their politics, and whether they own up to the privileges their myriad identities confer on them. Though for the record, otherwise straight guys who like ‘lesbian’ porn and would like getting it in the butt with a dildo by a woman do not count as queer in my book. Maybe in another world.” Yet queer anarchy should be fluid, fanciful and friendly in theory and practice to people who want to creatively evolve beyond the heterosexist, homophobic, statist and capitalistic paradigm of contemporary society.

Queer anarchy welcomes and incorporates the vast “berdache” tradition of queer tribalism that has existed for centuries amongst the indigenous peoples of North America. In her study of the recorded materials from 99 tribes, anthropologist Sue Ellen Jacobs found queer culture among 88 of them. The diversity of native queerness is characterized by the prevalence of cross-dressing “bulldykes” and “drag queens” who often assume cultural roles associated with medicine, magic, shamanism and the “opposite” gender.

Indeed, long before the 1969 Stonewall Riots ushered in the modern gay and lesbian liberation movement, prominent writers like Edward Carpenter held indigenous world views which saw queers as distinct peoples, if not part of a third gender. When Harry Hay co-founded the Mattachine Society in 1951 (the first open Gay organization in the U.S.), he envisioned it as a place to explore “who Gay people were (and had been over the millenia).” In Walter Williams’ book *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, he observes, “more conformist homosexuals did not want to identify with ‘savages,’ or to confront the fact that they might be ‘different’ in more ways than sexual behavior. But in a tiring game which has sadly played itself over and over, conservative leaders took over the group and insisted on portraying Gays and lesbians as being just like straight people, except for what we do in bed. Fringe groups of queers continue to explore our difference as a place for empowerment, despite the mainstream march to look and act straight.

The breadth of different lifestyles that we can learn about from queer Indians, mingling queer practice with acceptance in the larger tribal context, provides many possible examples of queer anarchy integrating into larger egalitarian communities without denying or diluting queerness. Queer anarchists realize that we will never dance in the celebration of liberation until we help the larger society come to terms with embracing difference and otherness. We also need to challenge the assumptions which persuade too many gays and lesbians to fear what has the potential to give them the most strength.

The Human Rights Campaign Fund, which bills itself as the largest gay and lesbian organization in the country, recently spent \$100,000 on a study to determine how to market gay rights to the mainstream. One of their profound findings was that it is more palatable to ask for “civil rights for gays” instead of demanding “gay rights.” (“Help Edith, hide the children, they are out for gay rights. “No, no, we only want civil rights for gays.”)

Straight people see us for what we are: different. Homophobes see us for what we are: a threat. We cannot achieve freedom by marketing images to win points in a world of pollsters and assimilationist hucksters. Our freedom cannot be bought or sold. As queers, we share the coming out experience, a ritual which can be both horrifying and revolutionary. Rather than shunning the frightening concept of “sexual outlaw,” queer anarchists embrace living outside laws. As a people, taught from childhood in the playground, schools, family, and churches that we exist outside the authoritative social scrip, queers have a natural affinity to reject authority.

As recent as the 1960s, same-sex couple dancing was illegal in most of the world. In Denmark, the mainstream gays and lesbians said the Gay Liberation Front was “irresponsible” when they held a dance extravaganza in Copenhagen’s town hall square. (We should say: “if we can’t dance, we can’t have a revolution.”) The radicals went on to hold a wild queer caravan across the country, boldly challenging authority. Their actions ranged from feeding pe-

nis shaped cookies to children (there was nothing in the legal code preventing this!) to exposing an official who had collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation. These queer anarchists embraced a wide-ranging dream that could not be reduced to simple pleas for rights. This group continues to act out their anarchist dreams in the theater they have created in the squatted community of Christiania.

Queer anarchy is dancing in the face of the new assimilationism, freaking out the Clinton queers, with all their pro-military patriotism and delirious pandering. The manner in which reformers eagerly jumped on the “lift the military ban” bandwagon is particularly disturbing to queer radicals. Since when did the President of the U.S. set the agenda for a protest movement? Some gays and lesbians will gladly chomp away at the crumbs the liberals scatter, working to gain “rights” at the expense of those on the fringe with beautiful, alternative visions. The media and the “mainstream” have discovered homo-capitalism, realizing that a tolerant marketplace filled with queer business means business-as-usual for the megamachine.

Rather than demanding the free-flow of erotic fluids, will we settle for a free market of entrepreneurs and their flunkies? Capital would rather sell queer-commodities than fight drag queens and dykes in the street. Despite the promise of growing acceptance and the marketability of our every fetish, reformists wish to water down everything distinct and sexy about same-sex love. They want the transgendered blurs and twists to be flattened by conformity or made invisible by the media until our movement appears like an all too familiar singles ad: “straight-acting, straight-looking, no fats or femmes please.” The “Movement,” defined by an emerging les/bi/ gay aristocracy that embraces the socio-cultural assumptions of the heteropatriarchy, is not our movement.

Queer anarchy loves and fucks and theorizes and shouts and fucks-shit-up in the face of queer consumerism. Queer anarchy seeks a synthesis of voluptuous cooperation and voluntary cunnilingus, anti-statism and anal-eroticism. We will not dilute queer diversity on the altars of straight society, trading the closet for the corporate boardroom. As the chant goes: “We’re here, we’re queer...and we’re not going shopping.”

“Each year the faggots and their friends celebrate the coming out of summer. On the summer solstice they show themselves to the world.

The fairies make floats of hay and locust branches on their trucks. They make clothes from the daisies and the buttercups and the pansies and the Indian paintbrushes. They move slowly down the country roads singing to the maple trees and the wild roses. In a field high in the hills they gather to eat sweet pea flowers and drink dandelion wine. The wine and the smell of the flowers make them exuberant. The soft bodies and the melting sun make them ecstatic...

The faggots are dressed for play, the queens are dressed to live in another world. They have allowed their tatters of tinsel and lace to turn them into fantastic creatures that the world has never seen before. On this day, all the men play golf and leave the faggots and their friends alone to cavort and amuse each other in the streets of the devastated city.”

FE Note: This text has been illuminated by faggot experience and its discursive flavor owes itself to many tastes and shades of faggery. As many lesbian and bisexual feminist wimmin have articulated, “Queer” as an identification and a movement must resist the tendency to become a “boys club,” an ostensibly diverse community of discourses that has its ideas dictated by men. This article by no means wishes to be definitive of “queerness” in boy-love terms but seeks to be faithful to the authors’ experience. It includes quotes by wimmin and a grrrl-love perspective where it feels appropriate. We welcome the voices of lesbian and bisexual wimmin who consider themselves “queer anarchists” to help us expand this discussion. The narrative interwoven with my text comes from Larry Mitchell’s out-of-print fable, *The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions*.

The authors of this article invite other queer anarchists to submit writings for a queer anarchist newspaper, hopefully to be published for the 25th anniversary of Stonewall to be celebrated in New York in 1994. Send poetry, articles, and art to: PO Box 11589, Detroit, MI 48211.

fifth Estate

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