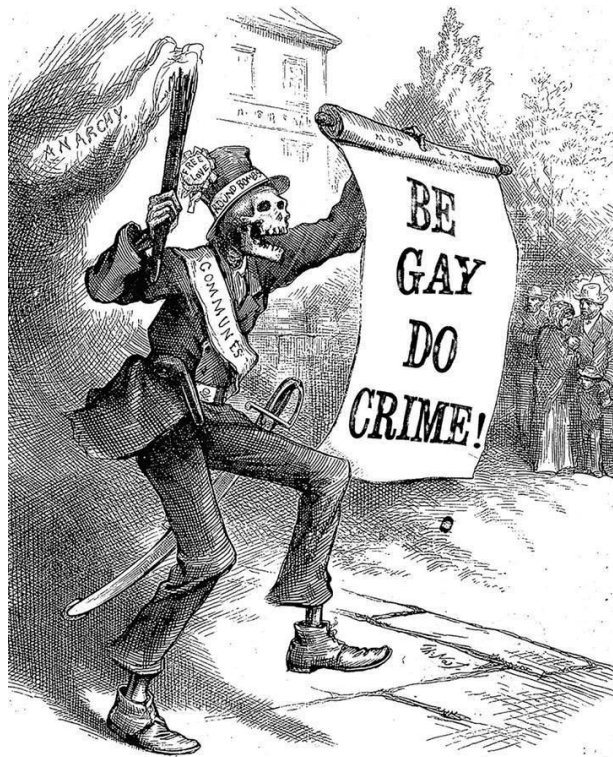


# Be Gay Do Crime

An Introduction

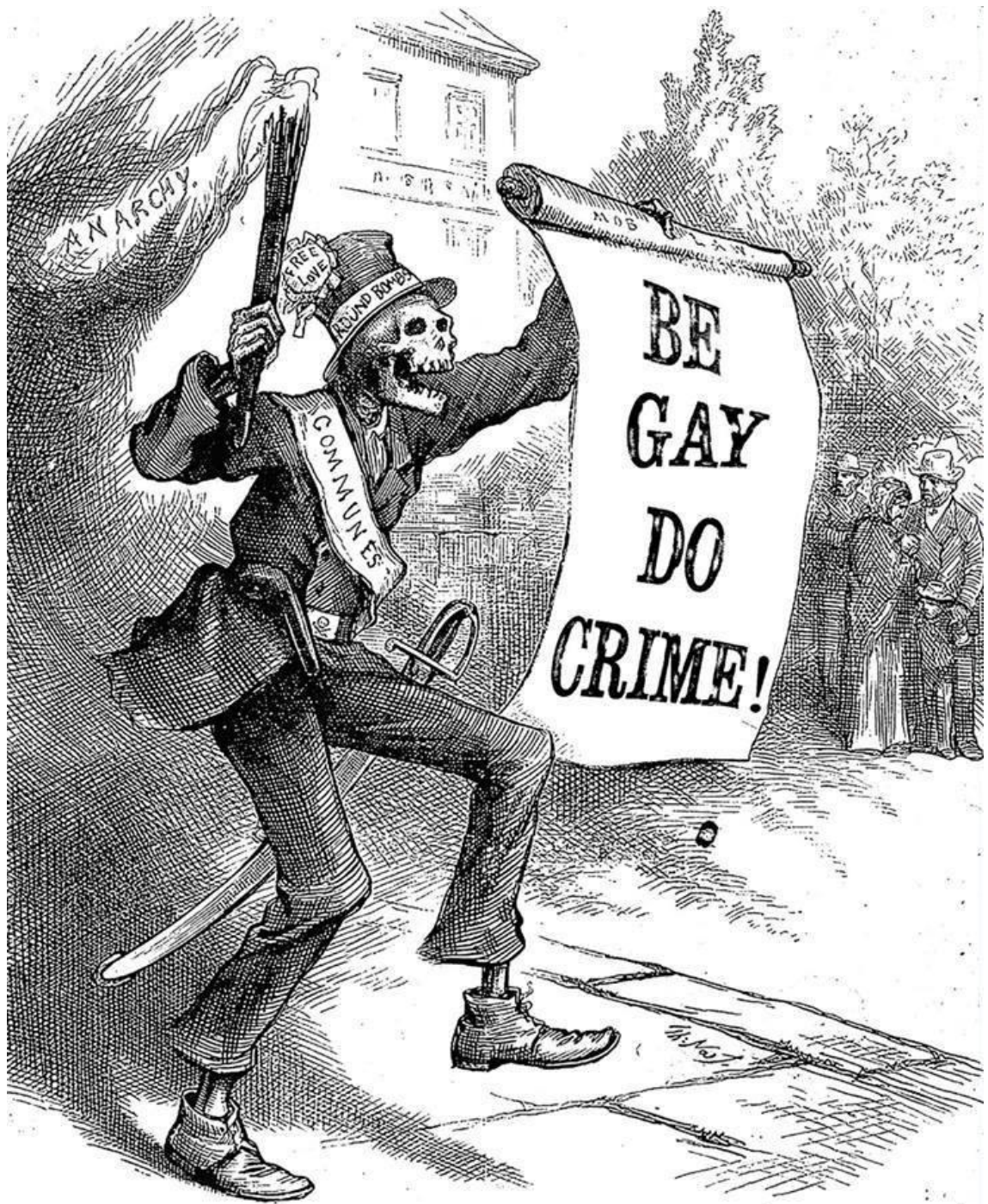
Mary Nardini Gang



"Many blame queers for the decline of this society—we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it's moral fabric—they couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as depraved, decadent and revolting—but oh, they ain't seen nothing yet."

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"Many blame queers for the decline of this society—we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it's moral fabric—they couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as depraved, decadent and revolting—but oh, they ain't seen nothing yet!"

*For Quincy Brinker, who, by disrupting the talk of yet another washed-up academic trying to write Marsha and Sylvia out of Stonewall, reminded us that not even the dead will be safe if our enemy is victorious.*

*For Feral Pines, last seen by some of her friends throwing rocks at police, by others in an assembly plotting psychic warfare against the fascists, and by others dancing and then defacing some fascist insignia in the moments before her death.*

*For Chris Chitty, who would surely use this opportunity to insult the insulters while transmitting some brilliant insight about where we have been and where we are going.*

*For Ravin Myking, whose beauty caused the pastor of a homophobic megachurch to froth at the mouth and declare the arrival of wolves to hunt his sheep, and caused the sheep to fall to the ground, speaking in tongues and praying for their absent god.*

*For Scout and the fires of memory.*

*For Vlad, ai ferri corti!*

For all our friends on the other side, we present these reflections.

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Ten years ago, we were seized by a frenzied spirit and, in a trancelike state, received a set of ten weapons for a war we were only just finding the words to describe. We were a cabal of teenage runaways, ne'er-do-wells, what Genet called criminal children, coming *ex nihilo*, from and with nothing but each other. We experienced the whole social order as inimical to freedom, desire, and our preferred relations, but suspected we were not alone in our visceral hatred for this world. So we encoded these tools — visions of excess and otherness — into a slim zine and sent it to the ends of the earth. For a decade we've followed it, across borders linguistic and militarized, to find the comrades (in a sense inalienable from, as Chris Chitty argued, the word's originary homoerotic implications) who received this same transmission: queer insurrection.

During that time, we stole away on trains with forged documents, on fraudulent flights, and in the cars of strangers who picked us up en route to one encounter after another. We found each other in forest encampments, communes at the center of cities, at blockades against the storm called progress, and in revelry within the hollowed out shells of deindustrialization. We fought enemies minute and gargantuan on streets and in alleyways. We were there when cities were burned, buildings occupied, boutiques looted, ports blockaded, wanna-be bashers humiliated, nazis punched. We delivered an empty coffin to the doorsteps of a killer cop, threw fire into the home of a john who killed a trans woman, and more through bank windows in the name of those imprisoned for refusing a similar fate. We instigated the wildest queer riots in a generation outside the gates of summits of the global elite, and again when an apologist for fascism emerged as a "dangerous faggot" in the hallowed halls of the intelligentsia.

We found our way into reading groups and meetings, waited for the men to stop speaking, and spoke only to be misunderstood. Misunderstood except by our friends, for whom we stockpiled pepperspray and stunguns because we wanted them alive, turned tricks to pay bail because we wanted them free, walked out of grocery stores because we wanted them fed, scammed universities to bring them to our cities, sold our time at strategic institutions so we could give them everything, got really good at showing specific forms of care (so good we found better hustles), waited with cigarettes and blankets outside the jails because we hated the idea of them in there alone, prepared for attacks like we would for a night with lovers, dedicated books to each other



and our beloved dead because these words mean nothing outside of the relationships which give them traction. We swore oaths to keep each others' secrets and keep each other alive. To hold fiercely to that brilliant intimacy we shared in moments of which we can never speak, to never speak our names either, to always speak sideways in handwritten letters on the sides of buildings, delivered by hand between traveling friends, or mailed innocuously under the eyes of guards and censors.

In the long tradition of queer criminality, we've expropriated literally everything we could. We wrote anthems and journals of exegesis, tended archives and prison distros, scammed pages by the thousands. We filled parcels with stolen fineries and sent them with love notes to distant friends. We determined each other deserving of the ten thousand things. We've fumbled through learning a thousand techniques of healing our broken bodies and spirits. We mastered the art of the *dérive*, wandering by instinct alone through the darkened streets of the varied metropolises seeking some ineffability we still can't name. We've experimented with every permutation of drugs and hormones to find the alchemy that opens us up to the world. We developed addictions chasing highs between one uprising and the next, and later helped one another find other ways. We experimented badly with dozens of models for new relations, but continued even at our worst, because we learned the hard way that disposability isn't an option. Eventually, aching flesh and the plant kingdoms revealed their secret languages. We learned love languages too: the inimitable joy of gifts and quiet declarations and eternities of now-time spent in affinity and in affection.

Now-time: a hard-won concept we only learned by way of a sequence of loss. We've hurt each other and had to learn to pick up the pieces of shattered relations. We've been betrayed too, but are disinclined to spill much ink on sellouts and turncoats. We've run away and we've returned humbled. Our friends and lovers have been taken from us, locked in cages, suicided by cops, burned up in dance parties at the margins of gentrifying cities. We know that our time with each other is fleeting, so we fight for every moment of interdependence and complicity.

This spring, along with the flowers, an image bloomed within some small nodes of the world wide web. A skeleton, dressed as a pirate, bearing a torch named 'anarchy,' with 'communes' emblazoned upon her chest, 'round bombs' around her hat and 'free love' on a pin. A sword hangs from her belt and she bears a scroll proclaiming "be gay! do crime!" The skeleton is frenzied.

At the bottom of the page run the lines: "Many blame queers for the decline of this society — we take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and its moral fabric — they couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as depraved, decadent and revolting — but oh they ain't seen nothing yet."

Here at the foundation of the image, we found words which rang familiar. After a slight slippage in time, we remembered the feeling of those words and having written them. They were initially published as a communique issued by a criminal queer association in an underground periodical published by anarchists in Milwaukee called *Total Destroy*.

Both the gang-form known as Bash Back! and this publication were expressions of a milieu based in Riverwest, a discreet (and at times not so discreet) anarchist neighborhood since the end of World War II. After the war, the nascent bohemian anarchist subculture that had been developing in the war resister camps among writers and art freaks, and some christians, splintered in a diaspora that bore the newly freed mystics to New York and San Francisco. A small enclave ended up in Riverwest and stayed, joining the Galleanist anarchist lineage rooted in the city. The

neighborhood remained a constant site of struggle, sometimes armed, with the forces of law and order. In the neighborhood one can find a certain crossroads at which a variety of struggles have intersected: queer struggles, struggles against racism and fascism, against the police, for the liberation of foodways, along with a dense layering of underground cultures. Distinct anarchist currents consistently cohabitated that neighborhood, debating positions and ways. Around the time of the Nardini Gang communiques, insurrectionaries, queers, race traitors, and eco-extremists came together under the roof of an anarchist space. This particular infoshop (the Cream City Collectives) was one of the many anarchist spaces that had stood at that exact intersection going back decades.

This is the place where we found ourselves when, a few months after the initial publication of “*Toward the Queerest Insurrection*,” emissaries from the future spoke through fires set across the seas. Insurrection broke out. Not in Milwaukee, but in Greece. Civilization died within the bounds of the nation-state mythologized as the epicenter of its birth. The police executed a teenage anarchist named Alexis Grigoropoulos in another long-term anarchist neighborhood, Exarcheia (*ex-*, out of; *-archeia*, rulership). Exarcheia is a place where anarchy, the Beautiful Idea, had never gone quiet, and so when a cop murdered a youth — an encounter so devastatingly routine in the US — there at the crossroads which is now Alexis’ hero-shrine, the whole world caught fire. The insurrection had come.

The fires that burned there for seventeen nights sent embers to the far corners of the world, and these found places where the flame could catch. That flame caught in our obscure neighborhood wrapped in rivers, and it changed everything for us. Those seventeen days opened up a narrow gate such as Walter Benjamin proposed existed in each moment. That gate opened up in the bizarre, internationalist, mycelial web woven by anarchists across the globe. All throughout the anarchist galaxy, the messiah came. We bore witness. We saw the river flow backwards. We saw the Event, the Open. The fires lit in Greece spread across the globe as metropolises and suburbs and unceded territories all throughout the world in a non-linear, expanding and evolving polyvalent front, a border between an old world decaying and a new one emerging.

For many, the realization was brought by disaster or insurgency in response to the hidden daily disaster of policing. In the US, the idea spread through the infrastructure of the various nodes created by the insurrectionary anarchists of the preceding decade. The first real encounter with the fire itself, on this continent, occurred in the opening days of 2009 when the city of Oakland burned in response to the police murder of Oscar Grant. By way of solidarity actions and the stories of travelers, anarchists who were present for that opening of the door on the west coast of this accursed nation, spread word that the insurrection had come and everyone should act accordingly.

Bash Back! was one of many currents which took that message to heart. In the context of the network’s emergent praxis, a proposal surfaced which insisted on a new form of life: criminal, queer, anarchist. In short, devotion to the new world emerging, indifference to the social order dying, and war with those who would defend its memory or attempt to reanimate its corpse. We realized that time and identity are fictions, but that we are bound to our ancestors and can only heal from the violences by addressing generations of trauma. We realized that the moment was always immanent, and that we simply needed to shift perspectives to access it. Anarchy had always been there beneath the paving stones. And we saw it, and were forever changed, and now had to live according, not in the time that remains, but in the time after. The distribution of the anonymous text “Desert” through green anarchist nodes put forward the proposal that the world

would not end in one single gesture of revolution or collapse, but would die as a patchwork, and from that humus would rise new worlds, plural.

In the clash with the alt-right we are encountering another of those worlds. Diane di Prima said it best in her revolutionary letters:

And it seems to me the struggle has to be waged on a number of different levels:  
they have computers to cast the I Ching for them  
but we have yarrow stalks  
and the stars  
it is a battle of energies, of force-fields, what the newspapers  
call a battle of ideas

Since the moment when the Bash Back! network encountered the clash of the new world breaking into existence, we've experimented in ways to live in this new world with which we're bound up in some divine act of co-creation. We, and these words, have gone to the corners of the world, announcing, as the frenzied skeleton above, our magic: Be Gay! Do Crime!

This development of means of living and fighting in this new world has looked different for each of us. We have suffered unimaginable losses and learned a thousand ways of healing. We studied to become specialized practitioners of these varied modalities. We built networks of care to support each other through betrayals, repression, and the death of our friends. We learned to care for each others' wounds and cover each others' rents. Many of us work with spirits and ancestors. Some people got into publishing. Some moved to the wilds and are learning its mysteries. We have abolitionist fanatics. We have antifascist researchers who've committed their lives to documenting the movement of our ancestral enemy. We've learned to fight, to attack, to hold space afterwards. We have been at every uprising in the last decade and have shared understandings by way of them. Those of us who continued the path of sex work are now struggling against the State's deployment of new repressive and cybernetic techniques. Some people have gone entirely underground. Some have learned the sacred methods of altering the body. As we speak, people are studying the stars to find their way. Some messengers are still wandering, many have stayed put and are now deepening their animistic relationship to place (yes, in the cities too). We have among us practitioners of sado-masochism, queer performance, afro-futurism, chaos magic, "public health," herbalism, diasporic traditions, long-form prisoner correspondence, poetry.

This panoply could be looked at as a set of tactical discussions, but this view must be turned on its head. These are not methods to bring about the new world, these are ways of living that assume its immanent being. We have continued from the proposal published ten years ago in "Criminal Intimacy" that our relationships are our strength and that those relationships were forged in the moments we found each other while the doors stood open. Strategy does not precede the moment but emerges in its aftermath. Insurrection is the messiah and it has already come. The question since has been how to proceed. It is no surprise that anarchists who turn toward mysticism (Fredy Perlman, Ursula Le Guin, or Diane di Prima) at some point come to study *the Tao* — the way.

We proceeded, despite the end of the world, seeking joy everywhere we could. Our commu- niques took the ruins for granted and we insisted upon dancing amid them. Sex parties, dance parties, street parties, reading parties — partying emerged as a central form in that frenzied moment. Our later inquiries into the sacred nature of the revel — into the bacchanals and nighttime

sabbats — revealed an intrinsic relationship between partying and the world-making arts. In our parties, we opened onto connection with each other, onto other realms and other gestures.

The realization of the insurrectionary dimension of the party proved dangerous precisely for its potential to be reified as the party of insurrection. By way of the circulation of a small blue book,<sup>1</sup> some who reveled in flames alongside us became fixated on the proposed re-emergence of the party form, the very structure of synthesis that had dominated the revolutionary imaginations of lost generations. Where we came to understand the party as spiritual, they desired a political party. Where we sought forms of connection, they submitted to an apparatus based first and foremost upon separation. The party as proposed by those who penned the little blue book was to be invisible and thereby avoid the failure of the past century's party form. We remain unconvinced. We had already experienced the death of the party, and had already dealt with the authoritarian cult tendencies that followed from it. When the formal dimension of the Bash Back! network had run its course, we quickly analyzed the moment so as to move beyond it. Following an excerpt from "Criminal Intimacy," a section of the conclusion to *Queer Ultraviolence* titled "On the Party" put it this way:

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. BB! 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, it was a failure). BB! was never about queer issues or queer politics. Instead, the project took as its issue the lives of its participants. Rather than the motifs of victimization and charity regurgitated *ad nauseam* in activist circles, the BB! 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 BB! as an amalgamation of desires, dispositions, acts, processes, gestures, and complicities. BB! is as much wrapped up in sexual practice as in criminal act, as much in strategy as in style. The process of BB! 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 as much of survival, of violence, of love, of life itself. And so, whatever the limitations of what Bash Back! was, it is the how (the way) that truly demonstrates the insurrectionary potential that I celebrate.

We took life itself as our project. Whatever rhetoric it may employ, no Party can say the same. The very function of the Party is to expand its own operation by vampirizing the life energy of all subsumed within it. We took that organizationalist dead end as a point of departure and had already begun other experiments. Sadly, by this point the straight comrades already stopped paying attention to that process of clarification.

We've learned a great deal in the last decade, most of which can be summarized by simply saying that we did not know what we were doing. Finding ourselves now in this position to speak across time, having an opportunity to reissue these words to some who might find them

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<sup>1</sup> *The Coming Insurrection*, the Invisible Committee.



for the first, we have a responsibility to clarify: *These initial words are not political; they are magical.*

The most studied practitioners of magic will tell you something remarkably similar to the life-long insurrectionaries: the secret is really to begin. Between the inquiries of the chaos magicians and the shared reflections of insurrection oriented anarchists, a whole host of techniques emerge in common: the means to choose a story and make it real by applying energy, the invocation of the dead, queer ancestral working, necromantic visits to Emma Goldman's grave, the reproduction of apocryphal texts, conjuration by way of magical language, the necessity of abundant sacrifice, fires set to purify, rendezvous below the moon's fullness and attacks carried out beneath its dark, rites of mourning & revenge, raising hell at the pulpits of the false priests, the interpretation of dreams and omens, the secret names of our beloveds and their encrypted sigils scrawled across city walls, the visionary states of *jouissance* and spirit-contact by way of dance, the decentering of the self and the openness to the other, the pacts made at the crossroads — these are keys to an otherworldly litany, a grammar of worldmaking by way of ritual action.

Worldmaking, because we actually effect the web of power — experientially and reciprocally — by way of our engagement. You see, the world really did end for us in December of 2012 when we lost Ravin. While the world waited out the clock to see if the machines would self-sabotage, we scrawled 'No Future' as epitaph for this world we were leaving, not as an effort to preemptively snuff out our light, but rather to light up another world which was already in germinating, there beneath the skin. We needed skillsets to engage our friends among the dead, and they in turn gestured toward an animist worldview, toward the enspirited world. We live in a world haunted by all the ghosts of a genocidal leviathan, where the land is full of bones screaming out for vengeance and the very architecture of these cities filled by all the dead who built it, where every spectacle of inclusion is wracked by the *evil eye* cast by the excluded. We've learned to be in relation, that any space has only been taken back for enchantment and reciprocity in co-creation with these spirits.

When we look at the transmutations which the anarchist galaxy has undergone in the dreamtime of the past decade, it is undeniably other than the heteronormative, boring void into which we first issued these enchantments. Strong, varied and dynamic queer currents course through our space, tracing previously unimaginable constellations of thought and lives. All the best and all the worst of what we wrote, all our illuminations and our omissions, came true. The most dismissible and petty conflicts in our little world have been elevated to a global and even cosmic stage. The locks we picked opened doors we could barely imagine in strong hearts wherever they lay. If only we had already internalized Diane di Prima's insistence that "you can have whatever you ask for" so "ask for everything."

Because these are magical words, and because our accomplices hear them and respond even beyond the veil of death, we cannot afford to miscommunicate. Let's hold a mirror up to our ten weapons and supply them with their necessary caveats. These ten, taken together, form a sort of minor arcana:

- I. Queerness in its negative sense
- II. Normalcy
- III. Social war

- IV. Queerness as conflict
- V. The other, the excluded
- VI. Repression, force relations
- VII. Attack!
- VIII. A subterranean riotous inheritance
- IX. Space, terrain, excess
- X. Refusal, the self-described anarchist

In furtherance of this tarot, we present the reversals:

## **X**

Hold onto that moment when you first called yourself an anarchist. Whatever your story, surely it was a refusal, a preference not to, saying “no.” You may not realize it, but this is the first time in your life you set a boundary with a world that attempts to erode your capacity to do so. Find that moment and that affect and hold firmly to it. Whatever else may be taken from you, they cannot take this. Let’s dispense with the tired conversation about the individual and the collective. We need each other and still each of us needs recourse to that intimately personal affect. Can we leave it at that? In the trying times, when we feel alone against the world, we will always have that initiating refusal. If we tend that little candle, we can always find our way, back to each other if necessary. The anarchist tension adapts to whatever comes next.

## **IX**

We received and will do our best to transmit this mystery: queer criminality. This is an ancestral current, a we, inherited from a long and varied line of rioters, thieves, writers, hustlers, mystics, ranters, freaks, and artists. Like the descendants of any ancestral line, we are the currently incarnated members of that spirit house. Nothing began with us: we are simply the present bearers of that weak messianic potential to make it whole again, to redeem all our dead, by way of heaven on earth. In all that we do, we are in co-creation with these spirits. Let’s learn to do it well. When we try to take space — or more realistically, to hold onto it against the annihilating flows of progress — it is for these reciprocal relationships between each other and all of our ghosts. We are fighting for the survival of a way of life: one criminal, queer, anarchic, mystic, other. Each of these predicates a source of strength, a lineage, a collection of techniques for the survival of people this world has tried thoroughly to destroy. This is why we strive for excellence and excess in all that we do. It has always been about queer forms of life. Beware those who speak about other lives but not of the corpses in their mouth, or of the screaming bones upon which they walk.

## VIII

The critique of assimilation is still only understood halfway. The dominant line within the radical queer corners of the professional activist world and the school-to-publishing pipeline holds that it is enough to simply take the right political positions. So long as one speaks the right language, ethical (here meaning happy) life exists within Leviathan. The impulse to critique assimilation, in its first instance, refuses this acquiescence. Be wary of any who remind too quickly that we all make sacrifices under capitalism. That is true, of course, but remember that to sacrifice is to make something sacred, to give it up for the spirits. This world conditions us to lose things easily because it is always taking them away. We choose to take back power over what we give up, for whom, and why. You'll recognize your true friends by the way they answer these three questions. There is a subtle difference between careerist and conspirator-within-a-given-institution. One way or another, those with nothing to lose but each other, and by extension a whole world to gain, remember one another and act accordingly. It's a matter of priority: this dead world, or the ones we are cultivating.

## VII

Attack! Because it is always available, and because it is the real marker of the boundaries of our little propulsive heterotopias — worlds plural. World-making gives us the ability to move our prefer-not-to into a sideways gesture, a preferring differently, otherworldly. The question of opacity (the closet, passing) is an old one for us. The queers who came before us navigated with several strategies, and it's up to us to look critically at all of them. It's all drag: a mask on our emergent world. The mask conceals the real in order to make attack possible. Realness is always a game played with normalcy. Those who haven't realized this are dangerous indeed. An attack of whatever intensity is a small door through which the real and its world enters. Its world is animistic — take this into account when choosing your target. All the cosmos is alive and watching and actually matters. If you've followed us this far into the labyrinth, you can always call to presence the energy for even the smallest attack. Let that possibility be Ariadne's thread as we go further. Let these rituals signal to conspirators, embodied and not.

## VI

Repression is the attempt on the part of a decaying world to smother new ones in their infancy. We've withstood them all. The Holocaust and the aids crisis respectively destroyed two moments in the preceding century when our world outgrew their comfort for it. In both cases the revolutionaries and the otherwise marginalized died first. Entire generations of our elders have been stolen from us. Remember this when you forget who you are. Remind your friends, too, if they forget. The state has soft means at its disposal. The criminalization of public parks goes hand in hand with the proliferation of cybernetic cruising apps. The benevolent campaigns of "trafficking reformers" keep sex workers on the streets or worse. The wealthy will afford their prep while people with aids continue to die on their doorsteps. The circulation of the images of particular bodies through social media numbs us with blue light and distracts from the systematic execution of those same excluded bodies. We've only made it this far by fighting repression in

all its forms. Pay attention to those worlds that are fighting it differently. Learn from those who fought it before. We'll need all the various techniques against our shared enemy. We need the healing techniques too. We've inherited so much trauma from these failed attempts. But we can choose to heal in these lifetimes, to not pass the shit on.

## V

The core of our world is an otherness, and so each of us liminally navigates the other worlds. We stand between, always a little extra, too much for any world but the one we're building between us. Pay attention to where you feel other and whom you feel at home with. This is affinity: knowledge of another, and of their desires and capacities. This isn't deterministic; ancestral traumas can be overcome, but only by those committed to that overcoming. This is a matter of hospitality, of the response of a world to the other at its gates. Never separate any concept of reconciliation — for example, *tikkun olam* — from its spiritual grounding in the vision of a living world, of an enchanted materialism. Resist the impulse for homogeneity. Circulate through whatever worlds will have us. Jailbreak the others.

## IV

To recognize queerness in conflict means to address the residue of a dead world within us — trauma in our bodies, possession by egregores, lies on our tongues. Be humble; know that you are addressing wounds inflicted upon countless generations. Be gentle with yourself and each other in these matters, but remember that healers often have the bloodiest hands.

## III

Social war, understood as a movement to expand upon this or that limited conception of struggle, gestures welcomingly to the other, includes the stories of resilience and subversion which disorder any tendency toward a scientific (read: systematized) fetish on the part of militants.

## II

We do this because we remember that Normalcy is itself our enemy. Avoid those who read the backs of Foucault books while gleefully flaunting their normalizing impulses. In any insurrectionary space, attend to the freaks. The Norm arms itself with terror, because some truly believe in it. The devotees of Normalcy — in its psychic, libidinal, affective, disciplinary or ideological forms — will be cops when the insurrection dies.

## I

'Q' then, will never be a coherent letter tacked as a bridge on some list of identities. The past decade shows the poverty or ruin of every attempt to do so. We've said already that these words

are magic. We might add that they are *wyrd* — the Old English for fate and all the other invisible and nonlinear causalities we are woven into and which gives us the modern word ‘weird’. The queerest insurrection demands the weirdest, the most enmeshed in the unseen, the most in relationship with all that teems just beyond the normative filter we are still fighting to unlearn. Find those who straddle that filter, a foot in each world. Share your methods, share what you’ve learned, share the stories of your dead. The dead we hold in common make us family — some other form of kinship than the Norm and its terror. We need each other today more than ever. We want to win this time, to *win all the time*, and the dead want that too.

## 0

Here. Now. In this place and time. The mirror of our current inquiry faces the mirror that this project always carried within itself. Mirrors upon mirrors; we are not strangers here. Our enemies have always mobilized the myth of Narcissus against the criminal and queer. These inquisitors and specialists in torture can only do this by subtracting this myth from the enchanted worldview whence it emerges, a view wherein other worlds exist, there are windows between them, and true communication is possible. In the notes to his translation of *The True Grimoire*, the faggot sorcerer Jake Stratton-Kent suggests that this story is in fact an early encryption of scrying — the magical technique in which one uses a mirror to communicate with other spirits and places. Narcissus gazed too long at the underworld and was immortalized as a delicate flower with such a fixed gaze. This is the sign of the immortality of the vegetable world, of the cycle between life and death, of the infinite. Each is slightly other, each a different variation on the story. We possess the freedom of discernment, choice. Theorists of games refer to the magic circle — the boundary within which the players agree upon the objectives and the rules. Zero: *the magic circle*. Zero: the space of all potential. Be careful what you say in this space; have your wits about you. What happens here extends to all levels. Zero: from nothing and returning to it. Zero: always the Fool, a stranger entering seemingly from nowhere. Who are you? Where are you from and where are you going?

The skeleton has been here, frenzied, before. The meme described above *detourned* a bit of propaganda from California dating back to the 1880s that vilifies the queer and anarchist currents then present on these shores. The skeleton has never left. She remains present along the diasporic threads which have always undermined the southern border. She is the Holy Death. The patron of criminals and queers, of exiles from worlds. She wears other robes but she insists as the constant reminder of our own mortality and of those we’ve already lost. If the messianic currents within western magical traditions are true — and that the final judgment is the return of the dead — then the passing of that moment means our dead are among us, the ancestors have returned and they are insisting that we have a chance to make it all whole again. The task remains to put our ways in common.

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Mary Nardini Gang  
Be Gay Do Crime  
An Introduction  
2019

Be Gay Do Crime

Elements of this introduction were presented at the North American Anarchist Studies Network conference in Montréal in the spring of 2018, on the occasion of the ten year anniversary of the initial publication of “Toward the Queerest Insurrection.” Others were presented at a small gathering hosted by Aleatory Books in Seattle later in the year. Some appear here for the first time. The full book that this text introduces can be found at <https://contagionpress.com/pocketbooks/be-gay-do-crime>.

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