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Vulgarities on Gender and Pronouns

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My “preferred gender pronouns are the sound of shattering glass, the weight of [a] hammer in [my] hand[,] and the sickly-sweet aroma of shit on fire.” If that creates discomfort in you, ‘it’ is acceptable as well; ‘it’ pronouns—from a personal, volatile, experience with gender—serve as an attack on the gendered binary hellscape we live in, especially when no opportunity for physical attack presents itself.¹ To me, being called ‘it’ represents the throwing of a fire bomb towards the construct of gender; *the point is to make you uncomfortable*. Violence against the gender binary is not only necessary to undo the violence it inflicts upon all of us, it is the natural and innate reaction of those who refuse gendered domestication. My position on this gendered purgatory

¹ Anarchist-Nihilist philosophy argues for the concept that you should attack—in other words, enact revolution—in the present moment; there is no time except now. Nihilists posit that, as anarchists, we should not wait for the growth of a large social movement in order to affect revolutionary change. Instead, we find it obvious that waiting for the future is, in and of itself, an oppressive notion. It is not my intention to contradict these ideas, nor to pacify individuals into complacency; I simply wish to expand on these views and open up new opportunities for anti-gender action and negation.

is one of total negation; I do not attack gender out of a positive programme or political aspiration, rather, I chase the radical allure of *Nothingness* in my sprint towards freedom. In addition to being a negation of gendered domestication, the practice of adopting it/its pronouns is also a pursuit into the realm of time travel and an unraveling of the flow of time. ‘It’ has been used for ages to dehumanize individuals. Today, ‘it’ is often applied to trans people nonconsensually in order to invalidate their experience with gender and gender expression. This dehumanization and invalidation is exactly what I hope to tap into and utilize against our gendered society.

Gender is a factory which manufactures and produces cogs for an even greater machine; this machine is often labeled as capitalism, civilization, or society.² As a trans-woman, I am intimately familiar with the violence of gender. From the moment I was born, an unwanted gender identity was thrust upon me. This nonconsensual, forceful, gendering has inflicted incredible violence and turmoil on my existence. The rigidness of the role of ‘male’ and my failures to live up to it have brought about immense sorrow; as a child I strived to fulfill the strict rules surrounding my assigned gender at birth, but was woefully unable to fit within the confined space. Intense bullying from both other kids and my parents, compelled me to conceal and disguise my *Unique* (an egoist term for the individual when exempt from the trappings of identity); I had to hide almost all aspects of my personality that made me *me*. I was, essentially, beaten into submission and made a willful servant to my assigned gender identity. Not only was the role of male a confined space I did not fit into, the air inside this box was, itself, suffocating. Now, loosely located within a new box, I find myself able to

² The process of production—especially through factories—is an inherently violent one. The manufacturing of goods is an assault, both on the individual’s liberty, and on the planet. Factories rely on exploitation to function; without the extraction of materials from the earth nor the theft of life from workers, they would cease to exist.

breathe for once in my life. Unfortunately, I have, once again, discovered myself to be pressed up against these new walls, without any sort of leg room.

My experience as an individual cannot be defined by any combination of labels; any attempt at drawing out exactly who and what I am will ultimately be a deficient description. Furthermore, prescribing any identity on to the *Unique* will eventually lead to the individual being constrained by that identity. An example comes to mind; when we identify as a failure, we will manifest further failings. My identity cannot be reduced to that of just 'woman', just as I cannot be reduced to identity period. 'It' is not an identifier; 'it' signals a lack of identity. When people use 'it' they denote, not only an absence of gender and humanity, but also an absence of identification altogether.

Identity—more specifically, gender identity—is an assault on the individual. Trans people are well aware of this incursion on our *Unique*. Dysphoria is an encapsulation of this violence; we internally beat ourselves for behaving like something we are not and we physically cut ourselves for failing to appear as something we are. No matter how well we “pass” as our preferred gender, our dysphoria will always show us the imperfections. This points to a possible solution; to end our dysphoria it is not enough to fumble about in the boxes of gender, rather, it is imperative we destroy all that upholds the gender binary. Dysphoria exists as long as the phantom of gender possesses us and everyone else in society; it was not something we were born with but something that was instilled on us from the moment we are born. This is not to say that we must simply conform to our assigned gender in order to do away with our discomfort, far from it. Instead, we should annihilate all apparatuses of control and description that would seek to impose their draconian rules of identity onto our unruly selves.

'It' is commonly used to refer to objects; it is a universal term and suggests no specificity. And while I desire to and have already branched into this concept, I have also discovered a fascination

with its common utilization in regards to individuals. When a transphobe uses 'it' in reference to a trans person, they are not only dehumanizing the trans person, they are attempting to imply that the trans person's gender is not valid. I do not believe an antithesis to the transphobe would be to normalize the usage of 'it' in regards to trans people. Rather, I yearn for his discomfort by agreeing full heartedly with him. I will not be subjugated to the identity of human, nor will I attempt to assimilate to the construct of gender by implying some-sort-of validity under it. Of course, my experience as an anti-gender trans woman—who frequently makes no attempts at 'passing'—is not valid in the eyes of the gender binary; an individual who negates all identity and fails to present consistent expression of that identity to boot, is never going to hold validity in our gendered world. Therefore, I crave no validity in this world, only its destitution.

Through the combination of total ambiguity and negation of gender offered by it/its pronouns, I believe I can begin to attain the elusive *Nothing* I long for. *Nothing* is defined by both its literal interpretation and nothing as a concept; that is to imply, it means nothing at all and existing in negation simultaneously. This contradiction is intentional; *Nothing* negates itself as a positive concept so as to exist outside of all other ideas and worlds. It both exists and doesn't exist. I search for *Nothing* simply because it is unlike anything else in our scope of reality. Unlike every-thing else, *Nothing* is not bent on growth nor on progress; it is the destroyer of worlds *and* the destroyer of itself.

The moment I was ejected from my mother's womb I was immediately referred to as 'it'. By using this pronoun the doctor was not identifying me by anything; he was neither gendering me, nor imposing his humanity onto me. Instead, he is denoting a lack of identity altogether, as all that currently existed was the (extremely) limited experiences of a new born baby. However, in an unfortunate about-face, this led directly into my gendering; the complete sentence being "It's a boy!" This was the first time a gender was

of constituting ourselves on our own terms, against the natural order. Though we forego the privilege of naturalness, we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth.

If this is your path, as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in this monstrous benediction: May you discover the enlivening power of darkness within yourself. May it nourish your rage. May your rage inform your actions, and your actions transform you as you struggle to transform your world.

gels, functioned as messengers and heralds of the extraordinary. They served to announce impending revelation, saying, in effect, "Pay attention; something of profound importance is happening."

Hearken unto me, fellow creatures. I who have dwelt in a form unmatched with my desire, I whose flesh has become an assemblage of incongruous anatomical parts, I who achieve the similitude of a natural body only through an unnatural process, I offer you this warning: the Nature you bedevil me with is a lie. Do not trust it to protect you from what I represent, for it is a fabrication that cloaks the groundlessness of the privilege you seek to maintain for yourself at my expense. You are as constructed as me; the same anarchic Womb has birthed us both. I call upon you to investigate your nature as I have been compelled to confront mine. I challenge you to risk abjection and flourish as well as have I. Heed my words, and you may well discover the seams and sutures in yourself

...By speaking as a monster in my personal voice, by using the dark, watery images of Romanticism and lapsing occasionally into its brooding cadences and grandiose postures, I employ the same literary techniques Mary Shelley used to elicit sympathy for her scientist's creation. Like that creature, I assert my worth as a monster in spite of the conditions my monstrosity requires me to face, and redefine a life worth living. I have asked the Miltonic questions Shelley poses in the epigraph of her novel: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mold me man? Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me?" With one voice, her monster and I answer "no" without debasing ourselves, for we have done the hard work

appointed to me. By using it/its pronouns I aim to journey back to just before this time; I seek to undo my domestication by harkening back to a time that has long been lost. I only wish that, in doing so, I can revisit myself prior to when identity was instilled onto my individuality.

By partaking in this reversal of time, it is my hope that the oppressive continuum of time into the future all but disintegrates. The future rules everything; it is arguable that futurity ruled over even the greatest despots, and still commands the most powerful oligarchs. When Elon Musk builds upon his monopoly or tweets something asinine, he is not doing so to derive present enjoyment from these acts. Instead, he is buying or selling (or tweeting) so that his future self may reap the benefits. When we work our jobs, we have our eyes glued to the clock; we are dreaming of when we can clock out as well as the next pay day. When both finally arrive, we cannot stop the anxiety of our eventual return to work, and our paycheck only grants us imaginary numbers that can be spent at a later date. I demand freedom from futurity in favor of living in the moment; I demand to live in the moment as myself, without any bounds or boxes that might hinder the infinite expanse of my *Unique*.

The quote I began this essay with is from a piece entitled "*my preferred gender pronoun is negation*." I find it fitting then, that I have used that quote to start an essay dedicated to explaining the usage of it/its pronouns. 'It' carries with it the implication of negation; as stated above, 'it' holds no specificity in regards to what it is being used for. No identity is being imposed by the usage of 'it'. Instead, 'it' is a universal term that suggests complete ambiguity and no identification of the object, person, thing, animal, etc. Through this negation and ambiguity, it is my ambition to achieve the eradication of gender and a leap into the void of *Nothingness*. Gender exists to subjugate and specify; I will not be pinned down by definition, and I most certainly will not concede to domination. Rather,

I will transform into a fiery, impassioned, inferno that burns and shreds-to-bits every inch of this wretched society.

The confines of this gendered society have birthed a frothy, palpable, and inexorable rage which boils over from the pot of identity and lands on the stovetop of society, disintegrating its steel surface. This disintegration gives way to holes and caverns in which individual freedom can exist. These holes could be further described as windows to new dimensions from which strange and unfamiliar forms of individual expression bloom. Within these openings also exists times long forgotten, and, therefore, a stoppage of time from flowing further into the nonexistent future altogether. These holes are where we, as trans/anti-gender individuals, locate ourselves; as queers we inherently exist counter-to and outside of societal norms. We do not just live inside these holes; we are the holes, and our rage gives way to an exponential expansion of these ruptures.

While my favored form of attack exists within the unfolding of a riot, I can also find moments of freedom within the anti-identity of it/its pronouns. If I cannot constantly be physically burning and smashing the likes of bank storefronts and Starbucks windows, then I will metaphorically do so by existing as a monstrous vulgarity to the gender binary. If I cannot constantly be dressed head-to-toe in solid black, obscuring any identification, living outside of societal bounds, then I will obscure identification of my *Unique* under the disguise of what is now deemed to be socially acceptable; If it is now socially acceptable to introduce ourselves with our pronouns, then I will introduce myself with pronouns which shatter the illusion of societal acceptance and which broaden the holes created by my queerness.

I will now close this essay with a couple excerpts from the works of Susan Stryker in her piece entitled "*My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage*". Her usage of the story of Frankenstein's monster is a powerful metaphor/simile for the trans/anti-gender experience. Through these fiery passages it is my hope that she can best exem-

plify what I am attempting to get across, and that she can inspire action out of readers long after the performance of her piece.

I want to lay claim to the dark power of my monstrous identity without using it as a weapon against others or being wounded by it myself. I will say this as bluntly as I know how: I am a transsexual, and therefore I am a monster. Just as the words "dyke," "fag," "queer," "slut," and "whore" have been reclaimed, respectively, by lesbians and gay men, by anti-assimilationist sexual minorities, by women who pursue erotic pleasure, and by sex industry workers, words like "creature," "monster," and "unnatural" need to be reclaimed by the transgendered. By embracing and accepting them, even piling one on top of another, we may dispel their ability to harm us. A creature, after all, in the dominant tradition of Western European culture, is nothing other than a created being, a made thing. The affront you humans take at being called a "creature" results from the threat the term poses to your status as "lords of creation," beings elevated above mere material existence. As in the case of being called "it," being called a "creature" suggests the lack or loss of a superior personhood. I find no shame, however, in acknowledging my egalitarian relationship with non-human material Being; everything emerges from the same matrix of possibilities. "Monster" is derived from the Latin noun *monstrum*, "divine portent," itself formed on the root of the verb *monere*, "to warn." It came to refer to living things of anomalous shape or structure, or to fabulous creatures like the sphinx who were composed of strikingly incongruous parts, because the ancients considered the appearance of such beings to be a sign of some impending supernatural event. Monsters, like an-