



# *Destroy Gender*

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~ I ~

## **Destroy Gender**

### **Gender as Governance**

Gender is a hierarchy, one of the apparatuses of governance, that differentiates and categorizes bodies/people. Bodies are categorized into genders based on one's appearance, behavior, economic/social/cultural position, and others.<sup>1</sup> The categories are stacked in a hierarchy, where men and men's labor are more valued than women and women's labor (domestic work, youth/elderly care, psychological/social work, food service, retail, all jobs based on emotional labor, etc).<sup>2</sup>

Gender uses its categories to play a part in governing the social sphere to maintain social reproduction. It creates a gendered division of labor, between masculine and feminine, "man's work" and "women's work". Women's work is valued and paid less, and for much domestic work not at all. The valuing women's labor less than men's attempts to make working class women reliant upon men economically. The forced reliance on heterosexual relationships is as old as civilization and class society. Women are coerced, structurally and interpersonally, into relationships with men for the sake of survival, and the reproduction of civilization. As "Against the Couple-Form" puts it, "rather than an essentialist concept, the category of woman stems a gendered mode of exploitation and relegates certain types of labor to a private, unwaged sphere."<sup>3</sup> The sphere of reproductive labor.

Economic exploitation is not the only way gender governs us. On a social level, gender sets standards and norms for our bodies and behaviors. Bodies get put into categories based on secondary sex characteristics, voice, behaviors,

dress/aesthetic/ethnicity, etc. These expectations vary based upon social/cultural situation and position. Gender regulates bodies into certain norms to be interpreted into certain categories (man/woman, etc). These norms are regulated by stricter interpretation for women, and with harsher punishment for transgression. Gender is what tells women that we are not enough or too much anything and everything. Gender regulates our movements (“it’s not safe at night”) and our capabilities (“that’s not what women do”, “women shouldn’t do this or that”). Gender creates our anxieties/desires to be “manly” and “womanly”, to meet the capitalist ideal of easily identifiable, categorizable, and predictable bodies and actions. *Gender governs the social sphere.*

Governance and gender define all aspects to the hierarchy of civilization. Governance is the regulation, normalization, and (re)production of bodies/people and territory. It does so through prisons, police, surveillance, borders, gender, work, evictions, school, racism, debt, xenophobia, etc, creating a class of those who benefit and a class of those who suffer.<sup>4</sup>

### **Done be to is what?**

Everyone in the milieu knows to make total destroy, abolish whatever, to smash this or that. Gender is but another apparatus to be smashed, burned, and scattered. To destroy an apparatus, we must destroy its roots. But first, the soil that covers and protects the roots.

The police, racists, misogynists—patriarchs of all varieties—this is the soil we must dig up.

Easier said than done. Confronting police requires militancy (vigilance + awareness + tactical knowledge), but militancy

demands the kind of commitment and preparation many aren't ready for. In most 'progressive milieus', going on the offensive is seen as hasty, ill-advised, or at worst, as reactionary.<sup>5</sup> Revolutionaries know that those who wait for the state's offensive to hit them, who wait for some tragedy to use as leverage and justification for reform, are the real reactionaries. Revolutionaries need to push beyond half-measures, beyond reform, concession and rollback, and push for breaking from the normalcy of daily life.

*We must push for insurrection against all governance.*

*The Coming Insurrection* states, "The goal of any insurrection is to become irreversible."<sup>6</sup> To be irreversible means the roots are dug up and patriarchy, and all forms of hierarchy, are dismantled. In more real terms, it means that we have communities and spaces that aren't just safe, but dangerous to those who oppose our desires and our spaces. Not just a reading group safe space, but reclaimed territories capable of providing for the needs of the working class/women/the excluded (free from gender/gendered violence). These spaces can't simply be given to us by a higher power. Through occupations of the borderlands and sites of production, or less formal territories of resistance, such as friends who have each other's backs, we will make or take the commons back.

### **No Tucking, No Masters**

Our insurrection against gender cannot stop with just gender self-identification, or with a new list of terms for everyone to learn to respect. Insurrection must push beyond these limits to a free-play of actions, behaviors, sexuality, etc. Where doing or enjoying one action or another does not categorize you into a limiting role.

To be free from governance entails being free from gender. Being free from gender entails being free from categorization, normalization, and exploitation of governance.

**Endnotes:**

[1] If one can separate the social from the political, private, etc

[2] These are not universal categories, exceptions may exist but we are looking at the structure of it all.

[3] Lies: a journal of materialist feminism, Volume 1

[4] Distinct but not separable

[5] Viewing attacks on police as reactionary is a view normally held by those more liberal in our milieu, who still take their morality from the state despite the state being the one who facilitates our murders and misery. While I don't think we should take their critiques to heart, we should still be aware of their presence in our circles and spaces.

[6] Pg 130, Semiotext(e)

## ~ II ~

# Beyond Another Gender Binary

### **Against Femme, Against Gender, Against All Binaries**

There has been a trend among the radical milieux over the last couple years to start using the term femme in place of woman. The reasons for this shift in language have varied depending on who you ask in the milieux, but the general reason behind the shift is to make 'our' understanding of patriarchy more inclusive to anyone who doesn't strictly identify as a woman. Taken from the Wikipedia page for "Femme":

Femme is an identity used by women (including trans women) and nonbinary people in relation to their femininity. As a gender identity, it usually denotes an individual who is "non-binary or queer femme gender specifically and inherently addresses femmephobia and the systematic devaluation of femininity as part of their politics". The term is used exclusively for queer people regardless of whether they identify as female.

This replacement isn't just semantics, it has been a change from seeing woman as the oppressed subject of patriarchy to seeing anyone femme, or feminine, as an oppressed subject of patriarchy. It's also a shift from seeing oppression as one's relationship to gendered violence to one's relationship to aesthetic, femininity, behaviour, and social norms.

Before, 'our' understanding of patriarchy was that only women could be oppressed by patriarchy and gender(ed violence). That is, if our understanding of patriarchy never dug deep enough to understand that there are a multitude of experiences and subjectivities that cannot be fit neatly into one of two categories (oppressed and oppressor, male or female, etc). For

anyone who held such ideas, moving from that crass analysis of patriarchy and the apparatus of gender toward an interpretation that includes more experiences than before is a positive shift. But, like all interpretations and theory, it falls short in its goals and in its analysis. The shift to the term femme does little, if nothing, to challenge patriarchal categorization/identification/normalization, binaries, the reproduction of patriarchy, or its economic basis, and it does not truly create a theory of oppression that is inclusive of all subjectivities/experiences.

### **What Does It Mean to be Femme?**

*Who gets to be femme? Who is actually oppressed? Who is femme enough to be considered oppressed? Are all women femme?*

As with all theories of oppression, if there is an oppressed subject/class then there is a corresponding oppressor subject/class (such as whites oppressing non-whites and the rich/bourgeoisie oppressing the poor/proletariat). Under the previous understanding of patriarchy where women are the only class oppressed by gender, men were considered the oppressor class. With the contemporary understanding of patriarchy, femmes are the oppressed class and mascs are the oppressors. All identities are defined by who is deemed an other.

According to everydayfeminism.com, femme “is an explicitly queer title, it is a gender expression that encompasses a wide range of identities. Gay and queer cis-men, trans-men, and gender-queer folx often identify as Femme. Saying that femmes are always only women perpetuates a gendered binary that excludes lots of people.” Besides the questionable use of queer as an umbrella term, this definition of femme attempts to



include the experiences of many who don't identify as women. While it does include some femme gay/trans men and non-binary people, it does so by abandoning women who aren't femme. Women who aren't femme, such as butch women and closeted trans women, are cast aside, either to be ignored completely or to be labeled as 'masculine' and oppressors. As if butch women are to blame for the strife of femmes, as if being a femme gay man means you cannot be a proponent of patriarchal control, as if our real experiences with gender and violence are secondary to our personal style.

### **Neither Masc, Nor Femme, But Unique**

This line of thought doesn't stop perpetuating a "gendered binary" but reinforces it by dividing people along the lines of oppressed/femme vs. oppressor/masc, except this division isn't based so strictly on gender and biology like the previous (and still dominant) gender binary. It divides people based upon aesthetics and behaviour instead of by biology or by self-identification. Almost anything is an improvement from biological determinism, but this shift doesn't go far enough to stop binary thinking. Before someone in the milieu asks me what my name and pronouns are, I am assumed to be "masc" because of my facial hair and the way I dress. My personal experiences with gendered violence are only taken seriously in light of revealing myself as a trans woman. *Our theories should start from the ways we have experienced gender violence in our daily lives, not identity.* Our relationships to each other should be based upon our affinities and similarities with each other, rather than based upon the categories of lowest-common-denominator politics. Daily life is far too complicated to be reduced into two categories.

## Meet the New Binary, Same as the Old Binary

A few years ago among the radical milieux, before *femme* was the go-to inclusive term for people oppressed by patriarchy, the term *not-men* was used. The theoretical failings of *not-men* are similar to that of the term *femme*. Baedan, an anti-civilization, nihilist, and anarchist journal which explores questions of gender, queerness, and domestication, elaborate on those theoretical failings. They critique the term *not-men* for failing to be the inclusive term it aimed to be, not going beyond binary categories, and for continuing the policing of categorization.

*(TW: rape)*

One recent answer to these critiques has been the introduction of the concept *not-men*. Most attempts at defining this category are extremely clumsy. At times it is used to mean not-cismen, or to explicitly say that faggots are not welcome at certain meetings. At others it simply means women plus trans people. Some feminists have even said that the category at times includes 'emasculated men of color.' Usually it is just postmodern shorthand for women. As with any other categories, it only functions if it has a firm border, and this border will always be policed. At every step of the way, it is ceaselessly problematic. The least problematic definitions of it [...] are so vague as to not have any practical application. And it is always in the practical applications that these theories enact their violences. The prospect of a political body of largely cisgendered women determining which genderqueer or transfeminine individuals are *not-men* enough to participate in their groups is quite nauseating. This categorical policing mirrors all the others. ***Meet the new binary, same as the old binary.*** A way out of this dilemma may be to start from experience rather than identity. To seek out conspirators based on a shared experience of a range of gender violence. Some proponents of *not-men* have defined it similarly ('those who are raped,' 'those who do caring labor')

but none of these experiences are limited by identity, and to accept a phenomenological or experiential framework would dispense with the utility of the category at all. If the concept is either problematic or useless then why has there been so much fancy footwork put into an attempt to save the concept? What we're really seeing is a desperate attempt to save binary categories, in a world where they've long been decomposing.

– “Against the Gendered Nightmare,”  
*Baedan 2: A Queer Journal of Heresy*

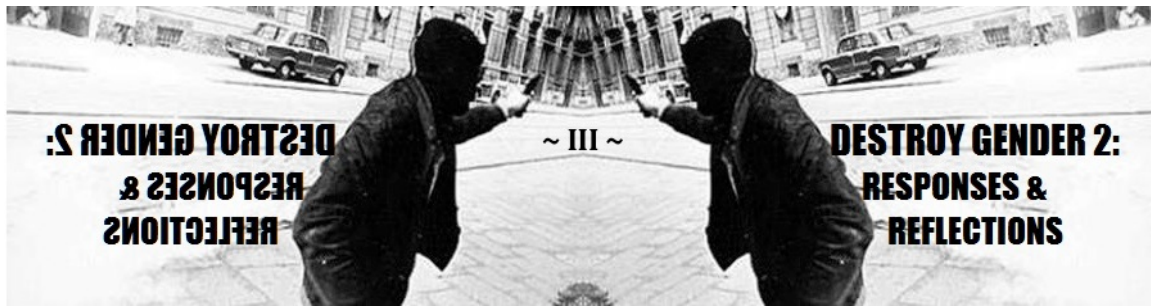
Whether it's man/woman, male/female, afab/amab, not-men/men, or femme/masc, all binaries require policing and exclusion to be maintained and defined. Binary categorization is just one method the apparatus of gender uses to govern. Binary categories require policing, exclusion, regulation, normalization, and hierarchy.

### **Not A Third Way**

*Insurrection calls upon us to no longer let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and set no glittering hopes on institutions.*

- Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*

The problems behind the femme/masc binary did not start with its introduction to the milieu, nor will they stop after some other terms are adopted in its place. I do not suggest alternatives or expansions for these categories, only their total abandonment. This can only be achieved through an insurrectional break against gender. Insurrection would be the total undermining of governance: to abandon and destroy the apparatuses of governance, to take our affairs into our own hands.



It's been a few months since I published *Destroy Gender*, during the rise of gender nihilism discourse in radical circles (I remember having *Baedan* and the *Anti-Manifesto* in mind while writing). What I would like to add to *Destroy Gender* has been covered by "Against the Gendered Nightmare" in *Baedan 2* (which I unfortunately read after publishing *Destroy Gender*); I don't claim any idea in *Destroy Gender*, or this piece, as original. I would like to respond to critiques and to clarify positions.

The two main critiques I received can be summarized as 1) lacking in discussion on colonization's role in gender / why not frame it as 'colonized gender' and not just 'gender'? and 2) why destroy gender instead of gender roles, the gender binary, or patriarchy?

In response to the first critique, I must admit I failed to include a discussion on colonialism for various personal excuses, which is still a mistake and leaves a major gap in *Destroy Gender*. I must also admit ideological failings on my part for not including a discussion on colonialism, at the time of *Destroy Gender*'s publishing I saw gender (and patriarchy) as a domestication process that could be separated from colonialism because indigenous cultures were capable of developing patriarchy and gendered division of labor without colonial violence.<sup>1</sup> I also saw patriarchy and gender as interchangeable terms, both just different names for the same

domestication process (division of labor, violence, separation, etc), and as one of many roots of civilization.

This understanding of gender/patriarchy falls short. Gender/patriarchy is not a root of civilization, it is civilization, it is domestication, it is one in the same. They are inseparable.

To quote Baedan at length:

Within colonialism, new subject categories were created by western Civilization and were racialized and engendered as the foundation of the new colonial state. This creation process is composed of several operations: the introduction and entrenchment of gender roles, the imposition of Male gods, the formation of Patriarchal colonial government, the displacement of people from their traditional means of subsistence and the violent institution of the Family. These operations serve as a revision which recasts and genders tribal life and spirituality. This engendering does more than create the victimized category of women, but also constructs men as collaborators in domestication. Lugones cites the British strategy of bringing indigenous men to English schools where they would be instructed in the ways of civilized gender. These men would work within the colonial state to deprive women of their previous power to declare war, bear arms and determine their own relationships. [Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí in *The Invention of Women*] also cites the Spanish strategy of criminalizing sodomy among colonized populations, intertwining it with racialized hatred of the Moors and other 'primitive' people. [...]

From this perspective, we can recognize all the incidents of gendered and racial violence in our lives as repetitions of this first capture. Sex work, abusive relationships, body dysmorphia, marriage, sexual abuse, familial constraint, date rape, gang rape, queer bashing, psychiatry, electroshock therapy, eating disorders, domestic labor, unwanted pregnancy, fetishization, emotional labor, street harassment, pornography: each instance is a moment where we are torn from ourselves, taken by another, captured and

determined as a brutal repetition of the primary rupture which denied us a life lived by and for ourselves. In this schema, the assimilation and medicalization of queer and transgendered people can be understood as a re-capture of rebellious bodies. Police murder and racist vigilantism can likewise be understood as functions of this capture.

It is worth noting here that to understand *gender as domestication* is crucially different from understanding *patriarchy as a consequence of domestication*, in that the former is a break from the trap of essentialism. None of the above is limited to one subject of the gendered world. Rape, for example, is not solely the experience of women (as is often claimed by various regurgitations of second wave feminism), but is a disgustingly widespread experience among people of all genders. The assertion that any form of gender violence is the exclusive property of one category of people would be laughable if it weren't for the litany of horrors which serve to disprove it. More sinisterly, these type of essentialist assertions obscure and shame those experience an entire range of very real experiences of gender violence.

Situating gender as domestication is a way to understand gender violence outside of an essentialist and white framework. Without this understanding, all theories which attribute some natural dimension to sex/gender (from eco-feminist to Marxist feminist) are structurally unable to account for the violence, capture, and exclusion experienced by anyone who deviates from the gender binary or the heterosexual matrix. These ideologies will expand to pay lip-service to queer and trans people, but they never alter the structure of their theory. This amounts to little more than the liberal politics of inclusion. If, however, we understand gender as something which captures us, rather than something natural to us (or extracted from our biological existence), we can begin to analyze all the methods of domination experienced by queer or transgender people. Brutality and exclusion come to be recognized as the policing methods by which individuals remain captured; assimilation and exploitation represent a more sophisticated capture. From here I can see the line which binds together the boys

who called me *faggot* as a teenager and the gay men who would pay me for sex a few years later. Everything about the refusal of gender follows from this. The criticism of identity, assimilation, medicalization or any technique of the self becomes meaningful once it is placed in this continuum.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the second criticism, I avoided using ‘gender binary’ and ‘gender roles’ in my writing in order to frame my argument as attacking the material base of gender and not its branches. That is to say, gender roles are just the essence of gender and cannot be abolished without the abolition of gender (how can you have men, women, non-binaries, without a knowledge of what a ‘man’/‘woman’/‘non-binary’/whatever is? You can’t). As for the gender binary, it is not essential to the domestication of gender, since even those who claim to be outside the binary still fulfill their gendered roles (even if they don’t see them as roles // power doesn’t care how you want to interact with it). Civilization can take into account, normalize, categorize, and domesticate any gender so long as it advances Civilization (more commodities to sell, new markets to explore, etc).

They point to a more favorable gender arrangement, but lack the imagination to understand that people may have had relationships to one’s body and sexuality outside of the gendered cages which have been built around us.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that the gender binary does not deserve to be abolished, I just did not want to frame my argument in such a way. Back to “Against the Gendered Nightmare”:

In gender, we see all the ways that the gender binary is naturalized as sex and projected into pre-history as a way of explaining and rationalizing (essentializing) all of these experiences of violence. We are told those assigned female are

meant to be mothers, and therefore it is in their nature to endure pain, to be caretakers, to submit to external authority. Those assigned male are virile hunters and warriors, violence and rape are supposedly intrinsic to their nature. Homosexuals are aberrations in nature, and thus they are fated for exile in their short, brutal and diseased lives.<sup>4</sup>

The gender binary, gender roles, and colonialism all deserve their own space for nuanced critique that I don't feel right to write at this time. Thanks to everyone who helped me in writing *Destroy Gender*, and thank you to all my sisters and comrades struggling, fighting back, writing, and plotting against gender.

For more writings on gender nihilism, check out *Baedan*, *What is Gender Nihilism?*, and *Lies*.<sup>5</sup>

## **Endnotes**

[1] Links are not a justification of my reasoning, just a reference to gendered division of labor in indigenous societies.

[2] *Against the Gendered Nightmare*, thesis VII

[3] *Against the Gendered Nightmare*, thesis VI

[4] *Against the Gendered Nightmare*, thesis VII

[5] *Lies* journal is not specifically gender nihilism, but has written much that influenced gender nihilism.





**Inspirations: Further Reading/Inspiration**

*Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto*

*Whipping Girl*

*Against His-Story, Against Leviathan*

*Lies: a journal of materialist feminism*

*Caliban and the Witch*

*Feminist Theory: from margin to center*

*Baedan: A Journal of Queer Nihilism*

*Baedan 2: A Queer Journal of Heresy*

*Lies: A Journal of Materialist Feminism*



My personal experiences with gendered violence are only taken seriously in light of revealing myself as a trans woman. *Our theories should start from the ways we have experienced gender violence in our daily lives, not identity.* Our relationships to each other should be based upon our affinities and similarities with each other, rather than based upon the categories of lowest-common-denominator politics. Daily life is far too complicated to be reduced into two categories.

Gender is a hierarchy, an apparatus of governance, a form of social control. Gender is violence...

...until we create more than just safe spaces, but dangerous spaces from which to wage war against patriarchy, gender, and all governance.

Until insurrection pushes us beyond the point of no return.

Until we no longer need identity.

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