'We're Here, We're Queer, We're Anarchists': The Nature of Identification and Subjectivity Among Black Blocs

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Contents

Abstract

At the G20 protests in Pittsburgh in 2009 a popular chant included the phrase, "We're here! We're queer! We're anarchists, we'll fuck you up." However, it is virtually impossible that every member of the black bloc using this chant self-identified as queer in their day-to-day life. In this article, I argue that the presentation of self among black bloc participants, especially the masking of the face with a black bandana and the wearing of black itself, allows for the destruction of a previously held identification and the temporary recreation of a new identification. I emphasize theories developed by Deleuze & Guattari and Giorgio Agamben. I also analyze a zine produced by the organizers of the resistance to G20 in Pittsburgh to show that my interpretation of the black bloc subjectivity is reflected in the claims of black bloc participants.

Introduction

During the protests of the G20 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2009, black bloc groups took to the streets to disrupt the meetings and the functioning of the city, as is often the case at trade summit protests. During at least one of these protests, a chant developed: "We're here! We're Queer! We're anarchists, we'll fuck you up!" What is fascinating about this chant is the phrase "We're Queer," as there were clearly far too many anarchists participating in the black bloc to actually be made up only of those who would self-identify as queer.[1] Instead, there were a number of individuals who would not have maintained a queer identification in their day-to-day lives that nonetheless engaged in a chant that involved taking on that identification, at least momentarily.

This momentary identification as queer during the black bloc demonstrates the postmodern fluidity of identitarian subjectivities. The subject is capable of embracing a multitude of subject positions for identification, and then equally capable of casting any one of these same identifications away when it no longer serves the individual. This is, in fact, why the term 'identification' is itself superior to the term 'identity.' Brubaker and Cooper (2000) emphasize that the term identification forefronts the fluid and always-shifting nature of the self. This is represented by the shift from the noun 'identity,' which implies a singular thing that exists in the world to the verb 'identification,' which emphasizes the act of taking on a self.[2] Though this multiplicity and fluidity of identification fits the nature of our understanding of subjectivity in the contemporary postmodern age in which humans are "to be understood as multiple and without center" (Call, 2002: 130), it remains the case that people regularly attempt to maintain the illusion of a singular identity. In other words, while we may know that identification is partial, fluid, and multiple, individuals usually attempt to present the fantasmatic imagining of a single identity to the outside world. This is often done through narrativity, a process in which we tell stories about ourselves, complete with antagonists, plots, and characters (Vila, 2000). These stories structure what would otherwise be our chaotic identifications into the illusion of stable identity.

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[1] If it were, this would mostly likely have then been a pink bloc, which did emerge during the University of Pittsburgh riots at night.

[2] The term 'identification' resolves Alberto Melucci's concern in *Challenging Codes* where he claimed, "the term 'identity' is conceptually unsatisfactory: it conveys too strongly the idea of the permanence of a subject. At this moment, however, no other designation seems in possession of the capacity to replace it in its purpose" (1996: 72). I put forward that 'identification' is just such a designation.

So, then the black-bloc's adoption of a 'queer' identification raises the following question: why is it that these individuals at this time were capable of presenting a queer self when some of them would not self-identify as queer in their daily lives? What was it about this moment that produced this possibility? If individuals normally strive for consistency through the creation of an illusory stable identity, what changed in the black bloc? In this article, I argue that the nature of black bloc aesthetics, and specifically the nature of the mask, allows this to occur. I argue that the black bloc presentation allows for a negation of the illusion of identity and the temporary possibility of a Deleuzian deterritorialized being, which I relate to the concept of the *whatever*-singularity developed by Giorgio Agamben.

Finally, a methodological note: a number of the authors used in this article have theoretical differences between them that are not addressed as a part of this article, as their similarities are more important to my goals here. For the purposes of this paper, I am more interested in the effects of the ideas developed by these authors and their similarities (which I believe are many) than with the contradictions between them that may span their many important works. This is not to downplay the significance of these differences, but only to state that for the purposes of the analysis developed here their similarities are more salient.

What are Black Blocs?

Black blocs have become common at protest actions, especially in the West. Though first developed by activists in Germany in the early 1980s, black blocs did not gain more widespread notoriety until the World Trade Organization (WTO) riots in Seattle in 1999 (Highleyman, 2002). Today, they are most commonly seen at anti-globalization mobilizations, such as the G20 in Pittsburgh, and other actions against neo-liberalism and capitalism, such as the Olympic riots in Vancouver and the ongoing insurrectionary activities in Greece, where anarchists take to the streets to protest, riot, fight the cops, and ostentatiously present their discontent with capitalism and the state. The aesthetic of a black bloc primarily includes wearing black pants, black boots or sneakers, a black hooded sweatshirt, and a black bandana with which to cover one's face. These bandannas operate as masks, tied around the lower half of one's face, so that the wearer's eyes and forehead are still visible, but the nose, mouth, cheeks, and chin are covered. This creates an image not dissimilar from that of the bandit in presentations of the early American 'frontier.' Many black bloc participants will also sometimes wear gas masks and goggles to protect themselves from tear gas.

Black bloc tactics most often involve a combination of property destruction, such as smashing the windows of corporate stores like Starbucks and McDonald's, and carnivalesque performances. These strategies are often used to do as much damage as possible and to be as disruptive to the normal functioning of the host city's businesses and government while aiming to do no harm to people, with the possible exception of police who may be seen as the enemy in an ongoing class- or social-war. David Graeber (2002) describes the black bloc tactics as follows:

> Black Blocs [...] have all, in their own ways, been trying to map out a completely new territory [...] They're attempting to invent what many call a 'new language' of civil disobedience, combining elements of street theatre, festival and what can only be called non-violent warfare — non-violent in the sense adopted by, say, Black Bloc

anarchists, in that it eschews any direct physical harm to human beings (Graeber, 2002: 66).

The most obvious goal of property destruction is to drain city and corporate money, or at least to inconvenience them. This property destruction is not unfocused, but emphasizes specific targets that are seen as representing the neo-liberal hegemonic order. For example, "Banks and oil companies often become targets, as do retail outlets that sell sweatshop merchandise and fast food chain restaurants that contribute to the global monoculture" (Highleyman, 2002).

The goal of these activists is not to make demands on capital or the state but instead to "demand nothing" (for example, see Anonymous, 2010 and Schwarz, Sagris, and Void Network, 2010: 192–4). Alberto Melucci, predating the Seattle riots but recognizing the growing trends among activists, pointed out the anarchic trends among social movements, including the lack of demands, in his 1996 book, claiming that activists, "*ignore the political system* and generally *display disinterest towards the idea of seizing power*" (1996: 102). Richard J.F. Day (2005) has also noted this trend in what he calls the newest social movements, of which black blocs would be one part.

These movements relate to the politics of boredom articulated by the situationists during May 1968 in which activists maintained a desire for a moment of perpetual 'festival.' This festival is a moment of political 'play,' of constant shifting and performance, which can be described as a politics of the 'gesture.' Lewis Call describes the importance of this political development in his book *Postmodern Anarchism*:

> Indeed, the concept of the gesture was part of the definition of Situationism itself [...] These gestures might be artistic or overtly political, satirical, or subversive. Above all, they were meant to be playful [...] The Situationist 'play ethic' was meant as an antidote for the quasi-Puritan work ethic endemic to both capitalism and institutional communism. And the gestural praxis of the Situationists was meant to take the revolution into the strange and unexplored terrain of the symbol (Call, 2002: 102).

This lack of demands on the system combined with the attacks on private property and the playfulness of some of the tactics results in a series of protest movements that aim to be virtually impossible to incorporate into the systems of control. This latter point is particularly important. Because "the best way to ensure the exclusion of a radical social force is to ensure its *inclusion*" (Day, 2005: 29), the only way to avoid being made impotent is to refuse inclusion, and one way to do this is to make no demands on the system and to step outside of the traditional boundaries of activist discourse through festival and carnival.

Black blocs also emphasize acting out and representing, or temporarily creating, the world in which they want to exist, without closing off the possibility of different acts in the future. In other words, while one lives, to the best of one's ability, as a representation of the yet-to-come, this is done without assuming that this is stable or permanent, as the yet-to-come must always remain open. Alberto Melucci has emphasized the importance of this way of acting, claiming that contemporary movement participants believe, "If I cannot become what I want to be starting today I will not be interested in that change" (1996: 184). This relates to the lack of demand-making, as these activists articulate a desire for *creating* the new world in which they wish to exist rather than simply asking the state or capital to reform themselves into something less vile. Furthermore, the way Melucci phrases the claim indicates that these activists do not see

themselves as having achieved or aiming to achieve some sort of permanence in their acts, but that it is a matter of becoming and starting, which can be permanent and ongoing.

Black blocs, then, represent one counterpoint to capitalist hegemony. They are something that precludes incorporation into the systems of capitalism and the state by refusing to make demands of that system. Black blocs are meant to represent the future possibilities of the better world in which the anarchists are fighting for but that they are also building alongside the continued existence of this world. As I will show later, this performance of something other than the system under which we live is particularly important.

I also believe, however, that the masks worn by black bloc activists offer an extra possibility not yet fully developed in the literature. While black bloc gear allows for the camouflaging of one's identity, I believe that there can be more to this point than simply hiding one's face from the police, FBI, and other authorities. As I explore below, I believe that the masks worn by black bloc activists particularly allow for the adoption and rejection of a variety of identifications (in the sense of subjectivity, not in the sense of one's official name, address, and so forth) one may wish to take on. Furthermore, I will show that literature which emerged out of the G20 protests in Pittsburgh indicates that at least some of the participants in these actions also think of black bloc in this way.

The Black Mask

> "Get ready to blend in, to put it on and disappear [...] I could be anyone, anywhere [...] To have a brand new identity [...] or to be no one at all this time [...] Just give me a black mask."
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> — The (International) Noise Conspiracy: Black Mask

As stated above, masks are a consistent part of the black bloc aesthetic, allowing the anarchist to both avoid external identifying by recording devices and also granting at least some small amount of protection from tear gas. However, I believe that there is more to the function of the mask. The opening quote to this section includes lyrics from the song "Black Mask" by the anarchist-punk band "The (International) Noise Conspiracy". The lines I selected from the song emphasize the point I want to make about what a black mask allows the black bloc participant to do. As I will show here, the mask allows for the erasure of identification, for the participant to become anyone or no one, to have a brand new identification, such as the queer identification at the G20 protests in Pittsburgh.

A mask, of course, covers at least part of one's face. The face itself, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is that which represents the signification of the subject; that "the form of the signifier has a substance, or the signifier has a body, namely the Face (the principle of the faciality traits, which constitutes a reterritorialization)" (1987: 117). This aspect of faces can be traced to the origin of the word face itself, which comes from *facies* in ancient medicine. This term meant a surface appearance that characterized a type, which connected not directly to anatomy but to the world around the *facies* as well as a relationship between subjects (Calefato, 2004: 68). Thus, the face is the signification of the self in relation to others, and, according to Deleuze and Guattari, it is upon the face that one will reterritorialize after having deterritorialized into a rhizomatic line of flight. In short, this means that once one has [always temporarily] rejected subjectivity, thus

entering into a line of flight, one will always reterritorialize in some way, meaning that one will regain subjectivity, and this reterritorialization is always onto a 'face.'

However, the face-as-subjectivity includes the possibility for the face to be a metaphor for the representation of one's subjectivity. Thus, the face or faciality is not limited to the frontal presentation of the head. Instead, the face can expand or reach out to other parts of the self, turning other aspects of the individual into a faciality. This too relates to the ancient *facies*, as the face was a "moveable territory, whose signs Hippocratic medicine [...] scrutinized, not in terms of anatomy, but in their connection with the surrounding world and with one another, in that state of otherness and oneness intrinsic to every living being" (Calefato, 2004: 68). This expansion of the face can occur, for example, through fetishization, when one allows another portion of the body to represent the self. In other words, the face is the signification of one's subjectivity, and as such other aspects of this representation can obtain 'face-ness.' Deleuze and Guattari articulate this idea as follows: "The face is a surface [...] if the head and its elements are facialized, the entire body can also be facialized" (1987: 170). But, of course, the face often facializes on the frontward-facing head in our culture, and we often experience the other's subjectivity here first. This is, of course, not inherently true and could be otherwise, but it is often the case.

Thus, to focus on the face-qua-face of the forward facing head for a moment, if we can make the broad statement that this is where we expect facialization and subjectification to occur most readily for many people, then what occurs when one masks this surface, as is done during a black bloc? According to Deleuze and Guattari, when masking the face,

> Either the mask assures the head's belonging to the body, its becoming-animal, as was the case in primitive [sic] societies. Or, as is the case now, the mask assures the erection, the construction of the face, the facialization of the head and the body: the mask is now the face itself, the abstraction or operation of the face. The inhumanity of the face. Never does the face assume a prior signifier or subject [...] The face is a politics (1987: 181).

Thus, "the face holds within its rectangle or circle a whole set of traits, *faciality traits*, which it subsumes and places at the service of significance and subjectification" (ibid., 188). In other words, the face is that which signifies subjectification and the mask itself comes to represent this subjectivity; the mask erases the old subject and represents the new subject.

The nature of masking as the erasure of the initial subject that allows for the becoming of something else is also that which shows human subjectivity to be multiple and fantasmatic. In other words, by using the mask to erase a subjectivity, one is also showing the imaginary nature of stable subjectivity itself. This is recognized by Slavoj Žižek in his recent brief piece, "The Neighbor in Burka":

> From a Freudian perspective, face is the ultimate mask that conceals the horror of the Neighbor-Thing: face is what makes the Neighbor *le semblable*, a fellow-man with whom we can identify and empathize [...] This then, is why a covered face causes such anxiety: because it confronts us directly with the abyss of the Other-Thing, with the Neighbor in its uncanny dimension. The very covering-up of the face obliterates a protective shield, so that the Other-Thing stares at us directly [...] What if we go a step further and imagine a woman 'taking off' the skin of her face

itself, so that what we see beneath her face is precisely an anonymous dark smooth burka-like surface with a narrow slit for the gaze? 'Love thy neighbor!' means, at its most radical, precisely the impossible-real love for this de-subjectivized subject, for this monstrous dark blot cut with a slit/gaze (Žižek, 2010).

In other words, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the face is itself a mask which conceals the nature of subjectivity as a nothing disguised as a something; we are never a single unified self, but only imagine ourselves as such in order to fulfill the Lacanian empty signifier. The elimination of the face as the representation of subjectivity through masking, in Žižek's case the Burka, confronts the subject with the subconscious experience of their own lack — it makes the lack of the reality of a single unified self obvious by presenting the other with a desubjectified other. In the case of the black mask worn during black blocs, we may say that this same thing occurs. However, the difference is that the black bloc participant wants this lack to be embraced, while Žižek's neighbour is horrified by the confrontation with the subject of the lack.

Thus, when one blocks the face through masking, one halts the experience of the previously existing subject-hood, allowing for the subject to take on a new subjectivity of choice, assuming that they are embracing this lack.[3] This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they say, "the mask is now the face itself," the mask allows for something similar to a becoming-*whatever* in Giorgio Agamben's language. For Agamben, this whatever is the whatever-singularity:

> WHATEVER is the figure of pure singularity. Whatever singularity has no identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determined only through its relation to an *idea*, that is, to the totality of its possibilities (Agamben, 1993: 68.7).

It is, then, not the case that the masked whatever-singularity cannot become a something (in the case above, a queer-anarchist), it is only the case that this something must be both temporary and partial, but also in relation to an idea that is equally temporary and partial. The mask itself allows for this temporality and partiality as it erases subjectivity and allows the subject to take on other subjectivities. One adopts the identification that is useful for the action, but this identification can itself be temporary and may be rejected when another one is useful or when one unmasks. In any case, this is in relation to an idea, anarchism, and the totality of possibilities, meaning *possible* identifications: one could be many different possible somethings, but often only obtains specific identifications.

David Graeber points out this nature of the mask when discussing a black bloc at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City where a number of anarchists wore masks with the following inscribed on the margins:

> We will remain faceless because we refuse the spectacle of celebrity, because we are everyone, because the carnival beckons, because the world is upside down, because we are everywhere. By wearing masks, we show that who we are is not as important

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[3]This matter of choosing to embrace the erasure of subjectivity is particularly important. While Žižek shows us that any hiding of the face might expose one as the Other-Thing, erasing assumed identity, it does not seem to be the case that through this hiding one always *necessarily* creates a new subjectivity. Instead, it is the matter of making this choice during the black bloc that allows for this, a choice that is often not made, for example, by a veiled bride.

as what we want, and what we want is everything for everyone (as cited in Graeber, 2009: 148).

Here we see both the importance of the erasure of identity — remaining faceless, becoming everyone, refusing the spectacle of celebrity — and also the importance of the carnivalesque nature of black bloc. Also interestingly, this was inscribed on the sides of masks that were themselves printed with the image of a face that was not the face of the participant wearing the mask, thus literally creating a new face for the de-faced black bloc subject.

Additionally, while I will reflect more on the concept of 'demanding nothing' later, here I must address the apparent tension between the idea of refusing demands and the apparent fact that anarchists nonetheless express desires, represented above by the claim that they want everything for everyone. The important point here is not that anarchists have no desires or have no ideas of what they hope to achieve. If that were the case it would be impossible for them to even identify as anarchists or anti-capitalists, as each of these identatarian labels implies a desire or want. What must be understood is that demanding nothing means refusing to make demands on capital and the state, instead aiming to create something entirely new themselves.

The black bloc aesthetic then is an erasure of identification; it allows for the masked anarchist to become the whatever-singularity, and as such to become anything, such as the queer of the aforementioned chant. The black bloc erases the prior facialization, but as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, the facialization spreads across the entire body, the entire body can become a face. Thus, the erasure of the previously existing identity can also spread across the entirety of the body: the black bloc activist is dressed in black from head to toe, creating the entire body as the face of the anarchist, who in the case of the chant above is also capable of taking on the identification of 'queer.' That the subject wears black when doing this is not a coincidence, but relates to the very nature of blackness as a style of clothing that "makes explicit an obliteration of meaning, a kind of physical absorption of all light rays that transforms the body dressed in black into a transparent, or invisible, entity" (Calefato, 2004: 110).

However, Deleuze and Guattari also tell us that deterritorializations, the obliteration of meaning and subjectification, are always partial and never wholly accomplished. So while the deterritorrialization of the masking is a line of flight away from subjectivity and toward rhizomatic becoming, "Deterritorrialization must be thought of as a perfectly positive power that has degrees and thresholds (epistrata), is always relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or complement" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 54). In other words, a deterritorialization always necessitates a reterritorialization, one can never become completely and permanently rhizomatic, while one may reject subjectivity, one will always become re-subjectified.

The erasure of subjectification performed by the black bloc aesthetic then always necessitates a returning to identity. The subject will first reterritorialize onto the anarchist subjectivity and then, in this case, onto the queer subjectivity. In fact, the black bloc cannot prevent a reterritorialization onto the identification of the anarchist because this subjectivity is necessary for the progression of the black bloc; the subjectivity of 'anarchist' is necessary for the goal of insurrection and revolution, thus the erasure is partial until after the insurrection; the mask erases subjectivity, but because the mask itself is a signifier of the anarchist, one will always reterritorialize onto an anarchist subjectivity, even if that subjectivity is a hyphenated one, such as with the queer-anarchist. It is, then, the queer that is the secondary reterritorialization in this case, and the face becomes a queer-anarchist face.

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This inability to permanently deterritorialize away from all subjectivity, including that of the anarchist, is the truest meaning of the statement by Jean Genet in Paris 1968, "C'est triste à dire, mais je ne pense que l'on puisse vaincre sans les drapeaux rouges et noirs. Mais il faut détruire après [Unfortunately, I don't think we can win without the red and black flags. But they will be destroyed afterwards]" (CrimethInc, 2008: 11). Red and black flags are a frequent signifier of anarchist-communism, black signifying anarchy and red signifying communism. However, the very existence of the flags also promotes external subjectification as a singular identity, anarchist, rather than the liberation of becoming *whatever*.

The same could be said of the black masks — they are necessary for contemporary anarchists, but afterwards we must take off and destroy these masks. The black masks remain necessary because they allow for the anarchist to become the representation of the post-hegemonic yet-to-come, that future which we fight to obtain. The whatever of the black bloc then is a *manner* in Agamben's language, in that it is "a *manner of rising forth*; not a being that is *in* this or that mode, but a being that is *its* mode of being, and thus, while remaining singular and not indifferent, is multiple and valid for all" (Agamben, 1993: 28.8). This validity relates back to the idea of refusing demands. The anarchists in the black bloc do not wish to have the state meet their demands, instead they represent that which could be and which all could become. This is represented in a phrase from the Greek riots of the winter of 2008, where black blocs and masks were prevalent, and later the title of a recent book on these riots, *We Are An Image From The Future* (Schwarz, Sagris, and Void Network, 2010); they represent that which may be but is not yet here.

Do Black Bloc Participants See It This Way?

In order to properly understand black blocs we must not only understand the aesthetic, but also how some of those participating in a black bloc see themselves during the act. Might participants in black blocs believe that identification can be erased and adopted freely through masking and the wearing of black? Did some of the participants from G20 in Pittsburgh believe this when taking on the queer identification? Do they see their presentation as that which predates the yet-to-come? And do they believe that they are demanding nothing? And, in the end, will they have to destroy the anarchist subjectivity just as they destroy all others? In order to describe this, I will look to a zine titled *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* that came out of the organizers of the G20 resistance in Pittsburgh.[4] As I will show, I believe that this communiqué does in fact indicate that a number of the other participants in the G20 black blocs in Pittsburgh may see masking in the way that I have described above.

In the section of *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* titled "My Preferred Gender Pronoun is Negation" that deals most specifically with queerness and the relationship between queerness and black blocs the author(s) recount(s) a conversation with a friend. The friend commented, "What is so queer about that? People just wore black and burned things in the street." The author(s) respond(s), "The practice of wearing black and destroying everything may very well be the queerest gesture of all." They claim that "to queer is to negate," that the becoming whatever

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[4] *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* has no author(s) associated with it, thus erasing the identitarian subjectivity of authorship. Additionally, the zine is not available anywhere on the internet. The goal of the producers of this zine was to show that the human-to-human networks of sharing are still valuable, and thus they never created a web-accessed version. In the name of keeping with this tradition, if any reader would like a copy of this zine they can contact the author of this article to have a physical copy mailed.

of the black bloc was itself a gesture of queerness as it negates not only the boundaries of gender and sexuality, but the act of black bloc resistance also negated subjectification itself. They go on to say:

> Without hesitation, queers shed the constraints of identity in becoming autonomous, mobile and multiple with varying difference. We interchanged desires, gratifications, ecstasies and tender emotions without reference to the tables of surplus value or power structures [...] If the thesis is correct that gender is always performative, then our performed selves resonated with the queerest gender of all: that of total destroy. Henceforth, our preferred gender pronouns are the sound of shattering glass, the weight of hammers in our hands and the sickly-sweet aroma of shit on fire. Address us accordingly.

Here we see that at least some of the rioters in the black blocs in Pittsburgh did see the black bloc as a negation of their previously existing identifications. Additionally, we see that the destruction of identification through the masking of the face is perceived of as erasing the self across the entire body, as they do not just say that masking is the queerest gesture of all, but that the act of wearing black, of completely blacking-out the self, is the queerest gesture of all. Furthermore, we can more deeply problematize the phrase, "We're here! We're queer! We're anarchists, we'll fuck you up!" While the identification must, to some degree, indicate queer sexuality, as is indicated by the references to gender, pronouns, sexualities, and ecstasies, it also references something else. As the author(s) state(s), queerness in this case also means negation itself; it means the negation or obliteration of an existing identification and the freedom to become whatever. Destruction comes to include the destruction of identification. This destruction of identification also requires that participants move beyond solidarity in the sense of traditional social network theories. Instead, this destruction moves into the realm of what McDonald (2002) has called "fluidarity." Fluidarity emphasizes the process of creation and change during struggles rather than the construction or maintenance of a coherent singular movement with public leaders and a coherent singular identity such as 'Marxist' or 'Proletariat.'

Furthermore, this same zine also indicates that some did see themselves as representing the yet-to-come. However, they do not do so by attempting to obtain the status of hegemony. Instead, in Richard J.F. Day's (2004; 2005) language, they represent an anti-hegemonic future. We see this when they claim that the goal is not the "Production of anarchist militants with a proper ideology" but instead the spreading of insurrectionary practices as a way of being. Here they claim a clear victory: "The riotous practices that were earlier limited to a tiny subset of anarchist discourse spread across political, racialized, gendered, and sexual categories, even taking hold of a portion of the student population" (ibid., 13–14). In other words, as I stated above, they aimed to represent a new way of being in the world, a way of being "total destroy." This representation was at least temporarily successful as those who would not have previously participated in such actions took on this way of being.

Thus, I do believe that the participants in Pittsburgh saw themselves as representing a manner that was valid for all, but this is not done in a paternalistic way. Instead, by representing a manner of destruction and fluidarity, they represent the possibility of becoming whatever. Unlike, for example, a Marxist Vanguard that defines the limits of the possible for the proletarian masses, the black bloc whatever simply represents the possibility of becoming whatever. This manner is

that which Melucci describes as the "subject of action" (1996: 91). He tells us that unlike previously existing social movements, which "were more deeply rooted in a specific social condition in which they were embedded, so that the question of the collective was already answered from the beginning," (ibid., 84) contemporary subjects of action reject this preconceived subjectivity. Thus, the truest meaning of the 'action' in "subject of action" would be the act of becoming the subject one wishes to be and ceasing that becoming when the subject sees fit — in other words, becoming the whatever-singularity. Thus, the destructive urge of the black bloc is the destruction of everything, and this is countered by the creative urge of creating a new identification in that moment, thus fulfilling Bakunin's claim that the urge to destroy is also a creative urge; the whatever will destroy subjectivity in order to create new multiple selves.

But is this urge also an urge to destroy the anarchist subjectivity? The authors of *The Enemy of Mankind Speaks Power* claim that,

> If we know that the trade summit is an image of itself, and we know that the protester is also an image of itself, then both must be confronted if we aim to destroy spectacular society […] even the most ideological of anarchist-activists became complicit in the collective becoming-ungovernable. It was through this becoming — this *losing my self* — that both the terms set by the impoverished discourse of activism and the terms set by the state were practically defeated.

This claim emphasizes the goal of not just destroying the G20 and global capital, but also ultimately destroying the activist and the anarchist subjects. When they claim that the most ideological of anarchist activists "became complicit" in the act of "becoming-ungovernable" we most clearly see the desire to destroy the anarchist subjectivity. The most ideological anarchist is itself subject to the outside force of anarchist ideology; the force of ideology limits the subject. However, in the act of the black bloc even this ideologue became whatever and engaged in the destruction of subjectivity through the loss of the self. Thus, at least for that moment, the subject obtains whatever-ness and enters into a line of flight. However, as I said above, this whatever has to reterritorialize, and this was always back onto the anarchist, and in some cases onto the queer. Reterritorializing onto the anarchist is essential, as it is the anarchist that must destroy everything, but in the end the subject will also have to destroy the anarchist.

Finally, this absence of a strict ideological position is also that which prefigures the demanding of nothing. While the authors recognize that some individuals have raised concerns about the lack of a clear strategy or ideology underpinning actions such as those described here, they instead see this as an advantage that allows them to refuse incorporation. They claim, "In a political climate lacking any real Left, adopting a strategy with specific demands and tactics to achieve our objectives would only solidify anarchists as the loyal opposition." First, here we see that they do continue to see themselves as anarchists, they have reterritorialized. Though the long-term goal is to destroy even this, in this quote we see that they maintain an anarchist subjectivity. If this was not the case, they could not see anarchists as facing a threat of being incorporated as the "loyal opposition" because they would not be anarchists. Second, we see here that they do demand nothing; they refuse to make demands that might be met by the system, thus incorporating their resistance. By becoming the "loyal opposition" they would only be that which could be appeased by meeting some demands. By refusing to make demands, by engaging in an act of total destruction, they refuse this incorporation.

Thus, I argue that the rejection of subjectification and the becoming of whatever is exactly what some participants in the black bloc at G20 saw themselves as doing. They saw themselves as representing the manner of the yet-to-come. Furthermore, they seem to believe that in this yet-to-come the subjectivity of 'anarchist' will have to be destroyed along with all others. However, they also continue to see themselves as anarchists in the here and now. Though they may obtain deterritorrialization, it is necessary to reterritorialize onto the anarchist in order to 'win.' Finally, we see here that they are queer not only in the sense of being queer sexual subjects, but in the sense of being subjects of total destruction. If queerness means negation, then their sexual identifications become that of negation, which must be the most significant meaning of their claim that their preferred pronoun is the sound of shattering glass. This, then, creates the most clear reason for the aforementioned chant's equation that being here and queer will equate to fucking things up — to be queer is to negate and destroy, it is to be anti-hegemonic, it is not just to fuck, but also to fuck things up.

Conclusion

Anarchists participating in black blocs (as well as in other projects that anarchists are a part of) represent a libratory future. These subjects exist as anarchist subjects until they destroy the black and red flags and take off their masks, until they can become the queerest of all by negating queerness itself. Deleuze and Guattari call this future that *we* represent the 'outside,' the place to which the lines of flight escape. However, should we win, we cannot be complacent in this future. Richard J.F. Day (2005) emphasizes that the outside must always be a passage rather than a place, less we risk hegemonizing the outside and oppressing not-yet-known Others. Thus, in Agamben's language, "The *outside* is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather, it is the passage, the exteriority that gives it access" (Agamben, 1993: 68.8).

The possibility for this passageway of the outside is unique to our contemporary postmodern age. The "era in which we live is also that in which for the first time it is possible for humans to experience their own linguistic being" (Agamben, 1993: 82.3). In other words, it is today that we can be aware of the constructed nature of our own subjectivity. That we can recognize this method of subjectivity today, rather than in the past, was also recognized by Laclau and Mouffe:

> This is not a fortuitous discovery that could have been made at any point in time; it is, rather, deeply rooted in the history of modern capitalism. In societies which have a low technological level of development, where the reproduction of material life is carried out by means of fundamentally repetitive practices, the 'language games' or discursive sequences which organize social life are predominantly stable. This situation gives rise to the illusion that the being of objects, which is a purely social construction, belongs to things themselves […] It is only in the contemporary world, when technological change and the dislocating rhythm of capitalist transformation constantly alter the discursive sequences which construct the reality of objects, that the merely historical character of being becomes fully visible (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: 97).

Thus, now that we can be aware of the fractured, unstable, and constructed nature of subjectivity, some are trying to turn this into ways of being in the world. But what might a future built

around the image presented here, of whatever-singularities and lines of flight, constantly deterritorializing and reterritorializing, look like? If the anarchists participating in black blocs are an image from the future, what is that future? The most obvious way to answer this question is to refuse to answer it. The reason for this is that rhizomatic communities of *whatevers* would not have a singular form or type, which would simply recreate hegemony. Instead, contemporary anarchists are fighting for the freedom of difference. By saying what the future would be, one would run the risk of making a demand that might be incorporated.

However, Agamben, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, does at least give us some ideas about what might bring us to this future. He claims that those who are willing to carry the rejection of subjectivity to its end result "will be the first citizens of a community with neither presuppositions nor a state" (Agamben, 1993: 82.3). He claims that the struggle for the coming politics will "no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization" (ibid., 86.5). Richard J.F. Day develops Agamben's ideas further, claiming,

> Just as the rejection of coercive morality need not necessarily lead to a passive nihilistic relativism, so the rejection of Hegelian community need not necessarily lead to an anti-social individualism. In poststructuralist theory, it leads to something quite different that can be approached via the concept of *singularity* [...] it breaks down the hard-and-fast distinctions between the individual and the community, the particular and the universal (Day, 2005: 180).

This is Day's anti-hegemonic yet-to-come. However, he also tells us that in these coming communities, we must never allow ourselves to conclude that we have reached a teleological end. Instead, these communities and those who make them up must always be open to "hear another other" (Day, 2005: 200), an Other who does not yet exist but may yet exist in this yet-to-come. These coming communities must not imagine that they have eliminated all points from which subjugation might occur or that all potentially subjugated subjects have been liberated, but must instead always be open to the new.

Beyond the temporary adoption of *whatever*-ness at black blocs, who might bring about this yet-to-come? Agamben's answer to this question is problematic. Richard J.F. Day points out that Agamben seems to believe that it is those who are most entrenched in consumer capitalism that will be able to bring about this future, as it is these individuals who will prove most aware of the postmodern nature of subjectivity. However, Day disagrees:

> The coming communities are more likely to be found in those crucibles of human sociability and creativity out of which the radically new emerges: racialized and ethnicized identities, queer and youth subcultures, anarchists, feminists, hippies, indigenous peoples, back-to-the-landers, 'deviants' of all kinds in all kinds of spaces (Day, 2005: 183).

We see this represented in black blocs whose subjectification is temporarily erased by the nothingness of the masked face spread across the body. However, here we see that it is not only

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[5]While Agamben's uses the term 'the coming community,' I prefer to follow Richard J.F. Day (2005) in calling them the coming communit*ies*. As Day points out, Agamben's language of 'community' is problematic because it implies

the black bloc activists who make up the representation of this yet-to-come, nor might they only do so during the black bloc. All those who Day mentions, *some* of whom may at times be black bloc participants, are also potential (non-)citizens of this future non-State. They represent the coming communities[5] and are living examples of their possibility for becoming.

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a singular thing in the world rather than a multiplicity of possibilities. It seems to imply that in spite of everything, we will all be the same and all part of one community, thus reproducing hegemony.

Edward Avery-Natale
'We're Here, We're Queer, We're Anarchists': The Nature of Identification and Subjectivity
Among Black Blocs
2010