## K – Imagine Violence

#### **Nonviolent strategies of resistance have become hegemonic, taking the anger out of any protest. While the aff tells you to put away your guns, cops shoot another black boy dead. The proper response is outrage, not quiet dissent, because only anger can produce anything threatening to the dominant order.**

Halberstam 93Jack Halberstam, Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance Reviewed work(s): Source: Social Text, No. 37, A Special Section Edited by Anne McClintock Explores the Sex Trade (Winter, 1993), pp. 187-201

**The** eruption of **rebellion in the streets of L.A.** and its representations in hip hop culture **indicate[s]**] very clearly **that violent law demands violent resistance. Tactics of nonviolent resistance** developed in the sixties and used nowadays seem to **have become dangerously hegemonic rather than disruptive.** In political demonstrations, indeed, **outrage** often **takes a back seat to** organized, formal, and **decorous shows of disapproval. In San** **Diego**, for example, shortly after the L.A. uprising of spring 1992 **in the wake of the Rodney King decision, people filled the streets** to sing, give speeches, and march upon the police station. **What might have been an outpouring of rage** and anger and frustration **directed at the racist, violent tactics of the local police was transformed rather quickly into a passive and indifferent meeting**. The group of "**protesters" actually followed a route laid out for them by** a **police** escort **and arrived** finally **at a deserted police building**. After some chanting and shouting, **the crowd quietly dispersed**. Local newspapers indeed were able to report that in the case of San Diego, the city remained relatively calm in the aftermath of the King verdict.5 **The failure of nonviolent resistance** to register anything but the most polite disapproval, I suggest, **is the effect of a** glaring **lack of imagination** on the part of political organizers, and an overemphasis on "organization" itself, which often produces determined efforts to eradicate expressions of **rage** or anger from political protest. Such expressions, after all, **might lead to something** spontaneous, something **that spills across the carefully drawn police lines, something threatening.**

#### **The cultural imaginary governs the self through production of fear; the system has taught us that acting out will get us shot by a cop or thrown in prison. However, we can use the same power of imagination to produce fear in the system.**

Halberstam 2Jack Halberstam, Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance Reviewed work(s): Source: Social Text, No. 37, A Special Section Edited by Anne McClintock Explores the Sex Trade (Winter, 1993), pp. 187-201

Postmodernism has been accused of not being political enough but in fact it is political activism that often fails to be postmodern in America in the 1990s. **Power** and conflict **no longer only spring[s] from** the domain of **politics**, and **resistance has become as much an effect of popular** **culture**, of videos, films, and novels, as of direct action groups. Postmodernism invites new and different conceptions of violent resistance and its representations. As Michael Taussig writes, **we live in a "nervous system,"** a system characterized as "**illusions of order congealed by fear**."7 The fear, the order, the nerves are all produced precisely as illusions, **fantasies** which **govern and discipline the self**. However, **it is also in the realm of fantasy and representation that we make the system nervous,** and that we can control and use our illusions. **Imagination**, in other words, **goes both** (or many) **ways**.

#### **Thus vote negative to embrace the 1NC’s representations of violently destroying civil society. Imagining violence against the white man disrupts standard narratives of violence that regulate life and creates a productive fear of retaliation. “What you think would happen if every time they kill a black boy, then we kill a cop?”**

Halberstam 3Jack Halberstam, Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representation, Rage, and Resistance Reviewed work(s): Source: Social Text, No. 37, A Special Section Edited by Anne McClintock Explores the Sex Trade (Winter, 1993), pp. 187-201

So, **what if we imagine a new violence with a different object**; a postmodern terror represented by another "monster" with quite other "victims" in mind? "**What if" denotes a potentiality, a possible reality that may only ever exist in the realm of representation but one which creates an "imagined violence" with real consequences** and which corresponds only roughly to real violence and its imagined consequences. Recently, queer activism has revived an emphasis on loud and threatening political demonstration, and groups like Queer Nation and ACT UP regularly create havoc with their particular brand of postmodern terror tactics. ACT UP demonstrations, furthermore, regularly marshall renegade art forms to produce protest as an aesthetic object. As Douglas Crimp writes in AIDS DEMO-GRAPHICS: AIDS activist art is grounded in the accumulated knowledge and political analysis of the AIDS crisis produced collectively by the entire movement. The graphics not only reflect that knowledge but actively contribute to its articulation as well.8 Protest in the age of AIDS, in other words, is not separate from representation; and "die-ins," "kiss-ins," posters, slogans, graphics, and queer propaganda create a new form of political response that is sensitive to and exploitive of the blurred boundaries between representations and realities. Meanwhile in the arena of popular representation, in popular film and video, the lines between representation and reality continue to be starkly drawn. Liberals continue to complain about the violent subject matter that especially kids are exposed to on TV and in cinema. But, I suggest, represented violence takes many forms and some still have the power to produce change. Conventional TV and movie violence, of course, consists of violence perpetrated by powerful white men usually against women or people of color. Such violence is a standard feature of the action genre, of the rock video, of almost every popular form of entertainment, and to a degree it is so expected that audiences may even be immune to it. On the other hand, **violence against white men perpetrated by women or people of color disrupts the logic of represented violence** so thoroughly that (at least for a while) **the emergence of such unsanctioned violence has an unpredictable power.** In recent years, popular texts that prominently feature violence against white men have been thoroughly analyzed by the popular media. So, for example, Ridley Scott's Thelma and Louise created an unprecedented wave of discussions around the issue of violence and women.9 Suddenly, violence, and particularly female revenge fantasy violence, was tagged as "immoral," "extravagant," "excessive," or simply "toxic feminism."10 Debates raged about whether we really want to condone a kind of role reversal that now pits female aggressors against male victims. But **role reversal never simply replicates the terms of an equation. The depiction of women committing acts of violence against men does not simply use "male" tactics of aggression for other ends**; in fact, **female violence [it] transforms the symbolic function of the feminine within popular narratives and it simultaneously challenges the hegemonic insistence upon the linking of might and right under the sign of masculinity. Women with guns confronting rapists has the potential to intervene in popular imaginings of violence and gender by resisting the moral imperative to not fight violence with violence**. Films like Thelma and Louise suggest, therefore, not that we all pick up guns, but that we allow ourselves to imagine the possibilities of fighting violence with violence. Women, in other words, long identified as victims rather than perpetrators of violence, have much to gain from new and different configurations of violence, terror, and fantasy. **Within the "nervous system" women are taught to fear certain spaces and certain individuals because they threaten rape: how do we produce a fear of retaliation in the rapist?** Thelma and Louise is an example of **imagined violence** that produces or **may produce** an unrealistic (given how few women carry and use guns) **fear in potential rapists that their victims are armed and dangerous.** Of course, there is no direct and simple relationship between imagined violence and real effects: just as it is impossible to judge the ways in which pornographic representation interacts with male sexual violence, it would only restabilize the relationship between the imagined and the real to claim that representing female violence quells male attacks. The "place of rage" where expression threatens to become action is of course that tightly patrolled and highly ambiguous space that we call "fantasy." The power of fantasy in the realm of erotic desire has been theorized variously by feminist, psychoanalytic, and postmodern critics. In feminist theory, for example, fantasy constitutes a problematic site for various contests over representation and politics-the pornography debates have posed the question of whether rape and violence against women are in part produced by the objectifying dynamics of pornographic fantasy. Such questions about the relationship between desire and representation have proven to be unanswerable since this relationship is constantly being refigured. In an essay titled "The Force of Fantasy," however, Judith Butler proposes that we rethink the relationship between the "real" and fantasy by refusing to grant the "real" an a priori stability. She suggests that the "real" is "a variable construction which is always and only determined in relation to its constitutive outside: fantasy, the unthinkable, the unreal."1' What happens when we make imagined violence-as opposed to erotic fantasy-the object of critical scrutiny? What is at stake in this question is the way that sexual fantasies might or might not intersect with violent fantasies to force into visibility the constructed nature of the real. If imagining violent women does nothing else for example, it might shift the responsibility for articulating the relationship between fantasy and reality from women to men. In other words, power lies in the luxury of not needing to know in advance what the relationship is between representations of violence or sexuality and acted violence or sexuality. The burden of stabilizing this relationship in the arena of sexuality has for too long fallen to women and to feminism and has, of course, produced unproductive alliances between antipornography feminists and the religious Right. Texts like Thelma and Louise create anxiety about fantasy and reality in a very different group of spectators. "Imagined violence" is obviously an adaptation of Benedict Anderson's well-known conception of the nation as "an imagined political community."12 Anderson explains that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." While nationalism, like national identity, is one of the most powerful effects of imagining community, there are many other identities that are mobilized by the power of fantasy. Furthermore, imagined communities allow for powerful interventions: they allow for the transformation of imagined fear into imagined violence. One example of such a transformation is **the Queer Nation**/Pink Panthers slogan "Bash Back." **In** **response to homophobic violence**, this group **mobilized around the menace of retaliation**. In an essay on "Queer Nationality," Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman explain the affectivity of this strategy: "**Bash Back**" simply **intends to mobilize the threat gay bashers use so effectively-strength** not in numbers but **in the presence of a few bodies who represent the potential for** widespread **violence-against the bashers themselves**. In this way, **the slogan turns the bodies of the Pink Panthers into a psychic counter threat, expanding their protective shield beyond the confines of their physical "beat."**13 The power of the slogan, in other words, is its ability to represent a **violence** that **need not ever be actualized**. There is no "real" violence necessary here, only the threat of real violence. The violence of Queer Nation in this example is the moment when what Foucault calls the "reverse discourse" becomes something else, something more than simply "homosexuality beginning to talk on its own behalf."14 The reverse discourse gathers steam, acquires density until it is in excess of the category it purports to articulate. The excess is the disruption of identity and the violence of power and the power of representation; it is dis-integrational; the excess is QUEER. **Imagined violence** disintegrates the power of what Audre Lorde calls "the mythic norm"15 and what David Wojnarowicz describes as the "ONE TRIBE NATION." It **challenges**, in other words, **hegemonic definition and even the definition of hegemony itself**. In Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration, Wojnarowicz writes about being queer in the age of AIDS: "We're supposed to quietly and politely make house in this killing machine called america and pay taxes to support our own slow murder and I am amazed that we're not running amok in the streets" (108). **Wojnarowicz writes of murderous desires and desires for murder; he calls for bloody and violent change and he does so in what he calls "the language of disintegration."** For Wojnarowicz, language itself becomes a weapon, a tool, and a technology and the act of imagination becomes a violent act. In Wojnarowicz's essays, he imagines a violence generated by HIV+ bodies and transforms the AIDS-stricken body into a symbol of postmodern politics. The Person With AIDS, the junkie, the homeless person, the queer in America have the power, as Wojnarowicz says, "to wake you up and welcome you to your bad dream" (82), or the power to completely and utterly alter the contours of the real and to reshape them into realized nightmares. Wojnarowicz's "memoir of disintegration" counters the slow decline of the body with speed, physical and mental speed. Life speeds up as time winds down and the car traveling across an open landscape becomes a symbol for Wojnarowicz of desire without an object and of a kind of masturbatory pleasure in self-propulsion or auto-mobility. The automobile here signifies precisely the movement of the self, the multiplicity of the self as it disintegrates within the realm of the bodily and proliferates in the realm of fantasy. Fantasy, the safest sex of all, avoids physical contamination but it contaminates nonetheless. It contaminates by making information viral; information, in other words, is transmitted via images which enter language and mutate. "Americans can't deal with death unless they own it" (35), says Wojnarowicz in reference to a museum of the atomic bomb. Death, in this memoir, is stasis, the banality of arriving at one's destination; it is a full stop, an end to language and speed. Wojnarowicz's heroes with AIDS attempt therefore to stave off death with technology, writing, or photography. In one scene, the hero films his friend's dead body-here the video camera, like the King tape, like the Ice-T song, records a dangerous technovision of reality in the making. The "real" now is precisely a reel of tape, a memory that can be cut, edited, replayed, rewound, paused, or fast-forwarded. "There is no enlarged or glittering new view of the nature of things or existence," writes Wojnarowicz. "No god or angels brushing my eyelids with their wings. Hell is a place on earth. Heaven is a place in your head" (28-29). **Wojnarowicz's language of disintegration, his effort to rewind or fastforward the real, destroys the America he calls the ONE TRIBE NATION and transforms it into the many tribes**. Of course, the political tactics of ACT UP have involved the disintegration of discrete identities into the many identities united in coalition against the "virus which has no morals." The ONE TRIBE NATION, Wojnarowicz shows us, is a particularly powerful imagined community, but it is one that cannot withstand the impact of a disease which, in the geography of its transmissions, maps out the limits of identity, the murderous effects of inadequate health care systems, the ideological investments of medical institutions, and the breakdown of even the unity of the Right. **This transformation can be capitalized on through imagining a violence that shatters the complacency that prevents people from immediate and spontaneous revolution**. "I'm amazed," writes Wojnarowicz, "that we are not running amok in the streets." Here Wojnarowicz echoes June Jordan's poem titled "Poem about My Rights": "We are the wrong people/of the wrong skin on the wrong continent and what/in the hell is everybody being so reasonable about."16 Wojnarowicz's answer to his frustration at what he sees as a passive nonresponse to the totalitarianism of the ONE TRIBE NATION is to imagine: I'm beginning to believe that **one of the last frontiers left for the radical gesture is the imagination. At least in my ungoverned imagination I can fuck somebody without a rubber, or I can, in the privacy of my own skull, douse Helms with a bucket of gasoline and set his putrid ass on fire....** (120) Hell is a place on earth and heaven is a place in your head and I too believe that "one of the last frontiers left for the radical gesture is the imagination." I believe that it is **by imagining violence that we can harness the force of fantasy and transform it into productive fear.** Wojnarowicz's memoir participates in AIDS activism because it confronts the Jesse Helms of America with the possibility of violent retaliation; it threatens precisely in its potentiality. It is with the potential for violent response from the so-called other that June Jordan ends her poem: "I am not wrong: wrong is not my name/My name is my own my own my own/and I can't tell you who the hell set things up like this/but i can tell you that from now on my resistance/my simple and daily and nightly self-determination/may very well cost you your life." This is the return of the gaze in cinematic terms, **the threat of the return of the repressed, an always bloody and violent re-entry into the realm of signification. This is the articulation that smashes binarism by refusing the role of peaceful activism and demands to be heard as the voice that will violate-the damage, again, lies in the threat rather than in any specific action. My resistance may cost you your life; my answer may silence your question; my entry into representation may erase your control over how I am represented.**