

With my BEGIN + HEART there is NO GENDER-CORE.

I wrote this 9 months ago, but I thought I'd include it, it shows a process of me figuring out about riot grrrl identity.

LADYFEST 2001, GLASGOW and what riot grrrl means to me....

everything about ladyfest seemed to have this nice twist of fate for me. I had persuaded my boyfriendish to cum with me, and we had booked scarily cheap trains from london to glasgow. Then, that Saturday morning, we wondered round to the train station in clacton hoping to jump on a regular train to london. But, we hadn't checked the times. The next one was ages away, and we weren't sure we'd make our connections. But we waited, we listened to our walkmans and played gameboys and prayed. We got to london liverpool st. with about 15 mins to get all this way to another station where our Virgin train was departing. We literally legged it-like mad young snail things with huge backpacks and wheezy lungs- and by the hand of god we...just...got...the...train...seconds... b4 the whistle. We were knackered, we were practically spitting blood from all the running, but we giggled to ourselves, thought typical us, and took our places on the train. Then, at hostel, there was confusion over the dorm rooms. Cos james had booked, and cos my name's Red, they thought we were both blokies, and had booked us into a guy dorm. I said I didn't really mind- but the cool lady at reception, flipped thru her computer reservations, and swapped us to a girl dorm. we then found out we had been

relocated to the room with the girls from the Riot Grrrl Central group. yeah!!

The first day of Ladyfest I was really nervous. Everybody looked so cool and confident. We hit the beer and vodka. I spied members of Lady!Die and thought one of them was Hilde- one of the people who set up the Riot Grrrl Europe list. How lushious when they stepped on stage and Hilde had RGE marker penned on her arm, and dedicated a song to Riot Grrrl Europe. I really wanted to talk to her afterwards- everybody did- but I was lame and nervous, but james made me go up to her (bless) after I had done some more vodka shots. She was a queen, really friendly and funny. We chatted about stuff and I felt really inspired. The energy was just mindblowing. I felt really safe, inspired, and ALIVE! Girls were everywhere-on the door, behind the bar, on stage, behind the decks, leading workshops, writing messages, laughing, kissing....

The talent was amazing- the un-signed bands blowing everyone away as much as the well-knowners, articulate, funny, mesmerising performers and workshop leaders...and the dedication and vision of the organisers- led by Lee Beattie- was ...you, know, these were ordinary women who hadn't ever really done anything like this b4... seeds were definitely planted cos scores of people left that place thinking- Im gonna do that now!

I wish I had gone to more workshops though- it was a shame stuff clashed- but the 3 I did make it to were wicked.

WORKSHOPS ON OFFER:

(I'll be a Post-feminist in the Post-PATRIARCHY)

- N.B. -

How to get on in the music business/
menstrama- an alternative look at
periods/ Heroine poster workshop,
Women, culture and identity, guitar,
sound engineering, dj and drum
workshops, women and violence,
woman as performer, stress
management, women and business,
women and the media, self-publishing,
feminism and identity, sexuality,
organising grassroots festivals.

In the 'Feminism and Identity'
workshop, I really got to think about
what constitutes my feminism, and why
I completely embrace the identity
'feminism'. yet felt a little distanced
from the tag 'riot grrrl'. In groups we
discussed some of the positive and
negative stereotypes of feminism and
then shared them as a whole while
somebody made a wall chart of
everybody's comments. For myself, I've
always seemed to assume that feminism
embraces so many different positions
and politics- but all based around the
premise that women, as a social group,
are subordinated to men. I guess I would
call myself a 'radical feminist' cos I
don't just believe that women lack the
same rights as men (and therefore are
seeking equality), but that women are
systematically oppressed through
structures such as family and gender
expectations, language,
representations....- and ^{what} ~~what~~ to get rid
of these 'values' and expectations. to
put it crudely, that the way our society is
structured privileges the man over the
woman (and the so-called 'masculine'
over the 'feminine'), and ad. Nauseum
about races, sexuality, able-ness etc. I'm
sorry if this sounds glib. But my point

Feminist: contradictory?

a radical, post-structuralist

is, that the negative stereotypes about
feminism don't really ..umm, well I AM
a bra-less, hairy arm pitt... lesbianism
isn't a slur to me...and ~~it's~~ its
common sense that feminism isn't about
man-hating. Ok some radical separatist
feminists might want a girl-ghetto. I
believe that sometimes women only
spaces are crucial (like the women-only
workshops at ladyfest for discussions
about sexuality), because it is creating a
'safe space' that women can perhaps
feel more comfortable in whilst
discussing their sexuality, or picking up
a guitar for the first time. I hope that
guys can also create their own spaces,
do their own gender work (no 'wild man
of the hills' bullshit though-a ~~the~~
backlash response to the gains of
feminism). Men have always been a part
of feminism, as supporters, as allies—
though of course, realistically, only a
small small proportion. Not all women
are feminist too.

Well, my feminism has cum of age in
the so called 'post-feminism' era. The
only sense I can make of that is that the
'sisterhood' splintered, well, the white,
middleclass feminism, and in the 80s
(??) more identity politics emerged,
more women from all types of
backgrounds and identities questioned
the all-inclusiveness of the term
'woman'. I'm still a privileged kid- I
feel funny talking about feminism
sometimes, because of my life and the
way my view is tunnelled. I experience
and have experienced a slide of different
oppression/ abuse/ bullshit because of
my gender/sex. But I'm an educated
working class girl. white, able-
bodied...maybe I don't need to list who
I am. But the point is that I am

this was questioned
in 60's, 70's.....

heterosexist → what was that
about the lavender menace,
was it Betty Friedan?

Women AS A STRATEGY for political solidarity + mobilisation.

conscious of the limited perspective I speak from. ~~Ok, the bottom line is, I personally, find the label 'feminism' empowering.~~

So why do I shy away from 'riot grrrl'? at the Feminism and Identity workshop, some girls in my group said Riot Grrrl was dead. And I think that's part of the problem- associating riot grrrl with the early 90s Olympia thing, or thinking that riot grrrl only refers to a certain punk subculture or thinking its bratty, or Hello Kitty and all the assumptions I make myself about girl plastic style. Ok....well, if I think about riot grrrl the same way as I approach feminism, that there is no one Riot Grrrl ethic, one politics. Riot grrrl is connected by feminism- is that fair enough? Or maybe, fundamentally, riot grrrl is about self-empowerment, community and D.I.Y. maybe we do take the label riot grrrl, like any identity/label, a little casually- cos everybody's got their own version of it. Riot, I am comfortable with. Grrrl- used to make me cringe! I see myself as a girl- or 'young lady'- you know, that prolonged adolescence that 'woman' seems too adult an name to take on.

(just talked to james on the phone and asked him what he though riot grrrl was- and he said 'Isn't it the girl bands in America ages ago).

If this is what riot grrrl is thought of- then of course it seems dead! And riot grrrl is more than music- although a lot of people who call themselves r.g. do have similar music tastes/ are in bands...but music is just one departure. isn't it. One way of expressing yourself, one way of being political. At ladyfest. a

actually, i v riot grrrl' ← now, i think what i needed was to [re]define it for MYSELF

lot of r.grrrls themselves were talking about how enclosed riot grrrl is- zines being passed around the same people, etc. and having a riot bubble can be attractive on some level, a network of people into similar stuff, people into d.i.y, but if Riot Grrrl has the passion and involvement that it does at its belly, then we need to ensure that other people get to hear about it, be inspired. Don't keep it a subculture- or make the subcultural projects public. If people are to realise that riot grrrl is still relevant, still active, then we need to bring it to their attention. (do we need to call ourselves riot grrrl? As a collective of people, having a name we can refer to can be empowering. As long as it doesn't fossilise, as long as people are contradicting, evolving, arguing????? Riot grrrl as a tag can be like a powerpoint, a way of meeting up with other people, a base from which all different directions can grow. And when you are doing activist work, I believe that having a collective identity- especially when individuals wish to remain anonymous- like Guerrilla Girls- can be helpful/crucial when u are doing subversive things).

Another complaint- the whole riot grrrl fashion jazz. I've done it myself- complained about people who seem more into the look of riot grrrl, than the substance behind it. I don't find any resonance in plastic, 'Hello Kitty, Barbie, girly brat stuff, and I think I get abit snobbery and condescending about it. At ladyfest, there was a big cheer when Penny Arcade ripped into Riot Grrrl as a fashion, as girls dressing up young. She implied that there wasn't anything radical in that, that it was sort

i don't believe in 'essence' yet i know material oppression, symbolic SHAMS, i know how this society treats me, in abstract + reality.

[SUBVERT THE IMAGE THROUGH
TEXT]

of brainless. (Riot grrrl fashion- there isn't one really, I'm not justified in even saying 'riot grrrl fashion' or maybe I am. Members of a subculture can have similar dress styles- similar styles of subversion. Read dick hebidge and argue about that!)... THEORISTS ASCRIBE THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS ONTO... but there are some girls who wear the same kind of stuff... like I used to wear babydoll dresses and boots all the time. I felt comfortable in that, sexy, the material of the slips were nice, bedwear felt good... but choosing to dress like that wasn't cos courtney did.....) . but maybe the point is that. after penny arcade left. bratmobile took centre stage. and wearing a little dress and a ponytail and doing high kicks. singer Allison Wolfe said something like you can play around with the way you look, and still have substance. And I thought that was a wicked thing to say! Why am I snidey about girls who dress up in brat style?? Brat style!- I mean taking kiddie things like dolls and cartoons.... You can have freckles, bracelets and still be a sniper with your pen, still assassinate people with your tongue. And if u don't, if u just enjoy the style, well that's up to u too. But I won't stop bitchin either. I think riot grrrl, and 'boiz', we need more of you too, there's so much we could get accomplished if we do take things seriously as well as have fun. My riot grrrl ethic is to work hard to try and motivate people and myself to see things a little different, to have confidence and commitment to see projects through.

EVIDENCE: THEY READ CULTURES / SUB-CULTURES FROM OUTSIDE.

NOTES:

there isn't 'riot style'- at meetings: to take a look at us + there isn't any defining commonalities.

But within zines, there can be common use of magazine cut outs - images of women:



yet, the representation is quite uncritical. it can be seen to be using + perpetuating beauty myths (+ often white women. thin, sexy...)

maybe we need a dada assault on our images. deconstruct.

de-centers representation to be realistic of diversity + identities