

OR MAYBE EMBRACE QUEER...

...FAILURE

“Failure is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style, to cite Quentin Crisp, or a way of life, to cite Foucault, and it can stand in contrast to the grim scenarios of success.”

Consider the many ways we think of failure as a negative trait instead of its potential. Think of those who have been rejected because they did not meet societal definition of success and the joy we have avoided because it was too childish or did not lead to financial reward.

The Death of Nero, ultimately, asks us to set aside our societal expectations of success and intentionally fail, to find joy beyond the success which ultimately leads to more Neros.

The pathways to queer failure are simple:

- Tactically forget societal expectations
- Practice being unserious
- Get lost, intentionally
- Be unruly
- Embrace and seek out imperfection

“The queer art of failure turns on the impossible, the improbable, the unlikely, and the unremarkable. It quietly loses, and in losing it imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being.”



Jack Judith Halberstam
The Queer Art of Failure (2011)

... TIME

“Pleasure — instead of appearing as foundational to a discipline or identity — flashes up from the past as the loser in bygone battles over what the discipline of history itself should become.”

Consider what it might mean to engage an oppressive history, subverting the violence into pleasure. We can then imagine a new future — to break the cycle of oppression, without erasing or minimizing historical trauma. When violence and pleasure blend, we enter a state of sadomasochism which acknowledges our complicity in oppression while allowing us to consider a different way of doing things.

We can engage sadomasochism as we perform, but also as audience members to imagine a different outcome of history:

- Draw on historical and mythological tales that remind of the oppressive past that led us to our present
- Drag the narrative so that it lives distinctly in the present and insist upon performing pleasure.
- Rewrite the ending so a new future is created
- Consider history not as progressive, but something that cycles and repeats...then break the cycle...creating queer time.

“Sadomasochism becomes a form of writing history with the body in which the linearity of history itself may be called into question, but, crucially, the past does not thereby cease to exist.



Elizabeth Freeman
Time Binds (2010)

...FUTURITY

“Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality [...] The future is queerness’s domain.”

Consider the future, then consider a queer future. What systems prevent us from reaching that utopia?

Queerness may only arrive when it is safe for all queer individuals to express themselves in all spaces, until then it is a goal to reach toward.

- ‘Disidentifications’ is one pathway that recognizes that queerness is not always safe to perform, especially for queers of color. It rejects the choice between assimilation and hostile rejection to find ways of working on, with, and against dominant cultures to ensure survival.
- To reach a queer future, we must first live, and by insisting on our existence, we create a sense of ‘queer feelings’ within society.

The Death of Nero plays with these ideas: heterosexual relationship appear odd, history is twisted, and when presented binary choices we find a hidden third option. Our playwright Kuzmin first shows us what is wrong the world, breaks it, and then begins anew without answers.

“Queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in both the world and time.”



José Esteban Muñoz
Cruising Utopia (2009) and
Disidentifications (1999)

HOW DOES FAILING OFFER DIFFERENT REWARDS?

HOW DOES REWRITING HISTORY CREATE A NEW FUTURE WITHOUT ERASING THE PAIN OF THE PAST?

WHAT IS KEEPING OUR QUEER UTOPIA ON THE HORIZON TODAY AND HOW DO WE DISRUPT THOSE PROCESSES?