

Bakunin Brand Vodka

An Exploration into Anarchist-punk and Punk-anarchism

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ABSTRACT

Punk and anarchism are inextricably linked. The connection between them is expressed in the anarchistic rhetoric, ethics, and practices of punk, and in the huge numbers of activist anarchists who were first politicised by punk. To be sure, this relationship is not straightforward, riven as it is with tensions and antagonisms—but its existence is irrefutable. This article looks back to ‘early punk’ (arbitrarily taken as 1976-1980), to identify the emergence of the anarchistic threads that run right through punk’s (ever advancing) history. However, it must be stressed that any claim to being ‘definitive’ or ‘complete’ is rejected here. Punk, like anarchism, is a hugely diverse and multifarious entity. Too often, authors leaning on the crutch of determinism reduce punk to a simple linear narrative, to be weaved through some fanciful dialectic. In opposition to this, Proudhon’s concept of antimony is employed to help contextualise punk’s beguiling amorphousness.

KEYWORDS

Punk, hardcore, anarchism, anarcho-punk, DIY, subculture, counter-culture

INTRODUCTION

I am an anarchist.¹

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Anarchism and punk have been closely associated since the latter's first intrusion into the public sphere in late 1976. Punk's roots and nascence can be traced much further back,² but it was the Sex Pistols' profanity-laden³ television interview with Bill Grundy⁴ that saw 'punk' splashed across the front pages in the UK. Less than a week previously the Sex Pistols had released their first single, 'Anarchy in the U.K.' with its opening lines, 'I am an antichrist, I am an anarchist.' Whatever Johnny Rotten's⁵ inspiration for the lyric, this utterance placed 'anarchy' firmly into the popular conception of punk. Even as the Sex Pistols were revealed as a short-lived profiteering publicity stunt rather than a voice of revolution, the anarchy/punk association endured and developed to produce numerous politically coherent, activist, and effective manifestations. It would seem, then, that there is a good deal more to this association than just a (half-)rhyme for a pop-song.

Penny Rimbaud of Crass, a band often identified as the progenitors of the anarcho-punk movement,⁶ has remarked that:

around Europe, and is toiling towards a PhD at Loughborough University, UK, scrutinising the relationships between anarchism and punk in contemporary contexts. He is currently involved with Leicestershire Solidarity Group, FC Kolektivo Victoria, and making an irreverent racket with fellow punks, Die Wrecked.

¹ Sex Pistols, 'Anarchy in the U.K.' The single was released November 26, 1976 (EMI), and subsequently released on the album *Never Mind the Bollocks* on October 27, 1977 (Virgin).

² The term 'punk' had been used in a generic or descriptive sense by music critics in the US to refer to 'unregenerate rock-and-rollers with an aggressively lower-class style,' as far back as 1964: Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985), 11–12; citing Greil Marcus, ed., *Stranded: Rock and Roll for a Desert Island* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 72.

³ The Sex Pistols said 'shit' twice during the interview, which had previously only been said twice in the entire history of British TV. Other words used such as 'rotter' have lost much of their ability to offend over the last 36 years, but attitudes of contemporary 1970's audiences must be borne in mind, as will be discussed later.

⁴ *Today Show* (Granada), December 1, 1976, only actually broadcast in London, but with much wider impact because of press reporting.

⁵ Johnny Rotten, a.k.a. John Lydon, former singer of the Sex Pistols, a contestant on reality TV gameshow *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!* in 2004, featured in TV advertisements for Country Life butter in 2008, and currently singing with a reformed Public Image Limited.

⁶ It should be stressed that the term 'anarcho-punk' does not apply to all

had anyone mentioned Bakunin, we would probably have assumed it was some kind of vodka.⁷

Curiously, these self-professed anarchists adopted the terminology, imagery, and philosophy of anarchism but were initially ignorant of its canon of ‘key thinkers’—so their deployment of anarchism must have stemmed from elsewhere.

This article will explore some of the complex relationships between punk and anarchism, dealing particularly with an intuitive anarchism identifiable in early punk—i.e., an anarchism developed *in absence of the anarchist political canon*. If such a thing as a ‘punk-anarchism’ can be said to exist,⁸ its form and later development are evident in microcosm from the very beginnings of punk as an identifiable movement. Anarchistic rhetoric and practice in early punk appear in the following ways:

- Shock tactic: a posture of ‘anarchy’ to project an image of danger and allure.
- Hippie hangover: influences from hippie and avant-garde movements and a continuation of 1960’s counter-culture and the anarchistic threads therein.
- Reactive anarchism: opposition to hierarchical, state, and societal repression.
- Practical necessity: the DIY (do-it-yourself) organising principle as taking over the means of production for

anarchist punk bands, but rather refers to a specific (though diverse) punk sub-genre including bands such as Conflict, Subhumans, AntiSect, Stalag 17, Toxic Waste, Zounds, Icons of Filth, The Mob, Poison Girls, Rudimentary Peni, Amebix, Cress, The Ex, Flux of Pink Indians, Rubella Ballet, etc. Participants in this scene did not generally accept the ‘anarcho-punk’ tag willingly, since being labelled as *anything* was anathema to their motivating principles. As Ian Gasper points out, the ‘whole idea behind, sort-of, anarchic punk was that it didn’t want to be tagged, pigeon-holed, . . . and controlled in that manner’: Gasper, interviewed in *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk*, dir. Roy Wallace (2007); available at: <http://fuckcopyright.blogspot.com/2009/04/day-country-died-2007.html>.

⁷ Penny Rimbaud (aka J.J. Ratter), *Shibboleth: My Revolting Life* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1998), 109.

⁸ The notion of a ‘punk-anarchism’ is, of course, completely self-defeating (just like the term ‘anarcho-punk’)—but in this instance the term will be used selectively to highlight those aspects of anarchism within punk that may be considered as distinct from other strains of anarchism.

workers' self-control, owing to a lack of mainstream industry assistance (or interference).

- Intuitive anarchistic politics: disavowal of (capital 'P') Politics.

From the outset, it is necessary to stress the amorphousness of punk and highlight difficulties in defining it. In common with anarchism, punk is a *popularly conceived* movement, not founded on any doctrine or programme. Despite the oft-claimed influence of a handful of leading figures,⁹ punk is formed from a myriad of influences and is constantly evolving along the tensions between these antagonistic strains. Each individual's experience of, and perspective on, punk is unique—for every claim that punk 'is' something, there is likely another to counter that it 'is not.' This multiplicity of apparent contradictions appeals to those employing Marist-Hegelian dialectics,¹⁰ but such attempts at synthesis are unconvincing. Smoothing over punk's inherent contradictions and wilfully ignoring those aspects which refuse to fit with the imposed ideology reduces complexity to a simple narrative (which, rather cynically, aligns neatly with Marxist socio-economic dogma). This refusal of synthesis means an embrace of contradiction and of *antimony*. As Proudhon put it, the 'plurality of elements, the struggle of elements, the opposition of contraries,'¹¹ are the conditions from which free society can emerge, as

⁹ Such as Richard Hell, Malcolm McLaren, Johnny Rotten, Jimmy Pursey, or Joe Strummer

¹⁰ For example, see: Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, (London: Routledge, 1979); Stacy Thompson, *Punk Productions: Unfinished Business* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Sean Albiez, 'Know history!: John Lydon, Cultural Capital and the Prog/Punk Dialectic,' in *Popular Music*, Vol. 22/3 (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 357–374; and Kieran James, "'This is England": Punk Rock's Realist/Idealist Dialectic and its Implications for Critical Accounting Education,' *Science Direct: Accounting Forum* 33 (2009): 127–145. Stephen Taylor takes a slightly different tack on the dialectical approach, saying: '[m]y effort at synthesis, then, consists in the kind of post-Hegelian negativity described by Julia Kristeva . . . an "affirmative negativity" or "productive dissolution" of fetishism': Steven Taylor, *False Prophet: Fieldnotes from the Punk Underground* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 80.

¹¹ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Théorie de la propriété*; cited and translated in Diane Morgan, 'Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon: "Utopian" French Socialism,' in *History of Continental Philosophy*, Vol. I (1780-1840), ed. Tom Nenon (Acumen Press, 2010), 302 [265–304].

well as being the conditions that a free society engenders. As Diane Morgan writes of Proudhon, '[o]ut of these antimonies, their conflicts and precarious equilibrium, comes growth and development; any fusalional resolution or the elimination of one of the terms would be the equivalent of death.'¹² In punk's refusal to have its contradictions synthesised into convenient narratives, the essence of antimony is embodied.¹³

This article does not claim to be 'definitive' or 'complete'¹⁴—any such presentation of punk is pointless, misguided, and worst, *misguiding*. Terry Perlin's comment that, 'there are as many anarchisms as there are anarchists,'¹⁵ readily applies to punk as well. Rather, it is the overlap and interaction between punk and anarchism, inherently ill-defined as they are, that is of interest here. By examining the numerous issues that arise from the relationships between anarchism and punk, insight into both movements can be garnered and a contribution can be made to the multifarious and ever-shifting mosaics that make up our understanding of these complicated and contradictory entities.

'Early punk' will be taken here as 1976-1980 (or so), though

¹² Proudhon, *Théorie de la propriété*; in Morgan, 'Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon,' 301. In Proudhon's words: 'What particular proposition . . . can be called *truth*? None; opposition, antagonism and antimony burst out everywhere. The real truth is: (1) in equilibrium, a thing which our reason excellently conceives . . . but which is only a relation; (2) in the whole, which we can never possibly embrace': P.J. Proudhon, *Théorie de l'impôt*, in *The Works of P.J. Proudhon*, ed. Benjamin Tucker, Vol. XV (1868), 226-227; cited by Henri De Lubac, in *The Un-Marxian Socialist* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), 146. This conceptualisation of 'truth' seems to foreshadow post-structuralist epistemology, despite Proudhon's own position within positivist enlightenment thought.

¹³ Indeed, punk's antimonious traits have contributed to its remarkable longevity.

¹⁴ Unlike, for example, Alex Ogg's *No More Heroes: A Complete History of UK Punk from 1977 to 1980* (London: Cherry Red, 2006), or Ian Glasper's *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk, 1980-1984* (London: Cherry Red, 2004), which describes itself on the back cover as 'the definitive overview of this previously overlooked era,' or Glasper's *Trapped in a Scene: UK Hardcore, 1985-1989* (London: Cherry Red, 2009), which describes itself as 'the definitive document of UK Hardcore' (back cover). These are probably just lazy adjectives to encourage book sales, and in fact Glasper's books otherwise avoid this kind of hyperbole, but the assertions of 'completeness' or being 'definitive' sit entirely at odds with the understanding of punk in this article.

¹⁵ Terry M. Perlin, "Preface," in Terry M. Perlin, ed., *Contemporary Anarchism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1979).

this interval is largely arbitrary. Peaks and troughs of punk activity may be identifiable across its history, but the inter-relatedness of these scenes is lost in the frequent assertion of distinct or separate ‘waves.’ The 1976-1980 dating commonly pops up in oral histories and outsider considerations of punk,¹⁶ roughly correlating to the mainstream media’s attention span for punk, with the added romance of regime change in the UK in 1979 and the US in 1981. As an illustration of this, the combined coverage for punk and associated topics and bands in the mainstream music magazines *NME*, *Melody Maker*, *Sounds*, *Zig Zag*, and *Trouser Press* was: 22 articles in 1976, 77 articles in 1977, 88 articles in 1978, 39 articles in 1979, 22 articles in 1980, and 3 articles in 1981.¹⁷

But! The number of active punks and punk bands did not diminish in concert with this decline in mainstream media interest. Rather, the profitability of early punk had been depleted, so the mainstream media’s gaze was turned to the commercial potential of the New Romantics, and the more marketable ‘New Wave.’ For this article, the 1976-1980 interval might perhaps be justified in that it runs up to the emergence of anarcho-punk as an identifiable movement—but even this supposed division is highly porous, and the main reasoning behind this particular interval is to focus the discussion down to a level that is manageable in a few thousand words, while also challenging some accepted conceptions of ‘early punk.’

The five sub-headings that follow (shock tactic, hippie hangover, reactive anarchism, practical necessity, and intuitive anarchistic politics) identify the various ways in which ‘anarchy’ and anarchism appear in early punk, *without a canon*. These threads are interrelated, so some crossover between them should be expected. To repeat, these five strands are offered as hangers to provide a sketch of early punk, not a complete picture; numerous conflicting elements co-exist with them, and although

¹⁶ For example, Alex Ogg’s *No More Heroes* contains this interval in its title, Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain’s *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove Press, 2006) contains everything from 1980 onwards as an Epilogue, and John Robb’s *Punk Rock: An Oral History* (London: Random House, 2010) covers a wider spectrum of dates, although 1980-1984 are lumped together, while 1976-1979 have individual chapters or even several sub-chapters each.

¹⁷ Prior to 1976, some of these publications make use of the word ‘punk’ but as an adjective to describe a raw rock ‘n’ roll sound. The articles are stored at www.rocksbackpages.com, though they are not complete to the point of including advertisements that might be aimed at punk readers.

space limitations mean that these antagonisms are not fleshed out in detail here, the point is to embrace them.

Some cases of explicit anarchism are evident in early punk. Craig O'Hara, Dave Laing, and Brian Cogan all particularly identify Crass as 'one of the few communal organisations dedicated to consistency and a clear ideological focus'¹⁸ in the early punk milieu, even though Crass themselves cast doubt on this point. Black Flag's name was adopted 'in symbolic reference to the Black Flag of Anarchy,'¹⁹ 'a threatening thing.'²⁰ Raymond Pettibon, who devised the Black Flag name and logo, describes himself as a 'card-carrying anarchist'²¹ in the late 1970's. But even though a degree of explicit anarchism was evident at the earliest stages of punk's development, this was a minority strand, and as O'Hara points out, '[i]t would be a lie . . . to say that these original Punks had well-developed social and political theories.'²²

SHOCK TACTIC: A POSTURE OF 'ANARCHY' TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF DANGER AND ALLURE

As suggested in the opening paragraph, the anarchy professed by early 'punk idols' was often little more than rhetorical posturing and lacked political substance. Revolutionary language did not preclude collaboration with major corporate labels, and numerous sell-outs, so 'anarchy' must have carried a different meaning for these bands. Understanding this meaning is not straightforward, since in the 1970's, as today, 'anarchy' was used pejoratively by the mainstream media, implying chaos and disorder. As George Katsiaficas puts it, 'the propensity for quick fixes on fragmentary factoids often leads the media to use (erroneously) the term "anarchist".'²³ The emotive power of the term 'anarchy'²⁴ also

¹⁸ Brian Cogan, "Do They Owe Us a Living? Of Course They Do!" Crass, Throbbing Gristle, and Anarchy and Radicalism in Early English Punk Rock,' *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1.2 (2007): 83 [77–90].

¹⁹ Stevie Chick, *Spray Paint the Walls: The Story of Black Flag* (London: Omnibus Press, 2009), 62.

²⁰ Gary McDaniel (aka Chuck Dukowski), bassist in Black Flag, quoted in Chick, *Spray Paint the Walls*, 62.

²¹ Raymond Pettibon, quoted in Steven Blush, *American Hardcore: A Tribal History*, 2nd edn. (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2010), 52; also quoted in Chick, *Spray Paint the Walls*, 62.

²² Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More than Noise!*, 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1999), 27.

²³ George Katsiaficas, discussing media reports on the autonomen of Germany in the late 1980's/early 1990's, *The Subversion of Politics:*

appealed to early punk bands that were attracted to the mythology that surrounded ‘anarchism’ in its popular (mis)understanding. In ignorance of the anarchist canon, they developed a form of oppositional politics, initially rooted in shock, that can be described as anarchistic. Several themes of shock and offence were prevalent (sexual explicitness and deviance,²⁵ violence,²⁶ drug use,²⁷ disgust or worthlessness²⁸), but profanity and World War Two/Nazi imagery are particularly revealing in regard to the appearance of ‘anarchy’ in punk.

Late-1970’s social attitudes were comparatively more conservative than today and popular punk-profanities such as ‘rotter,’ ‘bugger,’ or ‘wanker’ have lost much of their offensive-ness.²⁹

European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonisation of Everyday Life (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1997), 197.

²⁴ This is also the reason Proudhon adopted the term in the first instance.

²⁵ For example: ‘Sex Boy’ (Germs), ‘Sit On My Face Stevie Nix’ (Rotters), ‘Fuck and Suck’ (Mad Virgins), ‘Bondage Boy’ (Sick Things), ‘Orgasm Addict’ (Buzzcocks), ‘Killer Queers’ (Controllers), ‘I Like Boys’ (Snifters), ‘Homo Safari’ (Xtc), ‘Disease’ (UK Subs), ‘We Are All Prostitutes’ (Pop Group), ‘Psyche Sluts’ (John Cooper-Clarke), ‘Slut’ (Vomit Pigs), ‘Loner with a Boner’ (Black Randy and the Metrosquad), ‘Pornography’ (Revenge), and also band names such as Buzzcocks, Tits, Sex Pistols, Mad Virgins, Snatch, Buttocks, Slits, Throbbing Gristle, Vibrators, Crabs, and Stinky Toys.

²⁶ For example: ‘Get Raped’ (Eater), and also the band names Raped and The Stranglers.

²⁷ For example: euphemisms such as ‘Lady Esquire’ (UK Subs), and more explicitly, ‘Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue’ (Ramonés), ‘Cocaine Smile’ (Slaughter and the Dogs), or ‘Daddy Is My Pusher’ (Tits).

²⁸ For example, on the theme of disgust: ‘Gobbing On Life’ (Alberto Y Los Trios Paranoias), and also band names such as Acme Sewage Company, Fatal Microbes, Germs, Open Sore, Vomit Pigs, Urinals, and Celia and the Mutations. On the theme of stupidity: ‘Brainless’ (Deadbeats), ‘No Brains’ (Eater), and the band names Bad Brains and Crass (and their singer’s stage name ‘Steve Ignorant’), and also the stage personas of the Ramones. On the themes of rottenness and worthlessness: ‘Rot and Roll’ and ‘Teen Slime’ (Dogs), ‘Gutter Kids’ (Dyaks), ‘Born To Lose’ (Heartbreakers), ‘Ugly’ (Stranglers), ‘Freak’ (V2), and also the band names Proles, Viletones, Pigs, Pigz, Riff Raff, Sick Things, Yobs, and Rotters.

²⁹ As a marker of changing attitudes to profanity, it is now acceptable to use the word ‘shit’ on television in the US as an adjective or in an exclamatory sense (though, inexplicably, not to denote feces). This law change was mercilessly exploited by the subversive TV cartoon series *South Park*, which managed to accumulate a total of 162 ‘shits’ in one 25-minute episode, ‘It Hits the Fan,’ Series 5, Episode 1, first aired on June 20, 2001.

Christian moral crusader Mary Whitehouse brought the last successful prosecution for blasphemous libel in the UK against *Gay News* in 1977,³⁰ but a similar problem of moral pique arose for Crass when they had to exclude the song 'Reality Asylum' from their 1978 debut album *Feeding of the 5000* because an Irish pressing plant objected to its blasphemous content.³¹ Aside from religious 'swearing,' some early punk song titles that used profanity include 'Fuck You' (Alberto Y Los Trios Paranoias), 'You Bastard' (Alternative TV), 'Oh Shit!' (Buzzcocks), and 'The Bitch' (Slaughter and the Dogs), with the lyrics to many more songs peppered with similar language. In other instances, profanity is used covertly, as in the Sex Pistols' 'Pretty Vacant,' in which the last syllable of vacant is deliberately mispronounced to sound like 'cunt.'³² Racially-based profanity was also frequently used by early punk bands, such as the song title 'Rock and Roll Nigger' (Patti Smith), the band name NY Niggers, and in the lyrics to 'White Punks on Hope' (Crass), 'White Noise' (Stiff Little Fingers), and 'Holiday in Cambodia' (Dead Kennedys).³³ Crass's line, 'we're all just niggers to the rulers of this land,'³⁴ echoes

³⁰ For publishing James Kirkup, 'The Love That Dares to Speak Its Name,' in 1976; available at *Annoy.com*: <http://annoy.com/history/doc.html?DocumentID=100045>. The offending content was homosexual necrophilia between a Roman centurion and Jesus Christ's crucified corpse: 'in each wound, his side, his back, his mouth—I came and came and came.' In 2008, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act (section 79) abolished the crime of blasphemy in the UK (excepting Northern Ireland!).

³¹ The track was replaced with roughly 2 minutes of silence entitled 'The Sound of Free Speech.' 'Reality Asylum' was released as a single in 1978 on Small Wonder Records. The second pressing of the *Feeding of the 5000* album (*The Second Sitting*), released in 1980 (Crass Records), did include a version of 'Reality Asylum,' though it is titled simply 'Asylum.'

³² Strangely, this song was played during the London 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, with 'vaCUNT' heard by an estimated 900 million people viewing globally (see: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/08/07/oly-ratings-day-idINL6E8J78H620120807>). In this case, either the profane association was missed, or its potential ambiguity was used somewhat subversively.

³³ Black Flag's 'White Minority' and the Clash's 'White Riot' both clumsily employ themes of racial segregation, even if that was not their intention. Crass criticised what they saw as the Clash's unwelcome interference with their song 'White Punks on Hope': 'Black man's got his problems and his way to deal with it, so don't kid yourself you're helping with your white liberal shit.'

³⁴ Crass, 'White Punks on Hope,' *Stations of the Crass* (Crass Records,

with Patti Smith's 'Rock and Roll Nigger,' the liner notes of which say, 'any man [sic] who extends beyond the classic form is a nigger.'³⁵ Stiff Little Fingers, from Belfast, launch into a racist tirade in 'White Noise,' using words such as 'nigger,' 'golly gob,' 'monkey,' 'paki,' 'curry coffee queer,' and 'yid,' which is only revealed as parody in the final verse, moving from 'black wogs' and 'brown wogs' to 'green wogs'—i.e., 'the Irish' as perceived by 'the Brits.'³⁶ In these instances, punks *identify with* oppressed black communities, but use powerfully offensive and racist words to make their point.³⁷ These were not *intended* as racist songs, whatever their ambiguity, but crucially, the use of highly offensive racist language imbued them with shock value. This would have been tempered, since racist language would have provoked less shock-value in the 1970's than today (inversely to attitudes concerning profanity and sexual 'deviance'). For instance, the BBC (and ITV) comedy TV protagonist Alf Garnett regularly used words such as 'coon,' 'wog,' and 'paki' from 1965 to 1992.³⁸ These words were taboo-stretching comedy fodder as we were invited to laugh *at* the ageing bigot, but many must have been laughing *with* the character instead. These highly charged words were broadcast on state television to mainstream audiences, making them commonplace and therefore appear acceptable.

Punk's frequent use of WWII and Nazi imagery carried poignant shock value in the 1970's, since many people that had been personally affected were still alive. Examples include songs titles like 'Adolph You Beauty!' (Chosen Few), 'Nazi Training Camp' (D.O.A.), 'California Über Alles' (Dead Kennedys), 'The Gasman Cometh' (Crass), 'Fascist Pigs' (Nosebleeds), 'Decadent Jew' (Nuns), 'Just Like Dresden' (NY Niggers), 'Swastikas on Parade' (Residents), 'Belsen Was A Gas' (Sex Pistols), 'Mein

1979).

³⁵ Patti Smith, liner notes to *Easter* (Arista Records, 1978); quoted in Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, eds., *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (London: Verso, 2011), 37.

³⁶ 'Paddy is a moron. Spud thick Mick. Breeds like a rabbit. Thinks with his prick. Anything floors him if he can't fight or drink it. Round them up in Ulster. Tow it out and sink it': Stiff Little Fingers, 'White Noise,' *Inflammable Material* (Rough Trade, 1979).

³⁷ Unsurprisingly, this ambiguity led to the National Front and the British Movement taking a particular interest, with some early punk participants becoming involved with these racist groups.

³⁸ In the sitcoms created by Johnny Speight, *Till Death Us Do Part* (BBC, 1965-1968, 1970, 1972-1975), *Till Death . . .* (ITV, 1981), and *In Sickness and In Health* (BBC, 1985-1992).

Kampf' (Spitfire Boys), 'Hiroshima Mon Amor' (Ultravox), 'Swastika Girl' (Viletones), and band names such as Chosen Few, London SS,³⁹ Stormtrooper,⁴⁰ and Martin and the Brownshirts. The swastika was one of the most prominent examples of this shock-tactic. Jamie Reid used it in his Sex Pistols artwork, as did Arturo Vega associated with the Ramones, and many punks wore armbands or t-shirts featuring the insignia. Roger Sabin identifies several possible shock connotations within the swastika:

two-fingers to the 'peace and love' ethic of the hippies; the same to parents, who were of an age to have experienced the war; a nod to the 'camp' S & M aesthetic . . . ; an ironic symbol of living 'in a fascist regime'; or simply a nice bit of hip (anti-) fashion. But it could also very possibly mean some degree of sympathy with fascist aims⁴¹

Sabin's final point is the most controversial of these (as he intends it); however, Laing writes that '*Sniffin' Glue*⁴² made clear, and other evidence suggests, that punks who wore [Nazi] armbands were not doing so because they endorsed fascism. Their purpose was *to shock*.'⁴³ The World Wars had been beatified by the state, with numerous remembrance days, ceremonies, and symbols to reinforce a feeling of patriotism and worthy sacrifice within the populace. To defile memories of 'the fallen' was sacrilege, so punks using the swastika wielded considerable shock value.

As much as the political spectre of Nazism was raised for its shock value, it is with similar motivation that 'anarchy' was used. As noted above, anarchy was not popularly understood in a political/philosophical sense, rather, it represented the hell-on-earth that would assumedly ensue if the constraints provided by social norms and government control were to disappear. This theme chimed with the media-fuelled fears of impending crisis for the economy and society.⁴⁴ Political groups on the left and

³⁹ London SS are more accurately described as a 'proto-punk' band, albeit one that never actually played a gig.

⁴⁰ Stormtrooper was Crass's original name.

⁴¹ Roger Sabin, "I Won't Let that Dago By": Rethinking Punk and Racism," in Roger Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock: So What?* (London: Routledge, 1999), 209 [199–218].

⁴² Early punk fanzine.

⁴³ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 96 (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ Many analyses take the economic situation preceding punk's nascence as a key factor in its early development. Jon Savage in particular goes in-

right were able to motivate increased support, with several industrial disputes ongoing, and electoral success for the neo-fascist National Front, who were also active in street-level racist attacks. It must be recalled that the dominant form of extra-parliamentary 'leftism' at this time was orthodox Marxism, or the Trotskyism of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The Soviet Union was *still* being reified by many as the only viable alternative to capitalism, and despite the beginnings of change brought by 1968 and the birth of the 'new left,' debate and action was still bogged down in old-fashioned hierarchical unions, and dogmatic groups like Militant⁴⁵ and the SWP. As such, the political philosophy of anarchism was not afforded space for serious consideration. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the UK found itself with a weak government, a crippled economy, an army of unemployed people, the rising popularity of fascist thugs and totalitarian communists, and civil war in Northern Ireland. The mainstream media, in its unending thirst for hyperbole, could only be expected to prophesise impending 'anarchy' in the UK. But if 'anarchy' was generally understood by early punks in *this* sense, then much of the 'anarchy' professed is essentially inseparable from its political opposite, the Nazi swastika. The use of 'anarchy' as shock tactic in this context is certainly in the absence of any anarchist political canon.

HIPPIE HANGOVER: INFLUENCES FROM HIPPIE AND AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS AND A CONTINUATION OF 1960'S COUNTER-CULTURE AND THE ANARCHISTIC THREADS THEREIN

While much of the 'anarchy' posited by early punk bands was mere wordplay, this is not to say that ignorance of the anarchist canon was its essentially defining feature. Influences include anarchic threads from hippie and 1960's counter-culture⁴⁶ that

depth in explaining the bleak situation for workers, and the austerity measures being enforced in the UK by the International Monetary Fund: see Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond*, rev. edn. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002). Essentially though, discussion of the economy focuses on rapidly rising unemployment figures, 'doubl[ing] in the period 1975-77 from 700,000 to 1.4 million': Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 110.

⁴⁵ A far-left branch of the Labour party in the UK.

⁴⁶ George McKay also argues that hippie and punk are in some sense reunited in the 1980's, because the 'quarter-organised chaos of free festivals offer[ed] an easy homological fit': George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties* (London: Verso, 1996),

indirectly weave punk into a lineage that stretches back deep into anarchism's history.

As an example, Crass adopted anarchist language and imagery, but this did not stem from a prior knowledge of classical philosophers or activists, nor from involvement in explicitly anarchist political groups. Members had been involved in hippie and avant-garde cultures, which would have inevitably had at least some degree of engagement with anarchist ideas. This exposure helped shape Crass's response to the problems they identified in the music industry and society at large. As Rimbaud states, '[i]n all honesty, I wasn't aware of anarchism until about one year into Crass. I knew what it meant in the loose term of the word before, but in terms of a label, it was more default.'⁴⁷ However, this influence was not easily accepted into early punk's 'anti-hippy politics.'⁴⁸ As Rimbaud puts it, 'that particular form of hope was a dream,' and 'we abandoned the flowers for the black rags of another movement . . . if we weren't to be allowed to play our game of life, we'd have to fight for the right to do so.'⁴⁹ Rimbaud's case is particularly telling, since the anti-hippie statements above are directed at his immediate lived experience—the personal disavowal of a movement to which he had belonged illuminates the perceived rupture from hippie.⁵⁰ There was also a feeling that the movements of the 1960's had failed to achieve *anything*—the idea of "we can change the world" became "what good did it do anyway,"⁵¹ and 'the promises of the British sixties . . . [were] a con game people ran on themselves.'⁵² This

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⁴⁷ Penny Rimbaud, quoted in George Berger, *The Story of Crass* (London: Omnibus Press, 2008), 128.

⁴⁸ Roger Sabin, "Introduction," in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 4.

⁴⁹ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 215, 324.

⁵⁰ He recounts emerging from the utopian idyll of their countryside commune, Dial House, 'back into the "real" world,' 'the horrific reality of the nuclear age' (Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 68, 156).

⁵¹ Andrew Boyd, 'Irony, Meme Warfare, and the Extreme Costume Ball,' in *From Act Up to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalisation*, eds. Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk (New York: Verso, 2002), 248; cited in Ben Holtzman, Craig Hughes, and Kevin Van Meter, 'Do it Yourself . . . and the Movement Beyond Capitalism,' in *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations // Collective Theorization*, eds. Erika Biddle, Stevphen Shukaitis, and David Graeber (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2007), 44.

⁵² Greil Marcus, 'Johnny Rotten and Margaret Drabble,' *Rolling Stone*, March 9, 1978; cited in Greil Marcus, *In The Fascist Bathroom: Writings on*

sense of defeat and betrayal goes a long way in explaining early punk's reputed disdain for their sub-cultural forebears.⁵³ For those who had become disillusioned with hippie, and for younger people who felt let down that hippie no longer offered an alternative, the reaction was to reject it wholesale—captured in the punk motto, 'don't be such a fucking hippy.'⁵⁴ Perhaps though, it was the significant common ground between early punk and hippie that necessitated such rhetorical rancour.

Sabin has argued that punk was 'the last gasp of the 1960's counterculture,' particularly in a continued anti-'establishment' posture and in 'tactics for subverting mainstream culture, and its DIY ethic.'⁵⁵ Rimbaud, who was 'at the core both of the hippie and of the punk movement in Britain,'⁵⁶ describes hippie as 'a rejection of systems that govern with fear, control by force, and that in the name of the Father have slaughtered millions upon millions of innocent victims.'⁵⁷ This anti-religion/anti-state position draws an overt anarchistic thread between hippie and punk, though this connection is most clearly expressed as a shared sense of non-conformity, anti-consumerism, anti-materialism, and anti-capitalism. Expressed in Phil 'Wally' Hope's ebullient language, hippies were:

the new warrior class, the children of tomorrow, here to
 avenge the theft of the rainbow, to paint colours on the
 face of grey conformism, to move the moribund curtains
 of bourgeois mediocrity, to reclaim the sun.⁵⁸

Punk, 1977-1992 (London: Penguin, 1993), 17.

⁵³ 'Never trust a hippie' was a line in the Sex Pistols' 'Who Killed Bambi' (*The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, 1979), and NOFX's 'Always Hate Hippies' was released on the *Fuck the Kids* EP (Fat Wreck, 1996)—NOFX also released the *Never Trust a Hippy* EP in 2006. The Casualties' 'Kill the Hippies' was recorded in the early 1990's, but released on *The Early Years, 1990-1995* (Punk Core, 2001).

⁵⁴ Mark Sinker, 'Concrete, So As to Self-Destruct: The Etiquette of Punk, its Habits, Rules, Values and Dilemmas,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 123 [120–139].

⁵⁵ Sabin, 'Introduction,' *Punk Rock*, 4.

⁵⁶ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, back cover.

⁵⁷ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 153.

⁵⁸ Phil 'Wally' Hope, quoted in Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 65. Hope was a central organiser of numerous hippie festivals across Britain, including the first three Stonehenge festivals. Incidentally, the 101ers fronted by Joe Strummer (later of the Clash) played the third Stonehenge festival, providing another personal link between hippie and punk.

While early punks rejected such ethereal imagery, the underlying opposition to repressive society was shared. Lucy O'Brien understands this challenge to society's norms (particularly chauvinism and sexism) as an 'unpicking that started with celebratory abandon on the underground 60s freakscene [and] became a giant unravelling with punk.'⁵⁹ There are, then, some elements of punk that can be considered to have been inherited directly from the hippie movement, despite its expressed anti-hippie mentality. As Rimbaud says, 'I've never seen any sort of difference between bohemian, beatnik, hippie, punk. They're all one and the same to me.'⁶⁰ While methods of expressing this anti-'establishment' mentality are different—punk's confrontation versus hippie's escapism—their dissatisfactions with mainstream society are extremely similar.

Avant-garde and Situationism have often been applied to punk in an effort to place it within the tradition of 'bohemian and radical art.'⁶¹ The 'conventional view,' according to Laing, is that punk was 'heavily influenced by Situationism,'⁶² a view shared by Greil Marcus, though disputed by many others. Several members of Crass were previously involved in avant-garde music projects, namely Exit and Ceres Confusion, and Bill Osgerby describes early punk as 'a piece of radical theatre, a calculated attempt to enflame and outrage establishment sensibilities,'⁶³ while Kieran James identifies a (tenuous) link between the Clash and the Situationist International (S.I.), and Laing makes a comparison between the shock-tactics employed by dada and punk, as does O'Hara when he addresses:

unusual fashions, the blurring of boundaries between art and everyday life, juxtapositions of seemingly disparate objects and behaviours, intentional provocation of the

⁵⁹ Lucy O'Brien, 'The Woman Punk Made Me,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 187 [186–198].

⁶⁰ Penny Rimbaud, interviewed in *Crass: There is No Authority But Yourself*, dir. Alexander Oey (Submarine Channel, 2006); available at: <http://www.minimovies.org/documentaires/view/crass>.

⁶¹ Bill Osgerby, "Chewing Out a Rhythm On My Bubble-gum": The Teenage Aesthetic and Genealogies of American Punk,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 166 [154–169].

⁶² Sabin, 'Introduction,' *Punk Rock*, 4.

⁶³ Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); cited in Paul Cobley, 'Leave the Capitol,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 172 [170–185].

audience, use of untrained performers, and drastic reorganisation (or disorganisation) of accepted performance styles and procedures.⁶⁴

It has been suggested that Malcolm McLaren (Sex Pistols' manager) and Jamie Reid (Sex Pistols' artist) represent a link with Situationism. Both of these individuals had been exposed to the S.I. through King Mob,⁶⁵ and Laing suggests that this exposure led McLaren and Reid to use 'Situationism to radicalise rock.'⁶⁶ Dave and Stuart Wise, writing in 1978, contest that Jamie Reid's album covers for 'Pretty Vacant' and 'Holidays in the Sun' were 'lifted straight from' existing Situationist literature.⁶⁷ However, this link is limited to those participants who were old enough to have actually been involved in preceding cultural scenes. The identification of McLaren as puppet-master of the entire early punk era is dubious, particularly when even his ability to influence the band he managed cannot be accepted unequivocally. His supposed introduction of Situationism into punk is dismissed by John Lydon as "bollocks"—an erroneous fantasy contrived for coffee-table revolutionaries.⁶⁸ This is backed by Stewart Home who also disputes that there was any 'serious or significant sense in which punk was a product of Situationist ideas.'⁶⁹ In fact, many of the links drawn between avant-garde and punk are based on comparison alone. The observed similarities are taken as evidence

⁶⁴ James, "This is England", 132; Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 76; O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, 32–34.

⁶⁵ Bob Black, 'The Realisation and Suppression of Situationism,' in *What is Situationism? A Reader*, ed. Stewart Home (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996), 147.

⁶⁶ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 126.

⁶⁷ Dave and Stuart Wise, 'The End of Music,' in Home, ed., *What is Situationism?*, 63. Originally published as a pamphlet by 'Calderwood 15' (1978). Patti Smith also used the Andre Breton dada motto, 'beauty will be convulsive or not at all,' on the front of her *Radio Ethiopia* LP (Arista Records, 1976).

⁶⁸ John Lydon (with Keith and Kent Zimmerman), *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 4; cited in Osgerby, 'Chewing Out a Rhythm on My Bubble-gum,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 155.

⁶⁹ David Huxley, "Ever Get the Feeling You've Been Cheated?": Anarchy and Control in *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 86 [81–99]. Home has written books on both punk and Situationism: see *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (London: Aporia Press, 1988) and *Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory and Punk Rock* (London: Codex, 1996).

that punk was *directly inspired* by Situationism, but this is too strong an assertion. O'Hara qualifies his claims by stating that early punks were probably 'quite unknowing'⁷⁰ of similarities with the avant-garde, *yet still* goes onto assert that punks were influenced by these movements, rather than intuitively approaching similar problems with similar tactics. Another key objection is that 'avant-garde' connotes vanguardism,⁷¹ which sits at odds with punk's populist grounding. So, while outward comparisons may be drawn between punk and avant-garde movements, and a few individuals can be placed within both movements, their underlying motivations and approaches are essentially different and it is an overstatement to suggest that punk represents an expression of the avant-garde art philosophy.

So, even as early punk's rhetoric emphasised a break from the past, the anti-'establishment' tradition of hippie and avant-garde can be identified. These influences are largely indirect, and are felt in a negative sense as much as positive—i.e., some rhetoric and practices are carried through, but equally the failures of previous movements are learned-from (or rejected) in an effort to present a more resilient form of rebellion. This tradition of rebellion, freedom, and equality is (crudely) anarchistic.

REACTIVE ANARCHISM: IN OPPOSITION TO HIERARCHICAL/STATE REPRESSION AND THE REACTION AGAINST EARLY PUNK

Murray Bookchin argued that contemporary anarchism developed from 'initially inchoate but popular attempts to resist hierarchical domination.'⁷² This idea of an anarchic reaction to repression can be identified in the case of early punk, the development of which was largely shaped in reaction to the repression weighed upon the emergent movement. Ian Glasper identifies the 'rebellion inherent in punk from Day One.'⁷³ Further, 'Punk was almost unanimously denounced by clergymen, politicians, parents, and pundits for its "degeneration of the

⁷⁰ O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, 32–33.

⁷¹ This may appear startlingly obvious, but words that are used to name or signify a particular entity or movement frequently lose the impact of their original meanings.

⁷² An interpretation he claims to share with Peter Kropotkin. See Murray Bookchin, 'The Ghost of Anarcho-Syndicalism,' *Anarchist Studies* 1 (1993): 3-24; available at: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/ghost2.html.

⁷³ Ian Glasper, *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk, 1980-1984* (London: Cherry Red Books, 2006), back cover.

youth” and its potential to cause an upheaval of British culture and politics.⁷⁴ The hysterical language used against punk was in terms of moral depravity—to paraphrase Bernard Brooke Partridge,⁷⁵ punk is ‘disgusting, degrading, ghastly, sleazy, prurient, voyeuristic and generally nauseating . . . vastly improved by sudden death . . . the antithesis of humankind.’⁷⁶ Aside from Tory rantings, the mainstream media also demonised punk as ‘a national menace.’⁷⁷ Papers such as *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, and *Lancashire Evening Post* peddled adjectives like ‘sick and filthy,’ ‘outrageous and depraved.’⁷⁸ Robin Eggar of the *Daily Mirror* attacked the Crass single ‘How Does it Feel to be the Mother of a Thousand Dead’⁷⁹ as ‘the most revolting and unnecessary record I have ever heard.’⁸⁰ Holtzman, Hughes, and van Meter note that ‘[t]he media both created and reinforced fears,’⁸¹ in what Cobley describes as ‘a peculiar ideological battleground whose landscape, made up of manifest disgust at abjection, betrayed latent fears of a more *explicitly political nature*.’⁸² However, punk’s ‘saleability’ meant the newspapers could not afford to simply ignore it. Their reporting, negative or not, fuelled punk’s hype.

The music industry was also repressive. Laing notes ‘radio stations . . . intent on excluding it,’ ‘exceptional media hostility,’ ‘many acts of censorship and banning,’ and ‘sporadic refusals to stock [punk records] by chain stores infected by fits of general “immorality”.’⁸³ Crass having to remove a track from their album, discussed above, is another example. As punk became increasingly popular, major labels could no longer ignore potential

⁷⁴ Ben Holtzman, Craig Hughes, and Kevin Van Meter, ‘Do it Yourself . . . and the Movement Beyond Capitalism,’ in Biddle et al., eds., *Constituent Imagination*, 46.

⁷⁵ Conservative member of Greater London Council.

⁷⁶ Bernard Brooke Partridge, delivered to camera in *The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle*, dir. Julien Temple, 1980; quoted in Huxley, “‘Ever Get the Feeling You’ve Been Cheated?’,” in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 95.

⁷⁷ Cobley, ‘Leave the Capitol,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 173.

⁷⁸ *Lancashire Evening Post* (1976): see Cobley, ‘Leave the Capitol,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 174.

⁷⁹ Released on Crass Records and in reference to the death toll from the Falklands War of 1982—Thatcher being the ‘Mother’ in question.

⁸⁰ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 241.

⁸¹ Holtzman, Hughes, and Van Meter, ‘Do it Yourself,’ in Biddle et al., eds., *Constituent Imagination*, 46.

⁸² Cobley, ‘Leave the Capitol,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 175 (emphasis added).

⁸³ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 34, 37.

capital gains. Bands that did sign with major labels were duly exploited, but in the main, repression continued in some form throughout early punk. *Even* the Sex Pistols' 'God Save the Queen' was driven "underground", so that it could only be obtained in certain smaller shops and could be heard only in private homes.⁸⁴ Laing writes that this repression was then heavily reported by the mainstream media, who 'frothed over the "treasonable" nature of the song,' creating advertising for the record and helping sales, so that the media outlets 'were forced to re-admit it when its sales figures won it a place in their best-seller lists.'⁸⁵ So, repression from the music industry was not total since capital interests could outweigh any 'moral' concerns once a band exhibited a critical mass of popularity and profitability. Ironically, repression contributed to punk's public image as 'dangerous,' therefore making the bands more popular, and subsequently more attractive to the record labels as a profitable signing.

The most serious repression came from the state, carrying the threat of incarceration. Crass 'attracted almost constant State harassment.'⁸⁶ For example, '[t]he release of 'Reality Asylum' led to a visit from Scotland Yard's Vice Squad' and 'a threat of prosecution for "criminal blasphemy",' Further, Tory MP Tim Eggar (brother of Robin Eggar of the *Daily Mirror*) 'wrote to the Attorney General requesting that Crass be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act,' local police used to regularly intimidate inhabitants and search visitors to Dial House (Crass's residence), and MI5 reputedly tapped their phone line to record their conversations.⁸⁷ When Crass were brought to trial for breach of the Obscene Publications Act, the judge ruled that Crass's music 'might have a tendency to deprave and corrupt people likely to come into contact with them.'⁸⁸ State repression was not confined to Crass. For many punk gigs 'the local State . . .

⁸⁴ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 38. It seems rather strong to describe anything the Sex Pistols were involved with as 'underground.'

⁸⁵ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 38.

⁸⁶ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 255.

⁸⁷ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 112, 241, 121.

⁸⁸ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 256–257. Even Crass's lawyer for the case took the perceived threat extremely seriously, as Rimbaud recalls: 'Outside the courtroom, our lawyer offered his commiserations. "Don't worry," I responded, "the bomb's fused to go off in precisely four minutes." For a moment he froze, then he turned as white as a sheet, and then he took to his heels' (Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 257).

refused access to public halls,⁸⁹ and Tad Kepley, a punk and anarchist activist in the US, remembers ‘worrying about the cops coming in, fucking kicking your ass.’⁹⁰ Prior to the Clash’s 1977 gig in Munich, according to Paul Simonon, ‘the police came and dragged us out from the hotel.’⁹¹ Wider society also presented problems for punks. O’Brien notes, ‘there was actually a lot of painful stuff going on around it. You were seen as deviant.’⁹² Greg Gaffin of Bad Religion recalls ‘how frightening it was to live in a world where people were violently opposed to you . . . people wanted to kill us for the way we looked,’ and Kevin Seconds of 7 Seconds remembers ‘being chased down the street with baseball bats.’⁹³

This repression from so many sectors points to punk being perceived as a very real threat, and a determined effort to repress it. However, ‘[d]espite straight society’s studious efforts to ignore its new radicals, and the media’s determination to discredit them,’ writes Rimbaud, ‘punk had become a household word.’⁹⁴ In fact, as suggested above, this hysterical ‘moral panic’⁹⁵ contributed to punk’s hype and its attraction as something forbidden: ‘infectious . . . incredibly underground, dangerous.’⁹⁶ Rimbaud suggests the revolutionary impetus in punk:

I saw it as a job, a battle, a kick-back at the archaic structures I was one of the new fifth columnists, resistance fighters, counter-culturists, self-confrontationists. . . . Yes, this time it was our turn.⁹⁷

And even more explicitly:

I consider punk to have been essentially a revolutionary movement.⁹⁸

⁸⁹ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, xiii.

⁹⁰ Blush, *American Hardcore*, 352.

⁹¹ Paul Simonon, interviewed in *Punk in London*, dir. Wolfgang Büld (Odeon Entertainment/Munich Film School/HFF München, 1978)

⁹² O’Brien, ‘The Woman Punk Made Me,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 193.

⁹³ Blush, *American Hardcore*, 352.

⁹⁴ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 154.

⁹⁵ Term coined by Stanley Cohen, in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972).

⁹⁶ Richie Birkenhead, quoted in *All Ages: Reflections on Straight Edge*, comp. Beth Lahickey (Huntington Beach: Revelation Books, 1997), 17.

⁹⁷ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 73.

⁹⁸ Penny Rimbaud, in conversation with George McKay, ‘Subcultures &

Some of the ‘inchoate’ anarchic themes that emerged were lyrical attacks against establishment institutions, and popular targets were the government and the police. The band name Thought Criminals, and the songs ‘The Prisoner’ (D.O.A.) and ‘Criminal Mind’ (The Ruts) express feelings of criminalisation. Songs about the police include ‘Police Oppression’ (Angelic Upstarts), ‘The Murder of Liddle Towers’ (Angelic Upstarts), ‘Fascist Pigs’ (Nosebleeds), ‘The Cops Are Comin’ (Outcasts), ‘Secret Police’ (Unwanted), ‘Task Force (Undercover Cops)’ (Razar), and ‘C.I.D.’ (UK Subs). The police are recognised as agents of state oppression, and are scorned and derided for their chosen form of servitude. Lyrics concerning government in early punk were more varied, from the gentle irony of ‘Don’t Worry About The Government’ (Talking Heads), to more pointed sarcasm of ‘Leaders of Men’ (Joy Division), complaints of government harassment such as ‘Government Official’ (F-Word), ‘Pay Your Rates’ (Fall), ‘Censorship’ (Models), and ‘Law And Order’ (Stiff Little Fingers), up to totalitarian state imagery like ‘Fascist Dictator’ (Cortinas) and ‘1984’ (Unwanted).⁹⁹ The religious establishment was another target, examples include Bad Religion’s name and anti-Christian motif (a Christian cross contained within a red circle and bisecting line), Siouxsie and the Banshees’ ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ (a sex-fetishist parody), the Damned’s ‘Anti-Pope,’ Suburban Studs’ ‘No Faith,’ and Crass’s ‘Reality Asylum’. ‘God Save the Queen’ by the Sex Pistols provides one frequently cited anti-monarchist example, but so too does Drones’ ‘Corgi Crap,’ with the line, ‘Don’t wanna be no blue-blood, it makes me ill to think of them!’¹⁰⁰ Numerous other facets of society’s repression were targeted as well, and Mark Sinker sums up the oppositional position of punk:

All choices—what you ate, how you walked, when you

Lifestyles: Subcultures and Lifestyles in Russia and Eastern Europe” (conference), University of Salford, December 4-6, 2008.

⁹⁹ O’Hara argues that “[t]he Punk movement was originally formed in nations holding capitalist, pseudo-democratic policies. Because of this, capitalism and its problems became the first target of political Punks’: O’Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, 74. While this fails to account for punk’s popularity in Communist and non-Western states, the anti-capitalist rhetoric in early punk is typified in ‘Money Talks’ by Penetration and ‘Let’s Lynch the Landlord’ by Dead Kennedys (which encourages an extremely direct approach to rent boycott).

¹⁰⁰ Drones, ‘Corgi Crap,’ *Further Temptations* (Valer, 1977).

slept, who you liked—were to be rated primarily against their likely immediate effect; what reaction had you provoked from who.¹⁰¹

It is readily conceded that early punk lacked a coherent political ideology, but its oppositional elements are clear. Punk was repressed as a threat to the establishment and as a result punk *identified itself* as a threat to the state, the government, the police, the church, the monarchy, capitalism, and mainstream mass culture. This resistance to hierarchical domination, as Bookchin suggests, looks very much like a nascent anarchism.

PRACTICAL NECESSITY: THE DIY (DO-IT-YOURSELF) ORGANISING PRINCIPLE AS TAKING OVER THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION FOR WORKERS' SELF-CONTROL, IN THE ABSENCE OF THE MAINSTREAM INDUSTRY

The repression discussed above, and the anarchistic reaction generated, are best observed in the sphere of production (cultural, musical, *and* material). Initially the mainstream music industry was extremely reticent to become involved with punk, but the lure of profit meant numerous early punk bands were unscrupulously exploited. Within a short time punk fell out of favour with the corporate labels with 'New Wave' as a safer, more easily managed investment. This combination of refusal and exploitation led to the adoption of a DIY ethic as a central organising practice in punk, both out of necessity (if major labels refused to work with them) and out of choice (since signing to a major label would usually mean meagre monetary return and loss of artistic freedom and integrity). This DIY ethic then, to some extent, represents direct worker/producer control over the means of production, and the dissemination and 'marketing' of that product. Another important effect of this was to decentralise the networks created by punk, in stark contrast to the highly centralised mainstream music industry.

Laing writes, 'Punk rock was unusually concerned with the "production apparatus",' and '[j]ust as the fanzines demystified the process of producing and publishing the written word, so the early punk labels demonstrated the simplicity with which anyone could become a recording artist,' thus 'represent[ing] the virtual dissolution of the barrier between performer and audience that

¹⁰¹ Sinker, 'Concrete, So as to Self-Destruct,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 125.

was part of the ethos of much punk activity.¹⁰² Rimbaud writes, '[p]unk had originated as a statement, "do it yourself": your own band, your own sounds, your own words, your own attitude and your own future.'¹⁰³ Holtzman et al. describe DIY as 'anything from music and magazines to education and protest [being] created in a nonalienating, self-organised, and purposely anticapitalist manner'—'the idea that you can do for yourself the activities normally reserved for the realm of capitalist production,' 'a means of circumventing the powers-that-be.'¹⁰⁴ Holtzman et. al.'s definition of DIY is markedly similar to an anarchist understanding of direct action. Processes of production in music were exposed and demystified by early punk, and in its circumvention of the 'big 6' record companies' dominance, DIY also represents a direct and prefigurative approach—themes inexorably linked with contemporary anarchism. The DIY approach is a first step in creating alternative forms of production that attempt to break away from the capital-motivated norm. Punk's anti-capitalist position can be identified in various bands' relationships with the mainstream music industry, and as Ian MacKaye recalls, 'I was really struck by the fact that this was completely non-commercial music.'¹⁰⁵ Gregg Ginn found that '[h]ooking up with a major label was completely out of the question at the time People from major labels were afraid to go to Black Flag gigs throughout most of the band's existence.'¹⁰⁶ Jake Burns from Stiff Little Fingers recalls major labels 'offering us lots and lots of money, and we sort of realised, no, there's actually more value in people understanding what you want to do and respecting that.'¹⁰⁷ Gasper notes some of the key aspects of DIY as it became entrenched as a central organising principle of

¹⁰² Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 127, 17, 78.

¹⁰³ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 78.

¹⁰⁴ Holtzman, Hughes, and Van Meter, 'Do it Yourself,' in Biddle et al., eds., *Constituent Imagination*, 44.

¹⁰⁵ Ian MacKaye (interview), in Lahickey, comp., *All Ages*, 96. MacKaye played with Teen Idles, Minor Threat, Fugazi and others in the Washington, D.C. area, and he helped create the straight-edge hardcore movement.

¹⁰⁶ Gregg Ginn, interview with Eric Olsen, *Blog Critics: Music* [website], 2003: <http://blogcritics.org/archives/2003/11/21/183736.php>; cited in Chick, *Spray Paint the Walls*, 92. Ginn was a founder and member of south-Californian hardcore progenitors, Black Flag.

¹⁰⁷ Jake Burns, interview with Alan Parker, Part 1 (conducted June 13, 2001), track 16 on Stiff Little Fingers, *Inflammable Material*, reissue (EMI, 2001).

the anarcho-punk movement of the early 1980's, both in what it negated and what it strove to create:

No more corporate companies . . . this was the birth of *genuinely* DIY labels. . . . No more big booking agents controlling punk shows . . . now fans of the music could communicate directly with the bands, and book them . . . the meagre door takings being ploughed back into worthwhile causes locally. No more glossy magazines . . . anyone who could string two words together and use a stapler was a potential fanzine editor. . . . the kids were taking back control and making a difference.¹⁰⁸

Early punk DIY releases such as the Buzzcocks' *Spiral Scratch*¹⁰⁹ and Scritti Politti's *4 A Sides*¹¹⁰ included details such as the number of each take or overdub, and the production costs for the record. As such, the production process was demystified and the common perception that a major label was required to release a band's music was shattered. Mick McGee of Mayhem recalls the empowerment of DIY: '[I]f you robbed three phone boxes you could almost set up your own record company, and that was what we were relying on. That gave access to upcoming bands to actually get their records heard.'¹¹¹ Cogan notes that, 'Throbbing Gristle realised that to take a truly radical and outsider posture in punk rock, the first step must be to control the production and distribution of their own work.'¹¹² Dave Harker notes that, 'Crass ran themselves on a self-sufficient basis, organising their own tours, records and distribution. Their sole concern was to make enough money to live, not to have top 40 hits or play a large stadium.'¹¹³ Laing recognises the impact of this self-organisation, and using independent systems of distribution meant that punks could 'evade to some degree the insistence of the market values and forces and increasingly to offer different definitions of music

¹⁰⁸ Glasper, *The Day the Country Died*, 8 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹ Self-released by the Buzzcocks under the label-name 'New Hormones' in January 1977.

¹¹⁰ Rough Trade, 1979. Rough Trade is an early example of a DIY label. Sometimes the term 'indie' label is used, but in the contemporary context this no longer has any relation to 'independence' of any kind, and such labels are usually just imprints for one of the majors.

¹¹¹ Glasper, *Burning Britain*, 9.

¹¹² Cogan, "'Do They Owe Us a Living?'" 85.

¹¹³ Dave Harker, quoted in the zine *Pop and Politics Do Mix!* (Lancashire, April 1991); cited in O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, 160.

and different positions and roles for the listener.’¹¹⁴ DIY gave early punk bands the freedom to create their own music, and to produce and distribute it in forms not motivated by capital. The difficulties in organising alternative systems of distribution were more than outweighed by the benefits of creative freedom and the enhanced sense of direct communication achieved.

DIY media also proliferated, and ‘influenced enough people to begin a network of locally based fanzines that would soon connect a worldwide Punk network.’¹¹⁵ Without multinational record labels to coordinate and distribute most punk music, alternative networks developed to fulfil this role, which pushed (and was pushed by) the decentralisation of punk. Even early on, punk was to be found in suburbs, rural areas, far-flung industrial towns, as well as in the cities. This decentralisation was supported by networks of cooperation and information exchange. Dave Laing notes the distribution of independent and DIY labels in the UK as listed by *Zig Zag* magazine in 1978: ‘120 companies with a repertoire of punk material, mostly with just a handful of titles and *nearly all based outside London.*’ Labels such as Anonymous Records in Macclesfield, Duff Records of Bangor, Good Vibrations in Belfast, and Vole Records of Wolverhampton meant that the ‘metropolitan monopoly of the record industry had been seriously challenged for the first time.’¹¹⁶ This is not to say that punk existed in a uniform manner across its wide geographical spread. Paul Cobley was, as he describes it, ‘a provincial punk,’ which ‘represented a considerable leap of faith,’¹¹⁷ compared with the accessibility of punk in the major urban centres. In the US as well, the decentralised and widespread appeal of punk was recognised. Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys ‘championed young bands in every city—when such interest by headliners was unheard of.’¹¹⁸

This nascent network of punk scenes enabled ‘pioneering’ punk bands to travel widely outside of the main cultural hubs. Crass’s negative experiences with venues such as the Roxy in

¹¹⁴ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 21 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁵ O’Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, 64.

¹¹⁶ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 14 (emphasis added). Ian Glasper’s trilogy of analyses of punk in the 1980s divides the UK into separate areas, each burgeoning with punk bands—in his own words, he covers ‘the country region by region’ (Glasper, *Burning Britain*, back cover).

¹¹⁷ Cobley, ‘Leave the Capitol,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 171.

¹¹⁸ Blush, *American Hardcore*, 117.

London led the group to ‘seek out alternatives for our gigs.’¹¹⁹ Rimbaud notes that this led Crass to ‘play in an extraordinary range of venues in far-flung places in the British Isles where no band had ever played before. This act of de-centralisation was essential to our overall philosophy, and greatly contributed to the wide-spread effect that we were able to have.’¹²⁰ In North America, Black Flag, D.O.A., and the Dead Kennedys were having similar experiences and ‘sought out like-minded artists, and aided unknown upstarts’ in ‘their zeal to establish a united scene.’¹²¹ Biafra recalls the cooperation between bands: ‘We were all sharing information. Whenever somebody cracked open a new town, the other two bands [Black Flag and D.O.A.] found out about it.’¹²² Tim Kerr of Big Boys notes the influence of early punk bands arriving in towns that would otherwise be off the touring radar: ‘When Black Flag came through and started hitting every little town . . . all these kids started picking up instruments and starting bands.’¹²³ These networks were essential for dissemination of underground and DIY music. The Sex Pistols’ 1977 single ‘God Save the Queen’ would have been unlikely to reach the singles chart number one spot without the huge number of underground record shops willing to peddle the suppressed record.¹²⁴

Separation from capital, particularly at punk’s earliest stages, could not be complete: ‘even in their prime [the punk rockers of 1976] were part of the capitalist system [even if] only marginally.’¹²⁵ DIY and independent networks could be relied upon for creation of music, recording, distribution, and media, but *not* for things like pressing vinyl, sourcing equipment,

¹¹⁹ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 125.

¹²⁰ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 125. Crass’s ‘decentralisation’ was largely confined to the UK, since they were reluctant to play abroad where they had less understanding of local political situations. Crass did play in New York in their very early days, as well as the Netherlands and Germany, and Iceland towards their demise, but these were fairly exceptional venues compared to their usual UK-based touring schedules.

¹²¹ Blush, *American Hardcore*, 115.

¹²² Quoted in Blush, *American Hardcore*, 322.

¹²³ Quoted in Blush, *American Hardcore*, 322.

¹²⁴ These networks continue to enable bands to tour relatively cheaply, so bands and promoters require less financial reimbursement to break even, making punk accessible and affordable.

¹²⁵ This inference is drawn from another article, referenced only as ‘Emery, 2007 chapter VI,’ which has been impossible to locate so its source cannot be verified: see James, “This is England”, 137.

shipping records, or buying and fuelling tour vans. These tasks, within a capitalist framework, involve huge costs and are usually remunerated through large-scale production. These overheads necessitated having to pass costs on to the ‘consumer,’ in the form of commoditised products; however, any risk of greedy price-hiking by record stores was frequently eschewed with ‘pay no more than’ notices,¹²⁶ which also helped to negate any profit motive the bands themselves might succumb to. Later developments, such as recordable cassettes, mp3, cheaply available recording equipment, and punk-run pressing plants have helped to break down some of these impasses, making DIY and direct worker/producer self-control even more viable. The ‘virtue’ of DIY was discovered through necessity, but quickly became entrenched as a poignant manifestation of the intuitive anarchism inherent in early punk, and a continuing central tenet of punk cultures that exist outside of mainstream interference.

INTUITIVE ANARCHIST POLITICS: DISAVOWAL OF (CAPITAL ‘P’) POLITICS.

The four themes above make evident an evolution—rooted in punk’s antimonies—from initial oppositionalism, through resistance of repression, to an embracing of DIY as part of a conscious self-identification as a ‘real’¹²⁷ punk movement. These approaches could be readily mapped from the anarchist canon, but this was not the case for early punk. This is not to say that early punk operated apolitically or in ignorance of its own political significance. Early punk rejected dominant political discourses, frequently framed as opposition to ‘Politics’ in general, as in the songs ‘Politics’ (The Damned) and ‘Modern Politics’ (Panik). This was a refusal of ‘either-or’ options—Conservative or Labour within parliament, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) or National Front (NF) as ‘radical’ alternatives. The rejection of political parties is an obvious extension to the reactive anarchism discussed above, so the focus here will be on the rejection of extra-parliamentary political groups such as the SWP and NF. As

¹²⁶ Crass used these frequently: *Stations of the Crass*, for example, carries a ‘pay no more than £5’ notice. Record fairs and collectors tend to ignore these today—one copy of *Stations of the Crass* was recently seen for £12 at a record fair in Belfast, and the seller missed the irony when questioned on the ‘pay no more than’ notice

¹²⁷ ‘Real punk’ was a popular generic term in the very late 1970’s and early 1980’s.

Billy Idol¹²⁸ put it when asked about the political stance of Siouxsie and the Banshees, ‘we’re not communists or fascists,’¹²⁹ —the notion of being ‘Tory’ or ‘Labour’ is not even countenanced.

The Pigs’ song ‘National Front’ states how the NF have ‘got it all wrong,’¹³⁰ going on to deride them as fascists—a description the NF were keen to play down, despite its accuracy. Many early punks were also at pains to explain the use of the swastika as shock tactic rather than an indication of Nazi sympathies, as discussed above. A traditional interpretation in much of the literature is that punk was essentially void of explicit political content, with various groups staking a claim, until the Rock Against Racism (RAR) concerts of 1978 when punk came down on the Left. Certainly, punk was well represented at the events with bands such as Stiff Little Fingers, Generation X, Tom Robinson Band, Elvis Costello, the Ruts, the Clash, X-Ray Spex, and the Buzzcocks all taking part. So an association between early punk and ‘the left’ in its broadest sense is generally fair, as far as a rejection of the NF is concerned (with some significant exceptions). However, many early punks and punk bands were conscious that RAR and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) were front-organisations recruiting for the SWP. Sabin notes ‘open hostility to RAR/the ANL’ in early punk, and ‘a distrust of being used (especially as a tool in a socialist revolution).’¹³¹ Sabin puts this down to ‘punk’s broadly anti-authoritarian ethic—expressed both as an untheorised hatred of being told what to do and in more sophisticated *anarchist* terms.’¹³² Lydon states, ‘I’m not a revolutionary, socialist or any of that . . . It’s replacing the same old system with a different clothing.’¹³³ So, while the right-wing was widely rejected by early punk, so too was the left. Laing comments that ‘many punk bands were eager to avoid anything that smacked of programmatic commitment,’¹³⁴ whether left or right. The rejection of the orthodox left-right dichotomy is particularly telling in the case of Crass. As a band that had

¹²⁸ Billy Idol also played with Chelsea and Generation X, before pursuing a solo pop career.

¹²⁹ Billy Idol speaking in a Siouxsie and the Banshees interview; quoted in Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 126.

¹³⁰ The Pigs, ‘National Front’, from the *Youthanasia 7*” (Bristol Records, 1977).

¹³¹ Sabin, “‘I Won’t Let that Dago By,’” in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 206, 207.

¹³² Sabin, “‘I Won’t Let that Dago By,’” in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 206 (emphasis added).

¹³³ Lydon, *Rotten*, 311; cited in Albiez, ‘Know History!’, 367.

¹³⁴ Laing, *One Chord Wonders*, 126.

attracted a great deal of attention while remaining outside of the major label circus, Crass were 'put under increasing pressure to clarify [their] political affinities.' As Rimbaud puts it, '[t]he Left, in the guise of middle class liberals, wanted us to support the workers, whereas the workers, mostly in the guise of skinheads, wanted us to support the Right.'¹³⁵ Crass's position was to reject these since 'both the right and left wing parties [use] power to control and coerce people,'¹³⁶ and as long as they could 'shrug off either camp, [they] were free to expose both to [their] message of anarchist self-determination.'¹³⁷ While Crass's refusal to be drawn to either the left or right was largely pragmatic and based on a budding anarchism, this same position was frequently being taken intuitively across the early punk milieu.

The class consciousness of early punk is understandable in relation to the class-based society from which it sprang, particularly in the UK. People were acutely aware of their social standing based on where they lived, what occupation their families had, their accent, their school, etc. However, punk broke down these barriers.¹³⁸ Albiez describes this as a dramatisation of 'social changes that were eroding deference, the British class system, high and popular cultural boundaries.'¹³⁹ The establishment conception of class was recognised but intentionally *not* re-expressed in early punk; if anything, early punk subverted these conceptions. However, the ideas and relations of class within punk did not equate with those of the Marxist orthodoxy either. Previous notions of class were eschewed, with punk creating a 'déclassé,' 'underclass' or 'outsider class' of its own¹⁴⁰ in what Daniel Traber describes as a tactic of 'self-marginalisation to articulate a politics of dissent.'¹⁴¹ Early punk's

¹³⁵ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 108.

¹³⁶ 'Crass,' *Flipside* 23 (March 1981); cited in O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, 83.

¹³⁷ Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 109.

¹³⁸ In the case of Crass, this created a 'heady mixture of [Ignorant's] working-class anger and [Rimbaud's] middle-class nihilism' (Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 94), and the Clash were identified as '[m]iddle-class in background, working-class in the themes of their songs': Greil Marcus, 'The Clash,' *New West*, September 25, 1978; cited in Marcus, *In The Fascist Bathroom*, 29.

¹³⁹ Albiez, 'Know History!', 366.

¹⁴⁰ 'Here I am among the dispossessed, all punks together': Linder, quoted in O'Brien, 'The Woman Punk Made Me,' in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 193.

¹⁴¹ Daniel S. Traber, 'L.A.'s "White Minority": Punk and the Contra-

class-consciousness is evident in songs such as ‘I Hate the Rich’ (The Dils), ‘I Don’t Wanna be a Rich’ (Guilty Razors), ‘Eton Rifles’ (The Jam),¹⁴² ‘Ghosts of Princes in Towers’ (Rich Kids), and ‘Class War’ (The Dils), which all attack the privileged classes. Tricia Henry dutifully regurgitates the tired description of early punk as ‘a movement consisting of underprivileged working-class white youths,’ who were ‘self-consciously proletarian,’¹⁴³ but Lydon recognises as much oppression *within* the working class as from without: ‘When you grow up in a working-class environment, you’re supposed to stay inside and follow the rules and regulations of that little system. I won’t have any of that.’¹⁴⁴ Albiez agrees that early punk’s idea of class ‘was not launched from a position of socialist class solidarity,’ but rather from a ‘class-informed hyper-individualist stance,’¹⁴⁵ so certainly the assertion that punk was operating from an orthodox socialist perspective is dismissed. Early punk’s ‘class’ was neither that of the establishment, nor of Marxism—the combination of individualism and class-consciousness *was anarchist*. Punk’s concept of class is broader than narrow proletarianism, and the individual is understood to be a vital component of a wider ‘we,’ rather than being subsumed as a cog into the larger social machine. Of course, as has been stated many times here, early punk was amorphous and its politics were not yet coherently codified, but an anarchistic conception of class within punk is apparent.

An anarchistic concept of freedom was also prevalent in early punk, in songs like ‘I Wanna Be Free’ (Rings), ‘Freedom’ (Unwanted), ‘Freedom (Is A Heady Wine)’ (Yachts), ‘Privilege (Set Me Free)’ (Patti Smith), and the band name TSOL (True Sounds of Liberty). Marcus notes that punk was ‘a new kind of free speech. It inaugurated a moment—a long moment, which still persists—when suddenly countless odd voices, voices no reasonable person could have expected to hear in public, were being heard all over

dictions of Self-Marginalisation,’ *Cultural Critique* 48 (Spring 2001): 30.

¹⁴² Ironically (and cringe-inducingly), former Etonian and current Conservative UK Prime Minister David Cameron has expressed a fondness for this particular song. More on this and Paul Weller of the Jam’s reaction can be found in an article in John Harris, ‘Hands Off Our Music!’ *The Guardian*, March 18, 2008: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/mar/18/popandrock.politicsandthearts>.

¹⁴³ Tricia Henry, *Break All Rules! Punk Rock and the Making of a Style* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 67, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Lydon, *Rotten*, 311.

¹⁴⁵ Albiez, ‘Know History!’, 366.

the place.¹⁴⁶ Lesley Wood of the Au Pairs felt that, ‘if you’re going to have any kind of social change, personal relationships in society have got to change [...]. It is *really important to feel free*.¹⁴⁷ James identifies an emphasis on ‘mental freedom [as] an important type of liberation . . . freedom from false consciousness.’¹⁴⁸ Sinker iterates the individualist grounding of freedom within punk: ‘no-one else’s rules apply to you. You take full responsibility for the consequences of your own rules, your own beliefs. You choose to obey or disobey for your *own* reasons.’¹⁴⁹ This personal responsibility and self-direction are extremely important ideas relating to freedom in both early punk *and* anarchism,¹⁵⁰ and essentially precludes the applicability of ideologies that fail to value freedom as a prime tenet.

Owing to the importance of freedom, a particular conception of class, and a populist/non-programmatic basis, it is extremely difficult to identify early punk’s implicit politics as anything other than a crude, nascent, or inchoate anarchism. Combined with the previous four themes under discussion, the case for early punk as an instance of intuitive anarchistic practice is compelling.

CONCLUSION

So, even prior to the emergence of anarcho-punk and other punk scenes explicitly engaged with anarchism, anarchistic currents are apparent in early punk. Once again, this is not to say that

¹⁴⁶ Marcus, *In The Fascist Bathroom*, 2-3.

¹⁴⁷ Lynden Barber, ‘Au Pairs: Sex Without Stress,’ *Melody Maker*, June 12, 1982: <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=15923&SearchText=Au+Pairs>; cited by Lucy O’Brien, ‘Can I Have a Taste of Your Ice Cream?’ *Punk and Post-Punk* 1.1 (January 2012): 38.

¹⁴⁸ James, “‘This is England’,” 137.

¹⁴⁹ Sinker, ‘Concrete, So as to Self-Destruct,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 129 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵⁰ Of course, as Sabin points out, ‘[m]ost accounts assume that punk was “liberating” politically, and created a space for disenfranchised voices to be heard—notably women, gays and lesbians, and anti-racists’ (Sabin, ‘Introduction,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 4). So this picture cannot be presented universally—as with so many other aspects of punk. Lucy O’Brien writes that ‘[t]he punk scene . . . was not always one of halcyon acceptance. While there were men wrestling with questions of masculinity and feminism, there were just as many content to leave it unreconstructed’ (O’Brien, ‘The Woman Punk Made Me,’ in Sabin, ed., *Punk Rock*, 194).

early punk was uniformly anarchist, but that even where early punk seems most removed from political anarchism and the anarchist canon, anarchistic practices and rhetoric can *still* be identified. From these beginnings a far more coherent and consistent anarchism emerges. The tag of 'punk-anarchism' is too simplistic, but the presence of anarchist rhetoric *and practice* in punk's earliest manifestations is clear.

The destructive reigns of Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980's enhanced punk's negative unity, crystallised its anarchist politics, and fomented punk's vitriol ever further.¹⁵¹ Anarchy in a positive sense was touched upon by the likes of Crass even at this early stage, as Rimbaud comments, '[w]e wanted to offer something that gave rather than took, something of value that would survive short-lived faddism.'¹⁵² This was further developed towards the end of 'early punk,' and as Glasper writes, the end of the 1970's 'was a time when punk stopped being merely a radical fashion statement, and became a force for real social change; a *genuine revolutionary movement*.'¹⁵³

However, this reinvigoration of political anarchism, in both cultural and material aspects, has often met with criticism from old-fashioned workerist and syndicalist anarchist sects. The antagonism between already-existing anarchists and the emergent punk-inspired anarchists of the 1980's is exemplified by Nick Heath, writing for the anarchist periodical *Black Flag*: 'This new wave [of punk-anarchism] was very much defined by lifestyle and ultimately a form of elitism that frowned upon the mass of the working class for its failure to act.'¹⁵⁴ However, such differences are extremely overstated and the similarities and overlaps between these supposedly distinct approaches is best exemplified in DIY as a form of workers-control and seizure of (some of) the means of production. Certainly a greater appreciation, or at least understanding, of the anarchism developed in punk can only benefit the wider anarchist movement—particularly in view of punk's role in politicising

¹⁵¹ The same can be observed in punk's development within Communist Eastern-bloc countries in the 1980's, and in the 1990's under dictatorships such as Suharto's in Indonesia (both of which are case-studies in my forthcoming PhD thesis).

¹⁵² Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, 101.

¹⁵³ Glasper, *The Day the Country Died*, back cover.

¹⁵⁴ Nick Heath, 'The UK Anarchist Movement—Looking Back and Forward,' originally written for *Black Flag*; posted online November 15, 2006: <http://www.libcom.org/library/the-uk-anarchist-movement-looking-back-and-forward>.

thousands of individuals to an anarchist perspective.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Politicisation through punk and understanding of the mutual criticisms between 'punk anarchism' and other anarchist strands are key themes of my wider PhD thesis.