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MAKERS AND BREAKERS:
PRE-RAPHAELITES, PUNKS, AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION

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by

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Abstract
MAKERS AND BREAKERS:
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Andrew J. Wood

Weaving together influences from philosophy, visual and sonic aesthetics, and radical political thought, this project argues that individual and collective imagination should be understood as important sites of politics—in cultural, discursive, institutional, and collectivist registers. Rather than proposing dogmatic adherence to any particular ideology, we find that imagining new possibilities, as well as the possibilities for more possibilities, is centrally important to the endeavor of seeking radical change in the contemporary capitalist/state system. By turning to the examples of two politico-aesthetic movements, the Handicraft movement of William Morris and the Hammersmith Socialist League of the 19th century and the 20th/21st century cultures of punk rock, we witness the successes and failures of attempts to intervene in political imaginaries. I focus on the anachronistic, non-capitalist mode of production of so-called 'do-it-yourself' (or D.I.Y.), I argue that such productive processes could represent such an inter-temporal rupture point of radical anachronism that I have theorized, and can therefore demonstrate the potentiality of wellsprings for the creation of new forms of politics, paradoxically contributing to the progress of inclusivity and egalitarian politics through the introduction of anachronistic performances, visuals, and music.

Specifically, they reveal the surprising ways in which inter-temporal rupture through anachronistic aesthetic forms and modes of productions can not only disrupt hegemonic notions of progressive linear time, but also question the radical imperative

towards production of the new. These movements hence illuminate important implications for the tactics, tensions, and most of all thought—and preconditions for thought—that underpin contemporary progressive politics (e.g. Anti-globalization, Occupy, Black Lives Matter, revolutionaries in Rojava and especially, and most contentiously and controversially the contemporary Antifa movements) by demonstrating the radical potentialities of aesthetics, space, and anachronism for the introduction of historical rupture contained within politico-aesthetic shock. These movements are deeply concerned with democratic participation and social justice, and so we can use Morris and punk as a window in to deep analysis of tactics as utilized by the aforementioned anti-capitalist and anti-fascist movements.

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Dedicated to all those who struggle against the horrors of capitalist tyranny, in all its forms and all its various ideological and repressive state apparatuses. For all those who seek to build a world based on the "incomparable" quality of "harmony," and to "found a new world on the ruins of the old one that has been overthrown."[1]
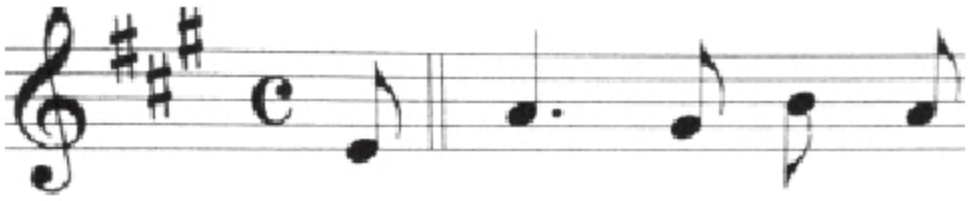
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1 Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1999. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 21 & 47.

Makers & Breakers:

Pre-Raphaelites, Punks, and Political Imagination

Andrew J. Wood



OVERTURE

"The society of alienation must disappear from history.
We are inventing a new and original world.
Imagination is seizing power."
Parisian Students' Communiqué, May 1968.[2]

"Life is like jazz, best when improvised."
Placard in the Dial House Garden.

"Life is the creation of the present…but this is a continuous creation."
Alain Badiou.[3]

Mortimer, Edward. May 17th, 1968. "Report from Paris," *The London Times*. [Emphasis Added]

[2]

[3] Badiou, Alain. 2006. *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event II*. New York: Continuum Books, p. 508.

Preface

In the fall of 2012, Elías García Martínez made international headlines for her restoration of an *Ecce Homo* fresco in a Catholic sanctuary in Borja, Spain. Her work received such attention because she had no artistic or restoration training, and this lack was reflected in her "botched" restoration attempt. Rather than a traditional restoration that paints a new layer on top of old decay with the intention of restoring the original splendor and intent of the artist, Martínez's restoration replaced the look of the original with an entirely new face. The images below (figure 1) demonstrate the life of the *Ecce Homo* fresco, from the (circa) 1930 original, to the decayed and damaged version, to Martínez's restoration. Martínez has claimed that she had the best intentions with her restoration, but that her lack of artistic expertise limited her skills, most especially in the facial features of Christ. The Spanish sanctuary claimed that Martínez never had permission to restore the fresco (a claim she contested) and even threatened legal action against her. Yet the story didn't end there.



(Figure 1: "Agence France-Presse — Getty Images. The three versions of the "ecce homo" fresco of Jesus. From left, the

original version by Elías García Martínez, a 19th-century painter; a deteriorated version of the fresco; the restored version by Cecilia Giménez.")
(source: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/24/world/europe/botched-restoration-of-ecce-homo-fresco-shocks-spain.html?_r=0)

The initial press reports described Martínez's work as a "botched" or "failed attempt" at restoration that "destroyed" the original art. What is truly amazing about this fresco restoration is not only how it achieved recognition and notoriety nearly over night, but also how the image continues to resonate. Within the span of a week, online memes (e.g. "Potato Jesus", *Ecce Mono* [or "Behold the Monkey"], "Epic Fail") were created and circulated by the thousands. The image also became quickly commodified and sold on a variety of products through Amazon, Zazzle, Café Press, and more. Clearly, something in this restoration struck a resonating chord in the popular imagination.[4]

The restoration or (re)creation of this *Ecce Homo* fresco is an apt example of the circulation, reproduction, and discourse of art in our contemporary moment. Art within established channels and the academy responded as expected, decrying Martínez and her work. Yet, popularly, the painted over fresco has become a hit, leading to tens of thousands of euros in tourist revenue in Borja (which previously had a virtually non-existent tourist trade), thousands of euros in contributions to the sanctuary, and revenue for both Martinez and the sanctuary generated from a plethora of products that utilized the image of her painting (e.g. such products include coffee

[4] The fan culture surrounding Martínez's *Ecce Homo* is reminiscent of other fan celebrations of camp, kitsch, cheese, the absurd, or in masochistic enjoyment of "guilty pleasures" ranging from television series like *Batman*, *Star Trek* or *The Twilight Zone* to the infamous films with cult like followings like the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *The Room*, and *Troll 2*. Of course, the humor of incompetence is also the basis for "riffing" cultures, such as that built up around the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* technique of enjoyment through criticism.

mugs, clothing, lighters, candles, posters, etc.). This "failed" restoration has achieved a level of recognition that so-called *proper* art only rarely achieves now.

The other noteworthy achievement of Martínez's *Ecce Homo* is that it has influenced an explosion of artistic expression. Everything from humorous mocking of the *Ecce Homo* restoration to a mocking of canonical paintings through the utilization of Martínez's imagery has appeared online and in galleries. What other expectations of art can we have but that it can influence other artists in their creative endeavors?

Whatever her intentions may have been, Martínez has undermined the belief that restoration is not an art form (calling into question the very notion of an "original"), but more importantly has challenged us to think about what we consider to be and label "art," what is acceptable within art, what makes art "good," and what it is about the humor of our time and space that finds something laughable in such cases. She has also shown that the technologies of globalization and media networking can disseminate an image not only to saturation point, but beyond this to the actual establishment of a given image as an *influencer* of further artistic production. Of course, the notoriety (or dare we say "success") of Martínez's restoration also indicates an embedded critique of religion (or at least a skepticism towards religion, most especially Christianity, as containing truth) that would lead to such sensational reactions not against her but instead in festive, humorous celebration of her work.

What can we determine about the status of art that such a fresco restoration can so greatly affect a popular audience? One possible explanation is a sort of artistic masochism that seeks out laughable "failures" more than austere "successes." Do we, for instance, now find pleasure in the ugliness of failure more than the sublime ideal of the beautiful that so captured the imagination of the Romantics? Do we now recognize the limits of art, and problematize the very idea of its perfectability? Can we write off Martínez's fresco as yet another online meme in an age of irony?

The more interesting possibility for explanation is that perhaps the very basis of art is being contested, an argument that can be sustained when looking at the riffing that has been done based on the fresco. Canonical artworks (e.g. Munch's *Scream*, Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe*, Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel*) have been parodied through applying the face from Martínez's fresco onto the faces depicted. These inspired parodies not only undermine the art establishment, but also demonstrate a questioning of such concepts as form, content, skill, and authenticity that are so often mobilized in valuating a work of art (authenticity is especially messy in such cases, as part of the appeal of celebrated failures is the perceived sincerity—or even authenticity—of the artist in question, cf. so-called "outsider" art). It is also an uncanny coincidence that the fresco in question shares the title of a text by Friedrich Nietzsche, who as it shall become clear, has great relevance in a discussion on aesthetics, popular and political. As we shall see, for instance, Nietzsche's dual concept of creative destruction and destructive creativity will have relevance to political art of varying aesthetic qualities.

This "botched" (or updated) version of *Ecce Homo* therefore has relevance to a number of aesthetic questions and debates. It also proves to be relevant to the two politico-artistic movements that I shall focus on that seemingly have little in common, William Morris's Arts & Crafts movements of the 19th century, and punk rock cultures of the 20th/21st centuries. The former engages Kantian aesthetics in a socialist register, introducing beauty as a radical goal of the working classes' struggle. The latter utilizes aesthetic shock as an offensive strategy in a (often anarchist) critique of normative power relations and an apocalyptic claim of 'no future' for these norms. While Morris seeks to soothe the suffering of the working class and increase pleasure through the experience of beauty, punks seek to disturb and shock subjugated classes out of complacency by forcing them to peer into a Lacanian mirror—shocking subjectivities into confrontation with their holistic existence—and witness their own self-alienation and the ugliness of exploitation. By reading these two cases together and in conversation, much can be revealed about both (i.e. a punk-informed reading of Morris reveals activist and analytical features that a more traditional reading may ignore). Beyond these two particular movements, we can recognize the "irreducible plurality of particular struggles" against capitalist determinism and exploitation, allowing us an opportunity to recognize two specific articulations of the "multitude of responses to the same impossible-real kernel."[5] Let's take *Ecce Homo* as an example of how the critiques of Morris and punks are still very much part of the public politico-aesthetic imagination.

[5] Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Brooklyn: Verso, p. xxvii.

Reading Martínez's fresco is but one illustration of how both Morris and punk have relevance in framing our analysis of aesthetics, the politicization of aesthetics, as well as the aesthetics of politics. For instance, in the 19th century, William Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the goal of which was to stop or interrupt restoration efforts, which Morris thought ruined the aesthetic of original architecture and art. He saw restoration as a blight against the original art and artist, as well as disruptive of the natural beauty that age and patina lends to paint, brick, and mortar. To Morris, all restoration is problematic, not the least of which those restorations that undo the original aesthetic. Even if the artwork (painting, fresco, building, sculpture) in question was of a subject matter, or embedded within a tradition of discourse that Morris disagreed with, he felt that the aesthetic qualities of beauty were worth preserving by *not* undoing them to supposedly "restore" them.

Age, patina, rust, and crumbling decay all had their place in Morris's understanding of beauty. He would undoubtedly be shocked and offended at restorations like 2012's *Ecce Homo*, as he critiqued even those restorations that the art establishment (i.e. critics, foundations, galleries, museums, etc.) identifies as seamless and "true" to the spirit and form of original artworks. His reaction that I am projecting as one of shock brings us to a later example of a politico-artistic movement that shares many of Morris's political views though very little of his aesthetic commitments. How could a movement identify with an aesthetic theory (i.e. in terms of how aesthetics can be utilized politically, D.I.Y., anti-capitalist art) while sharing little, if any, of the aesthetic expressions? What, in turn, could a radically different

aesthetic open up for us in terms of how we understand William Morris? Can we actually find continuity not only on the grounds of politics (and the political role of art in awakening the imaginations of the audiences), but also in terms of the reclaiming, repurposing, or rethinking of urban decay as aesthetically useful or even beautiful? Let us turn to our secondary case of punk rock cultures, roughly a century after Morris's context.

Punk reaction to *Ecce Homo* undoubtedly is much more in line with the humor of the ironic internet memes. Yet, the aesthetic qualities of Martínez's fresco aren't focused on in terms of desecration or shame, but rather as a satire of the deterioration of religious iconography. Punks often problematize traditions of religion, governance, capital, aesthetics, and the body in a similar, though in a much more conscious manner. To deface a painting of Christ would therefore, in other contexts, be a prevalent punk image and tactic (similar to the ubiquitous punk defacing of figures like Queen Elizabeth II, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and now Donald Trump, etc.). In the context of Martínez's fresco, however, punks identify an irony in the ugliness and absurdity of outdated religiosity (i.e. churches and other religious spaces have long been the target of many political punk actions, the most notorious and recent example being the Pussy Riot 'punk prayer' in 2012 at the seat of power of the Russian Orthodox Church, Christ Saviour Cathedral in Moscow). Such an image carries the weight of punks' *punctum* (i.e. in Roland Barthes's sense described in later chapters) in problematizing the expectations of the witness/audience and undermining the authority of the original image/tradition.

We have, then, arrived at a seeming impasse between the aesthetic commitments of our two movements. Yet both of these politico-aesthetic movements would engage a work like *Ecce Homo*, and though they may arrive at different judgments, still demonstrate similar artistic and/or political goals. Morris may be dismissed as outdated, as may any radical movement or thinker of the "modern" era, but we will see that much of his work does still resonate, in perhaps continuous or perhaps in rupturing ways. Punk may be dismissed as an entertaining spectacle, an adolescent phase for sneering, angst ridden, drug and violence fueled white males playing music poorly, but we will see the radical potentiality in the collectivism, anti-racist and anti-fascist work, and occasionally conscious rejection of (all, some, or at least a few aspects) of capitalism.

Though separated by a century, and utilizing extraordinarily different aesthetics, these seemingly unrelated examples share certain political and aesthetic goals that illuminate revolutionary views of labor, tactics, strategies, and the necessary connection between aesthetic and social revolution. Both also demonstrate political movements played out largely in art, preserved and remembered in their art, and more importantly, both demonstrate politico-artistic movements engaged within a crisis of capitalism. Neither of these movements is necessarily meant to be broadly representative of either their times or tangentially related scenes, but are rather seen as demonstrative of some different possibilities of what politico-aesthetic movements can look like, sound like, accomplish, and contribute to both their contemporary participants and later *imaginaries*. They both therefore serve as illustrative examples

of the (potentially mobilizing) influence aesthetics can have on the political imagination of a contingent historical moment. We will come to see, hear, and recognize that imagined possibilities and impossibilities will be the most important political goal of both of these movements.

Both of these movements also offer us utopian visions of the future, even while utilizing categorically different aesthetics. Morris very clearly writes utopian literature and poetry, as well as produces visually beautiful works. The basic idea behind his aesthetic theory is twofold; that experiences of beauty can both alleviate the suffering of the exploited and also demonstrate to the working classes what they have a basic right to but lack under capitalism. Punk rock cultures, however, take a very different aesthetic tact, choosing to utilize shock and ugliness to demonstrate the horror of the contemporary. Yet, both movements share the belief that the new world must be built upon the ashes of capitalism. Can a movement have utopian goals while utilizing a dystopian aesthetic? Are utopia and dystopia inherently linked or categorically distinct classifications? Must an aesthetic attachment to beauty match the politics of liberation? Must an aesthetic attachment to demonstrate the "desert of the real" (cf. Lacan, Baudrillard) be attached to a politics of change and liberation? How could these aesthetics do otherwise?

Reading William Morris in the 21st century offers both interesting insights and challenges. My second movement under consideration of 20th/21st century punk rock cultures is not only meant to provide an interesting example, but also to help to frame and shape the discussion of Morris. For instance, what *News from Nowhere* and

Morris's other late utopias (and political lectures) do is to challenge the assumption that Marxism leads inevitably to totalitarian versions of socialism. Anarchist critiques of Marxism therefore have a more difficult time discounting the work of Morris than they do more explicit ideologues. What can we learn within Morris's writings, for example, that can potentially explode the tired conflicts over minutia between traditional Marxists and more anarcho-socialists? Can Morris offer a way out of the Marx-Bakunin binary of the 19th century (as well as the reverberations of this conflict in our contemporary politics, e.g. as experienced in Occupy, etc.)? More important than published works, however, is Morris's legacy of activism, specifically in aesthetic or artistic activism. Morris's marches, pamphlets, and lectures set the example that punks could learn from. Long before D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) existed as a differential mode of production, Morris embraced producing things himself, most especially the self-publication of his political tracts.

A punk reading of Morris therefore offers us a unique perspective on his art, writings, and legacy. Of course, the lens also goes the other way, and a Morris influenced reading can reveal much about punk cultures as well. In the chapters that follow, I will attempt to show the continuities between these two politico-aesthetic movements, though I also attempt to maintain a sense of surprise and skeptical ambivalence at these continuities. Through examining the goals, successes, failures, tactics, uses of space, and aesthetic innovations of these two cases, we can begin to construct a theory of political imagination. How do radicals imagine post-capitalist futures? How can these imaginative exercises influence political actions as well as

beliefs in what is politically (im)possible? How do hegemonic ideas of the possible and impossible affect both our understanding of the role of art and the practice of politics?

What I argue such a reading of politico-aesthetic movements reveals is a reversal of the common radical imperative to resist the state and capital. Instead, as it turns out, we can gain important insights by beginning from the presumption that it is the state and capital that resists us. What is typically framed as radical 'resistance' can therefore be rethought as a reclaiming of freedom, autonomy, or lifestyle. Neither of these movements is as pessimistic (or nihilistic) as their critics have maintained, but instead offer a model of rebellion that is less like *The Wild One* or the *Rebel Without a Cause*, and are more in line with Crass's line in "Banned from the Roxy," that is, rebels *with* a cause, rebellion that consists of "taking a stand against what I feel is wrong with this land."[6]

[6] Crass. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Contesting the Culture Industries

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's essay in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "The Culture Industry" is often read as a lament, or a eulogy to the loss of serious emancipatory possibilities of art and despair for the loss of 'art' when produced within capital-centric societies. The lamentation at stake here is felt not only in the argument of essay and its visceral, aggressive language, and the overall style the authors use, most indebted to the manifesto genre. This loss of art is articulated specifically in Adorno's continued critiques of jazz, as a degradation of music's potentially sublime, un-representable, awakening into nothing more than another articulation of commodity form bearing a mere semblance to freedom. Popular (i.e. 'pop') art is understood here as a negation of the illuminating, and potentially emancipatory, qualities of true art.

While it is difficult to deny the despair that is clearly an affective possibility upon the reading of this infamous essay, I want to emphasize hope, rather than hopelessness, as a possible reading in one particular application. Despite what seems to be a tightening of Weber's iron cage (anticipating the further developments of Foucault's bio-political governmentality to be discussed in later chapters), *Dialectic of Enlightenment* importantly lacks resolution. This lack of resolution is what I shall focus on, for while there is cause for despair in the dismal critique of mass culture (and the seeds of fascism contained therein), I read an important element of hope in the dialectical space between negation and the negation of that negation.

Furthermore, I argue that this latter negation could actually hold possibilities for greater levels of freedom than the original position. To clarify, in "The Culture Industry" Horkheimer and Adorno present what has been lost in capitalism/culture industry, which is the serious art (a thematic Adorno continues to return to throughout much of his oeuvre) that has been largely supplanted by mass culture (served largely by the mechanical reproducibility that Walter Benjamin so famously explores). In a conventionally dialectical sense, we could place art into our framework as the position for which the culture industry is the negation. What then, would be the negation of this negation?

The answer to this last question is the kernel we will search for in our investigation of politico-artistic movements, for it seems that a rejection of the culture industry and an attempt at negating it is at the core of their efforts. In his later essay "On Popular Music", Adorno himself carves out a, albeit small, space for meaning making within music. As opposed to the more cynical reading of an all encompassing mass culture, Adorno suggests that "the attitude of distraction is not a universal one," for there are outlets of genuine, autonomous creative production "particularly among youngsters who invest popular music with their own feelings" and are hence "not yet completely blunted to all its effects."[7] Perhaps we haven't yet heard, seen, or witnessed a holistic negation of the culture industry, but what we have witnessed are various important exercises in imagining possible negations. The investigation of these attempts at resisting industrialized/commoditized culture will have important

[7] Adorno, Theodor. 2002. *Essays on Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 459 nt. J.

implications for our understanding of the imaginative qualities of political action, as well as opening an exploration into how we have come to understand concepts such as value, time, and leisure.

A clarifying note on terminology; it would be an error to retroactively apply the culture industry as described by Horkheimer and Adorno to the 19th century of William Morris. Indeed, in the time in which Morris creates, art productions are largely considered to be a bourgeois luxury, a connotation that so nauseated Morris that it pushed his politics towards a socialist identification. The mass culture that Horkheimer and Adorno describe, as defined by art as *entirely* commodified, exchangeable, and mechanically reproduced (i.e. art produced *only and entirely* as commodity product) was not yet fully developed in Morris's England. Of course, the recorded and easily reproducible and distributable technologies of film, radio, and phonograph that define the culture industry for Horkheimer and Adorno did not yet exist in the 19th century. Yet, Morris is still engaged in critiquing and countering industrialism of art, and he pursues this critique through aesthetic means. Mechanical reproduction was very much taking place, indeed even in the ways in which Benjamin so strongly critiques, though primarily through the industries of woodcut designs, mass publishing, and photography (all of which, it should be noted, Morris was involved in). According to Morris, his contemporaneous London was becoming increasingly ugly, as the aesthetics of industry trumped both natural beauty and historically respectable art. So although it would not be historically accurate to describe Morris's politico-artistic movement as an explicit attempt at negating a

culture industry, we can see an early articulation of a critique of industry's effects on aesthetics and the problems of homogenized ugliness of a context like Victorian London. The Arts & Crafts Movement is best understood as a pre-cursor to later movements of artistic contestation of the culture industry, for such an industry had not fully congealed at the time. We could see Morris's works and movement as a resistance to themes of the later culture industry (like homogenization, mechanization, ugliness) already present in the proto-industry of culture in the aesthetic productions of his time.

Modified and Mobilized Psychoanalytic Concepts

In order to engage what I am arguing is openness in the dialectic of the culture industry, it is also useful to turn to psychoanalytic concepts. Specifically, Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny and Jacques Lacan's work with the mirror stage, the real, and most of all second death will make our engagement with Adorno both more robust and more nuanced. The earliest of these is Freud's interpretation of E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Sandman." Freud recognizes the tension in rationalizing (or attempting to rationalize) a radically subjective experience such as aesthetics. He begins by describing his surprise at how little psychoanalysis has engaged aesthetics, in that aesthetics are a realm of emotion and feeling (i.e. those areas so in which psychoanalysts are so readily attuned to). Freud presents a convincing case that psychoanalysis can actually provide useful tools in aesthetic analysis, precisely for its attention to negative desire, anxiety, and despair, and all those realms ignored by canonical aesthetes who tend to focus entirely upon the beautiful and the sublime.

Freud argues that equally important in the aesthetic experience are those experiences of fright, dread, and horror that are also key sites of subjectivity creation/disruption in art. One aspect of fright that he dwells on is the new, for newness can be a shockingly disturbing or disrupting experience due to its incomprehensibility or illegibility.[8] The unfamiliar quality of the new can result in horror, as the subject attempts to make sense of what she has seen. It is in fiction that Freud is able to develop his idea of the uncanny by discussing the effects of horror both on the protagonist of the story as well as on the reading subject.

It is in this vein that he turns to Hoffman's "The Sandman," the short story he utilizes to construct his concept of the uncanny. The story follows Nathanael, from the recollection of his childhood fear of the mythical and monstrous sandman, the stealer of eyes, to his own descent into madness following his encounters with other phantasms such as his father's seemingly inhuman murderer, an all too lifelike (and seemingly human woman) clockwork automaton, and the recurring seeing of the sandman in the figure of the oculist Coppola/Coppelius. Freud uses this story to demonstrate the porous intersection between the possible and impossible in human perception, the collision of which he calls the uncanny.

Freud argues for a dual reading of Hoffman, the rationalistic and the phatasmatic (or uncanny). Given Freud's dedication to psycho-analysis, and his prior insights into repression, projection, and dreams, the uncanny is almost an inevitable place for his thought to go because of the play with impossibility, affect, and mentally

[8] Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny" contained in 1997. *Writings on Art and Aesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 195.

destabilization at work within the concept. The most fascinating aspect of the uncanny is what Freud describes as the effect produced "when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes."[9] This incursion, Freud argues, provides the context for the disruptions of our normative subjectivities when we have experiences of the uncanny in our lives. These incursions could be mimetic or discursive, real or imagined, but the affect of shock and the rupture to our assumed subject position of perceived objectivity is the same. This explanation is not meant to simply validate Freud's claims, but rather to introduce the uncanny as an important analytical tool for us proceeding through our current study. What the uncanny offers is an interpretive route to issues of surprise, shock, and disruption of the normative status quo often experienced through aesthetics. This uncanny experience can hence be present in any number of lived and imaginative settings, not the least of which are our case studies examined below. This does not mean, however, that we can't modify Freud's concept, putting it into useful conversation with later thinkers to give us even greater theoretical purchase.

Can we, for instance, push against Freud's insistence that fiction offers more possibilities for experiences of the uncanny, and suggest perhaps that the 'real' is always already imaginary and subject to the same possibilities/limitations as our imaginations? It seems that Freud is correct in posing the fictional and the aesthetic

[9] *Ibid*, p. 244.

as a realm of more open imaginaries, yet we must push the concept of imaginative possibilities to the actualized as well. What we will find in Morris and punk scenes is an insistence on expounding the fictional into its explicit connections to the actual, the real. The art object as conceived by these two movements is not simply a site of thought experiment, but a reflection-projection of the lived experiences (as well as the hopes, desires, and anxieties of these experiences) of their participants. This theoretical move is exemplified by Jacques Lacan's move beyond Freudian psychoanalysis through his concept of what he terms "the mirror stage."

Lacan builds upon and moves beyond the limitations of Freud's psychoanalysis, providing it with a much-needed Hegelian dialectical quality. Instead of the purely libidinal development of the human progressing through oral-anal-phallic (and Oedipal) stages, Lacan expands human development in complementing the libidinal with issues of recognition. The mirror stage is one of the most crucial stages in the development of the self in Lacan's thought, as summarized below,

> It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [*assume*] an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use of analytic theory of antiquity's term, "imago."
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>
> [H]uman knowledge is more independent than animal knowledge from the force field of desire because of the social dialectic that structures human knowledge as paranoiac; but what limits it is the "scant reality" surrealistic un-satisfaction denounces therein. These reflections lead me to recognize in the spatial capture manifested by the mirror stage, the effect in man, even prior to this social dialectic, of an organic inadequacy of his natural reality.
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> This development is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the individual's formation into history: the mirror stage is a dram whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality—and to the finally donned armor of an alienated identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure…[effectively creating the setting when] the specular *I* turns into the social *I*.[10]

The mirror is the metaphor for the recognition of the social self, the reflection of the image of the self as well as the alienation of its exploitative social reality. As a reflection, the mirror presents the subject with an external image associated with their internal self. This internal/external binary can not only disturb the cognitive view of the self through a presentation of a reflected otherness of the mirror image, but in doing so also disrupt the very grounds upon which the subjective self assumes its own reality. In other words, such reflected reality can disturb the subject's perceived reality through the introduction of a new image.

Such a rupture is precisely the type I maintain occurs in the Arts & Crafts movement and punk rock cultures, for these movements (consciously or not, intentionally or not) hold a mirror to the societies they attempt to change. Their critiques can be conceptualized as providing a reflective mirror through the movements' alternate critical and satirical presentations of normative modes of expression. In other words, we can see the aesthetic designs of Morris and the irreverent sneer of punk as allocating, modifying, and re-presenting/reflecting more

[10] Lacan, Jacques, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" contained in Lacan, Jacques. 2006. *Ecrits*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 76-79. See also Kaja Silverman's wonderfully lucid summation of Lacan's mirror stage in Silverman, Kaja. 1983. *The Subject of Semiotics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 149-178.

typical, mainstream modes. The inventions of these movements are to alter existing norms, most often through inverted reflections of acceptable cultural exchange. Identities of the participants are hence carved out in opposition to the normative, as these movements provide troubling reflections of the logics of capitalistic cultural industries. This mirror is framed by the use of anachronism (especially in the "return of the dead" aesthetic forms), utopia/dystopianism, and the creative act materialized in the art object.

The first of these key features, anachronism, is a concept I mobilize by beginning with Jacques Lacan's notions of the future perfect and the two deaths. This rethinking of anachronism is central in the development of the next chapter. The future perfect allows for a cyclical, spiraling, or complex notion of time as it operates as an imaginative concept.[11] Rather then reinforcing teleological, linear time, Lacan's concept of the future perfect allows for the operation of the imagined future ideal in shaping not only the present but also present understandings of the past.

Lacan explains the concept of two deaths largely in terms of the physical and the symbolic (i.e. the signified and the signifier respectively). The artistic basis for this conception is the position of the Greek protagonist of *Antigone*, which we will examine below. We can conceptualize this by taking the first death to be the death of the signified, i.e. the subject-object represented or constituted through meaning given

[11] This future perfect also acts as an example of what is probably Lacan's most influential psychoanalytic intervention, the big Other (or that entity, idea, mythos which is counter-posed to human actors, or even the imagination of them). This "radical alterity", which can be a god, or a structure within the symbolic order (like law, language, tradition, the state—always in the abstract) is both collectively produced (and collectively functioning) in a way that is impossible to fully grasp, radically unknowable in full, yet is also reflexive.

by language, and the second the death of the signifier, or the representative sign that symbolically presents the former.[12] This split between the signifier and the signified exists for Lacan within the same consciousness (or subject), "the point is not to know whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak."[13] This also splits the subject's realization of their self as subject and the realizing of their self as desiring, for desire is the epistemological other to the subject.[14] There can be the realization or refusal of desire (i.e. the first death) that therefore actually informs the constitution of a greater consciousness of the subject.

To make these assertions a bit less opaque, Lacan unpacks Sophocles's *Antigone* as the dramatic example par excellence of two deaths.[15] In the Greek play, the tragic figure of Antigone is sentenced to live entombing (a sort of living death) for defying her royal uncle, Creon's, legal declaration that she not bury her brother. In defying the natural order of things, i.e. by keeping the dead unburied and by burying the living, Creon incurs the wrath of the gods and death and misfortune befalls him and his family. This minimalist summary is only to set the stage for the significance Lacan finds in the figure of Antigone and her position between the living and the dead.[16] The significance of Antigone is that she demonstrates the limbo between the physical and the symbolic, a limbo exemplified most often in subjective experiences.

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12 Lacan, Jacques. 2006. *Ecrits*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 345, 430.

13 *Ibid*, p. 430.

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15 *Ibid*, p. 520. It is worth at least mentioning here that Antigone and her brothers are the direct descendants of Oedipus, the accursed incestuous house so beloved by psychoanalysts since Freud.

16 Lacan, Jacques. 1992. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 257-287.

In other words, in being buried alive, (prior to her suicide) Antigone exists in a status of the contradictory living death, i.e. she is physically alive but is also deprived of all of the benefits of life. She has become a mere object once Creon sentences her for the breaking of his law, "her punishment will consist in her being shut up or suspended in the zone between life and death. Although she is not yet dead, she is eliminated from the world of the living. And it is from that moment on that her complaint begins."[17] Slavoj Žižek neatly summarizes Lacan's interpretation of the character Antigone as existing in

> the dimension of the 'between-two-deaths' (the symbolic and the Real) which designates Antigone's subjective position after she is excommunicated from the *polis* by Creon. In exact symmetry with her brother Polynices, who is dead in reality but denied the symbolic death, the rituals of burial, Antigone finds herself dead symbolically, excluded from the symbolic community, while biologically and subjectively still alive.[18]

Neither in life nor when she ultimately dies, Lacan argues, are there spaces in which she can fully level her critique (indeed, her condemnation) of Creon. Her unique, multi-plain ontology positioned between life and death affords her greater clarity of consciousness than she would have if situated fully on either plain of lived experience or death. Thus, in the space between the physical and symbolic deaths, the space of the living dead is the most discursively free space in Lacan's analysis, a free expressive space of desire (un)fulfilled that is unhampered by the normative signifying chain.

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[17] *Ibid.* p. 280.
[18] Žižek, Slavoj. 2008 (1999). *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. New York: Verso, p. xvi.

Building upon this observation, I argue that the space between the two deaths of an artistic, political, politico-artistic, or cultural movement can provide more freedom than their initial articulations presented. To arrive at this possibility, we must travel on an uncomfortably teleological journey. However, time is not simply progressive in this narrative, for there are also crucial regressive elements (political, economic, and aesthetic) at play. Within the realm of art and music, certain aesthetic forms are typically declared dead when they are either viewed as no longer relevant or actively engaged (politically, socially, creatively). The 'death' of an art form or a specific aesthetic is then declared when the form enters a state of stagnation, passivity, or unpopularity. This is what we can refer to as the art's first death. The second death occurs symbolically when the aesthetic no longer has any bearing upon or place within popular imagination. The space between the death of an art's relevance and its total departure from productive and consumptive processes is a period of time in which it is viewed as anachronistic. I maintain that this location, when an aesthetic form, a genre of art, or a cultural scene is declared anachronistic, that what it loses in popularity it gains in creative possibility.

In both of the movements examined in this book, we witness concerted efforts to sustain cultural scenes long after they have been declared 'dead' and in so doing move underground and thrive in unforeseen ways. For instance, we will see with punk that what the media labeled the pop phenomenon of punk was declared dead in the late 1970s. Since that time, however, the punk cultures around the world have actually multiplied and diversified. This deliberate performance and embrace of

anachronism in the space between two deaths brings us back to negating the culture industry. In William Morris's re-insertion of craftsmanship into artistic production and punk's D.I.Y. aesthetic of intentionally low-fi productions, we can begin to sense their similar dissatisfactions with the predominant art commodities of their respective times. Both of these moves express negation of capitalist productive modes through their very aesthetics, not merely in their linguistic expression. This is not to argue that the poetics of the former case and the lyrical content of the latter are not important politically, but rather that the sounds that fill the spaces of punk and the colors that fill Morris's tapestries are of importance as well. Both instances of anachronism in these politico-aesthetic movements also demonstrate a challenge to the supremacy of hegemonic aesthetics, as both Morris and punk had considerable success, both in influence and commercial gain. An example beyond our case studies—Opera—can illustrate just how an aesthetic mode can exist in the space between physical (i.e. social relevance and predominance of form) death and symbolic death, or that space in which I argue the most radical aesthetic possibilities exist.

Building upon Lacan's notion of the two deaths, Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar examine the opera genre as just such an anachronism existing in the space between the two in *Opera's Second Death*. In the era of opera's death (posed by the authors as the current, post-19th century period), opera is still widely performed and respected. How can this be, given its supposed death and irrelevance? The authors argue that opera exists currently in the space between deaths, for though no new,

great operas are being composed, opera as a creative form still maintains its symbolic status as a subject-disrupting aesthetic mode. To build this argument, they engage concepts of anachronism and newness.

Dolar claims that "the greatest conservatives are the greatest revolutionaries" because these are the creators who revive the past in dialectical relationship to the present by *creating something new*.[19] I want to interrogate this claim, for I have ambiguity and ambivalence towards it at present. On the one hand, I agree that often revival is a revolutionary move, in that re-mobilizing past tropes, norms, and mores can both inspire re-allocation in new and exciting ways, but also new and exciting thought (cf. Nietzsche, Morris, etc.). However, on the other hand, this statement is paradoxical for the fact that revival, when formally understood, is not meant to create anew, but rather to bring to the fore something lost or forgotten. In other words, we can't actually revive and reinvent the wheel for our ideas of wheel-ness are always already embedded within our episteme that takes wheels for granted. However, we can make attempts at creating the new, perhaps by looking to the methods of the past (position), holding it in dialectical relationship with the present (negation), and see what we can create out of it (negation of the negation). It is also a possibility that in seeking the new, we can experiment with the modes of the past, seeking out those political/aesthetic/philosophical paths not taken on the contingent march of accepted history. The revival of the old through the creative and deliberate utilization of anachronism can therefore actually work towards the creation of new modalities.

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[19] Žižek, Slavoj and Dolar, Mladen. 2002. *Opera's Second Death*. New York: Routledge: p. 6.

Newness is also a concept mobilized by Žižek at the beginning of his essay, in which he claims that "a truly creative act not only restructures the field of future possibilities but also restructures the past, resignifying the previous contingent traces as pointing toward the present."[20] Part of what is important for Žižek in this claim is that it allows him to rethink past works, most especially *Tristan* in new and potentially subversive ways. What also seems to be at stake here comes from Žižek's close friend and colleague Alain Badiou, in the notion of the new. Badiou focuses on a theory of the event, which here is translated by Žižek into the "truly creative act" as that which shifts tides and changes everything. This is a charge that we artists and philosophers share, to try to create the new, the truly creative. Yet, the "new" in our colloquial sense is not the new in terms of Dolar, Žižek, or Badiou, for here the new undermines convention (artistic, political, social), but also and more importantly changes future possibilities. In other words, Wagner can be important not simply for what he achieves, but also for the creation of the possibilities of new and different possibilities. In later chapters, we will find Badiou's 'event' as a useful conceptual tool for unpacking and analyzing Crass. In all of Dolar and Žižek's claims, we witness the symbolic and imaginative status of a 'dead' art form, as it exists in the space between physical and symbolic deaths. This return of dead forms is typically received (at least initially) as an anachronistic mode of expression, and is usually either openly celebrated (as in the social status of various "retro" styles) or denigrated (in what is declared to be "outdated"). But, in our present study we will see the

[20] *Ibid*, pp. 103-104.

potentially enormous importance of anachronism in the performance of disruptive aesthetics.

Often, we recognize anachronism as an unwelcome error, as the sign that something is off the in art, film, novel, or music we are experiencing.[21] In fact, an error of temporal placement is the very defining feature of some(thing/one) as anachronistic. What, then, can we make of anachronism in art? Is it simply a goof, a problem, an oversight? Many infamous anachronisms are of the unintentional type. For instance, Francis Ford Coppola's highly acclaimed *The Godfather* (considered by many critics to be among the greatest films ever produced), includes an infamous anachronism. At one point, several of the film's protagonists are seen walking from their car into a Las Vegas hotel, and two clearly visible hippies are seen in the background. Though a visible presence in 1972 when the film was shot, hippies were clearly not around in the 1950s when this scene of the film is set.[22] In such a film, the appearance of such anachronistic figures can disrupt the illusion the setting is attempting to create, breaking the continuity of the scene if only for a moment. Coppola has owned the mistake, but however regrettable it may be to him, it was not edited out of the completed film. These types of humorous oversights can give

[21] It would be inappropriate for me to take full credit for the articulation of anachronism as a product of our inherited sense of history and historicity. This point on anachronism as error, though common enough in our parlance, is also a major theme of the comedic film criticism of the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* kind, has been pointed to by Vanita Seth in her "Early Modern Political Thought" class that I had the privilege of serving as teaching assistant for on multiple occasions, and was also explored by Lauren Berlant in her talk "Structures of Unfeeling" at UC Santa Cruz, 01/22/15. All of this is to say that anachronism-as-error is a part of our contemporary episteme and historical sensibility, and I am far from the first to argue so.

[22] On the DVD collector's edition director commentary of *The Godfather*, Coppola admits to still being haunted by the embarrassment of this anachronistic shot.

audiences something to chuckle at, perhaps even bringing "immeasurable pleasure, especially when they are found in great classics," or conversely something that deeply disturbs their enjoyment of a film.[23]

Indeed, we needn't assume that the producers, or creators of the anachronistic aesthetic are unknowing or ignorant of its historical oddness. Perhaps, instead, we should look to a variety of uses for anachronism, and open up the possibilities of interpreting it when we encounter it. For instance, anachronism may be a clever device of making the unfamiliar familiar for a perceived audience, a mechanism for making something relatable to a spatial or temporal location in which (it is assumed) it might not otherwise be. Anachronism may also be an instance of deliberately breaking the illusion offered by a given expression. Examples of this type of anachronism abound in the world of film, often as a case of circumstance due to the disparity in the time period in which a film is shot and that in which it is set.[24]

Yet, what of anachronism that is very much intended? These instances may actually represent a cognizant decision by an artist to temporally disturb or displace an audience, either to amuse or discomfort. Anachronism in such instances may actually be the re-insertion, or the invasion, of the real upon art, a sort of disruption to

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[23] Žižek, Slavoj and Dolar, Mladen. 2002. *Opera's Second Death*. New York: Routledge: p. 115.
[24] For example, Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil* focuses on a dystopian future rife with government/police brutality and bureaucratic impotence. Though this film is set in the future, much of the technology and fashion alludes to the past. While computerization and mechanization are crucial in *Brazil*'s society, we see unnecessary duct systems, faulty computer systems, and outdated heating, cooling, and communication technology. An elevator ride takes commuters from work to home, a clear technological advancement, yet these same commuters are dressed in the garb of 1940s style film noir. Computers abound, but seem only to produce mountains of *more* useless paperwork rather than increasing efficiency. These anachronistic inconsistencies are often the source of humor in the film, an indication of just how deliberate Gilliam's use of anachronism is, but also underline the general sense of malaise and discomfort that this dystopia produces.

the fantasy. We can allow for the possibility that anachronism, when deliberately deployed, can be the site of critique, and as mentioned above, a possible space of freedom. All of this is simply to establish that the specific type of anachronism that I am interested in here, and the anachronism that I will attribute to both Morris and punk, is best understood as deliberate anachronism. What is the relationship between deliberate anachronism and romanticism? This theme will be theorized more robustly in the next chapter. Anachronism in these contexts also directs our attention to the *how* of aesthetics. How is art produced, and why does this matter? How are production processes represented in the aesthetics of the art objects produced? Ultimately, what are the political stakes in attempts at negating the culture industries?

Guiding Questions & Terminology

This project seeks to unpack and explore the imagination as a politically important institution by connecting two seemingly disparate concepts, art and value. Ultimately, I argue that the concepts of art and value are not naturally or inherently disconnected, but rather become disparate under a capitalistic mode of production. To reach this conclusion, however, we must look to answer important questions on the status of art, the political affect of imagination, and the subjective qualities of resistance and rebellion. We must also acknowledge and understand the functionality of capitalism vis-à-vis aesthetics, the specific aesthetics of industrialism, and turn to specific attempts at the disruption of these aesthetics and their limitations.

How does the form of valuation de-aestheticize under capitalism? In other words, how may we hope to analyze value, intrinsic or extrinsic, of the art object

separate from the emphasis on utility and exchange value in capitalism? Does art itself problematize value (and hence the related concepts of time, money, and leisure), and following Herbert Marcuse here, provide an ontological other to capitalistic modes of production? In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse argues that art is always already the ontological other of capitalistic modes of production, in that it defies the capitalistic imperative towards efficiency in labor practices and profitability. In an argument strikingly similar to George Bataille's concerning the accursed share, Marcuse describes art as categorically distinct from productive labor.

Different from Bataille, however, is Marcuse's attention to form, privileging it over content. While Bataille focuses on the content of the erotic as the accursed share, Marcuse sees artistic form, as the 'other' of capitalism as such. Marcuse relates this otherness of art to those important, and sometimes casual features of the human psyche loosely described as emotion and affect (which Marcuse acknowledges as "not [being] forces of production," yet are still—and this is the kernel of his critique of Marxian investigations of aesthetics—crucially important to the real, everyday lived experience of people in that these features are "decisive, they constitute reality.")[25] This otherness in art's form is so striking that the political potential for art represents a radical break from the norm of the status quo. Art "transcends its social determination…[and the] transcendence of immediate reality

[25] Marcuse, Herbert. 1978. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Toronto: Beacon, p. 6.

shatters the reified objectivity of established social relations and opens a new dimension of experience: rebirth of the rebellious subjectivity."[26]

In interrogating Marcuse's claim, and expanding it to a consideration of the de-aestheticizing functions of capitalism, we must take several things into consideration. The first of these is an attention to the aesthetic object, in terms of what makes it unique (or not) from other objects, what relationship the art object has to perceiving subjects, and therefore what affective and imaginative qualities the art object either possesses or is invested with. What is the ontological status of the art object, i.e. what is important about the art object? Is the key distinction between the art object and the commodity in the process by which the object is made? What value is important—the intrinsic value, the use value, or the exchange value of the object? Or is it the most important feature of the object the social relations out of which the process for its creation arises?

In his early study of the 1960s youth (hippie, activist, beat) cultures, Theodore Roszak concludes with an important contribution to any theory of the contemporary imagination as he puts forth a contrast between supposed scientific objectivism and the more marginalized shamanism and magic of the creative act.[27] The scientific worldview, he suggests, is the key feature of technocratic society and the rule of experts. It is not so much science itself that the hippie youth protest, but rather its narrowing the knowledge deemed worthy of the name to the exclusion of all

[26] Marcuse, pp. 6-7.

[27] This magical quality of the creative act is not only reminiscent of the Kantian sublime we are engaging in depth here, but also many other traditions. For instance, see the Sufi mystical tradition on poetry, but even more especially in dealing with music. Hazrat Inayat Khan. 1991. *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.

alternatives. Put another way, technocracies value data and efficiency over other modes and definitions of value. The rule of scientific experts, Roszak argues, is so removed and isolated within academe that in its functioning, validated methodologies and intellectual elitism become "as closed a priesthood as any in history."[28] For all their empirical claims, in other words, quantitative methods rely heavily on a faith-like attachment to their own validity.

The crucial aspect of Roszak's argument here is not simply to critique the scientific worldview, though he certainly does so, but rather to demonstrate those other forms of knowledge, perception, and experience that science precludes and excludes. The mysticism and magic of traditional shamanism holds a special place in the imaginaries of the hippies, he argues, because it is so fundamentally different from the limitations of scientific explanation. He discusses shamanism not simply to celebrate this alternate worldview, but rather to demonstrate the marginalization of the creative acts and arts that scientific/technocratic society deems subjective as a primary way of bolstering the perception of scientific/technocratic objectivity. The creative act holds a certain magic for Roszak, as it relates to a "deeper level of personality…that might transform our lives…[and] achieve a shattering transformation."[29] This deeply affective experience is for Roszak almost exclusive to the creative act, especially in our contemporary moment in which creativity is all but dismissed as an important force in the social and political realms.

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[28] Roszak, Theodore. 1969. *The Making of a Counter Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 263.
[29] Ibid, pp. 256-257.

> At best, the artistically inclined person within a pre-dominantly scientific culture lives a schizoid existence, finding an out-of-the-way corner of his life in which to pursue some creative use of leisure time. In the technocratic society such a schizoid strategy is fast becoming standard practice. Men build careers and shape their worlds in their public roles as technicians and specialists. They keep their creative gestures to themselves as private and irrelevant pleasures. Such gestures are a personal therapy; they help keep us a little more sane and resilient in this grim world; but men do not let such hobbies define their professional or social identity. We value our little creative outlets, but we learn how to keep them in their proper marginal place.[30]

The hippie culture that Roszak examines resists the imperative to keep creativity private, and indeed celebrates the public creative act. Indeed, these public creative acts became so outlandish in the 1960s, that the motto "freaking out" or "letting your freak flag fly" became synonymous with notions of resisting normative liberal subjectivities.[31] Subsequently, however, major elements of this resistant culture have been coopted, and the most radical folks involved once again saw their creative lifestyles relegated to private realms. The emergences of creativity into the public, political realm are important for the openness they reveal of both aesthetics and the politically possible. This potential within the creative act (and the objects it produces) is nicely summarized by Slavoj Žižek as, "a truly creative act not only restructures the field of possibilities but also restructures the past, re-signifying the previous contingent traces as pointing toward the present."[32]

These private spheres of creativity comprise one part of what I will call shadow utopias. Shadows here are not (yet) meant to invoke images of ghostly

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[30] Ibid, pp. 255-256.
[31] Blyn, Robin. 2013. *The Freak-Garde: Extraordinary Bodies and Revolutionary Art in America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. For further examples of 60s musical "freaking," listen to CSNY's "Almost Cut My Hair" and the entire oeuvre of Jimi Hendrix and Frank Zappa (most especially the latter's debut concept album *Freak Out*).
[32] Žižek, Slavoj and Dolar, Mladen. 2002. *Opera's Second Death*. New York: Routledge: pp. 103-104.

apparitions or disreputable shady dealings. Rather, I mean to indicate that shadow utopias are those nooks and crannies, usually hidden (or at the very least off the mainstream beaten path) that are transformed and carved into spaces of and for creative expression. Utopia, as will be unpacked in the next chapter, is not meant to signify an ideal model or a blissful perfection, but rather a form of speculative or lived critique of the conditions of the present. In the chapters that follow, we will see these shadow utopias existing in a variety of spatial, temporal, and affective spaces, though they share the utopian aspiration of critiquing their present politics and experimenting with alternate modes of existence. It is often this shadowy existence rife with anachronistic experimentations, which opens up the possibility of processes of producing non-commoditized art objects.

Ultimately, it seems, that the kernel of political importance in the art object is embedded in the defiant character of creativity. A highly contested concept, creativity is at once a celebrated and a denigrated idea in contemporary capitalism. When applied to modes of production, innovative commerce, maximizing efficiency strategies, and new increases or changes in value form (e.g. the increasing hegemony of the financial derivative as a strikingly powerful—yet exceeding new—form for financial institutions to create value), creativity on the part of the capitalist and bourgeois classes is lauded.[33] Yet, more abstract modes of creativity, those outlets of the arts, alternate subjectivities, and experiments in modes of existence and lifestyle that are the focus of our study here, are often discounted as unnecessary, leisurely, or

[33] For another interesting economic example, cf. crypto-currencies' (e.g. Bitcoin) circulations and fluctuations.

as a sort of safety valve that only exists to continue the cycle of workers' production and reproduction. The creative industry has boomed in places like the United States, in terms of providing 'amateur' artists, musicians, and writers outlets for their creative *hobbies*, providing of course that they have the disposable income for them. When creativity leaves the shelter of the private hobby and enters the public realm of lifestyle or even profession, it is often met with suspicion, mockery, and the expectation of poverty, as the well-known cliché of the 'starving artist' can attest.

Can creativity, or the specific creative act producing an art object, represent a defiance of the accumulative ethic of capitalism? The creative process involved in producing an art object can be pleasurable, spontaneous, irrational, and perhaps even unexplainable. These features are not only at odds with the efficient and accumulative imperative of industrial capitalism, but also represent a contestation of the painfully rationalistic subjectivity of liberalism. In other words, we may find that in exploring non-commoditized, non-coopted modes of creativity in the arts, we are in fact examining an ontological position categorically different from the rational, liberal subject of capital. This is the argument that I shall build in the following study, and it is one that indebted to the claim that "the 'secret' to be unveiled through analysis is not the content hidden by the form (the form of commodities, the form of dreams) but, on the contrary, *the 'secret' of this form itself*."[34]

Though I acknowledge that the culture industry is a massive hegemonic force in connecting the artistic experience and object to capitalism, I do not concede that

[34] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 3.

the said industry is an inescapable, *all*-encompassing power that we cannot hope to resist without reinforcing. Instead, we will hear and see examples of attempts at contestation. The individual successes or failures of these movements, I argue, is not as important politically as the very real disruption of defeatist thinking and co-opted imaginaries that they represent, and the carving out of new and radical, though not necessarily dogmatic, subject positions.

The puzzle here is how to unpack the uniqueness of the art object without merely reifying particularized commodity fetishism. Can we see a radical potential specific to the art object, or are we grasping at straws of nothing more than an aestheticized commodity fetish? Perhaps the fetish is attached to the object itself, or in the case of the art object the process of its creation. Does the art object indeed have an ontological status distinct from the commodity, or is it merely an aesthetic fetishism that denies or obscures the exploitative or alienated processes still present in its production? Why is it important for the art object to have a different relationship to the subject than is typically had with the commodity object? Returning to Žižek, how can we examine the art object beyond recognizing that it is the mere materialization of ideology?

What we should attempt to learn, therefore, from politico-aesthetic movements is not limited to the use of this or that tactic, but rather the ways in which they demonstrate the heterogeneous responses to capital and its liberal subjectivity, and the desires shown in attempts at disruption and resistance. What is at stake, in other words, is a contestation of the singular ontological, ethical, and epistemological

framework presented by capitalism in the presentation of resistances and refusals to it. The potentialities of choke points, i.e. those areas of contestation that are inherent to—though whose existence is denied by—capitalist modes of production and existence, are demonstrated through these movements and their participant's refusal to accept what they have been presented as their only options for survival in the system (be this presentation from the capitalist ideologues, priests, parents, teachers, or other authoritarian figures in support of maintaining or indeed bolstering the status quo).

Perhaps the most important continuities between Morris's Arts & Crafts movement and punk rock cultures are their inherently contradictory nature. That is, both of these movements have sought to undermine and contest the hegemonic industries and the cultures of capital by simultaneously resisting the very institutions they were working in and through. The financial success and accumulated wealth and influence gained by each are no small hurdle for these politico-aesthetic movements to overcome in order to maintain political relevance and validity. Yet, both movements made important strides in troubling hegemonic liberal subject positions and the assumed omnipotence of capitalism.

Many more of the concepts utilized in this text will be elaborated in much more detail in the chapters that follow. However, it seems necessary to add to the terminological explanations above a brief summary of some key ideas and how I chose to employ them. For instance, as I have labeled our case studies as politico-aesthetic movements, I should briefly outline the linguistic implications and the

subtleties I have in mind in this term. As Chantal Mouffe nicely summarizes, "there is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art."[35] Mouffe goes on to describe artistic forms of activism that can be part of political struggle, yet I expand this to also claim that sometimes aesthetics is itself the very site of politics. When examined within the context of revolutionary political action, art is often seen as offering important strategies.[36] Some have even gone so far as to argue that artistic performance is the only political action widely available for dissenting peoples and parties.[37] Yet, I'm not so much interested in the limited realm of explicitly political art, but more of the recognition of diverse arts' politics and the intersection of the political with the aesthetic.

It is undeniable that art has also been widely used as an instrument of globalized capital, a coopted system of signs dispersed in the interests of branding, advertising, ideology, and profitability. Guy Debord goes so far as to claim that art not only becomes the servant of power, but the ensuing spectacle is the ultimate goal of capitalist political economy. Even the *avant garde* is stuck in the impasse of the

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[35] Mouffe, Chantal. Summer 2007. "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," *Art & Research*. Volume 1, No. 2, p. 2. I should also note that I do not have the space here to definitively define art or aesthetics, due to many reasons, not the least of which is due to the fact that since the mid-20th century the notorious "what is art?" question has been so dominant in the various fields of art history, visual studies, philosophy, aesthetic theory, and even political economy. To attempt to outline the entirety of this debate is futile within the constraints of this essay. However, I should indicate that throughout the essay, "art" takes on a broader valence than "aesthetics" in terms of examining social/subject positions, as the latter term is much more implicated in concerns of form rather than content. In the later sections of this essay, the broadest concerns of form (i.e. be they in Kant's natural examples or Bey's shock) are encapsulated within the terminology of "aesthetics."

[36] For example, see Sholette's case study of REPOhistory in New York, whose project of queering spaces by erecting memorials to victims of homophobic and transphobic hate crimes has important political but only slight aesthetic impact. Sholette, Gregory. 2011. *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 71-93.

[37] Bernstein, Cheryl. "Performance as News: Notes on an Intermedia Guerilla Art Group," contained in Duncan, Carol (ed.) 1993. *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 224.

spectacle for Debord, as it "is at once an art of change and the purest expression of the impossibility of change."[38] How, then, can art be positioned as a metaphor through which to understand radical change? Maurice Merleau-Ponty compares the two, "the revolutionary movement, like the work of the artist, is an intention which itself creates its instruments and its means of expression."[39] In the process Merleau-Ponty describes, art and revolution are similar in that they each constitute *themselves*, but can we additionally conceptualize them as constituting *each other*?

Marina Grzinic argues that "reconnecting creativity with processes that question or are critical of the systems" is so crucially important now precisely because "creativity and resistance are practically pulled apart by the capitalist machine."[40] But why must the questions we pose to art revolve around the binary schemas: Is this subversive or reifying? Is this a societal safety valve or authentic resistance? What if aesthetic change or revolution is not merely a symptom of suffering or a strategic tactic in political struggle but is instead a necessary and mutually constituting goal of social revolution? This doesn't only mean that "the same people who [are] radical political theorists [are] participating in public art," but rather that politics and art have a complex, dialectical, mutually constituting, and potentially vexed or even contradictory relationship.[41] As we shall see from a variety of political and philosophical positions outlined below, there is no such thing as a

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[38] Debord, Guy. 2000. *Society of the Spectacle*. London: Rebel Press, pp. 105.

[39] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, p. 445.

[40] Grzinic, Marina. "Re-politicizing Art, Theory, Representation, and New Media Technology," contained in Kocur, Zoya (ed.) and Leung, Simon (ed.). 2012. *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985, Second Edition*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 388-394.

[41] Susan Simensky Bietila interviewed in Antliff, Allan. 2007. *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, p. 149.

purely aesthetic experience, for 'the aesthetic' is always already embedded within 'the social,' *and vice versa*. This is not to privilege artistic over social revolutionary goals, but rather to argue that these goals are best addressed together. Hence, part of my term politico-aesthetic is meant to reflect the political constitution of aesthetics and the aesthetic constitution of politics. Of course, it is also meant as a precise category of a particular type of social movement, which I argue applies well to both case studies examined here.

Politics in this study does not refer to the theatrical farce performed in seats of state power, nor is politics here reducible to the domain of strictly economic struggle. Instead, when I analyze politics, I am referring primarily to the contestations, disagreements, conflicts, and compromises that define human lived experience and coexistence. Institutions of the state and of capital may have a demonstrable stake in the lives and movements of people in a very real sense, however, politics as understood institutionally has very little to do with the cultures we will examine below. Neither Morris's socialist league nor punk cultures have vested interests in (or the limited understanding of politics as) the endorsement of particular parties or candidates. Instead, both of these groups of people position their politics somewhat paradoxically as both micro-level individualistic freedom of lifestyle and as the group Oi Polloi expresses on the album of the same name, "total resistance to the fucking system."[42] In other words, politics in this sense is both about individualized lived experience and perceived or performed refusal and rupture with the institutional

[42] Oi Polloi. 2008. *Total Resistance to the Fucking System*. Plastic Bomb. LP.

systems of capitalism and governance. In an important sense, however, resistance is not the correct label for this activity, as both of these movements are better understood as arising out of a recognition that, as I posed above, it is not we who resist the state and capital, but rather it is the state and capital that attempt to resist us.

This definition of politics is indebted to many varied 20th century thinkers. My emphasis on contestation is derived largely from positioning Michel Foucault into conversation with Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, and Murray Bookchin. For Foucault, power is not as simple as a top-down distribution wherein some actors 'have' power and others do not. Power is not, and cannot be, a possession in Foucault's thought, but rather a set of ever-changing relations circulating in an through actors and institutions. Foucault spends a decade lecturing on the basis of power dynamics in war, furthering his own analysis of the circulation of power and possibilities for resistance.[43] He examines micro-techniques, the technologies and mechanisms of power that "gain the material means to intervene."[44] It is in this materiality that strategies of resistance come into greater focus. Foucault argues that power relations are not comprised of "*simply* negative mechanisms that make it possible to repress, to prevent, to exclude, to eliminate; but that they are linked to a

[43] Foucault, Michel. 2003. *"Society Must Be Defended:" Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*. New York: Picador, pp. 16-17. This focus on war as an analytic category also pushes Foucault further into his commitment to examine the "how of power", that is, the series of mechanisms through which power is enforced, maintained, etc., *Ibid*, p. 24 and 27. See also Foucault, Michel. 2010. *The Government of the Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 4.

[44] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 28 and 34. I should add here in the case that it is not always apparent, that I am following Foucault's lead in that my references to power are meant to refer to *relations* of power.

whole series of positive and useful effects."[45] Power, that is, *produces*.[46] To deny the productive component of power is to "adopt a purely juridical conception of power" and obscure the knowledge systems power produces.[47] This juridical conception of power cannot account for *how* subjects come to obey, outside of physical coercion. In his focus on productive aspects of power, Foucault is able to examine how subjects are constituted by power (and its interplay with resistance) and how they can become normalized. We must ask not how this normalization succeeds, but rather in what ways does it fail.

In Foucault's thought, the idea of the authentic self is troubled, for if the subjectivity through which self-understanding comes into being is a product of power, can any idea of authenticity not also be brought into being by these same forces? Instead of a conscious subject/agent, it is the interplay between power and resistance that creates "different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" including language, state structures, economics, categories of madness and health, and even a "way in which a human being turns him or herself into a subject."[48] Can authenticity be an idea or an affect in which such self-subjugation can occur? If resistance is taken to be the expressions of authentic desires and authentic selves, can this in fact serve to reify the subjugation of the subjects that believe themselves to be

[45] Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, p. 24.
[46] Note the difference from Bataille's notion of power that is characterized entirely as that which consumes without producing.
[47] Foucault, Michel. "Truth and Power," contained in Faubion, James (ed.) 2000. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3*. New York: The New Press, p. 120.
[48] Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power," contained in Faubion, James (ed.) 2000. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3*. New York: The New Press, pp. 326-7.

resisting? Foucault doesn't answer directly, but instead begins to problematize the subject. Taking a slightly different tact, we can also problematize the category of authenticity itself—see below—not least by undoing assumptions of intentionality or rationality on the part of our radical actors. Following Nietzsche, Foucault argues that to do genealogy, "one has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself" in order to pursue analyses "that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework."[49] Foucault argues that power operates in and through people, which leads Foucault to conclude "the individual is in fact a power-effect, and…the individual is a relay: power passes through the individuals it has constituted."[50] It is this troubling of liberal subjectivity that we shall hear resonating in our focus on politico-aesthetic movements.

The power-knowledge-resistance nexus hence creates 'the individual.' As Foucault describes, "in Nietzsche and Bataille, experience has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, or seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself."[51] He places himself in the Nietzschean tradition of *not* seeking origins and *not* presupposing subjects. Finally, for Foucault everywhere power exists, it encounters resistance. Resistance and power relations are mutually constitutive. Foucault's

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[49] Foucault, "Truth and Power", p. 118.
[50] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 30. The relaying capacity of the individual serves as the vessel through which normalization occurs and is transmitted. This is part of why Foucault also resists classification and categorization of his own work, as he wants to actively resist subjugation through conforming to normalized standards of academic research. Indeed, his resistant assertion of his particular *style* (i.e. "in contrast") is what Hayden White has attributed the "authority of Foucault's discourse" in that he is "willfully superficial…consistent with…[a dissolving of] the distinction between surfaces and depth, to show that wherever this distinction arises it is evidence of the play of organized power." White, Hayden. 1987. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 107.
[51] Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," p. 241.

elaboration on the connection between power and resistance in *The History of Sexuality* succinctly states, "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power…these points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network."[52] Particularly important here is the insistence that where power relations are present resistance is also *always* in play.[53] Perhaps we can pose politico-aesthetic movements as one of these (unintended) productions of power.

In investigating articulations of power, he argues that his genealogical method "consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point."[54] Foucault's complete conception of resistance is best understood as more than explicit political strategies, and is more inherently haptic or textured than visual (i.e. as in the friction caused between two objects coming into contact as they push in separate directions).[55] I argue that this concept of resistance is both invaluable and conceptually troubling. Foucault argues there is no outside of power relations and that resistance is always in play within power relations, so the most simple of deductions reveals that there is also no outside of resistance. How then might we

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[52] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, pp. 95-6. See also Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 347.
[53] "If there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you're not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with resistance. So I think that *resistance* is the main word, *the key word*, in this dynamic." Foucault, Michel. and Lotringer, Sylvere (ed.) 1996. *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*. New York: Semiotext(e), p. 386.
[54] Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 329.
[55] This textured conception of resistance can be demonstrated by borrowing from Walter Benjamin, "against the armature of glass and iron, upholstery offers resistance with its textiles," (*Arcades*, I3, 1). Benjamin, Walter. 2002. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 218.

arrive at and evaluate specific strategies of (political and discursive) resistance? What possibilities might there be for resistance that doesn't reify existing power relations?

Even in this search for strategies of resistance, Foucault is reluctant to label his goal as liberation because this term is applied without adequate scrutiny. Such applications of

> The notion of liberation…run the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression. According to this hypothesis, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself.[56]

The focus here is on individual practices that allow or afford freedom, i.e. the freedom to escape.[57] Power relations exist between humans engaged in struggle over the free assertion of their will, the interplay between this will and the resistance it encounters, and practices are defined as free to the extent that they overcome their encountered resistance. In the description above of liberation, Foucault seems to also be critiquing the very grounds upon which claims of authenticity are staked, e.g. in the self-reconciliation and positive self-relationship of liberated humanity. The problem with liberation as a category is not only that it cannot account for all practices of freedom, but also precisely that it rests upon an essentialist understanding of authentic being. In turning next to Rancière, I argue that Foucault's critique is further bolstered by Rancière's keen insights into the dialectical relationship between

[56] Foucault, "The Ethics of Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," pp. 282-3.
[57] Foucault is quick to add that liberation is sometimes an appropriate goal, most especially in overcoming systems of domination, but that even there the concept of liberation is not sufficient for defining practices that follow.

the sensor and the sensed, providing us invaluable tools for a deep analysis of consciousness of the sensible, and hence the possible. Yet, in this pairing, what also arises out of Rancière for us here is a greater potential for rupture than Foucault allows.

The sensible, for Rancière, has a double meaning, indicating both what makes sense and what can be sensed. Rancière is interested in both what our *sensory* perception can experience and what we can understand (i.e. make *sense* of) in this sensory perception.[58] What is sensible in any polity or public is not only an indication of regulation, but represents a primary ground of political contestation. Rancière's "distribution of the sensible" is a function of "police" and policing, or those forms of normative power relations that promote consensus rather than encouraging politics.[59] This policing function is, in essence, a regulation of the sensible, which can take various forms and is articulated in many institutions (i.e. not just the particular branch of law enforcement referred to as 'police' in common parlance).

'Resistance' to this policing appears central to the formation of politico-aesthetic movements.[60] Included within this distribution of the sensible is the presentation of what is representable in artistic form. The non-sensible, i.e. or that that cannot be sensed, is that which is *declared* to not be sensible. Rancière argues

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[58] Rancière, Jacques. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 12.
[59] Rancière, Jacques. "Ten Theses on Politics," contained in Ranciere, Jacques. 2010. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, pp. 36-7.
[60] Not limited to Morris and Punk, but cf. Banksy. 2010. *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. Paranoid Pictures. Film. and Thompson, Nato & Sholette, Gregory (eds.). 2004. *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*. North Adams: MASS MoCa.

such a declaration of "impossibility" contains and "conceals a prohibition."[61] This prohibition is what is resisted in non-sensible aesthetics, or "what calls for a new art, an art of the unrepresentable."[62] Though the thought of Rancière is critical and insightful, it often leans towards ocular-centrism, a focus that I will problematize through my engagement with audio-sonic sensory registers.[63] Listening, touching, smelling, tasting, etc. can sometimes be examined through such visual theories, but they cannot be entirely explained our understood thusly.[64] Just as visual studies can contribute to our understanding of other sensory registers, Fred Moten reverses this formula and claims that greater attention to other sensory registers (such as sound) also give us further traction in our attention to the visual.[65] Indeed, for Moten, the simplistic separation of these multiple sensory registers is not correct, as the affect of perception is more holistic than any narrow, unilateral focus would indicate. Echoing Merleau-Ponty, he describes the "whole body" as the emitter (and hence consumer) of sound.[66]

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[61] Rancière, Jacques. "The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics," contained in Ranciere, Jacques. 2010. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 195.

[62] Rancière, Jacques. "The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics," contained in Ranciere, Jacques. 2010. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 195.

[63] As a point of clarification, this ocular-centrism has a variety of possible causes. Within the discipline of visual studies, the visual is deliberately privileged as it is taken to be *the* prevalent and omnipresent sensory bombardment of the contemporary moment. However, this justification, as well as broader theoretical ocular-centrism is often a privileging of the visual due to the simple fact that it is easiest to narrativize. Rancière himself is aware of this fact, and reroutes this critique toward thinking of aesthetic writings that appear to be ocular-centric to in fact being logo-centric, a privileging of language of sensory perceptions that are easiest to describe and analyze within language.

[64] See Kun, pp. 115-118.

[65] Moten, Fred. 2003. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 235.

[66] *Ibid*, p. 39.

Davide Panagia also takes an important step forward in expanding Rancière's critique to other modes of sensory perception. Panagia draws upon Rancière's insights on the sensible and its relation to democracy in order to investigate not only visual aesthetics in painting and film, but also haptic, sonic, and taste perceptions as important *political* sensations.[67] He describes democratic politics as "first and foremost a politics of noise," which not only plays at bringing sonic sensory perception into a Rancièrean scheme, but also illustrates nicely the multiple, conflicting, and indeed cacophonous character of dissensus.[68] This dissensus can occur in the "interruption" of normative sensory perception, and Panagia provides us with examples ranging from the carnival to horror film to the Slow Food Movement to illustrate this point.[69] Similar to Merleau-Ponty, Panagia positions the senses as connected; the perceiving body is holistic rather than a collection of separable senses.[70] Panagia also makes an important connection between Kant and Rancière, claiming aesthetic experience (or "the experience of the beautiful") as not only "uniquely free" but also because of this freedom is a "moment of dissensus" for at the moment of aesthetic experience "the agent of appraisal is neither rational nor irrational, neither animal nor human, but both."[71] While Panagia focuses on the pleasurable, we must not limit our attention to these beautiful experiences, but must also allow for dissensus in the shockingly *un*beautiful.

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[67] Panagia, Davide. 2009. *The Political Life of Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press.
[68] *Ibid*, p. 48.
[69] *Ibid* s, pp. 111-122 & 125-148.
[70] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, p. 225.
[71] Panagia, Davide. 2009. *The Political Life of Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 128.

Rancière sees the basis of politics in what he calls dissensus.[72] His concept is similar to Chantal Mouffe's agonistic politics, in the attention to difference, dissent, and disagreement as more free than the celebrated liberal values of compromise, consent, and agreement.[73] Morris and punk, sometimes in intersecting, sometimes in diverging ways, also both promote such a confrontational stance. Although Rancière isn't entirely clear on if he believes dissenting art to be truly possible, he does pose the central importance of art, its entire raison d'être should be to introduce dissensus through its disturbance of the hegemonic regime of the sensible. This is important in acknowledging and working with difference constructively.

Murray Bookchin also argues against consensus-based decision making in favor of actualized democratic processes precisely because consensus precludes the rich discussion, discourse, and difference that are the product of dissensus.[74] This dissensus is not only important politically in terms of the introduction of new ideas and a truly democratic mode of discourse from multiple voices, but it is also important creatively. He states, "dissensus—the all-important process of continual dialogue, disagreement, challenge, and counter-challenge, without which social as well as individual creativity would be impossible."[75] The struggle is hence constant, and there is no definable endpoint to resistance. This doesn't mean that there are no

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[72] Different readings of Rancière view dissensus as defined largely as events opening the possibility of new possibilities (in a sense very similar to Alain Badiou) or as the spaces that provide openings for such events to occur.

[73] Mouffe, Chantal. 2005. *On the Political*. New York: Routledge, pp. 3-21.

[74] Bookchin's ideas are now central to the ongoing autonomous revolution in the Rojava region of Syria/Kurdistan.
It is also worth noting that among the Americans fighting alongside the revolutionaries, there are several punks. Dirik, Strauss, Taussig, Wilson (eds.). 2016. *To Dare Imagining: Rojava Revolution*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

[75] *Ibid*, p. 17.

goals, for Bookchin is very clear about the goal of overthrowing capitalism and ending exploitation.[76] But, because people are diverse and ever changing, the types of politics we should be striving for leading up to and following revolution should be able to account for this immense difference. In other words, there is no end to politics when we move our definition beyond institutional parameters.

The other side of a politico-aesthetic movement is obviously aesthetics, which I also utilize in a particular, nuanced sense. In the 18th century, Immanuel Kant defines aesthetics as pure (either in beautiful or sublime articulations), but a purity absent of judgment because tastes are variable. He repeatedly argues that judgments tell us information about the judging subject only, for nothing can be learned about an object from a subjective claim.[77] Indeed, this problem is at the very core of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, that "what is understood in the judgment is not the determination of the object but of the subject and its feeling."[78] Sensation is always of an external object, "the merely subjective aspect of our representations of things outside us."[79] This external object troubles the subject through its very otherness.

There are a variety of judgments that interest Kant (i.e. of taste, the agreeable, the pleasurable), but his primary concern is with judgment of beauty and the sublime (most especially the sublime in nature, what he takes to be superior perfection in

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[76] It is perhaps of no small importance that Bookchin has identified Morris's *News from Nowhere* as the utopian society most in line with his own desires.

[77] Kant, Immanuel. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 89, 214, 272.

[78] Ibid, p. 25.

[79] Ibid, p. 75.

experience).[80] These various judgments are subsumed under the umbrella classification of *aesthetic* judgment, and are characterized by both their subjective nature and lack of "presupposition [regarding] any concept."[81] In other words, aesthetic judgments can never be either objective nor conceptual. But rather, (as Fred Moten summarizes) "consciousness of art is nothing other than consciousness of self."[82] For Kant, the sublime defies categorization and complete understanding and can only be witnessed within the unsoiled perfection of nature.[83] However, beautiful art can come close, and can indeed "cultivate the mental powers for sociable communication," be it within the highly problematic domain of obedient private reason.[84]

This subjective basis of judgment is why Kant remains relevant in aesthetic theory, even in the analysis of radical revolutionary art. This seems a perplexing application, for Kant is consistently an advocate of the 'question but obey' brand of political conservatism, as seen in his dedication to moral duty and political idealism. How, then, can his aesthetic theory be used in analyzing revolutionary art? Subjective experience and aesthetic judgment can be manipulated, shaped, or

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[80] Ibid, pp. 126, 143, & 185. Cf. Edmund Burke, who is largely created for first 'discovering' the Sublime, though it is Kant who expands upon this concept and takes it towards more a conclusive, complex, nuanced idea. Burke, Edmund. 1937. *Collection: The Harvard Classics*. New York: P.F. Collier & Son Corporation.

[81] Wood, Allen. 2005. *Kant*. Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, p. 158.

[82] Moten, Fred. 2003. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 237. The context of this assertion by Michael Fried, which Moten is summarizing, is his objection to Adrian Piper's theatricality, her playing with object-hood to construct subject-hood, and her overall engagement and objections to Kant.

[83] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, pp. 126, 128-30, 134-7, 143.

[84] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 185.

ruptured through the troubling of subjectivity.[85] This rupturing is often the stated goal of revolutionary art. In addition, the subjective bases of judgment and taste also lend themselves to the "creating power" of imagination in Kantian aesthetics.[86] As Slavoj Žižek explains, the experience of beauty is calming in its pleasure, whereas the sublime is "paradoxically pleasurable in the dis-pleasurable" rupture of subjectivity, i.e. "sublimity excites and agitates."[87] Can this agitation be not only troubling subjectively, but also politically? In other words, a guiding question for examining the potentialities of movements like Morris's Arts & Crafts movement and punk cultures, we must decide a) what are the subjective bases of aesthetic judgments, b) who or whom determines aesthetic norms and by what processes, and c) what are the potential effects and affects of aesthetic ruptures of norms, mores, and subjectivity taken as objectivity.

Kant's contemporary, Friedrich Schiller, gets us closer to answering these by explaining perception and aesthetics as subjective, but also as a site for the resolution of political problems. Schiller's ruminations on aesthetics are influenced not only by his elite status as a member of the nobility and his reading of Kant, but also by his disillusion with the French Revolution. His disillusionment was so piercing due to the great hope that Schiller initially had for the revolution as it first unfolded.[88] For Schiller, the revolution itself was a failure the moment violence ensued, and he found

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[85] See, for instance, the discussion of Magritte's 'misleading' and hence troubling images in Foucault, Michel. 1983. *This is Not a Pipe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 20.
[86] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, p. 192.
[87] Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Brooklyn: Verso, pp. 228-9.
[88] A similar disillusionment can be found in a variety of Marxist writers immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

it impossible to reconcile the great potential of the revolution's ideals with the policies of the terror.[89] His *Letters* on aesthetics were one attempt to address the problem of how the people were to grow in order to live out such lofty ideals as liberty, equality, and fraternity non-violently. His answer lies in the good of beauty.

Politics and aesthetics are the same inseparable enterprise in Schiller's work. He argues this political point, claiming aesthetics (and aesthetic education) as not only inherent to all human experiences of freedom, but also (similar to Morris's great faith in the truth of beauty) as the *only* path available for humanity to achieve its mental, physical, and political potential. Aesthetics is not simply a concern with the beautiful or the good (one in the same for Schiller, i.e. the beautiful *is* the good), but are rather at the core of what it means to be human. Our understanding of an object's "aesthetic character" occurs when we understand its "physical, will, and moral" properties and when the object "can relate to the totality of our various powers."[90] Aesthetic education is not supplementary to moral, scientific, or logical education, but rather "has as its aim the cultivation of the whole of our sensuous and intellectual powers in the fullest possible harmony."[91]

Schiller argues that to solve political problems, we must "follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom."[92] However, whether this freedom is imaginary or material (or both) is unknown in his formulation. Aesthetics and the experience of beauty are not the paths to simply enhancing human

[89] The question of violence as a revolutionary tactic is taken up in Chapter 8.
[90] Schiller, Friedrich. 2004. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Mineola: Dover Books, p. 99, footnote 1.
[91] *Ibid*, p. 99, footnote 1.
[92] *Ibid*, p. 27.

existence, but in freeing it. This is because the aesthetic experience opens contemplative channels within the perceiver. He claims, "lofty serenity and freedom of spirit, combined with strength and vigor, is the mood in which a genuine work of art should leave us, and there is no surer touchstone of true aesthetic excellence."[93] This "freedom of spirit" is an "aesthetic purity" or the overwhelming "feelings" and "quickened imagination" brought on by the sensual experience of great paintings, poetry, and music.[94] Aesthetics are indeed what "gives rise to freedom" in that it "releases mankind from all the shackles of circumstance and frees him from everything that may be called constraint, whether physical or moral."[95] Schiller therefore provides an exemplar of the Romantic bridge between Kantian purism in aesthetics and the revolutionary art examined below. Yet, what also comes out in Schiller's Romanticist writings is an individualist understanding of freedom. We will return to the freeing potential of art in the sections below, but in the cases of William Morris and aesthetic shock, we will witness very different understandings of intended and/or inspired affect in the experience of art, with implications far beyond the individual.

Similar to Kant, Schiller's art also has a place of privilege and power, and also great political importance, in its indestructability. The political legislator, he tells us, "can humiliate the artist, but Art he cannot debase."[96] Because of political leaders' inability to eradicate art itself, despite their best efforts at silencing dissenting artists,

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[93] *Ibid*, p. 104.
[94] *Ibid*, pp. 104-5.
[95] *Ibid*, pp. 124 & 137.
[96] *Ibid*, p. 51.

Schiller sees the artist as best positioned to bring forth critique against "political corruption."[97] The artist, though the product of her time, can be properly trained into seeing beyond her particular time. She could contemplate the "sphere of the actual" and through "the union of the possible with the necessary, produce the Ideal."[98] This Ideal, according to Schiller, forms a position of critique that speaks back to power in the experience of overwhelming Beauty that cannot be undone.

Different from the paradigm established by Kant and Schiller, though utilizing several of their insights—even if unconventionally—to frame our study, my guiding argumentative hypothesis is that aesthetics is uniquely situated to radically disrupt the temporal conception of the uniqueness of our contemporary time (i.e. which is often messianic in the politico-theological conception exemplified by rhetoric of salvation or apocalypse) by utilizing anachronism as a stylistic tactic to radically undermine complacency and comfort within the present. My central claim is that such inter-temporal ruptures are not only discomforting to the complacent, but also fundamentally disrupt the progress narrative of the liberal ideological underpinnings of capitalism by demonstrating, if however fleetingly, the fallacious assumptions of progressive linear time.

As with much of Enlightenment thought, the model of progressive, liberal time has white supremacist and colonial undertones. The very notion that time moves in one direction, and that European civilization demonstrates this, has been used consistently to position European (and American) publics, institutions, and

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[97] *Ibid*, p. 51.
[98] *Ibid*, p. 52.

individuals as the 'most advanced,' as compared to the 'primitive,' 'backward,' or 'savage' populations these empires monstrously conquered, colonized, and exploited. As Valerie Rohy succinctly states,

> [I]f calendar time is a fantasy, it is a persistent, public one, whose inclusion or exclusion of particular subjects has profound cultural consequences" for chronological, linear time explicitly constructs the world by assigning subjects to different temporal locations along the progress axis of "development."[99]

It's not that time doesn't exist in *any* physical way, but rather that the concept of time mobilized in modernity have been used to justify exploitative labor processes, most consistently against those considered to exist in a previous temporal location (i.e. and not having "progressed" or "developed" as far as their conquerors). The hegemonic hence becomes synonymous with notions of development, progress, and movement towards a future perfect, shaping the present based upon colonizing understandings of an overcome past and an aspirational future.

Ruptures against the progressive, linear conception of time are of course prevalent in the concepts of Freud's uncanny and Lacan's two deaths and future perfect that I outlined above and will be mobilizing through the several chapters of this text, as will the Nietzschean eternal echo and genealogical method. But beyond these philosophical interventions, we can find material attempts at inter-temporal rupture (i.e. deliberate and brazen use of anachronism) as the central political feature in both of the politico-aesthetic movements we explore. These ruptures are hence important tools to be mobilized in post/anti-colonial and anti-racist resistances. In the

[99] Rohy, Valeria. 2009. *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality*. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 24, 34, 48, 61 & 105.

chapters that follow, I will be presenting the radical *potential* in such anachronistic aesthetics. The reader should be aware that discussions of potential always undertake a romanticizing turn, examining what might have been or still might be, rather than the 'really' there. Potential (past or present) has lessons to teach us, as do the various successes and failures of attempts or realizations of actualization.

The trace of the fleeting event, as well as the reverberations of the past, may be seen in the politico-aesthetic works of Morris and punk rock, in their eclectic temporal/nostalgic play, and the emancipatory potential of deliberately anachronistic (and non-exploitative) production methods of 'do-it-yourself.' In other words, by introducing a moment, and ultimately a materialization, of inter-temporality, an aesthetic of deliberate political anachronism can bring into question underlying assumptions of our present epoch, radically troubling the liberal notion of consensus that is all too often built upon an exclusionary and elitist edifice. The introduction of dissensus through this inter-temporality therefore allows for a potential wellspring of voices, perspectives, and dialogic participation of hitherto marginalized, oppressed, and/or coopted populations.

Yet, how can we analyze the beautiful, sublime, ideal art object without privileging the perspective or intentionality of the producer? In both politico-aesthetic movements we will turn to, there are spaces for both acceptance and rejection of the artists' claims about their art. So we needn't feel bound to merely reiterate what producers have told us about their productions, and may instead look to the variety of meanings offered by the art object in its life of interpretation, taking

seriously Roland Barthes's proclamation of the "death of the author" and the "birth of the reader" as an important literary moment in its opening of multiple meanings. Authorship precludes meaning because it "furnishes" the text with a "final signified," a "closing" off of other potential meanings.[100] The de-privileging of the author is also an acknowledgment of the impossibility of objectivity or neutrality.[101] Elaborating on this theme, Michel Foucault declares that the author (a modern invention) is a representation not only of regulation in discourse, but is also an agent of "thrift," an "ideological" limitation on meaning.[102] Yet, for Foucault, the death of the author is not so simple, for this "disappearance" leaves other ideas that function similarly (e.g. that of the "work" or a "discourse"), undoing the freedom unlocked in the author's death. Foucault also acknowledges that it is inappropriate to limit authors to text, but that the authorial role is also very much present in musicians, sculptors, painters, designers, etc.[103] The author must be removed in all of these aesthetic forms to unlock freedom in interpretation and liberate meaning.

In both art and politics, however, the question of who is speaking is often implicated in structures of power and critique. For example, the anarchist contingency at Occupy Wall Street was critical of the movement for its pretensions to speak for all marginalized peoples, most especially those not represented, heard, or

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[100] Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author" contained in Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Image-Music-Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, p. 147.
[101] Barthes, Roland. "The Grain of the Voice" contained in Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Image-Music-Text*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 179-189. This idea is also elaborated upon in Panagia, Davide. 2009. *The Political Life of Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 49-57.
[102] Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author" contained in Faubion, James (ed.). 1998. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 2*. New York: The New Press, pp. 221-222.
[103] Foucault, "What is an Author?" p. 216.

even acknowledged in their general assemblies. How can we acknowledge the subversive contribution of Barthes's "death of the author" while looking at movements in which the "author" (i.e. as applied to any maker—writer, painter, musician, sculptor, photographer, artisan—in relationship with the made) *is* an important contributing voice within a political discourse? How, in other words, can we both acknowledge the context and intentionality of authors while still providing the space for dissonance and difference in interpretation?

Kobena Mercer provides a possible way out of this binary by suggesting the return of the author while still allowing for different (and even contradictory) readings.[104] In a rethinking of his scathing critique of Robert Mapplethorpe, Mercer maintains the importance of who is producing a given expression or statement, for different racial, gender, and sexual subjectivities yield very different messages with ostensibly the same sensation. Similarly, these differences in subjectivities will yield different aesthetic experiences for viewing publics (i.e. in the different reactions to Mapplethorpe by diverse gay communities and the 'moral majority' religious right communities). Following Mercer, it may be possible to bring authors back in to critique while still not ceding them a monopoly on meaning. We should account for the author (artist, musician, maker), in other words, while maintaining an open imagination, in the spirit of acknowledging that "ambiguity is of the essence of human existence, and everything we live or think has always several meanings."[105]

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[104] Mercer, Kobena. 1994. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, pp. 203-4.
[105] Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, p. 169.

Therefore, we should look to spaces and events in which a multiplicity of meanings is possible and allowed, for only in these do we find politics.

Finally, to conclude this section on terminology, I should also mention initially here that I deliberately avoid using the language of 'counter' or 'sub' culture as traditionally applied to punk. I avoid this terminology because it implies that there is a coherent, unitary, and stable culture that other facets of culture merely respond to (both in substance and form). Instead of this, I prefer to conceptualize cultures as always moving, changing, flowing, and importantly always multiple in their existence. In other words, culture is a site of flux and contestation, not simply an establishment and its opposition. I prefer, therefore, to refer to punk as an assemblage of cultures (plural) and scenes, for this language does a better job of representing the instability, flexibility, and fraught ideological diversity I wish to focus on. The language of scenes also helps us to conceptualize cultures not as an immovable object for analysis, but rather comprised of a series of ongoing events. When I mention 'punk' in the chapters below, it should understood as a signifier meaning 'punk scenes and cultures,' or that loose assemblage of (first and foremost) music, people, arts, events, spaces, styles, fashions, ideologies, and conflicts swirling within what participants, observers, and critics have dubbed 'punk' or 'punk rock.' This is not to hint that there are no defining or uniting features of punk, but rather a recognition that such definitions are often inherently flat, excluding at least some of the nuance and diversity within scenes that we should be attempting to recognize and represent.

Methods and Plan

My descriptive method in presenting my case studies is indebted to John Ruskin and James Clifford, as well as the aesthetics of Gee Vaucher, all of whom embrace diversity and collage techniques to define and describe. In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin gives a description of the defining features of gothic architecture, one that not only influences William Morris's life and works, but in its method also influences this current study. The element of this text that I utilize in my methodology is obviously not connected to architecture specifically, but rather the way Ruskin successfully describes a diverse assemblage while maintaining the continuity necessary for categorization. In the most well-read and oft cited section of the text "The Nature of the Gothic," Ruskin attempts to outline features of the gothic rather than simply giving a unitary definition. He writes,

> That [Gothic] character itself is made up of many mingled ideas, and can consist only in their union. That is to say, pointed arches do not constitute the Gothic, nor vaulted roofs, nor flying buttresses, nor grotesque sculptures; but all or some of these things, and many other things with them, when they come together so as to have life.[106]

None of the individual characteristics that Ruskin describes here define the Gothic, yet each of them is associated with it. The point is that the Gothic is not simplistically reducible to any of one of its signs (e.g. *simply* flying buttresses or *simply* vaulted roofs) or any of the other singular characteristics so often associated with the Gothic style. Rather, the assemblage of these features can be seen in any building classified as representing a part of the Gothic movement in architecture. It is

[106] Ruskin, John. 1960. *The Stones of Venice*. Cambridge: De Capo Press, p. 158.

only when multiple of these features "consist in union" that they are able to "come together so as to have life."[107] Ruskin elaborates on this idea by describing some examples from the scientific method, demonstrating that, for instance, in the creation of chalk it is none of the elements used in its production that singularly defines chalk, but rather their working in unison.

The idea is simple enough, that any given substance, minus those primary elements that scientists can identify, is comprised of many elements that create something new in their combination. This gelling of multiple elements in the creation of something new that is not reducible to any one of the original elements is the type of method that allows complexity to come through, and can best account for the many contradictions, tensions, and discontinuities seen in social, political, and artist movements. Though not strictly collage, Ruskin's descriptive method does utilize a collage-like emphasis on multiplicity and complexity.

Relatedly, James Clifford describes a collage method as representative of a particularly effective method of ethnographic thick description. One is not faced with a singular narrative in Clifford's texts, but rather the gathering together of multiple sites, sounds, and perspectives that work divergently to round out a particular scene or image. He uses the language of collage to describe this method, for like the cut-and-paste collages seen in the visual arts or the 'cut-up' method of William Burroughs, Clifford's descriptions take pieces from many different, and sometimes seemingly incompatible, resources, combined to porously frame his sites of analysis.

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[107] Ruskin, John. 1960. *The Stones of Venice*. Cambridge: De Capo Press.

Each piece/perspective/image is crucially separate from *and* connected to every other. Returning to Rancière, who also describes collage as an anti-essentialist method, that questions ideas of culture as "stable," "organic wholes," or "unified," preferring instead an ethnography of "assemblages" and multiplicity.[108] He writes,

> If collage has been one of modern art's major techniques, the reason is that its technical forms obey a more fundamental aesthetic-political logic. Collage, in the broadest sense of the term, is the principle of a 'third' political aesthetics. Before combining paintings, newspapers, oilcloths or clock-making mechanisms, it combines the foreignness of aesthetics experience with the becoming-art of ordinary life."[109]

In other words, in analyzing cultural spaces, expressions, and events, we need not be invested in unitary explanations, but can rather "delight in cultural impurities and disturbing syncretisms."[110] Through constructing a collage of Pre-Raphaelite and punk experiences, spaces, aesthetics, art forms, histories, and more can we begin to see the nuance, complexity, and multitude of productive and destructive potentialities punks embody. What is both interesting intellectually and important politically about punk is precisely this ambiguity and the openness of potential.

An example will help to illustrate the collage method, and in order to lead us towards our case studies below, it is fitting to begin with an example of collage from punk culture. Below (figure 1) is a reproduction of Gee Vaucher's frontispiece painting for the Crass single "Nagasaki Nightmare."

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[108] Clifford, James. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 145-148.
[109] Ranciere, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. pp. 46-47.
[110] *Ibid*, p. 131.



(Figure 1)

This striking art object contributes to our discussion here by demonstrating the binary present in each separable-inseparable image. The foreground of the piece is a charred, mutilated corpse, ostensibly the victim of a nuclear attack. Based upon its size vis-a-vis the other figures depicted, this victim is most likely a young child. Their remains lay upon a field of refuse and rubble upon which the other figures stand. Collage is precisely comprised of this interplay between the assembled images, as the piece would not exist as such were it not for the contribution of each.

The jovial figures seen embracing each other, smiling in friendly gestures, provides the unique critique of juxtaposing the happy leaders of various ideological state dogmas with the horrific war effects of the background. We see Margaret Thatcher dancing with Mao Zedong, Ronald Reagan shakes the hand of Mikhail

Gorbachev (while an unrecognizable Sheik—perhaps Saudi royalty?—peers from behind them), and additional figures such as a saluting Fidel Castro. All of these figures are arranged as an informal social gathering, in stark contrast to the destruction of both the foreground and background. None of these elites care to look down at the rubble or corpse caused by the explosion, but instead look straight out at the observer. In the top left corner, the ominous mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion hangs over the entire crowd, positioned directly behind two injured women, the only (live) figures in the work that seem to be truly miserable in the face of such violence. The eerily dark, cloudy sky offers a stark contrast to the brightly lit figures.

Vaucher's paintings are so incredibly detailed, and make such painstaking use of the contrasts, arrangements, and overall aesthetic of collage that they are often taken to be photo assemblages rather than the original paintings that they are. This lends an even greater power to the text of the work, as being an original painting, the collage aesthetic is a formic choice (beyond being just a 'method') demonstrating the violence and horror that is endorsed, supported, and perpetrated by the elites represented. All of this is meant to demonstrate not only the particular critique of nuclear arms and political figures that Vaucher has made in this piece, but instead to show the ways in which collage can accomplish different ends than a straightforward narrative. I hope, in the pages that follow, to make a similar move within my prose. Constructing a collage to describe the movements examined incurs the challenge of never being firmly cemented into a singular narrative, yet this very multifaceted presentation choice allows for a heightened level of complexity to enter into to our

consideration. It is no small coincidence, then, that punk utilizes collage as not only a D.I.Y. aesthetic, but also a means for representing the impossible diversity of a so-called movement that can only congeal in its totality, never in a singular, immovable telling.

As already indicated, we shall be engaging two primary movements that shall demonstrate and complicate the main arguments I have outlined above. This overture has laid the groundwork and provided framing questions that will allow us to proceed through two thematically linked yet aesthetically distinct movements, ultimately concluding in a coda that reiterates and rearticulates these arguments in light of what the movements have taught us. The reader should be aware that my usage of musical terminology to describe the sections of this project is not meant as coy, but rather as illustrative of the thread of continuity and harmonious relationship between the movements that I hope to demonstrate. Of course, my choice of this language is also meant to indicate my own aesthetic goal within the form of this project itself. Each movement is examined in its own terms as much as possible, and hence readers may choose to turn to them individually or in conjunction, holistically or divergently, harmoniously or discordantly.

Penny Rimbaud (co-founder of Crass, poet, and philosopher discussed later, most especially in chapters 6 and 7) once asked me, "What does it matter what people are imagining? Say they're imagining the McDonald's arches rather than a novel does it really matter, as long as they're imagining something? You see, they're not imagining less, just differently." I think that he is on to something, for though I will

argue against his flattening move of presenting an inherent equality between qualitatively distinct conceptions, his point about quantity is relevant to our discussion of the culture industry (and responses to it). As we shall see in later chapters, aesthetic (i.e. politico-aesthetic) movements are largely engaged in *shifting* popular imaginations, not as is often heard in a colloquial cliché in *expanding* imagination. This emphasis on shifts and ruptures arises out of recognition of the non-quantitative component of imagination. In other words, why we shouldn't necessarily be asking how to make people imagine more, but rather look to the ways in which people have been influenced into imagining differently.

As the imagination is not a graspable, material object, it is necessary to focus on the attempts at disruption and modification, rather than addressing in a facile or simplistic way the success or failure of these attempts. In other words, conversations around expanding the imagination deceptively use quantitative language to address what can only be a qualitative change. Imagination can be shifted, and part of our task here is to look at the ways in which radical political artists (and their audiences) have attempted just such a shift. Chapter 3 therefore focuses largely on the development of a theory of political imagination, specifically connecting the imagination-as-political to issues of the aesthetic, the subject-object relationship, and elements of shock, particularly the shock of inter-temporality via radical anachronism, as they relate to subjectivities.

The First Movement is comprised of two chapters developed with a focus on William Morris. These chapters focus on the historical context of Victorian London,

Morris's influences, his early work in the exuberantly anachronistic Pre-Raphaelite group, Morris's work as a poet and artist developed alongside his work as a socialist organizer, activist, and agitator, and finally, concludes with a discussion of the radical potentialities of beauty and Morris's attention to the aesthetic object. This discussion of the radicalness of beauty will present a stark contrast to the section on punk that follows.

The Second Movement in our analysis is the late 20th century—present punk rock cultures. The scenes that comprise the punk movements are much less specific in their goals and tactics than Morris and his compatriots. Rather, what we will see is a reclaiming and reallocating of spaces, tools, and sounds to connect the experiences of exploitation in capitalism to the experience of aesthetic ugliness and shock. In our most prolonged field study, the penultimate chapter turns to the art, philosophy, lifestyle, and enduring legacy of anarcho-punk collective Crass, situating the group as an 'event.' The final chapter in the second movement focuses specifically on this ugliness, utilizing Roland Barthes's concept of the *punctum* in conversation with Jacques Rancière's distribution of the sensible, and most importantly George Bataille's dark excesses to explore punk's claims of rupture. Specifically, we shall draw out links between punk and Morris, through an exploration of attempted underground utopias, as well as the dystopian and utopian visions presented in punk aesthetics. Ultimately, we will conclude by exploring further the differences, and surprising continuities across these movements and their legacies, ultimately asking what lessons they can teach us about politics and aesthetics. All the time, however,

we must maintain a critical distance from the achievements of these movements, not only by acknowledging their contradictions and failures, but also by bearing in mind the pitfalls of Dionysian excesses and the escapism of entertainment. In other words, we should attempt to maintain the ambiguity exemplified by Žižek when he demonstrates that,

> Although functioning as a support for the totalitarian order, fantasy is then at the same time the same time the leftover of the real that enables us to "pull ourselves out," to preserve a kind of distance from the socio-symbolic network. When we become crazed in our obsession with idiotic enjoyment, even totalitarian manipulation cannot reach us.[111]

In other words, fantasy (or as we will be particularly attuned to in this study, not simply fantasy, but aesthetics in general) can simultaneously and paradoxically be both a bolster to, and a resistance to or escape from, totalitarian rule. We should not make a purely celebratory move in looking at these politico-aesthetic movements, but rather maintain the ambivalence necessary to account for both the ways in which they can be antagonists to the system of the state and capital and/or coopted by it. These movements both demonstrate the intimate connection, indeed interweaving, but also tensions, ambiguities, and harsh material realities of art and politics. We should also not flatten the differences between these movements, both in the content and the form of their aesthetics. Even in their mobilizations of anachronistic productive and consumptive methods and the consciously eclectic aesthetics they both mobilize, they have important differences. Morris primarily works in the media of the visual and logos, most often with the affective effect of suspending time. His rupture comes

[111] Žižek, Slavoj. 1991. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 128.

from the frozen visible form forcing the present to engage the seemingly unwavering past. While punk deals primarily with the sonic, affectively impacting the very temporality of time by variously providing ways in which to speed up, slow down, or halt the supposed march of linear time through its occupation of space with sound. As with many musical works, this text will end not with a conclusion, but with a *coda*. We will bring together themes from the entire project, culminating in a climax that is not an *end* to the work, but a gesture towards continuance. In other words, this project doesn't so much have a definitive end, but could continue it's cadence towards the infinite barring such an imposition of the finite as a coda provides a work of music. But the work of revolution is ongoing, and there is still much work to do.

Radical political change can occur in art as revolution, as well as in revolution as art. This change begins in the creative imagination. It is thus towards the philosophy of imagination, with a particular focus on the radically disruptive potential of anachronistic aesthetics as one affecting tactic brought to bear upon social imaginaries and individual imaginations, that we will turn in the next chapter. As McKenzie Wark has argued in his first book on the Situationist International (as well as their predecessors in the—also Parisian—Letterism), when making the determination on who to highlight in a study of a politico-aesthetic[112] movement, "the criterion for inclusion is not [necessarily] historical importance but contemporary resonance."[113] The same must be said about both movements examined in the current

[112] To clarify, this is my term, not his.

[113] Wark, McKenzie. 2015. *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*. Brooklyn: Verso, p. 4.

study. The idea is not to glorify, romanticize, reduce, or sanitize these movements, nor in any way imply that we must return to some lost, past ideal. Rather, these particular movements are explored in their very resonance with the ongoing crisis of capitalism. The crises of the labor movement and neoliberalism—countered (or at least, responded to) by Morris and punk respectively, certainly resonate in certain ways with our contemporary crises of globalized finance, speculation, and environmental degradation. In exploring these movements' successes and failures, the intent is not to suggest that they have all the answers to politics in the early 21st century. But maybe, we can learn some of these movements' lessons without having to repeat any of their shortcomings or reinvent the wheel.[114]

Ultimately, what we will conclude with is the assertion that creativity in productive and aesthetic modes *must* be temporally engaged. This is the case for all aesthetic creations, but most of all for those engaged in radical critique or action, for it is a fundamental feature of the revolutionary act under capital that it undermine in some sense the capitalistic insistence on the econometric regimentation of space and time. "A truly creative act not only restructures the field of future possibilities but also restructures the past, re-signifying the previous contingent traces as pointing toward the present."[115]

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[114] In this sense, this project is revolutionary, in the original (Greek) sense of the term, revolution as cyclical, i.e. *revolv*ing back through the kairos.

[115] Dolar, Mladen & Žižek, Slavoj. 2002. *Opera's Second Death*. New York: Routledge, pp. 103-104.

Chapter 2

Towards a Radical Use of Anachronism in Affecting Political Imagination

"Every human problem cries out to be considered on the basis of time, the ideal being that the present always serves to build the future…The future must be a construction supported by man in the present…as I consider the present something to be overtaken."
---Frantz Fanon[116]

"The war that matters is the war against the imagination—all other wars are subsumed in it."
--Diane di Prima[117]

On February 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered a speech and press conference at the United Nations in a prelude to the U.S. 2003 invasion of Iraq. The address was part plea for the support of the U.N. and part arrogant posturing that such support was in fact not necessary for the U.S. war plan to proceed. The 'evidence' presented has since been proven false, a mere pretense for imperialistic intervention in the region. The speech itself, however, was less than remarkable. What is perhaps just as telling as the text of the speech is the aesthetic organization of the assembly space prior to the press's entrance into the U.N. building.

The U.N. building has a longstanding connection to Pablo Picasso's famous (and enormous) 1937 painting *Guernica*, which depicts the horror of one of the many bombing campaigns conducted by Francisco Franco's fascist troops (with the support of their Nazi allies) during the Spanish Civil War. Picasso declared that the work was not to be returned to his native Spain until the Franco regime fell, which didn't occur

[116] Fanon, Frantz. 2008 (1952). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, pp. xvi-xvii.
[117] Dirik, Strauss, Taussig, Wilson (eds.). 2016. *To Dare Imagining: Rojava Revolution*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

until the dictator's death in 1975, two years after the artist's own passing. Prior to this time, and the establishment of the extraordinary exhibit now housing the work at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, *Guernica* was displayed in exile across Europe and the United States until its return to Spain in 1981.[118] While the original has enjoyed such a precarious and largely nomadic life, a tapestry replica of *Guernica* was displayed for several decades at the U.N. building. Officials from the Bush administration had this tapestry covered by a large blue curtain prior the U.S. arguments for war in February 2003. Though administration officials claimed it was only covered to provide a smoother backdrop for television cameras, many saw a more insidious reason behind this obstruction. Clearly, those arguing for a dubious preemptive warfare didn't want an aesthetic reminder of the horrors of destruction framing their presentation.

The Bush administration officials who made this request were not original or unique in their concern over the aesthetic background framing their declarative announcements and strategic threats. Indeed, the U.S. Army under Colin Powell's leadership during the *first* Gulf War utilized sonic warfare, utilizing many loud musical recordings (including, reportedly the Clash's "Rock the Casbah") in their Iraq operations. From the decibel level of residential areas versus commercial performance spaces, to the frequency at which emergency sirens are projected, sound is highly controlled in much of the public space in most communities within

[118] The exhibit mentioned here wasn't completed until 1992, so from 1981 until that time, *Guernica* was displayed in Madrid's Museo del Prado. For more on the fascinating history of this painting see Hensbergen, Gijs van. 2004. *Guernica: The Biography of a Painting*. New York: Bloomsbury.

contemporary societies.[119] The imagination of the populace—and therefore aesthetics as a primary way for influencing this popular imagination—have long been a concern of governing bodies and other institutions of power. As Althusser describes in his essay on ideology, "a small number of men base their domination and exploitation of the 'people' on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imagination."[120]

In previous centuries, imaginative activity was seen variously as quaint, fantastic, and even politically dangerous. Plato, for instance, famously decries artistic/representative forms, and excludes them from his Republic.[121] "Those who fear the unpredictable and unknown in every imaginative act should side with Plato, who banned art from his utopian republic as being dangerous to society. Then we will know where they stand: in an authoritarian state."[122] Most concerning for Plato seems to be the imaginative quality of a populace trained in and familiar with poetry, and so hence the poem could not be allowed to exist in the good city.[123] Though imagination and the danger it brings to governing bodies seems to be at the heart of Plato's skepticism about the social good of art, it is his student Aristotle who is widely credited with 'discovering' the human imagination in his text on the

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[119] Goodman, Steve. 2012. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
[120] Althusser, Louis. 2008 (1971). *On Ideology*. New York: Verso, p. 37.
[121] Not to mention the ban on artists in the Kallipolis. Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Brooklyn: Verso. Here, Žižek is citing Lacan, Jacques. 1998. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 112.
[122] Bohrer, Karl. 1984. *Suddenness: On the Moment of Aesthetic Appearance*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 85.
[123] Badiou, Alain. 2005. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, see also pp. 16-27, 42-43.

metaphysical properties of man, *De Anima*.

> The soul is in a way all the things that exist. For all the things that exist are objects either of perception or of thought, and knowledge is in a way the things that are known, perception in a way the things that are perceived…Imagination is also something different from assertion and negation—for it is the combination of thoughts that is true or false. What, then, distinguishes the *primary* thoughts from being images? Is it not better to say that neither they nor the others *are* images, but that they cannot occur without images…
>
> There seem, then, to be these two producers of movement, either desire or intellect, if we take the imagination as a kind of thinking. For many men follow their imaginations as against their knowledge, and in other animals, while there is neither thought nor rationality, there is imagination…And even imagination, whenever it produces movement, does not do so without desire. Thus there is really one thing that produces movement, the faculty of desire…Inability to see into the future underwrites the appearance that what is immediately pleasant both is so absolutely and is absolutely good. In form, then, that which produces movement is a single thing, the faculty of desire as such. But first of all is the object of desire, which, by being thought or imagined, produces movement while not in motion.[124]

Aristotle consistently deals with imagination in such skeptical terms as in the passage above. Images are not to be entirely trusted (a position Aristotle seems to share with his mentor's distrust of poetry, even though Aristotle writes entire treatises on poetics, he also remains skeptical of the more abstract arts, preferring the mimetic), for it blends truth and falsehood. Although mimetic art that imitates reality should not be trusted, however, does not mean it should be banned (as in Plato), but rather that it should be put to a (ostensibly 'productive') purpose. In part, this distrust is also due to the naturalizing process Aristotle applies here, finding that imagination is natural to humans, but also to animals (and hence an active imagination is no key defining

[124] Aristotle. 1986. *De Anima*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 210 & 215.

feature of humanity, in the way that he thinks logos and politics are). And so, like the beasts, people can be fooled by the "immediately pleasant" and in fact betray their own best interests in the future in favor of enjoyment in the present. Hence, knowledge should rule, and if most people are not able to cede control of their actions over to knowledge (as opposed to imagination and its offspring, desire), then they should be made to.

Never a supporter of democracy, Aristotle's model of an oligarchic meritocracy (or in his preferred term for the rule of the few, an aristocracy) depends upon those with 'lesser' souls (or those less noble, less filled with virtue than with vice), and those of the working classes especially had to be less concerned with the metaphysical and more concerned with their labor. Mimesis in the arts is largely left to the elites in Aristotle's calculation, unless of course the imitations presented by the art can be put to good purpose by the mass of workers. Workers, in other words, are not to waste their time which that which isn't *real* or connected to their real work. In the late 4th century, St. Augustine of Hippo (during the years of his attempts to reconcile Aristotelian thought with Christianity) included sections on the imagination in his *Confessions*. Specifically, he writes about the subjective experience of time and the eternal present, posing that all existence exists in the now (for the past and the future can *only* exist in the now, for the former is already over and the latter has not yet come to pass).[125] This idea became somewhat canonical in Roman Catholic thought of the time, in their calculation that Christ's 'holy days' (that is, *holidays*) are

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125 Saint Augustine. (Chadwick, trans). 2009. *Confessions*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics.

ever present (i.e. hence the ever present image of Christ on the cross, for his sacrifice continues in the present). Interestingly, for an idea like this on the simultaneity of time that existed in such Christian thought, it is also quite similar to Nietzsche's concept of the eternal echo, and is an idea even echoed by Albert Einstein in a condolence letter to the surviving wife of a recently deceased friend.[126]

In 1513, Machiavelli cautioned the Medici family (specifically Lorenzo) of the importance of appearances and perceptions of power (in addition to its material operations and effects). Among the key goals for princes wishing to maintain their rule is to be "beloved and feared" and to "not make himself hated" by the people.[127] "It is easy to persuade them of a thing, but difficult to keep them in persuasion. And so it is necessary to order things so that when they no longer believe, they can be made to believe by force."[128] Nearly the entire text of *The Prince* is comprised of advice on how to keep up appearances, to use a cliché, to give with one hand and take with another.[129] Later that same century, Montaigne ruminates "On the Power of the Imagination," by utilizing the human body as his case in point.[130] Drawing from Greek, Roman, and early Christian thought, Montaigne produces an early argument

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[126] Waugh, Alexander. 1999. *Time: Its Origin, Its Enigma, Its History*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, p. 208.
[127] Machiavelli (Ricci, trans). 1952. *The Prince*. New York: The New American Library., pp. 57 & 68. Perhaps this text should once again become widely read, not only as an examination of particular operations of power, but also particularly the chapter on "How Flatterers [of the prince] Must be Shunned" in light of neo-fascist movements centered around cults of personality.
[128] Machiavelli,, p. 50.
[129] Put another way, we could quote Tom Waits, "the large print giveth, and the small print taketh away."
[130] Montaigne, Michel de. Screech, M.A. (trans). 1987. *The Complete Essays*. New York: Penguin Classics, pp. 109-122.

for the imagination's "power" over the physical body.[131] Without using this exact language, Montaigne produces an early articulation of the now cliché notion of 'mind over matter' and the 'placebo effect', ruminating on the "close stitching of mind to body" as witnessed in patients' success given doctors' confidence, more so than their "potions," specifically as it relates to male impotence. Nearly the entire essay can be summarized with two further quotations; first, the medieval axiom Montaigne opens with, "imagination produces the event," and second, Montaigne's argument that belief is bolstered only by imaginative properties of the mind, which when mistreated allows people to "think they see what they do not see."[132] In the following centuries, medical science has caught up with this idea, producing numerous clinical studies on the physical damage caused by mental stress, e.g. damage to the cardiovascular, circulatory, nervous, muscular, immune and reproductive systems of the human body. The mentally based imaginative phenomenon of stress clearly manifests itself in physical symptomology, a fact supported by most of the scientific community and medical professionals.

The Enlightenment is similarly engaged with issues of the imagination, image, and reason, but on an entirely new scale. Again we see servants of power, such as John Locke and Edmund Burke warn governors of the power of popular imagination, and hence the reason for strict control. Even Kant—who shifted discussions of aesthetics so far as seen in the previous chapter and engaged again in more detail

[131] Specifically, Montaigne cites Augustine, Herodotus, Lucian, Lucretius, Ovid, Pliny, Plutarch, and Virgil.

[132] Montaigne, pp. 109 & 112. It is this production of the event—specifically as we will see later in our theorization of Crass as punk event—is the imaginative process that will prove to be crucial to any holistic understanding of imagination as political institution.

below—positions the imagination as something relatively autonomous from politics, preferring the public to imagine privately while obeying the monarch in society. The 19th century saw the explosion in utopian thought that William Morris was certainly a part of, and dreaming of the ideal became an immensely popular form of artistic and imaginative play—rivaling the popularity of even the dark realism of Dickens's descriptions of urban plight.

In the mid-20th century, existentialists like Husserl and his student Heidegger spend decades exploring the ontology and phenomenology of time. Contemporaneous with these, critical theorists informed by Marx also set out to discuss the imagination (and its industries). Obviously, Frankfurt School scholars Horkheimer and Adorno make their famous critique of the culture industry discussed in the previous chapter, but they were not alone. Herbert Marcuse relies on the problematic concept of authenticity to differentiate art from the simulacra-art products of the cultural industry. For him, the more explicitly political a work of art, the less disruptive it actually is, in that it is explicitly engaging the dominant organization and institutions of society rather than existing as a pure other to them. Art must hence remain "autonomous" from predominant modes of production, everyday commonplace cycles, and institutions of power in order to have "political relevance…The aesthetic form is essential to its social function. The qualities of the form negate those of the repressive society."[133] Similar to Morris, Marcuse sees a revelatory function in art, that is, a political role in the revelation of lack to oppressed people. He argues, "the

[133] Marcuse, Herbert. 1978. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Toronto: Beacon, p. 58.

autonomy of art reflects the unfreedom of individuals in the unfree society. If people were free, then art would be the form and expression of their freedom."[134] If people are not free, then likewise they will express that lack in art.

This discussion is not meant to conflate the variety of or temporal and spatial space between these thinkers, nor is it meant to flatten the vast differences in their sympathies and politics. Rather, what I mean to demonstrate is that despite the differences among these philosophers, they all seem to indicate an (either in conjunction with or in critique of) epistemic anxiety related to the political potential of imagination. Political philosophy and theories from the 'noble lie' of Plato and the distrust of music of Aristotle to the perception management of Machiavelli, the religious revelations of Augustine, Lao Tzu, and Rumi, the modern liberal myth of the 'social contract' of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau (and, in its imperialistic articulations, the connection to the imagined 'noble savage'), the sublime subjective who obeys in Burke and Kant, the skepticism of David Hume, to the ego/id/superego construction and metric for interpreting dream in Freud, construction and presentation of enemy classes throughout the history of contemporary politics as understood in the friend/foe, us/them mentality of Carl Schmitt. In the mid 20th century, existential psychologist (and prominent figure of the 1960s radical culture) R.D. Laing positions fantasy and imagination as differently understood, yet equally real, forms of human experience. Of course, the dark side of imaginative possibilities include the utopian lies, falsehoods, and pseudo-sciences of white supremacy, fascism, Stalinism, and

[134] Marcuse, p. 72.

Maoism, imagination has greatly influenced the governing bodies' ideas about ruling the 'hearts and minds' of the populations they control.

Finally, we should also acknowledge that every theocratic, spiritual, and mystical tradition in recorded history also centers on imaginative functions (be they based on faith, revelation, meditation, epiphany, or ritual practice), relying on metaphysical imagery rather than physical evidence of the 'real.' Imaginative institutions—and their primary instrument of aesthetics—are hence an indisputable part—perhaps in some instances (e.g. theocracies) the *central* part—of the ruling, governance, economics, and social interactions of the human world. Yet, the imagination as a site of politics is woefully underexplored in political theory, perhaps as the political imagination's importance is too little understood to be taken seriously by some, perhaps because these imaginative functions actually do problematize hegemonic models of rationality and agency, or perhaps because scholars of politics are all too happy to pass studies of imagination and aesthetics along to their colleagues in literature, philosophy, art, and other disciplines lumped together under the classification of 'humanities.'[135] As Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand summarize, "not much space is left for imagination understood as the radical capacity to envisage things differently and construct alternative political options."[136] As the same time they inform the public that any hope for a peaceful more equitable society is pointless imagination, these institutions of great global power haven't

[135] It is far easier to control a population who believes not only in the functioning of the state/capitalist system, but indeed thinks that they choose (and should be grateful for) their rulers—even though these 'choices' are already predetermined between a handful of candidates.

[136] Bottici, Chiara and Challand, Benoît (eds.). 2011. *The Politics of Imagination*. New York: Birkbeck Law Press.

underestimated political aesthetics, which the ongoing perpetual war in Iraq demonstrates all too well.

Yet, contemporary politics seems awash in declarative statements that paradoxically posit imagination as central to technological and financial innovation within the context of the Fukuyama paradigm of capital as the "end of history."[137] Frederic Jameson writes, "But the notion of the 'end of history' also expresses a blockage of the historical imagination…that blocks our imagination of the future."[138] So, why aesthetics? Why now? The ruling classes, imperialists, governing class, and foot soldiers of capitalism have utilized aesthetic techniques to reinforce their hegemony while simultaneously expending concerted efforts to delegitimize radical aesthetics.

Before turning to the specifics of radical anachronism, we must first unpack imagination as a site of politics. What can we imagine? What can we not imagine, or are too afraid to? What are the limitations to thinking certain thoughts in different temporal, epochal, or epistemological locations? In a variety of contemporary spaces and expressions, it is often remarked that our ideas, commitments, and actions are so

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[137] Fukuyama, Francis. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Avon Books. This idea is also central to the Huntington thesis (followed faithfully by U.S. administrations, most of all in the development of the perpetual warfare of the Bush Doctrine and the 'War on Terror') of the "clash of civilizations." Cf. Both Huntington's book-length version of this argument, as well as the earlier article in *Foreign Affairs*. Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Touchstone. Edward Said all but puts this simplistic thinking to rest intellectually (not least of which by revealing Huntington's Euro-centric thesis, but also the more fundamental problem in place billions of people into categories so vast as to render them meaningless), but politically the "clash of civilizations" paradigm of West/Civilized vs. Islam/Other remains disturbingly hegemonic. Critiquing the "clash of civilizations" thesis, as well as revealing the disastrous imperial and foreign policy implications of it is a consistent theme in Said's work, but see especially *Orientalism*, *Culture & Imperialism*, and *Covering Islam*.

[138] Jameson, *The Cultural Turn*, p. 91.

inculcated in our contemporary episteme that it is difficult (or even impossible) for us to even imagine a future that doesn't include the state or capital. Versions of this idea, in more-or-less Foucauldian articulations, have been especially present in radical anti-capitalist (i.e. Marxist and Anarchist) critiques. Frederic Jameson claims that we can imagine complete environmental apocalypse more easily than we can the end of capitalism.[139] David Graeber makes a similar argument when he describes the affect of "despair that renders any thought of changing the world seem an idle fantasy" created by the institutions of the state and capital.[140] Graeber goes even further, describing his intellectual and historical texts as central to his activist project, in an attempt to "throw open perspectives, enlarge our sense of possibilities" in order to pave the path for "new ideas" which he claims further "won't emerge without the jettisoning of much of our accustomed categories of thought."[141] In other words, Graeber presents his narrative as necessary historical background for the emergence of new and imaginative political actions. Though written decades before, Raoul Vaneigem's *Book of Pleasures* takes Graeber's argument to its furthest conclusion, arguing that human potentiality is hidden and hindered by these impediments to ideas. He writes, "nobody knows, for no-one has imagined what a being which has finally become human could develop into a society based on emancipation and the actualization of desire, on the potential every individual can fulfill."[142]

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[139] Jameson, Frederic. 1998. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. New York: Verso.
[140] Graeber, David. 2011. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. New York: Melville House Publishers, p. 382.
[141] Graeber, pp. 383-4.
[142] Vaneigem, Raoul. 1983. *The Book of Pleasures*. London: Pending Press, p. 71.

It is also important for us here to acknowledge that imaginative exercises are all too often dismissed as childish, for the very nature of imagination is itself taken to be the providence of innocents and children. Yet, such 'childish' play (and hence imaginative exercises) can also be understood as crucially important to social and individual development. James Scott, for instance, indicates the political importance of play, for both the development of children and adult seeking of alternatives.[143] Yet, playful, wishful, or not, the imagination has stark consequences for our political reality. In other words, the focus on the imagination is not to say that there is no materiality attached to imagination.

Imagination also shows up in a variety of social-scientific and historical studies as well. Most notably, Benedict Anderson's enormously influential treatment of the "imagined communities" of nations and nationalism shows the materialization and political relevance of imagination.[144] As these imaginative phenomena have material consequences in the realm of identity and nationality, so too do we find a particular attention to inter-temporality. One obvious area in which suspension of linear time is commonplace is in finance, in which speculation about the future (and whether or not it is predicted to be like the past) have million, nay *billion* dollar implications. Inter-temporal choice is a massively influential concept both among financial practitioners and economic analysts. In other realms of contemporary society, immateriality has only increased importance in the last few decades, not just

[143] Scott, James. 2012. *Two Cheers for Anarchism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 57-67.
[144] Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.

the creation of these financial products (i.e. fictitious capital), to cyber-surveillance and terrorism, to the collection and collation of big data, it seems that mechanisms of economics and state control are increasingly reliant upon virtual understandings of the real. A turn towards imagination is hence ever more relevant in politics, and it seems that imagination itself must be examined and understood as a political institution, or at the very least a focus on politicize aesthetics as an (perhaps intangible) entity of great political importance. As Adriano Bugliana argues in terms similar to Althusser (but also Fromm and Buadrillard), politics itself "is a struggle for people's imaginations" and furthers this argument by explaining that, "such a struggle occurs in the first place *within* human beings before doing so *among* them."[145] Power, that is, must first and foremost conquer (and maintain) the imagination of a populace, whether through fear, spectacle, ideology, etc.

Sublimity: Modifying Kant

"The inexplicable is its own form of freedom"[146]
--Carrie Brownstein

Several recent thinkers have modified Kantian aesthetics, but this is nothing new. Indeed, Schiller elaborates on Kantian themes seemingly before the ink is dry on the former's third *Critique*. Though clearly not endorsing shock tactics, Schiller is perhaps closer to our purposes here than Kant, for he carves out an important space for confusion. Though Kant is Schiller's great master, we find him breaking with Kant in his emphasis on the *importance* of confusion. Granted, confusion is important for Kant's conception of the divine shock of the sublime. But Schiller doesn't invest

[145] Bottici and Challand, p. 73.
[146] Brownstein, Carrie. 2015. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*. New York: Riverhead Books, p. 238.

this confusion with a straightforward spiritual experience alone, and instead argues that such confusions should be understood as being "among the most instructive chapters in the history of humanity."[147] Rancière elaborates on this Kantian theme, claiming that the concept of the sublime is not only inherently conservative, but also more importantly demonstrates limits to the imagination. He writes of the sublime that, "it simply translates the incapacity of the imagination to grasp the monument as a totality. Imagination's incapacity to present a totality to reason, analogous with its feeling of powerlessness before the wild forces of nature, takes us from the domain of aesthetics to that of morality."[148]

In *The Ticklish Subject*, Slavoj Žižek furthers a similar critique of Kant by critiquing Heidegger's engagement with "fundamentally ambiguous" Kantian conceptions of imagination, for "in his focus on transcendental imagination, Heidegger misses the key dimension of imagination: its disruptive, anti-synthetic aspect, which is another name for the abyss of freedom."[149] In other words, by engaging imagination deeply, we can view not simply as a synthetic mental process that brings divergent data and/or monads into coherent wholes, but also as a violent mechanism that can break a whole (concepts, assumptions, institutions, etc.) into its constituent parts. Like Nietzsche, but from a more fundamentally Hegelian perspective, Žižek also sees imagination as a disruptive force.

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[147] Bohrer, p. 71.
[148] Rancière, Jacques. 2009. *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 89.
[149] Žižek, Slavoj. 1999. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. New York: Verso, pp. 28 & xxv.

> Our (Hegelian) point, however, is that this mythical/impossible starting point, the presupposition of imagination, is already the product, the result, of imagination's disruptive activity. In short, the mythic, inaccessible zero-level of pure multitude not yet affected/fashioned by imagination is nothing but *pure imagination itself*, imagination at its most violent, as the activity of disrupting the continuity of the inertia of the pre-symbolic 'natural' Real.[150]

Yet, the primary site in which Žižek situates the potentiality of radical imaginative rupture is in the experience of the sublime. He argues against the Kantian grain, however, by claiming that in the experience of the sublime, it is not "the Sublime confronts us with the failure of imagination, with that which remains forever and a priori un-imaginable."[151] Instead, he writes

> In other words, it is not that, in the experience of the Sublime, imagination fails properly to schematize/temporalize the supra-sensible dimension of Reason; rather, it is that the regulative Ideas of Reason are ultimately nothing but a secondary endeavor to cover up, to sustain the abyss of the Monstrous announced in the failure of transcendental imagination.[152]

Reason and rationality are hence the imaginative failure of reconciling the abyss of freedom and the abyss of the monstrous through mechanisms of obscuration. Not only is imagination conceived here as a violent apparatus, but Reason is as well. Continuing, the rupture within the imagination caused by the sublime reveals the violence upon which control (i.e. reason) over imagination is established.

> The violence of the Sublime is twofold: it is the violence *of* imagination itself (our senses are stretched to their utmost and bombarded with images of extreme chaos), as well as the violence *done to* imagination by Reason (which compels our faculty of imagination to exert all its powers and then to fail miserably, since it is unable to comprehend Reason).[153]

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[150] Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, p. 35. Here the existence of linear time and contentment/assumption in the uniqueness of the present provides an example of the 'continuity of the inertia of the pre-symbolic real'
[151] Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, p. 71
[152] Žižek, *Ticklish Subject*, p. 43
[153] Žižek *Ticklish Subject*, p. 46

Reason, in this formulation, seems to be imagination's other, perhaps hinting at why reason's philosophical basis in liberalism is so closely aligned with that other imagination killing/limiting force, capitalism. We may also, with Marcuse, find a space for de-sublimation within the aesthetic rupture of the sensible. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse rearticulates and mobilizes a very Kantian conception of the sublime, further arguing with Kant that the experience of the sublime has shocking and consciousness-altering potentiality.

> Under the law of the aesthetic form, the given reality is necessarily *sublimated*: the immediate reality is stylized…Aesthetic sublimation makes for the affirmative, reconciling component of art, though it is at the same time a vehicle for a critical, negating function of art. The transcendence of immediate reality shatters the reified objectivity of established social relations and opens a new dimension of experience: rebirth of the rebellious subjectivity. Thus, on the basis of aesthetic sublimation, a *de-sublimation* takes place in the perception of individuals—in their feelings, judgments, thoughts; an invalidation of dominant norms, needs, and values. With all its affirmative-ideological feature, art remains a dissenting force.[154]

In other words, through aesthetic expression and representation, the perceiving subject's complacency with apparent reality is radically undermined. This is witness in many different aesthetic experiences from many different forms of sensory perception. The brushstrokes of Diego Velázquez, for instance, leads Foucault towards an analysis of representation, knowledge, sovereignty, and the episteme.[155] Sounds (e.g. most especially music, the "imageless art, which is that of Dionysos), for Nietzsche's Zarathustra is what allows us to be "outside" our selves, for "all sounds

[154] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, pp. 7-8.
[155] Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Random House, most especially pp. 3-16.

allow us to forget" that "there is no outside."[156] Finally, in fiction, complacency with material reality may be undermined in foundational changes to structures in society, either for good or ill (in other words, in utopian or dystopian imaginaries).

Utopia, Dystopia, Imagination, Imaginary

"This world is better than Utopia because…
You can never live in Utopia. Utopia is always somewhere else."
--Brad Warner[157]

"What is most human is not rationality but the uncontrolled and uncontrollable continuous surge of creative imagination in and through the flux of representations, affects, and desires."
--Cornelius Castoriadis[158]

Perhaps the greatest modern theorist of utopian thought, Ernst Bloch, once told Theodor Adorno that the purpose of utopia is to critique contemporary structures and contexts and to demonstrate what the present lacks.[159] While Bloch argues that utopia is important, not so much in providing a model of the ideal (as in some imagined future), but rather in providing a critique of the present, I argue that we can likewise understand dystopia. That is, rather than viewing dystopia as the opposite of utopia, or a nightmarish view of the future, we can instead conceptualize dystopia as a continuance of the utopian critique of the present. "Part of the concept of utopia is that it stands in opposition to reality."[160]

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[156] Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1999. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 14 & Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1995. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*. New York: The Modern Library, p. 217.
[157] Warner, Brad. 2003. *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies, and the Truth About Reality*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, p. 7.
[158] Castoriadis, Cornelius. 1997. *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 127-128.
[159] Adorno, et al. 1977. *Aesthetics and Politics*. New York: Verso. Thompson, Nato. 2012. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. New York: Creative Time Books. (Co-published by) Cambridge: MIT Press.
[160] Bohrer, p. 228.

Rancière argues, "utopia is not the elsewhere, nor the future realization of an unfulfilled dream. It is an intellectual construction which brings a place in thought into conjunction with a perceived or perceptible intuitive space."[161] This place in thought, based on perception, allows us to intuit limitations, capacities, probabilities, and potentialities, and hence expand our definitions of the possible and impossible. These imaginative perceptions then influence how we may act, either in terms of building a world we may hope for or in resisting one we fear. Ruth Levitas has convincingly shown that utopia is most useful in pursuing radical political change when it is viewed as a

> [M]ethod rather than a goal, and therefore as a process which is necessarily provisional, reflexive and dialogic. It is always suspended between the present and the future, always under revision, at the meeting point of the darkness of the lived moment and the flickering light of a better world, for the moment accessible only through an act of imagination.[162]

Utopia as method is hence not simply an imaginative method, but an *inter-temporal* one, providing a vision of the future perfect situated as a critique of the present imperfect. The tension (i.e. Levitas's "suspension" above) between present and future is not only equally present between present and past, but both of these suggest the inherent tension between things that are, and things that are not—usually as expressive of some unfulfilled desire. In fiction, this may be revealed to be a defining utopian quality, for only in fiction (in the midst of a narrative which allows us to be in the present of the author's fixed past, but also allows us to imagine a future that is

[161] Rancière, Jacques. 1995. *On the Shores of Politics*. New York: Verso, p. 15.
[162] Levitas, Ruth. 2013. *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 149.

simultaneously open to our imagination, even while it has been previously fixed during the fiction's composition).[163]

Such utopian/dystopian temporal ruptures may be most obviously present in fiction, but they also occur in utopian projects of various (including political) actions. To give a recent example, San Francisco's *Streetopia* art exhibit, collective, and later book demonstrate one way that utopian thought can be engaged in and through radical politics. Much of the inspiration for the project came from the utopian rhetoric employed by the city government of San Francisco in their justifications of their "beautifying," i.e. gentrifying, policies and initiatives. Utilizing the hygienist language of "cleaning" up downtown San Francisco, the Mayor's office was able to essentially dispossess and price out city residents under the guise of the war on drugs and the "dot com" boom. This project seems to push for a temporal break with the 'progress' so extoled by city hall. While it would be problematically flattening to describe the *Streetopia* project as an outgrowth of punk cultures, but there is an undeniable connection with DIY punk ethos at work here (as well as the material involvement of many punks). Yet, it would also be misleading to discount either the participation of punks in the project, or the fact that many of the performance and exhibition spaces utilized by *Streetopia* have been specifically punk spaces (e.g. while traveling with the exhibit, spaces employed included ABC No Rio, the long-standing punk art/free space in New York's Lower East Side). What *Streetopia* also shows is one articulation of utopian imagination that retrospectively juxtaposes the

[163] Currie, Mark. 2007. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 5.

future *will have been* to the past *once was*, all within the present. The political critique of this art-activist project hence requires us to imagine inter-temporally, in a way that usefully demonstrates the manner in which aesthetics can disrupt presentist complacency.

What can we imagine in terms of wide-ranging societal change? What can we imagine in terms of small-scale micro-level change? The answers to these two questions may superficially appear as categorically different, yet upon closer examination ask for a similar thought experiment.

> We could say that what identifies philosophy are not the rules of a discourse but the singularity of an act. It is this act that the enemies of Socrates designated as 'corrupting the youth.' And, as you know, this is the reason why Socrates was condemned to death. 'To corrupt the youth' is, after all, a very apt name to designate the philosophical act, provided that we understand the meaning of 'corruption.' To corrupt here means to teach the possibility of refusing all blind submission to established opinions. To corrupt means to give the youth certain means to change their opinion with regard to social norms, to substitute debate and rational critique for imitation and approval, and even, if the question is a matter of principle, to substitute revolt for obedience.[164]

For some, to inspire "revolt" instead of normative "obedience," requires a bit more than the mere exposure of falsehoods and platitudes to children. Granted, Socrates is surely right to 'corrupt' the youth in order to inspire questioning and skepticism, but recall that he ultimately drinks the hemlock, choosing to die in submission to societal norms and mores. So what could we do, if trying to inspire resistance to or revolt against obedient complacency if such pedagogical methods may not suffice? The simple answer is to utilize techniques of shock in order to effectively jolt folks out of

[164] Badiou, Alain. 2012. *Philosophy for Militants*. New York: Verso, p. 10.

their "blind submission" Badiou describes above. The capacity for shock and surprise is *the* essential political feature of the imagination for Castoriadis, who writes,

> At its root, the imagination is the capacity to posit an image starting simply from shock and even—here we part ways with Fichte and this is our most important point—starting from *nothing at all*: for, after all, the shock concerns our relations with "something" *already given*, whether "external" or "internal," whereas the imagination moves autonomously. Yet one must not truly be reflecting if one says that this capacity is simply the positing of an image. An image must *hold together*, it brings together "determinate" elements, presentable elements; and these elements always are found caught up in a certain organization and in certain order—otherwise, there would be no image, there would simply be chaos.[165]

The concept of shock is almost entirely thought of as representing the presentation (or representation) of the new. But, to borrow a phrase from Simon Reynolds, what can we possibly make of the "shock of the old"?[166] Shock can elicit a particular, and desired, response based on empathy. That is, the shock of encountering a sound, a sight, or a style can—for a moment—inspire an affect similar to the shock felt by iconoclastic folks at the violence and oppression of everyday existence under capitalism. Following the lead of other existentialists (like Heidegger in particular) who explore issues of temporality, Sartre also opens discussions of the imagination, which he posits as the foundational concept for any analysis of being, time, or nothingness. Sartre's existential method to the imagination begins with an exploration of the variety of terms used in metaphysics and psychology to describe consciousness, ultimately choosing a primarily phenomenological approach.

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[165] Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, p. 260.

[166] Reynolds, Simon. 2011. *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addition to Its Own Past.* New York: Faber & Faber.

> If, therefore, I form a thought about the world, it must appear to me as a Real psychic phenomenon. There is no 'potentiality' or 'possibility' that would hold here; consciousness is act and everything that exists in consciousness exists in act.[167]
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> ***
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> If words are metaphors, let someone make us understand the reality that hides itself beneath the words. But it is evident that there is *nothing* under the words, behind the images, because nothing can be there. One calls spontaneous an existence tat by itself determines itself to exist. In other terms, to exist spontaneously is to exist for itself and by itself. One reality alone thus merits the name spontaneous, and that is consciousness. Indeed, for it, to exist and to have consciousness of existing are but one.[168]

Sartre expends great effort in discussing consciousness as it relates to the image, i.e. most especially in the consciousness of *being* a consciousness. In this examination, he argues that the imagination isn't simply *derived* from "knowledge of the image," but is in fact *equivalent* to this knowledge or "cognition via image."[169] He writes further, describing the dialectical relationship between the imaginer and the image in consciousness, "it is impossible for me to form an image without knowing at the same time that I form it; and the immediate knowledge that I have of the image as such will be able to become the basis for existence judgments."[170] As Hegelian as this seems, the disappearance of the actor behind the act ties this conclusion more so to Nietzsche.

What is the status of the real in this conception? Has Sartre banished the un-real, or the unrealized, to obscurity or as epiphenomenal error? Upon first glance, this possibility seems evident, claiming boldly that "we are in a world of

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[167] Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1936 (2012). *The Imagination*. New York: Routledge, p. 34.
[168] Sartre, *The Imagination*, pp. 112-113.
[169] Sartre, *The Imagination*, pp. 9 & 11.
[170] Sartre, *The Imagination*, p. 99.

representations…the real world is not; it has to be made."[171] Yet, in later chapters of *The Imagination*, Sartre outlines the possibilities of fiction, and the relationship between the images in the real with a synthesis of said images in the imagination of the fictional thought. Hence, the figure of the centaur can be created from remembered mental images of 'man' and 'horse' synthesized into a newly imagined (and fictional) figure.[172]

Sartre writes a brief history of the problem of imagination in philosophical and psychological systems (spanning from Descartes to Husserl), most especially focusing his critique on what he labels the "contradictions of the classical conception" of the image.[173]

> We are in a world of representations. The criterion has become the agreement of representations with each other…The real world is not; it has to be made. It undergoes incessant retouching; it becomes supple; it is enriched. Such and such a group taken as objective for a long time is finally rejected; on the contrary, another such group, for a long time isolated, will be all of a sudden incorporated into the system. The problem of the discrimination of images is but one with that of the construction of the objective. Among the sensible data, the image is what cannot proceed to the objective. The image is subjectivity.[174]

Thus, Sartre outlines the perceived world's relationship to the impossibility of a "real world" absent of struggle over meaning.

> [T]he image cannot in any way be reconciled with the necessities of synthesis if it remains an inert psychic content. It can only enter into the stream of consciousness if it is itself a synthesis and not an element. There are no and there couldn't be any images *in* consciousness. But the image *is a certain type*

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[171] Sartre, *The Imagination*, p. 92.
[172] Sartre, *The Imagination*, p. 140.
[173] Sartre, *The Imagination*, pp. 77-124.
[174] Sartre, *The Imagination*, pp. 92-93.

> *of consciousness*. The image is an act and not a thing. The image is consciousness *of* something.[175]

In this excerpted passage, Sartre also tacitly endorses the (now canonical) Kantian line of the subjective. Yet, unlike Kant, Sartre does not limit subjectivity creation to the aesthetic *experience*, but rather sees subjectivity as embedded within the aesthetic object (i.e. image) itself. This subjectivity cum object that Sartre sees in the image is indebted to, though not as rigorous as Edmund Husserl's conception of the image as a relation. "Husserlian imagination works toward suspending the actual existence of a thing, detaching it from the empirical by subjecting it to free variation in an infinite set of open, ideal possibilities."[176]

Cornelius Castoriadis (engaged through out this project) is, even more than Sartre or Heidegger, perhaps the greatest social theorist of the imagination in the 20th century. He is much more clear on the political importance of imagination, especially in reflection upon past moments and movements for radical change. These moments tell us about successes, failures, and as Castoriadis argues, mostly things falling between these two possible outcomes. Past revolutions, for example, have never been wholly successful or unsuccessful, but usually contain elements of both.

> This failure [of revolutions, movements, etc.], need we recall, very rarely is total. In most cases, these movements result in the formal instituting of certain rights, freedoms, guarantees under which we still live. In other cases, nothing is formally instituted, but deep traces are left in the mental outlook and actual life of societies; such was undoubtedly the case with the 1871 Paris Commune; such is certainly the case, as I stated earlier, with the movements of the sixties. The situation is clearly linked to the antinomic character of the

[175] Sartre, *The Imagination*, p. 144.
[176] McCaffery, Steve. 2012. *The Darkness of the Present: Poetics, Anachronism, and the Anomaly.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, p. 60.

modern political imagination. This imagination is, on the one hand, under the sway of the aim of autonomy and its successive extensions into the various fields in which the social sphere is instituted; on the other hand, it seldom, if only for a brief time, manages to disengage itself from the representation of politics—and of the institution—as an exclusive domain (*fief*) of the State and from the representation of this State (which itself continues to incarnate, even in the most modern societies, the figure of a power based on divine right) as belonging only to itself. The result has been that, in modernity, politics as collective activity (and not as a specialized profession) has been able to be present so far only as spasm and paroxysm, a bout of fever, enthusiasm and rage, a reaction to the excesses of a Power that in other respects is still both inimical and inevitable, enemy and fatality; it has, in short, been able to be present only as "Revolution."[177]

I hold that human history—therefore, also, the various forms of society we have known in history—is in its essence defined by imaginary creation. In this context, "imaginary" obviously does not signify the "fictive," the "illusory," the "specular," but rather the positing of new forms. This positing is not determined but rather determining; it is an unmotivated positing that no casual, functional, or even rational explanation can account for. Each society creates its own forms. These forms in turn bring into being a world in which this society inscribes itself and gives itself a place. It is by means of them that society constitutes a system of norms, institutions in the broadest sense of the term, values, orientations, and goals (*finalites*) of collective life as well as of individual life. At their core are to be found, each time, social imaginary significations, which also are created by each society which are embodied in its institutions. God is one such social imaginary signification, but so is modern rationality, and so forth. The ultimate objective of social and historical research is the restitution and the analysis, as far as possible, of these significations for each society under study. We cannot conceive such creation as the work of one or of a few individuals who might be designated by name, but only as that of the collective-anonymous imaginary, of the instituting imaginary, to which, in this regard, we shall give the name *instituting power*…each society is immersed in a temporal dimension which itself cannot be mastered, a time-to-come that is to-be-made and to-be-done, in relation to which there are not only enormous uncertainties but also decisions that must be taken.[178]

The absolute condition for the possibility of reflectiveness is the imagination (or phantasmatization). It is because the human being is imagination (nonfunctional imagination) that it can posit as an "entity" something that is

[177]Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, p. 55.

[178]Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, pp. 84-85.

> not so: its process of thought. It is because its imagination is unbridled that it can reflect; otherwise, it would ne limited to calculating, to "reasoning." Reflectiveness presupposes that it is possible for the imagination to posit as existing that which is not.[179]

The past is important in revealing lessons to the present, not in the clichéd way of ensuring that history doesn't repeat itself, but rather in the recognition of the roads not traveled and possibilities not explored. Creativity for one is always already indebted to what precedes it, in Castoriadis's view, and the "reflectiveness" mentioned in the passage above points to the centrality of imaginative qualities that put forth ideas about "that which is not." In other words, any change in the word presupposed the *possibility* for this change, but even more deeply, this possibility for change rests first on human imagination's capacity for even *thinking* such change. It is on this level that Žižek also engages Castoriadis, in seeing with him the possibility of rupture and opening in imagination.

> [T]he abyss of imagination provides the philosophical foundation for the democratic opening—the notion of society as grounded in a collective act of historical imagination: 'A full recognition of the radical imagination is possible only if it goes hand in hand with the discovery of the other dimernsion of the radical imaginary, the social-historical imaginary, instituting society as source of ontological creation deploying itself as history.' However, Castoriadis's notion of imagination remains within the existentialist horizon of man as the being who projects his 'essence' in the act of imagination transcending all positive Being.[180]

We seem to be caught between either defining our theoretical category as an individual capacity (i.e. imagination), or as a socially produced context (i.e. imaginary). In posing the category of the imaginal, Chaira Bottici has provided one

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[179] Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, p. 159.

[180] Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p. 23.

way out of this seeming impasse, and points us towards thinking through the individual imagination and the social imaginary as mutually informed, mutually constituting entities.

There are several problems here, however, primarily in the reification that a imagination/imaginary split produces in the supposed individual/society tension. In *Imaginal Politics*, Chiara Bottici posits a genealogical finding that positions the imagination within the individual and the imaginary within the social. Summarizing this position, she writes, "the substantivized adjective *imaginary* denotes what we are *immersed* in rather than a faculty that we *possess*. If imagination is a faculty that we have as single individuals, the imaginary is what produces us as social beings."[181] Beginning with Aristotle, Kant, Marx, and Lacan, she demonstrates the ways in which each posits one or the other of these (i.e. imagination or imaginary, as understood as individual and social phenomena respectively) as the more crucial element in both establishing and instituting a societal (political, economic, moral) organization, as well in the potential for radically changing said organization. She writes,

> If one starts with 'imagination,' conceived as an individual faculty, then the problem is how to account for the at times overwhelming influence of the social context. If we begin with the concept of the 'social imaginary,' then the problem is how to reconcile it with the free imagination of individuals…In contrast to imagination and imaginary, the concept of the imaginal emphasizes the centrality of images, rather than the faculty or the context that produces

[181] Bottici, Chiara. 2014. *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 39.

> them; therefore, it does not make any assumptions about the individual or social character of such a faculty.[182]
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> Thus the Imaginary becomes a structure constitutive of our being, the context we are immersed in: far from being the autonomous subjects that are presupposed by modern theories of imagination posited as an individual faculty, the underlying idea is that we are captivated and thus constituted by the imaginary in which we live. Simply put, if imagination is an individual faculty that we possess, the imaginary is the context that possesses us.[183]

Charles Taylor agrees that the imaginary can "posses us" and claims that in modernity, the imagination is subjugated to a private realm, an "unofficial" liberated zone in which each of us can "drop out" and pursue various activities not typically assigned to our normative social roles,

> This unofficial zone has developed its own public sphere, in which the imagination is nourished, and ideas and images circulate: the spheres of art, music, literature, thought, religious life, without which our personal dropping out would be radically impoverished. This modern space for anti-structure opens up unprecedented possibilities for untrammeled creation, and at the same time hitherto unexperienced dangers of isolation and loss of meaning. Both of these come from the fact that this space is "private", its public spheres sustained by purely voluntary participation…[Yet] Carnival and Revolution can never coincide, no matter how close playful revolutionaries try to bring them. The aim of revolution is to replace the present order. It mines previous anti-structures to design a new code of freedom, community, radical fraternity.[184]

For Taylor, the goals of artistic imagination and revolution are not only separate, but indeed the former may in practice be detrimental to the latter. This poses a significant challenge to movements that seek social change in and through aesthetic change.

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[182] Bottici, Chiara. 2014. *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 5.

[183] Ibid, p. 37. Also see p. 127, "The idea that history could ever be the simple reconstruction of how things have actually happened has been abandoned for a long time. The past has always been at the service of the present…But if the past is always subject to the construction of an identity in the present, what is the difference between historical and purely mythical accounts of the past?" and p. 165.

[184] Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 52-53.

Taylor does carve out a space of importance for social imaginary, however, as he views the social imaginary as an important contextual aspect of any movement for change. Furthering the aspect of the claims made above about the present/future revolution "mining" previous structures and learning lessons from them.[185]

What are they afraid of? Imaginative Alternatives

Our turn to Nietzsche here is two fold. Firstly, Nietzsche puts creation and destruction into a mutually constituting dialectical relationship, which we will see resonating within our case studies. He describes creative destruction and destructive creativity, both of which can be read as articulations of radical political imagination. Of the many grounds on which Nietzsche critiques Immanuel Kant, perhaps the most striking (and certainly the most relevant for our purposes here) is his argument that Kant demonstrates cowardice by turning away from the abyss of freedom rather than robustly engaging it. Secondly, Nietzsche also provides important insights into conceptions related to authenticity, such as the "genuine" aspects of man and how this concept is related conceptually to power and freedom.[186] He asks, "Are you genuine? or only an actor? A representative? or that itself which is represented? Finally you are

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[185] "The new social imaginary comes essentially through a retrospective re-interpretation. The revolutionary forces were mobilized largely on the basis of the old, backward-looking legitimacy idea…The transition can only come off, in anything like the desired sense, if the "people", or at least important minorities of activists, understand and internalize the theory. But for political actors understanding a theory is being able to put it into practice in their world. They understand it through the practices which put it into effect. These practices have to make sense to them, the kind of sense which theory prescribes. But what makes sense of our practices is our social imaginary. And so what is crucial to this kind of transition is that the people (or its active segments) share a social imaginary which can fulfill this requirement, that is, which includes ways of realizing the new theory." Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 198 & 200.

[186] Nietzsche is most hopeful in the genuine expressions of humanity and humanity's self overcoming in art, a point that will be more relevant to my forthcoming second field statement on the politics of aesthetics.

no more than an imitation of an actor."[187] As morality changes from antiquity to modernity, man becomes increasingly disingenuous. Early man, or *genuine* man devolves into a race of actors, and eventually a race of imitators of actors. Not only does humanity now lack genuine expression, but it also lacks even the simulacra of genuineness. The only way out, or the only potential negation of such morality is the recognition of this "morality as a pose."[188] The falseness of this pose must be resisted and overcome for the genuine will to be expressed.

Nietzsche relates sincerity and expressions of the "genuine" to the "will to power", or that most essential aspect of man that, if properly developed, can lead to

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[187] Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1990. *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 37. Please note that I maintain Nietzsche's sexist usage of the masculine pronoun and exclusion of the feminine, both to avoid confusion and to make clear that Nietzsche is *very much* engaged in a sexist postulation (in that he clearly excludes women from these conclusions about men, and instead engages women as a distinct and separable group for analysis, i.e. there is no such thing as the *uberfrau* or "overwoman" to Nietzsche). When pronouns are not specific within the text, or the thinker engaged is not writing specifically about men alone, I deliberately use the feminine.

[188] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil* in Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. New York: The Modern Library, p. 336. See also p. 205. Ever playful with contradiction and paradox, Nietzsche does not entirely regard such acting as always necessarily a sign of weakness or falsity, as he is also concerned with the necessary role of the masks, disguises, and deceptions of strength. While he laments the lack of genuine expressions of the will to power, he is also careful to note the foolishness such genuineness can represent in the current moment. By revealing the will, one can open one's self up to harm, "How does one compromise oneself today? By being consistent….By being genuine," Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 88. See also *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 367. As Lionel Trilling has also shown, Nietzsche found the more profound a spirit the more a mask was needed. The mask, however, is not for Nietzsche a sign of insincerity or inauthenticity, but rather a tool "not for the purpose of deceit and not wholly for the purpose of mockery" but rather in establishing a "disconnection between the speaker and his interlocutor" through the "intellectual value of the ironic posture." Trilling, Lionel. 1971. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 120-1. Indeed, even self-preservation can be at stake in honest, non-ironic presentation, as Nietzsche writes, "what prudent man would write a single honest word about himself today?—he would have to be a member of the Order of Holy Foolhardiness to do so." Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 138. This is also perhaps an insight into Nietzsche's chosen writing style and humor. See also *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which Nietzsche describes the need to "successfully appear more stupid than one is—which in ordinary life is often as desirable as an umbrella," p. 418 and poses the question "does one not write books precisely to conceal what one harbors," p. 419. In addition, it is in art that Nietzsche finds hope, the expression of perfection, and the "sanctified" lie, the space in which the "*will to deception* has a good conscience." Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 153. See also pp. 100-1, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 260, 290, and 418, and *Twilight of the Idols*, pp. 82-85, and 92.

the emergence of the *ubermensch* (or "overman").[189] As Lionel Trilling elaborates, this will is contained not only in action, but also in philosophy, most especially in "systematic thinkers", a "will to power" that can be found by "look[ing] below the structure of rational formulation to…the will that is hidden underneath. What is that will up to? What does it want—really want, that is apart from the 'truth' that it says it wants."[190] We must hence look beyond what people present, or even their conscious intentions, and look to their hidden (or even unconscious) desires. Presentation may or may not hide a conscious will, for the will can be hidden from the thinker as well.

Uncovering this hidden "will to power" through an overcoming of historically contingent low morality will release the potential of man to overcome himself and become the *ubermensch*. We can rephrase; man's true potential of self-overcoming is hindered by morality's insistence on the social necessity of human inauthenticity. If man began following the authentic will to power, it seems, only then could the *ubermensch* rise.

Nietzsche argues that in following disingenuous morality, the false presentation by men to others and their misplaced valuations are both impediments to philosophical thought and the self-overcoming of humanity. He argues that the "men of today" have become so used to falsity that they could wear "no better masks" than

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[189] Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1995. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*. New York: The Modern Library, pp. 13, 27, 32-3, 59, 114, 119, 193-9, 245. *Beyond Good and Evil* in Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2000. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. New York: The Modern Library, pp. 204, 216, 234-5. Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1989. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 11, 18, 101, 109, 117, 132.

[190] Trilling, p. 156.

their "own faces."[191] Indeed, "the genuine are always rare."[192] Nietzsche attacks the modern "taming" of man as a dishonest, disingenuous, and ill-conceived scheme at "improvement."[193] This "deprived creature" that could "not discharge [instincts] outwardly *turns inward*" and through this internalization "developed…his soul…and 'bad conscience."[194] Morality, through this confining process, also serves the movement of humanity towards greater levels of insincerity. The authentic will is obscured, and free expression of the will becomes increasingly difficult.

Nietzsche argues that "freedom [is] measured…by the resistance it has overcome…One would have to seek the highest type of free man where the greatest resistance is constantly being overcome."[195] Freedom in the Nietzschean sense is greatness, the unfettered ability to assert the will to power and *overcome any resistance* that such an assertion encounters. Actions are free only insofar as are not hindered by forces that oppose them. Resistance in this sense can be defined as any act, obstacle, or confinement that the will may encounter. Freedom is linked to the "instincts" that must be expressed outwardly, or else man is doomed to create "bad conscience" through the "repression" and "incarcerated…instinct for freedom" that

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[191] Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1995. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*. New York: The Modern Library, p. 119. See also Nietzsche, pp. 36-41.
[192] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 169. He goes on to describe that even among actors there is a divide between disingenuous and genuine actors, and that all of these characterizations can describe both cognizant and unconscious disingenuous. He concludes that it is better to live among "hermits and goatherds" than among the "foul" and "gilded, false, painted mob." *Ibid*, p. 245.
[193] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 66.
[194] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 84-5. This portion of the *Genealogy* is also relevant to the discussion of Nietzsche's conception of resistance, as part of what drives man inward is the "lack of external enemies and resistances", i.e. the lack of resistance to assertions of power serves to further confine and internalize these 'natural' animalistic instincts of strength.
[195] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 104.

"vents itself only on itself."[196] Strength, known only through its acts, can either be free in this overcoming of resistance, or it can succumb to the resistance of the herd morality exemplified by liberalism.[197]

Nietzsche is wary not only of liberalism as an ideology and liberal institutions, but also of liberal individualism.[198] He critiques the feature of "popular morality" that conceives of freedom as simply being "free to express strength or not to do so."[199] Such a conception artificially splits humans, separating them from their actions. Nietzsche argues that in fact, "there is no 'being' behind the doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything."[200] Nietzsche defines one of the "great errors" of our time, the mistaking of causality, in "[believing] ourselves to be causal agents in the act of willing."[201] Authenticity comes in at the level of interpretation. Michel Foucault argues that Nietzsche finds authenticity only within the interpreter because it is the interpreter alone that recognizes "everything is already interpretation, each sign is in itself not the thing that offers itself to interpretation but an interpretation of other signs."[202] In other words, all interpretation is already mediated by language, which is itself a

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[196] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 87. See also note 21 above.
[197] This is also a key influence that Nietzsche has on Foucault engagement with power in its constant tension with, and mutual construction of, resistance (see below).
[198] Although Nietzsche does ruminate on some liberal institutions (primarily the church, but also to a significant degree the state), it is not his primary focus. Rather, his philosophical legacy is significant in the critique of liberal institutions via his critique of liberal ideology and those thinkers (e.g. Foucault) who have taken up Nietzsche in their much more explicit focus on institutions.
[199] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* p. 45.
[200] *Ibid*. Judith Butler uses this exact terminology to describe her own argument in regards to identity politics, gender, and construction of the self "in and through the other," Butler, Judith. 2006. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, p. 195.
[201] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 60.
[202] Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," contained in Faubion, James (ed.) 1994. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 2*. New York: The New Press p. 275.

semiotic system of interpretation. This, argues Foucault, is why Nietzsche discovers that the interpreter is "the authentic one" in their very recognition and "pronouncing [of] the interpretation that all truth functions to cover up."[203] Foucault thus connects Nietzsche's critique of disingenuous morality to the shortcoming of consciousness that mistakes interpretation for authentic truth. But, as Nietzsche acknowledges, such inadequacies of consciousness have material effects.

Finally, Nietzsche also gives great theoretical purchase on the specific study of time, and will hence be an interesting figure framing our discussion throughout this book of those times in which time itself seems mutable. That is, in the radical mobilization of anachronism that can—potentially—shock people out of their complacency with their own present, we can see reverberations of Nietzsche's concept of the eternal resonance (also referred to as the eternal echo). Nietzsche poses the idea of the eternal echo in multiple of his texts, posing that if the universe holds infinite possibilities—specifically if there is infinite time preceding us and infinite time following us—then everything that occurs has both occurred before and will do so again. To borrow a phrase from West-Pavlov (admittedly used in a different context), we could describe this as the "simultaneity of presents."[204]

Like Nietzsche, Marx also engages concepts linked to authenticity. In Marx's project of critiquing capitalism, this engagement is largely on the grounds of self-alienating aspects of this economic mode. He writes that concern with consciousness

[203] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," p. 276.
[204] West-Pavlov, Russell. 2013. *Temporalities*. New York: Routledge, p. 106.

has abstracted humanity away from the material.[205] Therefore, he wants to reverse the method of young Hegelian thought by creating a bottom up approach to theorization of humanity's position. His attention to "real, active men" in their "actual life processes" is ultimately a move towards grounding theory in materiality, "a matter of ascending from earth to heaven."[206] Subjectivity and consciousness are not determining factors in life, but rather the material factors of life determine subjectivity and consciousness (i.e. the "material" of "real life" determines how humanity and its position in the world are "imagined").[207] Marx does not seek human potential in the form of consciousness, but rather in the form of material existence in the world. It is in this materiality that the "real liberation of man" can be sought, for "liberation is a historical and not a mental act."[208] Resistance to capitalism, in other words, must be focused around changing humanity's material conditions and modes of production, so that what humanity *is* can also change.[209] Because of this dedication to materialism, it is surprising to find Marx also engaging concepts such as 'species being' in theory and also as an explicit political goal. We can read 'species being' as both related to authenticity and positioned by Marx as a result following successful resistance to capitalism.

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[205] Marx, Karl. and Engels, Frederick. *The German Ideology*, contained in Marx, Karl. and Engels, Frederick. 1976. *Collected Works: Vol. 5: Marx and Engels 1845-1847*. New York: International Publishers, pp. 32 & 73.
[206] *Ibid.* pp. 36-7.
[207] *Ibid.* p. 37.
[208] *Ibid.* p. 38.
[209] And this resistance can only be successful in the form of a total revolution, "by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations…not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history." Marx, *The German Ideology*, p. 54.

In Marx's early texts, the concept of 'species being' demonstrates his attachment to a concept related to authenticity, in that capital has alienated the essence of humanity, an alienation that communism will negate. Marx claims

> man is a species being…because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being…it is only because he is a species being that he is a Conscious Being, i.e. that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity.[210]

True consciousness, freedom, and free labor are the fundamental aspects for separating the uniqueness of humanity from animals, i.e. what establishes man as a 'species' being. Yet, through the process of estrangement (also referred to as alienation), this "relationship is reversed" as humans become objectified, life becomes mere existence, and people (and their *un*free activity) become mere means to existence.[211] Through the exchange of labor for wages, the worker becomes alienated from the product of labor, as "his own labour has already been alienated from him, appropriated by the capitalist, and incorporated with capital, it now, in the course of this process, constantly objectifies itself so that it becomes a product alien to him."[212] It is also possible that introducing more robust engagement with temporality can shift Marxian thought here, as yet another way in which capital alienates the worker. That is can't we view the regimentation of time itself as perhaps the *greatest* method of alienation, as the very temporality of life is dedicated to the reproduction of labor value simply to produce more time for labor (either in the short

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[210] Marx, Karl. 1988. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: Prometheus Books, pp. 75-6.
[211] Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, p. 76. See also Marx, Karl. 1976. *Capital, Vol. 1*. New York: Penguin Books, pp. 270-80 and 747-61.
[212] Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*., p. 716.

term in terms of micro-efficiency, or in the long term in terms of the maintenance cost of the working class that enables them not only to continue working but also to raise their children to take their place in the reserve army of labor)? Russell West-Pavlov, for instance, writes that modern conceptions of time (linearity, quantifiability, ubiquity—regimented into a commodification of time itself, i.e. heard in the cliché 'time is money) all operate in service of capitalism.[213] Marx describes this multi-stage process of objectification beginning with "the worker [who] puts his life into the object…the worker becomes a slave of his object."[214] West-Pavlov and others imply that as we can ask questions about the worker *putting* life into the *object*, we must also recognize the time in which this put takes place.

It is alienated labor that creates surplus value for the profit of the capitalist, labor that is further alienated in the valorization process of the commodity that further separates the wage of the worker from the value of the commodity.[215] This object in which the worker has invested her labor, confronts her as alien, "belonging to a being *other* than me" which necessitates the fact that "man's relation to himself becomes *objective* and *real* for him through his relation to the other man."[216] The worker is hence alienated not simply from the product of labor, exemplified in "the loss of his

[213] West-Pavlov, Russell. 2013. *Temporalities*. New York: Routledge, p. 5.
[214] Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, p. 72. This objectification is also seen in the worker's relation to property. Marx also discusses property in terms of this objectification of humanity, "all *objects* become for him the *objectification of himself*, become objects which confirm his individuality, become *his* objects: that is, *man himself* becomes the object." *Ibid*, pp. 107-8.
[215] i.e. In that value of exchange that exceeds the cost of production (including the cost of labor). Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*., pp. 293-306.
[216] Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, pp. 79-80.

self," the loss of human essence.[217] This historical description implies that preceding this objectification, humans existed as subjects rather than the objects they have become (or that they could become subjects again by negating their objectification). In other words, for Marx there is a preexisting self to lose, and this loss is to the object. But, as West-Pavlov points out, there is also an inherent futurity to the operation of capitalism, for capitalism is "ever reaching" towards the future for "profits" which justify the "debts incurred today."[218] As McKenzie Wark explains, "linear temporality is ruling-class; cyclical temporality is working class time" for "cyclical time is the time of needs and the struggle to meet them" but also the cycle of "waiting for the festival [i.e. read 'freedom,' 'liberation,' or the dissolving of rules and hierarchy here] to return."[219] Instead, we are always in moments of imminent becoming, as Frye describes, "We inhabit a present, which is sandwiched between a fixed past and an open future."[220]

Of course, Nietzsche is also relevant here for his theorization of eternity. Utilizing a metaphor from the sonic register, Nietzsche describes time—or the expanse of time in eternity—as an echo, that which continues reverberating into infinity. Can there be an object that, instead of de-subjugating the self, actually makes an opposite move of empowering it? This potentially emancipatory object is in our present study the product of creative activity. In returning to Nietzsche, we can also

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[217] *Ibid.* p. 74.
[218] West-Pavlov, p. 134.
[219] Wark, McKenzie. 2015. *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*. Brooklyn: Verso, p. 99.
[220] Currie, Mark. 2007. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 5.

see through various sketches in *The Will to Power* and *Untimely Meditations* that position creation and destruction into a dialectical relationship, the radical possibilities of the creative act and its subsequent art object, and the central problematic of present/past temporal relations. Time is flexible for Nietzsche, for in our retroactive gaze we can only recognize permanence and aspects of the structure of time. In doing so we come to the paradoxical conclusion that,

> The past and the present are one, that is to say, with all their diversity identical in all that is typical and, as the omnipresence of imperishable types, a motionless structure of a value that cannot alter and a significance that is always the same.[221]

Additionally, the "constellation of heavenly bodies" is so vast that our limited grasp of time allows for another dis-settling conclusion that everything recurs in eternity.[222] This is because of the vastness of space and time that, in an universe that is ever expanding, it is only logical to conclude that all possible have occurred or will occur. If we recognize the expanse of time as infinite behind us and in front of us, Nietzsche suggests, then whatever we do is happening simultaneously in the now and in the past and future. Of course, it is likely that Nietzsche is being metaphorical here, and rather than suggesting some astrological truth is merely suggesting a model informing human behavior. That is, the echo in eternity of our actions can serve to *guide* these actions, opening up the space for dissent within a state quo (i.e. an easy out if one's actions clash with the dominant morality of one's times). Can the eternal echo, and it's gesture toward cyclical time provide a useful tool in undermining capital's

[221] Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1997. *Untimely Meditations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 66.
[222] *Ibid*, p. 70.

ceaseless, linear march 'forward' But what of an object that is not produced through exploitation?

The experience of inter-temporality in aesthetics can serve not only to break complacency with a present status quo, but also the arrogance that the status quo is *superior* (either in morality, politics, art) to the past.[223] The complacency (or smugness) of the present is also part of the broader phenomenon of substituting what is popular for what is correct, as Nietzsche rights, "the naïve belief that all the popular views of precisely their own age are the right and just views," most especially that "usual" view "that our present highly disagreeable reality is the only one in any way possible."[224] Undoing this assumption, and demonstrating that new or different worlds are in fact possible, is an early step towards pursuing that different world. Following Nietzsche, we will be turning to art for an arena in which this undoing is actively pursued. One needn't accept Nietzsche's eternal echo in order to analyze these politico-aesthetic movements' use of radical anachronism, however, but merely recognize the importance of thinking through and beyond linear temporality.

Nietzsche writes that "without music, life would be a mistake," but Bataille goes even further in suggesting that art is precisely what defines humanity as such. That is, humanity is differentiated from animality not simply in the Hegelian aspect of the transformation of the physical world through its labor, but specifically in the transformative process of representation.

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[223] *Ibid*, p. 83
[224] *Ibid*, pp. 90 & 118.

> The earliest prehistoric art surely marks the passage from animal to man. In all probability, however, when figurative art was born, man had been around for a long time. But not in a form characterized by the kind of tumult that we experience as human beings, feeling similar to one another yet district. With the name *Homo faber*, the anthropologists designate the man of the Middle Paleolithic age; not yet holding himself erect, he was also quite far from our myriad possibilities, of which he only shared the art of tool making. *Homo sapiens* alone are like us, at once in appearance, cranial capacity, and, beyond their concern for immediate usefulness, the ability to create not just tools but objects in which sensibility flourishes.[225]

Related to Bataille's point on artistic representation, Castoriadis posits imagination writ large as the defining human condition,

> Man's distinguishing trait is not logic but imagination and, more precisely, unbridled imagination, defunctionalized imagination. As radical imagination of the singular psyche and as social instituting imaginary, this imagination provides the conditions for reflective thought to be able to exist, therefore also for a science and even a psychoanalysis to be able to exist.[226]

Nietzsche seems to agree in the imaginative power of humans (perhaps as an aspect of the *will*), yet this imagination hasn't yet moved beyond the dominant morality based on *ressentiment*, nor is it yet capable of a robust engagement with the past. The imaginative connections between past and present reveal such a limitation is at least partially responsible for complacency and acceptance of the present as a 'good' or agreeable status quo. This complacency is a product of our misunderstandings of the

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[225] Bataille, Georges. 2009. *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture*. New York: Zone Books, p. 58.

[226] Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, p. 247. Northrop Frye also agrees, writing, "Many animals and insects have this social form too, but man knows that he has it: he can compare what he does with what he can imagine being done. So we begin to see where the imagination belongs in the scheme of human affairs. It's the power of constructing possible models of human experience. In the world of the imagination, anything goes that's imaginatively possible, but nothing really happens. If it did happen, it would move out of the world of imagination into the world of action… Art, on the other hand, begins with the world we construct, not with the world we see. It starts with the imagination, and then works toward ordinary experience…An imaginative attitude, a vision or model of the world as you could imagine it and would like it to be." Cf. Frye, Northrop. 1964. *The Educated Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 22, 23, 37.

past, hence the need for a genealogical method (with particular attention to ruptures and discontinuity) that attempts to understand the past in it's own terms. However, to fully understand the past in the present may in fact be an impossible task. We can make the effort, but are doomed to only partial understanding, for "you can only do so [interpret the past] only out of the fullest exertion of the vigour of the present…when the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it."[227] In ancient Greece, oracles were only interpreted by priests specially trained in understanding, translating, and imagining meaning within the oracle's abstract declarations. For Nietzsche, the priests of modernity that can create meaning from the oracle of the past are artists.

Affecting Imagination & The Political Potential of Anachronism

"Progress? There's no such thing as progress. There's only change.
You dig a hole in the ground, you build up a city, you fight a war, and you call it progress?"
--Charles Manson[228]

"We are the imagination of ourselves."
--Bill Hicks[229]

"Sometimes, to go forwards, one has to go back."
--McKenzie Wark[230]

"History is all one…and the pattern is *reiteration* rather than progress."
--Norman O. Brown[231]

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[227] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p. 94.
[228] Manson, Charles 1967 interview. Manson, Charles. 2003 (reissue) *Charles Manson Sings*. ESP. CD. The Manson Family. 1992. *The Manson Family Sings the Songs of Charles Manson*. Cassette/CD. Self Released.
[229] Hicks, Bill. 1997. *Rant in E Minor*. Ryko Disc. CD.
[230] Wark, McKenzie. 2015. *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*. Brooklyn: Verso, p. 1.

"I don't want your progress, it tries to kill me."
--Flux of Pink Indians[232]

Different from Sartre and Bottici, I do not work with a definition of imagination that is derived entirely from conceptions of and relationships to the image. I don't deny the etymological basis of image in imagination, yet I want to push beyond the rationalistic imaging (i.e. elaborated in Sartre's argument in syncretic form) to the less rational, even absurdist possibilities of imagined fictions and futures. Instead, I define imagination as an assemblage of projections, which may include the visual but also auditory, relational, and tactile, usually based on hopes or fears. These assemblages affect individuals (whom I define neither as autonomous atoms nor as mindless automatons, neither fully agentic nor non-agentic) and socio-political contexts, spaces, and institutions.

My attempt is to position imagination as a primary site of political contestation, for the imaginative futures are the site of projected institutional change, continuance, or destruction. In other words, alongside materialist critiques of our contemporary politics and economics, we must recognize the connection between maintenance of the status quo and the ways in which people imagine possibilities for either change or stagnation. This also means that imagination is necessarily conditioned, limited, and framed by societal structures (including economies) in which it occurs.

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[231] Brown, Norman O. 2009. *The Challenge of Islam: Lectures*. Santa Cruz: New Pacific Press, p. 22.
[232] Flux of Pink Indians. 1997. *Not So Brave*. Overground Records. CD.

> An economy organized in terms of profit deface the landscape—which in turn impoverishes the imagination: "Where the land has been defaced," writes Reclus, "where all poetry has disappeared from the countryside, the imagination is extinguished, the mind becomes impoverished, and routine and servility seize the soul, inclining it toward torpor and death."[233]

There is hence, contemporaneous with and parallel to Morris, a political argument focused around the connection between un-freedom in art and society. Similarly, and in specific reference to the culture industry and capitalistic exploitation, Marcuse makes a similar claim, posing that "The autonomy of art reflects the unfreedom of individuals in unfree society. If people were free, then art would be the form and expression of their freedom."[234] Marcuse, however, doesn't go quite as far as either Morris or Reclus though. His claim is that a lack of freedom in society is necessarily *reflected* in art, not necessarily that art is also not free. In other words, there is a space in Marcuse for the imaginative genius to reflect a freedom within their aesthetic production that far exceeds the freedom of the social order in which that genius may act. "No matter how much experience we may gather in life, we can never in life get the dimension of experience that the imagination gives us. Only the arts and sciences can do that, and of these, only literature gives us the whole sweep and range of human imagination as it sees itself."[235]

> When you stop to think about it, you soon realize that our imagination is what our whole social life is really based on. We have feelings, but they affect only us and those immediately around us; and feelings can't be directly conveyed by words at all. We have intelligence and a capacity for reasoning, but in

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[233] Ross, Kristin. 2015. *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*. London: Verso, p. 140.
[234] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p. 72.
[235] Frye, Northtrop. 1964. *The Educated Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 101.

> ordinary life we almost never get a chance to use the intellect by itself. In practically everything we do it's the combination of emotion and intellect we call imagination that goes to work.[236]

Part of my postulation is that it makes little sense to discuss imagination in terms of closure and expansion, for imagination is an unquantifiable, immeasurable, and immaterial force. Instead, radical politics should be engaged in *shifting* the popular, political imaginative, redefining what participants, sympathizers, and observers of various movements conceptualize (and *can* conceptualize) as possible. This isn't about making the imagination broader or larger (as I already stated that this is immeasurable), but rather *changing* the imagination by changing our political relationship to imagination itself. More precisely, what the movements of this project should reveal are ways in which (a) the imagination is brought explicitly into politics and (b) how aesthetics in particular provide a unique avenue for such imaginative political engagement. As William Morris's own definition of art shows, there is something within art that holds the potential to fundamentally shift consciousness through affecting imagination. He lectures, "what I mean by art is some creation of man which appeals to his emotions and his intellect by means of his senses. All the greater arts appeal directly to that intricate combination of intuitive perceptions, feelings, experience, and memory which is called *imagination*."[237]

Also important here are the intersections and tensions between individuals and cultures/societies, for aesthetics often defy easy categorization of the diversity of who an audience is, whom is imagining and in what ways, and where these experiences

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[236] Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, p. 135.
[237] Morris, *Collected Works, Vol. 22*, p. 235 emphasis added.

and phenomena occur. Yet, what the quote above from Communard Elisée Reclus demonstrates well are the ways in which capitalism (most especially of the scorch-the-earth variety) precludes many imaginative possibilities. In other words, to dig into the politics of the imagination, we may not follow a strictly ideational-philosophical nor materialist conception, but must be attuned to the many ways in which the two mutually inform, mutually constitute, and mutually produce within their interactions and tensions.

In light of the ultra-right movements occurring throughout much of the world (materialized especially in the U.K. Brexit and U.S. Donald Trump campaigns), anachronism can seem a particularly strange concept to examine, analyze, and even mobilize in struggles for radical social change. Neo-fascist politicians have been trafficking heavily in nostalgic language for years, in ways quite clearly linked to and reminiscent of early 20th century European fascist populism of restoring past glories and strength. This is not the context for a deep analysis and critique of Trump's 'Make America Great Again' sloganeering, but it is worth noting the electoral success that such nostalgic dog-whistling has had in 2016. A central part of the context enabling said allusions to past glories are insistence among many 'left' politicians (not just the U.S. Democratic party, but also many liberal-left parties through Europe as well, e.g. Labour in the U.K.) to couch the entirety of their sales pitch in the rhetoric of progress and futurity. The 'traditions' and 'heritage' of many groups and demographics are not appealed to as much as a vague sense that, if only we were patient enough, things will be better in the future than they were in the past.

Has the left too quickly ceded a monopoly on the meanings on the past to conservative and fascist demagogues? Yet, this hesitancy on the left to engage the past as part of their tactic of theatrically gesturing towards a 'progressive' future may in fact indicate a surprising way in which the concept of anachronism may be differently understood in a way that precludes the supposed conservative monopoly on the potentiality of the past. One important distinction here is that we are decidedly *not* discussing a simplistic or childlike nostalgia, described by West-Pavlov as "an imagined past before some sort of fall," or Svetlana Boym describes as a "romance with one's own fantasy" primarily within a "utopian dimension" of a romantic past.[238] Yet, Boym goes on to describe what nostalgia may indeed share with radical anachronism, which is its "rebellion against the modern idea of time, history, and progress…refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition."[239]

Karl Bohrer writes, in the context of art, of "parting ways with the concept of progression and still not perceive stagnation as endless, changeless repetition" for the very idea of such "progression" can indeed lead to stagnated repetition of aesthetic norms, traditions, and values. In other words, the faith-like belief in societies' constant and consistent progressive march can in fact be a form of conservative rigidity. In fact, to even be able to "conceptualize the new," Bohrer insists in attachment to the "suddenness" of the new's appearance, requiring (at least a

[238] West-Pavlov, p. 110. Boym, Svetlana. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, p. Xiii.
[239] Boym, p. xv.

momentary) "disregard [for] the *course of time* that is a necessary part of our consciousness."[240] The suddenness of the hitherto unthinkable is what he derives as the kernel of Nietzsche's discussion of the aesthetic experience in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which we will be engaging throughout this text. But in terms of politics in the 21st century, such insistence both beckons those seeking change to reinvent the wheel (rather than present past roads not traveled), and represents linear time, the *kronos*, as a truism effectively rendering all other models of time (e.g. such as a more cyclical *kairos*) marginalized, if not fully and automatically rejected.[241]

A further wrinkle is the ungraspable ontological status of the present, for the present is always a moment of becoming, a transitory moment leading inevitably into an imminent past. As R.D. Laing asks, "Can we describe the present in terms of its becoming what it is not yet?"[242] My writing of these words is your past, but my present. Your reading of these words is the future to my present as I compose them. The *time* in which I write this phrase is such a moment of such a present becoming, as Laing writes in the quote above, for it connects this present (your past) to your present (my future) in mutually informed, cyclical fashion. Your reading will also soon be past, installed (hopefully) as a memory of something you once read and considered. The emergence of the new is hence already dated from the very moment

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[240] Bohrer, p. 120.

[241] Kronos, it may be of some significance, is the not only the Greek conception of progressing time, but is named after the Titan of the same name who was famously defeated and banished by his son Zeus, after devouring some of his own children, whom he feared would overthrow him (a myth recorded most famously by Hesiod). Greeks also had a festival in his name and honor in which "all moral restrictions were lifted" and festive excess and indulgence ensued. Waugh, Alexander. 1999. *Time: Its Origin, Its Enigma, Its History*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, p. 85. See also, West-Pavlov, Russell. *Temporalities*. New York: Routledge, p. 101.

[242] Laing, R.D. 1967. *The Politics of Experience*. New York: Random House, p. 13.

of its emergence—which becomes past at the moment of recognition or classificationas 'new.' Steve McCaffery elaborates on this paradox of the new in terms that are helpful in our definition of radical anachronism, as well as harkening forward to the 'newness' so celebrated in the fundamentally anachronistic punk cultures, for instance. McCaffery writes that we should critically question

> This intimate connection of originality and autonomy by calling up the necessary insistence of the unacknowledged precedent and the already belated 'new.' The new is always a milieu of multiplicities where echo sometimes meets a magnet that pulls heterogenesis to the past propels the past forward.[243]

Such a break from linear time and 'progress' can also problematize the idea of the past as some sort of trap—or that which predetermines possibilities and entraps our imaginative capacity. This understanding of the past as trap is witnessed, for instance, in Fredric Jameson's idea that innovation (at least in the representational world of the arts) is over.

> In a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past.[244]

But is anachronism a true break from linear time? Rohy argues that anachronism, unfortunately, is more complex than that, "Anachronism is not merely the necessary other of straight time; it is always inside normative temporality."[245] Yet, anachronism

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[243] McCaffery, Steve. 2012. *The Darkness of the Present: Poetics, Anachronism, and the Anomaly.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, p. 2.
[244] Jameson, Frederic. 1998. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. New York: Verso, p. 7.
[245] Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others*, p. xv.

can also be utilized as a shock strategy, for it runs the risk of (or indeed, deliberately elicits) misunderstanding, lack of comprehension, and/or confusion.[246]

Such a presentist position is adopted by ideologues, primarily on the liberal and neo-liberal left/center in U.S. and European politics in which the kernel of the present holds some fundamental truth, essence, or achievement that not only makes it superior to past epochs but also contains the seeds to some future glory. Past glory from the right, future glory from the left, yet all within the context of an overwhelming political attachment to the *now*, and the sense of urgency this inspires. This *now-ness* is hence always either perceived or presented as (or most likely both) either too late (past glory) or too early (future glory), and utilized to justify any number of political horrors based upon that lateness or earliness.

Such a presentist position can also be politically dangerous in its reification of the inaccurate, yet widely held, belief that capitalism is inevitable, necessary, and permanent (or even more erroneously, that capitalism is not historically contingent but has instead been the natural order of things throughout history). Relatedly is the excuse for complacent inaction operating under the guise of 'that's just how it is,' rather than a genuine search for alternative modes of production, exchange, organization, or at an even more basic level, any non-capitalist ontology. A dis-settling of the progressive liberal understanding of history is hence necessary in developing strategies of resistance and struggle against capital, the state, and their complicity with (or outright support for) neo-fascism.

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[246] West-Pavlov, p. 72.

During the initial outbreak of political fascism in Europe, Walter Benjamin describes the material reasons for skepticism towards liberalism's progressive framework.

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.[247]

Writing about the inter-temporal gaze of William Blake's *Angel of History*, Benjamin positions the past as central to any imaginaries of both present and future, "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again…For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."[248] Agamben elaborates on Benjamin's point,

> Benjamin ties the figure of the angel precisely to an idea of happiness, which he states in the following terms: 'He wants happiness: the conflict in which lies the ecstasy of the unique, new, as yet unlived with that bliss of the 'once more,' the having again, the lived… Historical redemption appears as inseparable from the capacity to hear the past from its context, destroying it, in order to return it, transfigured, to its origin.[249]

The "Angel of History" that Benjamin so famously describes, faces the past, and through the "storm" called "progress," is swept into a future by surprise. This

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[247] Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History" contained in 2007. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections.* New York: Schocken Books, p. 257.
[248] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," p. 255.
[249] Agamben, Giorgio. 2009. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 138 & 152.

"progress," as an idea is problematic in making the mistake outlined above. The horrors of fascism are not framed as an exception, but within the range of normality that even opponents of fascism can grow complacent with. The concession that fascism is "still" possible "even now" is, in Benjamin's analysis, part and parcel of a "present" that is always conceptualized as being in linear transition towards some sort of more utopian future.[250] This critique is directed at historical materialists, for the horrors of the present can become acceptable to such "progressives" if thought of merely as the "eggs" that need to be broken in order to create the future's omelet. Of course, the related point of how much "better" things, or could be (even if the means employed are militaristic and economic forms of tyranny, whatever the claims for "human rights" used to justify such action may be), are *after evil* is also only possible given a linear, homogenous understanding of progressive time.[251]

But beyond the extremes of complacency with fascism and war, working class movements by in large have been damaged by a similar investment in linear, progressive time. Benjamin writes, for instance, that the ultimate "corruption" of the "German working class" has been their investment in the idea that "it was moving with the current."[252] For example, the notion that "technological progress constitutes a political achievement" leads to the erroneous assumption that the capitalist class will *use* this technological advancement to the benefit of *labor* rather than a method of combating diminishing returns. As we will see in both Morris and punk, critiques

[250] This is the exact rhetoric deployed by many leftists following the election of Donald Trump.
[251] Meister, Robert. 2011. *After Evil: A politics of Human Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press.
[252] Benjamin, p. 258.

of mechanization often revolve around demonstrating the falsity of this assumption. As Morris argues, mechanization hasn't reduced labor time for the working class, though perhaps it could. But in order for such technological advances to *actually* positively affect the class struggle, a political achievement must accompany it.

Avery Gordon argues that Benjamin's angel provides a model for sociological haunting, or that element of the past that creeps into the present. In other words, the 'angel of history' can in fact provide clues into possible forms of inter-temporal rupture.

> Fighting for this past appears to be a paradoxical gesture, but it is Benjamin's way of figuring the historical materialist's relationship to what seems dead, but is nonetheless alive, operating in the present, even if obliquely, even if barely visible. Upon recognition, the oppressed past or the ghostly will shock into recognizing its animating force. Indeed, to fight for an oppressed past is to make this past come alive as the lever for the work of the present.[253]

Yet, despite the fact that the angel of history may force us to look into the abyss of fascist horrors, a similar gaze can affect inordinately more hopeful imaginaries as well. Norman O. Brown also reflects on the angelic figure of history, writing of the subjective (quasi-Kantian) aesthetic experience of epiphany. Here, epiphany becomes the central form imagination takes, in the ability to visualize (or we could add in the case of music, hear) what is not, and in doing so we participate in creation itself. Brown also writes of the problematic assumptions of linear time, by claiming that such a conception of 'progress' or even the most basic division of history into 'epochs' is a trap that we needn't let our thinking fall into,

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[253] Gordon, Avery F. 2008. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 66.

> Conventional chronological scheme Ancient—Medieval—Modern is I think a snare and a delusion, confusing our search for where we are and what is to be done. It is an invention…This view of history is, to be a little more philosophically precise, a teleological structure…That is to say, determined by the end to be arrived at…And I read all of modern literature, and all of modern art, as a *protest* against any such assumption."[254]

Brown positions art as protest against historical pretension (and the limitations upon the imagination progressive, linear models of time impose). So what does it mean to insist on a present defined by affixation on a linear timeline?

> Epiphany is visionary reality, direct unmediated vision, like beauty an aesthetic phenomenon…It is in the eye of the beholder…Or as the poet/prophet Blake said, "We become what we behold." It is radically subjective. Epiphany is radically subjective, and yet not *purely* subjective. What is perceived is what the poet [Wallace Stevens] called "the necessary angel," each one his own angel…perceive with your imagination that which you cannot perceive with your eyes. We *participate* in the epiphany. It is a work of the creative imagination…Creative imagination, not only in art, also in love.[255]

Epiphany may be a tall order for all those whose political demands require a "break with the cult of genealogies and narratives means restoring the past as the amplitude of the present…History does not exist. There are only two disparate presents whose radiance is measured by their power to unfold a past worthy of them…To live is therefore also, always, to experience in the past the eternal amplitude of a present."[256] If we can't necessarily create (intentionally at least) moments of epiphany, have we lost the ability to rupture the continual movement of linear time under our current understanding of temporality? In reality, lived experience demonstrates that we often suspend linear time, though perhaps without conceptualizing this suspension in these

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[254] Brown, *The Challenge of Islam*, pp. 6-7.
[255] Brown, *The Challenge of Islam*, pp. 98-99.
[256] Badiou, *Logic of Worlds*, pp. 509-510.

precise terms. Jameson summarizes Bohrer's theorization of aesthetics beyond time as, "Karl-Heinz Bohrer…argues for an existence of aesthetic experience outside historical time."[257] Bohrer identifies two primary examples of the ways in which we often receive surprises jolting us out of our perceived present. The first of these is through memory. Though relying upon the fictional examples within Proust, what Bohrer demonstrates is the cognitive process of recalling memory is indeed a *new* experience, distinct from the experience of the occurrence being remembered. "It is the highest experience of the self," he writes, "whereby the 'new' is experience as the old."[258] Our most introspective moments of memory can therefore cause new sensations to emerge. In other words, sadness, laughter, fear, regret, or any of the hundreds of other emotional experiences can result from recall—most often according to Bohrer in pleasurable experiences.

The other example Bohrer gives of the aesthetic suddenness through which we often experience "ruptures in the temporal flow" is within fiction itself.[259] Such temporal flexibility and rupture is as old as the novel, as Bohrer cites Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as his example. Such framed narratives, consisting of a frame story set in a different present than the narrated one. Stories within stories necessitate a temporal leap in the imaginations of readers of such novels, and we can easily extend this necessity to audiences of any number of other aesthetic forms.

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[257] Jameson, *The Cultural Turn*, p. 113.
[258] Bohrer, p. 215.
[259] Bohrer, p. 230.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx declares that all events in history occur twice, "first as tragedy and the second as farce."[260] I amend Marx's conclusion here in two ways. This first, and more straightforward way I change Marx's formulation is to suggest that despite the apparent truism in the common refrain of history repeating itself, it can't truly unless we are willing to move in the direction of a Nietzschean eternal resonance (or some other meta-physical or quantum explanation of expanding universes). In other words, if we take Marx's materialism seriously, then we can recognize a tension within the impossibility of historical repetition, for however similar events may appear, they are always already distinct (perhaps hinted at by the differentiation between tragedy and farce). It is precisely Louis Bonaparte's *differences* with Napoleon that inspires Marx to re-examine his classifications of struggle and introduce the new category of the lumpen-proletariat (not to mention his definition of the latter Bonaparte as farcical and his uncle as tragic). So, it seems that Marx may be merely sarcastic when he declares historical repetition, or he is making an argument essentially reversing Hegel's dialectical progress by presenting France as an example of degeneration.

Secondly, by refusing to stop at two, I mobilize a more cyclical concept of time in which historical events are not limited to the twin occurrences of tragedy and farce, but through a radical reimagining of anachronistic productive, consumptive, and aesthetic processes, said events can re-enter our politics as a radical inter-temporal rupture. Therefore, the specific type of political imagination we will be

[260] Agamben, Giorgio. 2009. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 130.

unpacking has to do with the inter-temporality and disruptive affect of anachronism. Time, and hence it's related concept of history, must be conceived as radically subjective, for obviously there are vastly different conceptions and interpretations of this idea. Castoriadis goes even further, claiming (in Levinasian fashion) that time is fundamentally *other* to the human, an idea that then informs the related categories of the new. He writes,

> We cannot reach the kernel of the question of time—be it subjective, objective, or overarching time—unless we start from the idea of the emergence of Otherness, that is, from alteration (*alloiosis*) as creation/destruction of forms, considered as a fundamental determination of being as such, that is, in itself. This forces us to distinguish strictly between difference and otherness. Thirty-four is different from 43, a circle and an ellipse are different. The *Iliad* and *The Castle* are not different—they are other…The emergence of the other is the only way to give a more than verbal meaning to the idea of newness, or the new as such. The new is not the unforeseeable, unpredictable, nor the undetermined. Something can be unpredictable (for example, the next number in a roulette) and still be the trivial repetition of a form; or be undetermined, and again, a sheer repetition of a given form (for example, quantum phenomena). Something is new when it is the position of a form neither producible nor deducible from other forms. Something being new means, therefore: something is the position of new determinations, or new laws…Creation entails only that the determinations over what there is are never closed in a manner forbidding the emergence of other determinations."[261]

As we will see in our studies of two politico-artistic movements, the deliberate utilization of anachronism represents and invasion of the past upon the present in an effort to radical disrupt the audience's (i.e. either a self-selected audience or the entire public who becomes the intended or unintended audience of a given action) sense of comfort, security, and certainty in the status quo of what they perceive to be their present. While contemporary aesthetic theory is often willing to acknowledge the

[261] Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, p. 393.

artistic merit in the repurposing and reallocating of tools, materials, and techniques in composition, this is typically done with the deliberate exclusion of anachronism. But this is only the case in radical anachronism of past paths *not* taken, for the anachronistic usage of formal techniques that conforms to traditional standards is often celebrated. Indeed, the lingering influence of Kant and Schiller all too often instills a formalist approach to the analysis of art, in which the key arguments revolve around the subjective nature of aesthetic judgment, adherence to the hegemonic distribution of the sensible, and an investment in the social necessity of art for the education of subjects about their aesthetic pasts in order to better situate them within their present.

Radical political and philosophical excitement often arise around the creation of the new, as the examples of Dada, Surrealism, Situationism, and the increasing move towards the inclusion of identity politics within a multi-culturalist framework for the arts. Each of these examples is described as an avant-garde, for they are rightly conceived as major breaks from traditionalism. Badiou argues, "the avant-gardes only think of art in the present and want to force the recognition of this present."[262] The anachronistic use of a particular productive process, aesthetic, perspective, or style appears at first glance to be fundamentally at odds with the goals and methods of an avant-garde. Yet, what if anachronism itself can be a method of an avant-garde? The avant-garde can be read as "creating social worlds," i.e. the "creation of context" for existential experimentation, newness in the social form, or

[262] Badiou, Alain. 2007. *The Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 134.

new possibilities for everyday life.[263] Must such a context-creating move of avant-garde aesthetics always already be assigned the role of introduction of the new? What if the status quo and complacency of a contemporary present (in our case, the hegemony of state-sponsored financial capitalism) can be disrupted by the *old* just as well, or perhaps even more effectively, than it could be disrupted by the new?

Different from the paradigm established by Kant and Schiller, I argue that aesthetics is uniquely situated to radically disrupt the perceived uniqueness of our contemporary time (i.e. this conception of time is related to Judeo-messianic political theology typically exemplified by rhetoric of apocalypse or salvation) by utilizing anachronism as a stylistic tactic to radically undermine complacency and comfort within the present. The artistic repetition of the past in the present can potentially alter the position of present politics through claims about the future (and the present events that are almost past).

The trace of the fleeting event, as well as the reverberations of the past, may be seen as demonstrable in the politico-aesthetic works of Morris and punk rock, in their eclectics, temporal/nostalgic play, and the emancipatory potential of deliberately anachronistic (and non-exploitative) production methods of 'do-it-yourself.' In other words, by introducing a moment, and ultimately a materialization, of inter-temporality, an aesthetic of deliberately political anachronism can bring into question underlying assumptions of our present epoch, radically troubling the liberal notion of

[263] McCaffery, p. 93.

consensus that is all too often built upon an exclusionary and elitist edifice.[264] Rather than accepting what Badiou calls the "a-temporality" of the current epoch (which he correctly identifies as demonstrating the—perhaps politically based—construction of time), anachronism can force a re-temporalization, or a radically different temporalization of productive processes.[265] The introduction of dissensus through this inter-temporality therefore allows for the voices, perspectives, and dialogic participation of hitherto marginalized, oppressed, and/or coopted populations. Such radical dissensus can also lay the theoretical groundwork for an expanded notion of political recognition and democratic participation.

Central to the concept of anachronism is the recognition that something is awry, that there is something out of time or place. Of course, this recognition is contingent upon the historical sensibilities of modernity. As Benedict Anderson as demonstrated, the "homogenous, empty time" postulated by Walter Benjamin as a defining feature of modern notions of time, history, narrative and manner through which events reveal themselves to us in the contemporary moment.[266] There is also a radical kernel within the reallocation of anachronism, that in utilizing the thing-out-of-time, the inter-temporal rupture lends significant weight to the claim that the present is not only not impenetrable, but is indeed a construction of presentist socio-

[264] Bergson goes even further, suggesting that time can in fact materialize, presenting a more spatial conception of time by arguing, "[T]ime is not a line along which one can pass again. Certainly, once is has elapsed, we are justified is picturing successive moments as external to one another and in thus thinking of a line traversing space; but it must then be understood that this line does not symbolize the time which is passing but the time which has passed." Bergson, Henri. 2001 Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness. Mineola: Dover, p. 182.
[265] Badiou, *The Century*, p. 105.
[266] Anderson, *Imagined Communities* & Benjamin, "Theses on Philosophy of History"

political forces benefiting from the liberal progress narrative (and the linear definition of time that upholds it). Indeed, an inter-temporal rupture opens up the assumptions of the present, not least including that present forms of social, economic, and aesthetic organization comprise a sustainable—or even the *only* sustainable—regime.

In other words, the introduction of inter-temporality can throw into sharp relief that the present can be a site of struggle, for "if we merely wait for the 'appropriate moment' we will never live to see it" for successful change can only occur after a series of "premature, failed attempts."[267]

Linear time has been roundly explored in philosophy, often with the resulting conclusion that such a conception is just that; a conception, based simply on illusion and shared experience. For instance, Žižek discusses the problematic of linear time and inevitability in narrative structure.

> The experience of a linear 'organic' flow of events is an illusion (albeit a necessary one) that masks the fact that it is the ending that *retroactively* confers the consistency of an organic whole on the preceding events. What is masked is the radical contingency of the enchainment of narration, the fact that, at every point, things might have turned out otherwise. But if this illusion is a result of the very linearity of the narration, how can the radical contingency of the enchainment of events be made visible? The answer is, paradoxically: by proceeding in a reverse way, by presenting the events backward, from the end to the beginning. Far from being just a hypothetical solution, this procedure has been put into practice several times.[268]

What Žižek writes here in regards to narrative structure can be deepened and applied to linearity writ large, for linearity and narrative are not only mutually constituting,

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[267] Žižek, *Sublime Object*, p. 62
[268] Žižek, Slavoj. 1992. *Looking Awry*, p. 69.

but are also the two mechanisms by which the hegemonic notion of linear time is produced and reified.

Beyond these investigations, other disciplines (most notably Anthropology), have also offered alternative conceptions of time, human experience of time, and the manner in which colonial histories have shaped the linear conception we are now so used to. Valerie Rohy, for instance, has convincingly argued the connections between investment in linear time and the racist placing of 'others' from 'primitive' contexts and subject positions further back on the timeline than the 'advanced' civilization. Yet, though this interpretation of linear time may significantly undermine ideologies that are dependent upon it, it doesn't do much to disrupt mass investment in it. As Rohy writes, "If calendar time is a fantasy, it is a persistent, public one, whose inclusion or exclusion of particular subjects has profound cultural consequences."[269] Linear time, like the linked concept of the present, must be undermined through some other mechanism than the presentation of alternate conceptions of time as anthropology and philosophy typically offer. One such mechanism that can disrupt the public faith, complacency, and investment in both the present and the linearity that it depends on is the radical move of anachronistic aesthetics.

To again return to Žižek, his unpacking of Schelling is useful in demonstrating the accomplishment of the latter in overcoming the presentist impulse of Kant.

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[269] Rohy, Valeria. 2009. *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality*. Albany: SUNY Press, p. 24.

> Schematism forges of temporal experience into a homogenous linear succession in which past and future are subordinated to the present (which retains the past and announces the future): what transcendental schematism prevents us from thinking is precisely the paradox of *creation ex nihilo*. In schematized time, nothing really *new* can emerge—everything is always-already there, and merely deploys its inherent potential.[270]

> The great achievement of Schelling's notion of Past, Present and Future as the three 'ages' of the Absolute was to break the constraints of the Kantian temporal schematism, with its predominance of the Present: what Schelling makes thematic, in the guise of the abyss of the Real, are the contours of a Past that was never present, since it is past from the very beginning of time; complementary to it is the notion of a Future that will always remain 'to come', not just a deficient mode of the Present.[271]

It is in this sense that anachronism is central to Utopian thought, for as we shall see in the chapters below, Utopianism is keenly focused on postulating what *ought* to be vis-à-vis what currently *is*. Travelers to various utopias are therefore discombobulated when observing the alternate social organizations they encounter, and they themselves become a sort of embodied anachronism. How, then, could anachronism have the political potential to inspire or mobilize action geared towards racial change? Badiou argues that the only important artistic productions, indeed the only *true* art, rest upon the experience of inter-temporality,

> Lacan correctly perceived that the experience of the real is always in part the experience of horror…[yet] We are still immersed in the obsession with the real…To counter all this there is only the flute of art. Without doubt this is the principle of courage that underlies any cognitive enterprise: to be of one's time, though in an unprecedented manner of not being in one's time. In Nietzsche's terms, to have the courage to be untimely. Every true poem is an 'untimely observation.'[272]

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[270] Žižek, Ticklish Subject, p. 47. See also Žižek, *Sublime Object*, pp. 157-158.
[271] Žižek, Ticklish Subject, p. 47, nt. 41.
[272] Badiou, *The Century*, pp. 20-21.

The "untimely" aspect to art is the only register that artistic expression has that can be both shocking and productive. This is not to suggest that anachronism entirely unpacks for us the relationship between all politics and all aesthetics, but rather to give a theory of a particularized way in which radical art has attempted to affect politics. We should also maintain an ambiguity about the salience of anachronism, disallowing ourselves to become invested in anachronism as an object of faith, but rather recognize its limitations as a tactic and as an aesthetic choice. To this end, we must ask initially what the specific problems with anachronism are, which as I have indicated includes an attention to the particular actors, groups, intentions, and manners in which anachronism is deployed.

There are two central paradoxes contained within the postulation of anachronism as radical. The first has to do with the intrusion of the old or outdated, i.e. the very parameters of an aesthetic of anachronism. How can anachronism be utilized as an instrument of rupture rather than a strategy of conservatism? Another way of posing this is to ask in what ways can radicals seek to use anachronism without succumbing to the pitfalls of retro consumerism or nostalgic romanticism. Žižek has begun to unpack this paradox of the past's relationship to the present in a non-linear, rupturing instance. Our answer must be to look specifically to *radical* uses of anachronism, rather than being limited by the typically conservative articulations it is usually ascribed. In other words, the danger in a misreading would be that the argument is merely celebratory towards all uses of anachronistic aesthetics. This is not so, for radical anachronism is distinct from the related concepts of the ahistorical

or the outdated. For example, the Trump administration's insistence on the perpetuation and prioritization of carbon-based sources of energy is hopelessly outdated in its ignoring of overwhelming scientific evidence in the damage coal and oil do to the planet and its climate. One could indeed claim that the administration is putting its faith in anachronistic technologies and resources. There is nothing in this insistence but a commitment to the continuance of capitalism and defiance of the considerations of shareholders rather than community stakeholders. Radical anachronism this is not. Instead, what we can view as a radical articulation of anachronism in this same example would be an investment in divesting from energy draining and wasteful productive processes for more sustainable (though perhaps less technologically advanced or efficient) modes of production.

Intertwined with this first problem is the second central paradox, that is, how an aesthetic of anachronism can produce the new through evocation and utilization of the old. In her most recent discussion of the Paris Commune, Kristen Ross characterizes the political valence and productivity of the Commune as arising from its technique of "importation," more specifically the importation of non-capitalistic elements from the pre-capitalist past into the present. Such importation, she argues, creates "a mode of being intensely in the present made possible by mobilizing figures and phrases from the past—first and foremost the *commune* itself…a powerful mix of pre-capitalist and pre- or extra-national desires."[273] In other words, what Ross is

[273] Ross, *Communal Luxury*, p. 29.

demonstrating is the radical emergence of a new material reality based on the mobilization of past mechanisms.

To be clear, this is not an argumentative claim that radical usages or rethinking of anachronism are the only, the primary, or even the preferable mode of resistant or revolutionary thought and action. This text is more of an explication of how anachronism has been reworked in surprising ways, in order to demonstrate flexible potentialities in the intersecting political and aesthetic spheres. Such inter-temporal rupture as can be witnessed in particular uses of anachronism as positioning of political imagination as a site of contestation, becoming, and/or reification. The conservative possibilities of anachronism (or political imagining more broadly) cannot therefore be ignored nor glossed over, even if these are not the hopeful directions that constitute the focus of this study. Nor is this meant to suggest that anachronism is the end of the story. Indeed, the opposite must be true, for it is not enough to radically shock and discomfort subjects of their present through the presentation of objects of the past. Instead, what we shall see in the following chapters, is that anachronism is an important, though limited tactic for *initial* rupture of the present, but not for the prescribed political program we may or may not wish to see in the future.

In order to support this claim and unpack its political implications, I shall therefore pose specific questions to the specific aesthetics utilized and the politics evoked by these particular movements, resisting the urge to make generalized claims that can do little but flatten the complexities and nuances of the particularities of

spatial and temporal locations. In both the case of William Morris's Arts & Crafts Movement and punk rock cultures, the aesthetic other they are attempting to counter is realist modernism. The radical potentialities of anachronism are also revealed in the subtleties of these aesthetic movements, rather than the all too obvious anachronistic play of reenactments (e.g. Renaissance Fairs, Battlefield Reenactments, Steam-Punk).

Alain Badiou claims that the 20th century is a century defined by a prevalence of the real, to the detriment of the imaginative and the creative. Counter to this claim, I position the imaginative/imaginary/imagination as the site of politics precisely for the fact that it is devalued by the institutions of state and capital, yet continues to emerge in important ways. Even the most "real" confrontations of contemporary politics often rely upon imaginative qualities, either in the planning, execution, and representation, or even in their use as a strategy of propaganda of the deed. For example, in the U.S. context of the last half-century, there has hardly been a more striking protest movement (coupled with practical and communal activity) than the Black Panther Party's armed self-defense and political organizing. Even so, Huey P. Newton describes their patrols not just in the practical sense of providing protection for the people, but also in terms of "testing ideas that would capture the imagination of the community."[274]

Both of the politico-aesthetic movements discussed in the chapters that follow do just that, test ideas to affect the radical imagination. Our task is to be open to the

[274] Newton, Huey P. 2002. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. Oakland: Seven Stories Press, p. 53.

potentiality of each, without succumbing to the temptation to romanticize this potentiality by disregarding the concrete actualization of these movements. Productions, material and imaginal, of both Morris's handicraft and Crass's punk hold important lessons for those seeking not only a more equitable society sometime in the abstract future, but also those seeking zones of autonomy or escape from the logic and exploitation of capital in their presents. Again, Žižek is helpful, echoing the radical contingency within history (most especially when a Nietzschean genealogical approach is taken), for "our understanding of actual history always implies a (hidden or not) reference to alternate history—what "really happened" is perceived against the background of what *might have* happened, and this alternative possibility is offered as the path we should follow today."[275]

The point here is that such uses of radical anachronism can reveal the inter-temporal nature of revolution—or, that is, the situating of revolutionary change in various articulations of continuity with the past, breaks within the present, and imaginaries of the future. Just as Norman O. Brown writes, "a new masterpiece rearranges our library, rearranges the way we have to see previous literature," I claim that a reclaimed and radically mobilized anachronistic productive process and aesthetic rearranges our understandings not only of the past, but also of the present.[276] That present, however, as we've learned from Heidegger is also illusionary, for it is always in the position of eminent memory. As Mark Currie argues, all philosophers

[275] Žižek, Slavoj. 2011. *Living in the End Times*, New York: Verso, p. 88.
[276] Brown, *The Challenge of Islam*, p. 49.

who have ruminated on time can attest to a straightforward, if troubling conclusion that

> The present doesn't exist, and yet it is the only thing which exists. The past has been, and so is not, and the future is to be, and so is not yet. That only leaves the present. But as long as the present has duration, any duration at all, it can be divided into the bits of it that have been, and so are not, and the bits of it that are to be, and so are not yet, so that the very duration of its existence consigns it to non-existence.[277]

What is present, what is past, what is future are clearly already on shaky definitional terms, so is it such a stretch to imagine possibilities for rupture in these categories of time? Nietzsche's genealogical method already provides us with the tools to look for, identify, and examine ruptures within history. Perhaps our examples of Morris's Handicraft-Socialist movement of the 19th, and punk rock cultures of the 20th/21st centuries can offer clues into how to similar introduce such temporal ruptures into the present. What inter-temporal rupture may also help us come to terms with is that revolutionary struggle need not always gaze into some abstract, romanticized future end point when all social ills will be resolved. Rather, through a cyclical sense of time as suggested by radical anachronism, perhaps we can begin to recognize that radical struggle is ongoing, and the vigilance required is endless.

"The capacity to envisage new images of the world seems to be threatened by the saturation of our political imagination…[as a] consequence of a change in both the *quantity* and the *quality* of the images produced in the global epoch."[278]
--Chiara Bottici

"Understand that time is running out on bullshit change."
--The Last Prophets[279]

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[277] Currie, p. 8.
[278] Ibid, p. 111.
[279] The Last Poets. 1970. *The Last Poets*. Douglas Records. LP.


THE ANARCHISTS
OF CHICAGO
H THE BOURGEOISIE
LAW AND AUTHORITY.
MOTHER EARTH
Vol. IX. August 1914 No. 6
AAoVEMENT
THE LABOUR QUESTION
SOCIALIST STANDPOINT
SOCIALIST CATECHISM,
APPEAL TO TRADE UNIONS
TO-DAY
Mrs. Parsons
WIFE OF THE
Condemned Anarchist
WILL DELIVER A
FREE LECTURE
AT
KUMP'S HALL,
Das Kapital
SOCIALISM

"Never again let labour be enforced,
let no man exploit another;
this cry is ours.

To live free and single like a tree
and in fraternity like a forest;
this longing is ours."

--Nâzim Hikmet[280]

"Art has for a long time not only acknowledged the ugly, but considered the ugly as necessary to its existence, and takes it up into itself; it needs a villain."

--Max Stirner[281]

[280] "Galloping Full-Tilt from Furthest Asia"
[281] *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 96.

Chapter 3

Truth & Beauty: The Radicalism of Handicraft

"All art is quite useless."[282]
--Oscar Wilde

An aspect of capitalism that is all too rarely unpacked is the fantasy that rules over our material reality. That is, the very phantasmatic, theoretical basis of capitalism which drives the opposite to develop in reality; the surplus, the fetish quality of the commodity, the accursed share. Those on the "left" in much of the world are left justifying their positions in largely theoretical terms—whereas the conservative capitalists and their apologists are allowed to claim the title of reasonable, rational, and *realpolitik*, often without debate, or as an a priori assumption framing the terms of political debate. Nearly anyone who has organized, demonstrated, spoken, taught, or even just written anything that sounds even vaguely sympathetic to Marx, socialism, anarchism, cooperation, communalism, or equity in the world is routinely (and again without much question), dismissed as utopian, blissfully ignorant of history's lessons on what "really" happens in human nature under such systems, and that collectivist, non-capitalist economic modes are only "good in theory, not in practice." But isn't this dismissal equally applicable to, or indeed perhaps even *more* applicable to capitalism than its more cooperative, counter-cultural, equitable, and/or underground counterparts? In other words, it is capitalism that only works well in theory, for it is certainly a decided failure everywhere it has been put into practice.

[282] Wilde, Oscar. 2013. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. San Diego: Canterbury Classics.

Social commentary, arguably dating to Plato's *Republic* and likely before in ancient religion, myth, and other oral traditions, has often been focused around either a utopian or dystopian view of a future world in which the inherent contradictions of society have been resolved, either for good or for ill. The seems to be a human aesthetic need to produce an image of society upon which we can project our anxieties, in order to imagine how much better or worse we could have it in the future. In other words, for as long as we have recorded history, there has been an almost foundational, radical desire to imagine the real as different than it exists materially. Especially since Aristotle's "discovery" (or one could more like more accurately say "recording" or "documenting") of the imagination in *De Anima*, in Buddhist enlightenment/awakening, the promise of an eternal paradise or damnation, Hegel's phenomenology, the sublime of the Enlightenment individuals, Lacan's *objet petit a*, humans of vastly different backgrounds, cultures, traditions, and locations have engaged in this type of collective imagining. This could be an evolutionary trait, something that we developed as societies became more and more complex, thinking up and thinking through issues related to institutions which can best serve these human collectivities, to membership of a society, a given (restrictive or accepting) set of norms and mores, to the overall smooth functioning of social interactions and relationships.

Disagreements of course ensue, but the intellectual exercise of imagining the future has largely dwelled—at least in the contexts of both aesthetics and politics—on the twin possibilities we can, following what Frederic Jameson and Peter Paik have

each labeled "apocalypse or utopia."[283] But what if, as many critics of capitalism point out, the most horrifying possibility, is to simply continue more of the same, to see neither utopia or apocalypse stemming from a decisive event (say, nuclear war, a solar flare, an unstoppable ultra-virus), but continue instead the very real apocalyptic practices and possibilities of the current corporatist system. All of this is to say that perhaps the most problematic and stifling imaginary future economic and socio-political realities that exists is the simple continuance of the current capitalist system. Be they the contradictions and possibilities for disaster directly inherent to the wealth inequality, exploitation, colonialism, poisoning pollution, financial speculation, genetic engineering, and global climate change of capitalism, these threats are already materialized, and in a way demonstrate the dystopian aspects of our present 21st century society. Yet, in our complacency and/or silent acceptance of these doom machines, we seem to have forfeited our taste for utopian dreaming in favor of (in our politics as much as in our entertainment) for visions of disaster, catastrophe, and even global extinction.[284] Rather than viewing such horrors as inescapable dooming us to the "bare life" of living on borrowed time, imagining utopian scenarios defined by

[283] Jameson, Fredric. 2005. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. New York: Verso. Paik, Peter Y. 2010. From Utopia to Apocalypse: Science Fiction and the Politics of Catastrophe. Twin Cities: University of Minneapolis Press.

[284] Frederic Jameson famously made (an often repeated) claim that it is easier for us to imagine the end of the entire earth before the end of global capital. In many cases, this indeed seems to be the case, especially in the contemporary U.S., where more media and political focus is on combatting imaginary 'threats'—and framing extra-terrestrial life, sentient all-powerful A.I., the undead returning to life as more believable than building a new society based on cooperation, equity, empathy. Do we really believe that fascism is more likely than freedom, and if so, what does this say about our society and what we collectively accept?

cooperation and "mutual aid" in equitable and peaceful societies is necessarily a radical act.[285]

The title to this chapter, "Truth and Beauty," consciously evokes the Romantic cliché on the value of beautiful aesthetics. William Morris, along with many of his contemporaries, has a complex relationship with romanticism and modernism, as he is guided by both formalist artistic concerns *and* politically mobilized artistic content. Typically, formalist aesthetes regard artistic form (and the perfection of this) as the sole goal of art. Such formalistic aesthetics are (sometimes consciously) tautological, stating art's only goal is to be perfected so that it may be admired as great art (i.e. *l'art pour l'art*). One is left with a seemingly inescapable binary, that one must either be dedicated to art as an end unto itself or one must be dedicated to art mobilized as a means toward some other end. Can art only be one or the other, either a means or an end, or can it be both, neither, or otherwise? How then could one ever be a formalist dedicated to aesthetic perfection and also be a political radical engaged in social revolutionary art?

William Morris can demonstrate one possible route towards this latter paradoxical position. Morris conceives of beautiful art as a mechanism for alleviating the suffering of arduous labor in unjust economic modes, as well as a tool for rousing discontent among the working classes by demonstrating what they do not (but could potentially) have. In other words, Morris is as concerned with aesthetic perfection as

[285] For "bare life" see Agamben, Giorgio. 1995. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. For "Mutual Aid," see Kroptokin, Peter. 2008. (1902). Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution. Forgotten Books.

high modernists such as Édouard Manet in paint and Gustave Flaubert in print while simultaneously giving equal attention to the effects of art in transforming the lives of the working classes.[286] This can lead to conceptual unpacking of debates around modern formalism and radical art, perhaps providing a bridge between these two apparently irreconcilable ideas on the purpose, goal, and life of the art object.

In many ways, 19th century figure William Morris may appear as an unlikely recruit to the Socialist Movement in England.[287] He spent the first half of his life engaged in writing poetry, designing furniture, décor, and tapestry, and producing religious art all for the luxurious consumption of the upper and ruling classes. Born into the upper-middle class, Morris did not necessarily seek great financial gain, yet found it through broad recognition and celebration of his literary and artistic talents. E.P. Thompson argues that Morris grew increasingly uncomfortable with this success, and it was his successes (not his failures or hardships, of which there were few) that pushed him into revolutionary politics, a conclusion that can be verified through Morris's later journals and lectures.[288] May Morris, William's daughter, writes of her father at the end of the 1870s as having a "brain full at one and the same time of many and diverse problems—all those far-reaching speculations about art and life, as

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[286] I should be careful to indicate here that I am not attempting to conflate Morris's contributions with these other artists, for each of them had unique approaches, aesthetics, and contributions. I am hoping, rather, to demonstrate the obsession with aesthetic perfection that Morris shared with them. This does not mean that they produced similar works, or even that they viewed aesthetic perfection in the same ways. For instance, in attempting this common goal, Flaubert strove to write about nothing while perfecting aesthetic beauty; Morris sought to perfect aesthetic beauty by writing about the base of everything.

[287] Morris's conversion to socialism was so surprising to many, Gary Zabel has even referred to this event as a "difficult blow for members of the English middle class." See his introductory essay "The Radical Aesthetics of William Morris" contained in Morris, William and Zabel, Gary (ed.) 1993. *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*. Boston: George's Hill, p. 7.

[288] Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 248.

well as the immediate call of certain aspects of the political tangle" and that it was ultimately his lecturing on art that emboldened Morris to seek out the connections between art and life "that formed the foundation of his work for Socialism."[289] Morris ultimately deprioritized these profitable ventures for the financial benefit of his own wallet and the aesthetic benefit of his own class in order to take up the cause of the workers.[290] He became completely dedicated to "daily and hourly resistance to our tyrant," (that is, capitalism) and he worked ceaselessly until the end of his life to spreading socialist ideas.[291]

William Morris is not only a remarkable novelist and artist, but also a sophisticated political thinker whose primary goals of "education, agitation, and organization" saw him dedicate his life to active political struggle, and I argue that his aesthetic skill is largely transferred into his political action.[292] Many biographers have presented Morris's politicization as a separate venture (or even a departure from) his artistic activity.[293] Others have argued that Morris viewed "the key to socialism lay in the rebirth of art. Like Kropotkin, he saw art as part of a wider theory of history, but one which pointed to the possibility of creating a new morality which

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[289] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 51. See also, Thompson, Paul. 1993. *The Work of William Morris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 205-234.

[290] See Morris's explanation of his conversion and attempt to sidestep his own class privilege in "How I Became a Socialist" contained in Morris, William. 1966. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXIII*. New York: Russell & Russell, p. 278.

[291] Morris, William and Lemire, Eugene (ed.). 1962. *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 52.

[292] Morris, William. "Art and the People: A Socialist's Protest Against Capitalist Brutality; Address to the Working Classes," contained in Morris, William and Zabel, Gary (ed.) 1993. *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*. Boston: George's Hill, p. 62.

[293] MacCarthy, Fiona. 1995. *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Arnold Knopf. Mackail, J.W. 1899. *The Life of William Morris*. London: Longmans, Green, & Co.

would function with a public conscience."[294] I will argue more in line with this latter vein, that Morris's works in art and politics are inseparable.

Many thinkers and authors lead banal, ordinary, or even obscure lives. For instance, even the most famous of writers, such as Socrates and Shakespeare, we know very little by way of their personal biography, and so we can't make conclusive claims about the overlap between their lives and their legacies. Other writers, such as Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, have led to vast debates about whether there is a significant connection between their thought and their lives (and life choices/political allegiances). William Morris, however, is not one of these figures, and in fact his thought and art are driven primarily by his personal experiences and observations. He joined the Socialist Movement in England and became a close associate and interlocutor of celebrated activists and political thinkers of the time like Friedrich Engels, Peter Kropotkin, and George Bernard Shaw. Morris could be seen selling Socialist periodicals (many of which he personally financed), giving public lectures and rallies for the workers' movement, settling disputes between anarchist and socialist factions within the broader movement, fundraising for the Socialist League, and even occasionally under arrest or embroiled in street battles with police. Yet, in all of these political activities, Morris was never too busy or too detached from his earlier loves to abandon his artistic productions. Indeed, nowhere in Morris's writings or letters can one find a single statement defining political struggle and artistic production as separable, but instead numerous calls for artists to "rebel against

[294] Kinna, Ruth. "Morris, Anti-Statism, and Anarchy," *William Morris: Centenary Essays*. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (ed). 1999. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, p. 221.

the tyranny compounded of utilitarianism and dilettantism" which has suffocated aesthetics since the development of capitalism.[295] Instead, what we find is a re-dedication of Morris to aesthetic production informed by the working class politics he was participating in, as well as political projects informed by his particularly trained aesthetic eye.

Towards this multifaceted end, Morris's primary concern is often the art of the everyday, i.e. a focus on all crafts made by "man's [and woman's] hand" which may be called low art or culture, which Morris labels "decorative" or "popular" art as opposed to the elitist concerns of high art, which he labels "intellectual art."[296] Morris argues that every material good made by humans throughout their long history bears the ornamentation of the former type of art. Due to this fact, his fear is that the mechanization brought about by capitalism not only increases the material suffering of working classes, it further dehumanizes them by depriving them their experiences of beauty and constricting their imaginations. For Morris, machinery precludes the production of the beautiful, as the beautiful is necessarily a product of nature (i.e. either directly, as in Kant's sublime, or as channeled by human production). Only handicraft—those crafts directly produced through direct human labor—can produce art, and only nature and art "touches the imagination through the eye" and hence can

[295] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 421.
[296] Morris, William. "Art Under Plutocracy," "Art and the People," "Art, Wealth, and Riches" contained in Morris, William and Zabel, Gary (ed.) 1993. *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*. Boston: George's Hill, pp. 19-100. "The Lesser Arts" and "Useful Work versus Useless Toil" contained in Morton, A.L. (ed.) 1984. *Political Writings of William Morris*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 31-56 & 86-108.

"awaken that divine discontent which is the mother of improvement in mankind," inspiring the imaginative workings toward the future perfect.[297]

In directing his attention to the art of the pre-capitalist past, Morris concerns himself with the possibility of rupture in the present through the presentation of the past's representations; that is, a representation of the past's simultaneous past-ness and presence. He writes, "sometimes, indeed, this link with the past is so beautiful and majestic in itself that it compels us when we come across it to forget for a few moments the life of today with which we are so familiar."[298] Out of these concerns grew the Arts & Handicraft movement that Morris headed, a group of socially engaged artists and artisans who rejected exploitative labor relations, and instead focused on the ornamental, most especially in hand-made furniture, tapestry, and printing used to enhance life.[299]

In order for art to thrive, Morris argues that capitalism must be overcome, for art is most simply defined by Morris as "all work done with pleasure and worthy of praise" in that it expresses—or even more radically, directly creates—"the human pleasure of life" that is denied under exploitative and oppressive working/living conditions.[300] The emphasis on efficiency, quantity over quality, mechanization, and (exploitative) work merely for the sake of bare life rather than truly living, capitalism

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[297] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 427 & 424.
[298] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 375.
[299] Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Oakland: PM Press.
[300] Morris, William and Lemire, Eugene (ed.). 1962. *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 94 & 116. Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 457.

is largely incompatible with beauty. Even if beauty can be occasionally attained in the current epoch, Morris is not convinced that this would represent any type of victory in the political struggle. Morris's friend and comrade J.W. MacKail states this conclusion of Morris's that

> Art, being a function of life, sound art was impossible except where life was organized under sound conditions: that the tendency of what is called civilization, ever since the industrial revolution, and more obviously in its continual progress had been to dehumanize life, and that the only hope for the future was if that were yet possible, to reconstitute society on a new basis. Many other practical men, many other students and artists have believed this. Morris proceeded to act on the belief.[301]

The re-humanization of life becomes the focus of Morris's politico-aesthetic movement. The future reconstitution of society is therefore not the extent of Morris's political imagination, however, for he was also invested in the reconstitution of his present. Morris repeatedly calls for the overturning of his contemporary social structure, eliminating the exploitative labor and the human suffering that is necessarily created by capitalism. For him, only in such a setting as will follow the demise of capital will artistic beauty truly be able to thrive. Or in Morris's own words, "what's the use of building a people's palace in Hell, or putting a mosaic picture on the walls of the Devil's scullery?"[302]

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[301] MacKail, J.W. 1901. "William Morris: An Address Delivered the XIth November MDCCCC at Kelmscott House Hammersmith Before the Hammersmith Socialist Society." The Terrace Hammersmith: The Doves Press, No. 1, p. 6. Accessed in British Library Rare Books collection. Emphasis added.

[302] "The Reward of Labour: A Dialogue by William Morris, Author of "The Earthly Paradise." Being Number 1 of the Hammersmith Socialist Library," contained in *William Morris Pamphlets*, British Library Rare Books Collection, 502.fll (33), p. 6. See also Morris, William and Lemire, Eugene (ed.). 1962. *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 114 & 218.

Beauty is important, but the liberation of the working classes is exceedingly more important, and hence beauty should only be seen as an avenue towards this liberation, rather than a straightforward end unto itself. As these two relate, Morris lectures that the choice among his contemporaries for the future is between "art and dirt," and this choice is ultimately derived from economic organization.[303] Importantly, however, Morris demonstrates that aesthetic choices do not have to be put off until the liberated future, but are instead important towards the disruption of normative labor relations, progress narratives that rely on a simplistic understanding of the linear march of history, and complacency in the present summarized through the now common cliché of "that's just how things are." This utilization of anachronistic aesthetics, he writes, will help to retrace what we have lost, and once again be the possessors not only of freedom (as an "art of the people, the art of cooperation"), but also of "the wild imagination" which can only be freed once the "fear of poverty" which "destroys imagination and intelligence" is no longer an economic concern (after the successful resolution of class struggle and the elimination of class as such).[304]

Further, he even argues that art is not only the better choice (ethically and politically), but also the cheaper economic choice in the long run, for through the dissolving of the exploitation and ugliness of capitalism, discontent (and the violence

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[303] Morris, William. *The Manchester Guardian.* 21 October 1882. Reproduced as *Mr. William Morris on Art Matters*. 1961. London: The William Morris Society, pp. 6-7.

[304] Morris, William and Lemire, Eugene (ed.). 1962. *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 147, 148, & 155.

it inspires) will also dissolve.[305] Towards the end of supporting the workers' struggle, a key component of Morris's attention is not only the quality of the products made, but also subversion of the hegemonic mechanization of his time (and ours) by the anachronistic re-insertion of an intimate connection between the maker and the made. In other words, Morris's movement was an attempt at reclaiming labor processes from alienation and reworking these processes in ways that promoted dignity and pleasure in work. As "craftsmanship has become extinct in the production of market wares," it is the duty of artists "to become as good craftsmen as possible."[306] This emphasis on process and the maker-as-craftsman has found later articulations in radical circles, from the Situationists, to anarchist cooperatives, to what we will later explore in punk.[307]

While this celebration of the hand-made may seem conservative on the surface (i.e. reviving or bringing back a past status quo of artistic and artisanal production), the kernel of Morris is revolutionary in his push for a socialist overthrow of normative capitalist exploitation. Handicraft serves the dual purpose in this struggle of providing for beauty through liberated labor, but also through the presentation of the historical alternative, the creation of a "living bond of the hopes of

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[305] Not to jump the gun, but we will see a similar intersection of the 'good' with the more economically viable at Crass's Dial House, in which the residents claim that organic gardening is not only healthier, but also cheaper than the use of chemical agents would be. See Oey, Alexander. 2006. *There is No Authority but Yourself*. Submarinechannel, Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep.

[306] Morris, William. 1889. "The Arts and Crafts of Today, Being an Address Delivered in Ebinburgh in October, 1889," contained in *Socialist Tracts* (1843-1893), British Library Rare Books collection, p. 46.

[307] For example, a famous product of 1967-8, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* claims "the object created is less important than the process that engenders it, the act of creating." Vaneigem, Raoul. 2012. *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 177. Artisanal products continue to be quite popular among radical thinkers, artists, and activists—perhaps most of all craft beer!

the past, the present, and the future."[308] Even in the last years of his life during which Morris retires into writing primarily utopic fictions, he doesn't advocate anything short of socialist revolution. He doesn't romantically paint the past as an idyllic Eden to which we should hope to return. Instead, he calls for movement forward, incorporating the lessons of the past towards the abolition of capitalism by joining "the cause of art" with the "cause of the people!"[309]

As a member and leader of the Socialist League in Britain, Morris consistently directed his artistic work towards social goals of freedom, equality, and most of all human dignity. In "The Aims of Art," Morris tells us that his goal (achievable through art and art alone) is to soothe, mitigate suffering, and in short to increase the pleasure and happiness of humanity.[310] Again we see a confluence of revolutionary and aesthetic goals. To take another illustrative example, in "Chants for Socialists," Morris doesn't simply present a straightforward or simplistic lyric for workers. Instead, he shows an immense dedication to form, bringing beauty through poetics to the revolutionary song. The two examples of these chants below will illustrate the interconnectivity of Morris's socialist aesthetic and political sympathies.[311] The rhyme, rhythm, meter, personification of the earth, and romantic imagery give these

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[308] Morris, William and Lemire, Eugene (ed.). 1962. *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 149.

[309] Morris, William, "Art and Socialism," contained in Zabel, Gary (ed.) 1993. *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*. Boston: George's Hill, p. 91.

[310] Morris, William. "The Aims of Art," contained in Zabel, Gary (ed.) 1993. *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*. Boston: George's Hill, pp. 113-126. See also "Signs of Change" contained in Morris, William. 1966. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXIII*. New York: Russell & Russell, p. 21.

[311] "Chants for Socialists," contained in *William Morris Pamphlets*, British Library Rare Books Collection, 502.fll (33). Also accessible at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1894/chants.htm#chap-3

chants the power of beauty, furthering their pleasure as verse *and* their cause in politics. It is easy to imagine simpler chants, for instance the first poem could easily be changed to something much simpler like "break the chains!" or "no masters!" if one has no attachment to aesthetics or nuance. But, to borrow a phrase from Hayden White, Morris shows the powerful content of the form by not pursuing simplistic slogans, but rather poetic messages.[312] There are multiple effects of this stylistic choice. For one, by choosing to present prolonged chants of poetic (as well as political) value, these chants allow workers the opportunity to present their case in an erudite way. Simple slogans can certainly be utilized well as a tactic of quick, efficient communication for activists. Yet, simplistic slogans are often met with and countered by simplistic responses (including police violence). By promoting the *performance* of these more complex chants, Morris is also providing an important attention to presentation. Performances of poetry have the effect both of adding a certain intellectual weight to the workers' demands, and perhaps more importantly, the appearance of more respectability as an artistic performance than would otherwise be given to a supposedly pure political statement. Indeed, as political in nature as these phrases are, they read and sound much more like a poetic utopia than a polemic. The phrase "No Master," which is a phrase most often associated with political anarchism, is here written by Morris as a definitive feature of liberty in the post-capitalist future. The earth isn't purely objective in the latter of these two chants, but is clearly situated on the side of the workers' struggle. In invoking the earth itself as

[312] White, Hayden. 1987. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

sympathetic to the workers, Morris naturalizes free labor and de-naturalizes exploitation. In fact, the chant demonstrates a corruption of nature that Morris believes has occurred in capitalism, as the capitalistic form robs workers of their natural "gifts" and "Home" bequeathed by the earth. As heard in these chants, so we find an intimate connection between the beautiful and the revolutionary throughout Morris's work.

"No Master"

Saith man to man, We've heard and known
That we no master need
To live upon this earth, our own,
In fair and manly deed.
The grief of slaves long passed away
For us hath forged the chain,
Till now each worker's patient day
Builds up the House of Pain.

And we, shall we too, crouch and quail,
Ashamed, afraid of strife,
And lest our lives untimely fail
Embrace the Death in Life?
Nay, cry aloud, and have no fear,
We few against the world;
Awake, arise! the hope we bear
Against the curse is hurled.

It grows and grows--are we the same,
The feeble band, the few?
Or what are these with eyes aflame,
And hands to deal and do?
This is the host that bears the word,
No MASTER HIGH OR LOW -
A lightning flame, a shearing sword,
A storm to overthrow.

"May Day" (1892)

THE WORKERS

O Earth, once again cometh Spring to deliver
Thy winter-worn heart, O thou friend of the Sun;
Fair blossom the meadows from river to river
And the birds sing their triumph o'er winter undone.

O Earth, how a-toiling thou singest thy labour
And upholdest the flower-crowned cup of thy bliss,
As when in the feast-tide drinks neighbour to neighbour
And all words are gleeful, and nought is amiss.

But we, we, O Mother, through long generations,
We have toiled and been fruitful, but never with thee
Might we raise up our bowed heads and cry to the nations
To look on our beauty, and hearken our glee.

Unlovely of aspect, heart-sick and a-weary
On the season's fair pageant all dim-eyed we gaze;
Of thy fairness we fashion a prison-house dreary
And in sorrow wear over each day of our days.

THE EARTH.

O children! O toilers, what foemen beleaguer
The House I have built you, the Home I have won?
Full great are my gifts, and my hands are all eager
To fill every heart with the deeds I have done.

THE WORKERS.

The foemen are born of thy body, O Mother,
In our shape are they shapen, their voice is the same;
And the thought of their hearts is as ours and no other;
It is they of our own house that bring us to shame.

THE EARTH.

Are ye few? Are they many? What words have ye spoken
To bid your own brethren remember the Earth?
What deeds have ye done that the bonds should be broken,
And men dwell together in good-will and mirth?

THE WORKERS.

They are few, we are many: and yet, O our Mother,
Many years were we wordless and nought was our deed,
But now the word flitteth from brother to brother:
We have furrowed the acres and scattered the seed.

THE EARTH.
Win on then unyielding, through fair and foul weather,
And pass not a day that your deed shall avail.
And in hope every spring-tide come gather together
That unto the Earth ye may tell all your tale.

Then this shall I promise, that I am abiding
The day of your triumph, the ending of gloom,
And no wealth that ye will then my hand shall be hiding
And the tears of the spring into roses shall bloom.

First, it is useful to briefly turn to the Pre-Raphaelite group that a youthful Morris was an active participant in. Then we will look at the transition period in which he jumps fully into the cause of socialism, analyzing the ways in which aesthetics and politics become fully intertwined in his thought, art, and action. On this point, Morris will not be providing a purely romanticized view of a privileged artisan so common among economic theorists. Instead, he presents the aesthetic object as the crucial kernel of the future epoch. Rearticulating Marx's congealing of the worker's exploitation into the object, Morris presents the future aesthetic object as the congealment of the producer and consumer's *pleasure* in the object. Finally, we look at the concept of time and retrogression that we can draw out of Morris, and mobilize from these a non-linear concept of time as it functions in relation to art. As a preliminary example, Morris's attention to the very aesthetic of a published work through his founding and further activities of the Kelmscott press reveals his sympathy towards the importance of the form as well as the content of a given radical

text. His usage of woodcuts to reproduce the illumination style of medieval manuscripts nicely illustrates the dedication to a nuanced type of revivalism, which I will refer to below as radical anachronism. In other words, Morris isn't viewing this use of aesthetics as separate from his politics, and as such cannot look completely to the past in terms of a total return to pre-capitalism. Rather, Morris utilizes anachronistic styles and forms as part of his problematizing of the present.

Kelmscott press, though not a major focus of Morrisian studies, represents the challenge of anachronism throughout his work. As with so many other interests, Morris developed an interest in the material processes of publishing as an extension of his radical writing (i.e. the process by which the writing is made accessible for distribution), and his respect for what quality craftsmanship can accomplish. His work with the press, out of the basement and carriage house of his home in Hammersmith, put out illuminated editions of his writings, as well as his favorite books by canonical authors like Chaucer.[313] Beyond these beautifully bound and decorated editions, however, Morris also utilized the Kelmscott press in what is an apt metaphor for so much of his work analyzed in this chapter. That is, the aestheticized pamphlets he put out, promoting socialist ideas through verbal and visual representations. Poetry and print, painting and politics all intertwine in Morris, and the site of connection for this diverse assemblage is most often the productive toying with the concepts of time and progress.

Aesthetics and Activism: William Morris in Context

[313] The William Morris Society uses the floor of Kelmscott House that is not privately occupied as its headquarters, featuring archives, the press itself, and various visual pieces by Morris.

As a young man pursuing the proper Oxford education befitting his upper middle class status, William Morris fell in love with the romanticized vision of his alma mater's storied past. One derivative of this historical fascination was that Morris and his friends and colleagues sequestered themselves off into the previously established Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, i.e. an intimate circle of like-minded artists. Essentially, this group (which was founded by William Homan Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and later joined by other artists like William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens, Thomas Woolner, Marie Spartali Stillman, Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, and of course Morris himself) dedicated themselves to exploring the aesthetic implications of John Ruskin's work, and more specifically a return to an early mode of artistic production that they believed had been lost, abandoned, or corrupted by increasingly mechanistic demands of art.[314] In other words, the name Pre-Raphaelite signifies a temporal turn in art towards classical and medieval poses, subjects, and representative forms that they felt had been in steady decline since the Renaissance (hence the naming of the group after who they thought of as one of the last truly great artists, Raphael).

Part of Morris's significance is that he draws no distinction between his artistic thought and work and his political life, for "it is impossible to exclude socio-political questions from the consideration of aesthetics."[315] In other words, he is an exemplar of someone operating within an 19th century politico-artistic movement, and

[314] Lang, Cecil Y. 1975. *The Pre-Raphaelites and Their Circle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[315] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 332.

a major component of his movement is the rethinking, reevaluation, and remobilization of our contested relationships to the organizations, productive and consumptive processes, and aesthetics of the past.[316] Morris repeatedly lectures on the virtue of ancient aesthetics as a representation of art/use value that is inseparable. The Egyptian pottery we revel at in the British Museum, for instance, represents for we moderns an art artifact, but for the Egyptians was *both* an art object and a useful container. Under capital, art is distinguished from nearly all forms of labor, for by Morris's definition art is exclusively produced in non-exploitative processes (or else it doesn't qualify as art). Art is also the only thing that is uniquely produced by humans through their direct, tactile labor, for Morris is quick to distinguish mechanized productive processes from the possibility of aesthetic beauty.

Morris laments the "utilitarian ugliness" of mechanization, and the disappearance of the "art of making beautifully all kinds of ordinary things."[317] In the Middle Ages, Morris argues that "the workman worked for himself and not for any capitalistic employer, and he was accordingly master of his work and his time; this was the period of pure handicraft."[318] Despite his romanticizing moves, Morris is not making the case for a pure return to the medieval, nor is he denying the exploitative power relations of feudalism. Instead, what he proposes is the adoption of a "spiraling" understanding of time, in which the lessons of the past can be remobilized

[316] For instance, this can be seen in his previous belief in the autonomy of the artists' colony at Red House, where a radically different lifestyle could unfold.
[317] Ibid, p. 336.
[318] Ibid, p. 334.

in the present and future, allowing for a "step upward along the spiral, and not the straight line [which] is, the true line of progress."[319]

> So that if in the future that shall immediately follow on this present we may have to recur to ideas that today seem to belong to the past only, that will not be really a retracing of our steps, but rather a carrying on of progress from a point where we abandoned it a while ago.[320]

This conception of time informs both Morris's dual goals of the aesthetic and pleasurable (that is, for the producer most of all, in addition to the consumer) qualities of handicraft products. The conception of time as spiraling rather than linear allows for the radical mobilization of anachronistic modes in reviving elements of the past to hauntingly invade upon the future and disrupt complicit comfort and conformability in the present. The key purpose in this disruption of the present is to both introduce the concept of historical contingency and present the possibility of dramatically reorganizing it.

Instead of the exclusionary palace, after "victory in our rebellion," monetary wealth will be destroyed, not merely redistributed, and in the new social organization "every man will have his due share in art."[321] In good social-liberal fashion, Morris argues that this art of the future must "be of the people for the people, and by the people; it must understand all and be understood by all."[322] The only way to get to such a future for art is by working for this future within the capitalistic present, is

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[319] Ibid, p. 371.
[320] Ibid, p. 371.
[321] Ibid, p. 118.
[322] Ibid, p. 133. See also Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 396-397.

paradoxically (within Morris's view) for artists' forced into "looking back."[323] In this act of looking back, Morris and his group specifically dwell on the Middle Ages in England, and somewhat obsessively with the folklore of Iceland, putting forth these aesthetics as not only an important retreat from the present but also as an articulation of hopeful lessons for potential futures. Importantly, however, Morris isn't so much concerned with the specific style or taste of this previous epoch, as he is with the productive and consumptive processes and the people's relationships to art. In other words, he isn't invested in "borrowing from the past but carrying on its traditional usage."[324] As Thompson explains, "Philip Webb and Morris and their group, were concerned with the *manner* of work in the Middle Ages, with the handling of materials by the medieval builder and craftsman, with substance and structure rather than with 'style'."[325] This remobilization of modes from the past is also an important move for Morris because it represents a temporal turn in aesthetics to a time before the corruption and ugliness of capitalism. In responding to the labeling of his work as a 'revivalist' of sorts, Morris writes

> The very fact that there is a 'revival' shows that the arts aforesaid have been sick unto death. In all such changes the first of the new does not appear till there is little or no life left in the old, and yet old, even when it is all but dead, goes on living in corruption, and refuses to get itself put quietly out of the way and decently buried.[326]

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[323] Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Oakland: PM Press. p. 56.
[324] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 16.
[325] Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Oakland: PM Press. p. 100.
[326] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 241.

Morris reiterates the important point that liberated labor, and creative labor-as-pleasure that he proposes for the future post-capitalist economy, is not an "idyllic dream," but rather a rival of past processes, brought to the fullest possible fruition. In other words, the revival of pleasurable labor isn't a pure revival of mediaeval forms, but a moving along the underdeveloped, underexplored trajectories not pursued due to linear "progress," i.e. those areas of expansion or development that *didn't* occur in history's contingency. He finds that the pre-capitalist maker/guild cultures a contain the kernel of pleasurable labor, when "such works of art were once produced."[327] This past relationship to work, pride and pleasure within production of the aesthetic use-object, and even anachronistically outdated medieval notions of hospitality all make an important reappearance in the future of *News from Nowhere*, Morris's agrarian, hospitable utopia.

Utopia (Past, Present, Never, Ever?)

My handling of utopia in this chapter is both distinct from and reliant upon my treatment and use of utopia in my previously posed theory of political imagination. I will not here repeat critical claims about utopia broadly, but will rather discuss the specific articulations and assemblages of utopia in the radical imagination of the 19th century. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will be using the label 'utopian' to describe a variety of (fictional and/or projected) future or other-worldly societies. Those utopian novels of the 19th century that I explore have a key difference from their predecessors in the long and various utopian traditions. For instance, Plato's

[327] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 362.

Republic presents Kallipolis as a metaphorical device to investigate the soul, but in so doing also presents the ideal as unobtainable (i.e. the ideal, just city is even further removed from the realm of the possible, as even Kallipolis does not attain this ideality). In a fundamentally different move, Thomas More's *Utopia* presents an already existing society that shares temporality with the writer, and only exists in a different geographical location (a similar move can be attributed to the much later works of Swift). More does, however, share with Plato the method of representing an ideal in order to critique the real of the present. This literary mode supports the claim of perhaps the greatest modern theorist of utopian thought, Ernst Bloch, when he once told Theodor Adorno that the purpose of utopia is to critique contemporary structures and contexts and to demonstrate what the present lacks.[328] This is an important epistemological frame through which to read utopias, as it can productively focus our interpretations around critiques of the present embedded within projectionist literature. Yet, we should ask not only what utopianism is meant to do, but also what it actually does. Does utopianism, for instance, give us hope? Following Lauren Berlant, could this hope itself become a form of cruelty, working to maintain hegemonic systems and structures rather than changing them?[329] Most important for this study is the question of how utopianism affects or potentially expands our political imaginations by presenting new or wider possibilities for human thought, coexistence, cooperation, and social organization.

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[328] Adorno, Theodor. 1964. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. New York: Routledge. Adorno, et al. 1977. *Aesthetics and Politics*. New York: Verso. and Bloch, Ernst. 1988. *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

[329] Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Here, I deal primarily with utopian novels in the time period spanning roughly from 1880 until the onset of World War I, as this grouping involves a renaissance of utopian speculation and thinking among authors who were, by in large, contemporary with William Morris. Why might we see such a tremendous outpouring of utopian thought during this short time? Why was utopian fiction particularly attractive as an avenue of both entertainment and political commentary? What politico-economic conditions and changes particularly affected the utopian imagination during this particular time? I argue below that 19th century utopias, as variant as they may be, rely on modern historical sensibility. It may be too obvious to state, but there is a sense in which the genre of utopia itself was already quite anachronistic in the context of the industrialism and state planning of the 19th century. In the case of William Morris, this historicism is especially apparent, in his mobilization of anachronistic forms of labor, leisure, and community from the past in order to critique the present. Historical contingency is hence an underlying assumption, for before presenting a radically different future, these utopian writers had to first demonstrate the instability of their present and the possibilities for changing it.

Also important is the consideration of diversity (i.e. in terms of racial and gendered identities) in the 19th century utopian imagination, for we shall see that for some writers this question is of utmost centrality and importance, while for others it is skirted entirely. What does the homogenous ideal of utopia tell us about the socialist imagination of Bellamy and Morris? Is this homogenizing move an inclusive or an exclusionary feature, i.e. can homogeneity ever reflect equality or does it always

already imply marginalization? What does 19th century utopian imagination teach us about the literary and political conversations in which socialists and anarchists (e.g. Morris and Kropotkin) were engaged? What anxieties and hopes are expressed in these texts (and how are these concepts defined and mobilized)? How does 19th century utopianism frame the connection between politics and aesthetics? How are 'realness' and potentialities important features of this imaginative genre?

The 18th century saw the dominance Enlightenment theories of the 'state of nature' as the primary site of utopia or dystopia. The 'noble savage' trope, for instance, presented an idealized past for European contemporaries based upon their projections of indigenous Americans their colonizers were encountering. However, the 19th century saw the emergence of a new type of utopian imagination, that of an idealized future for their contemporary polities, a specifically *de-naturalized* human-centered projection. What these accounts share is a projectionist vision of a better—and (arguably) *humanly possible*—world, be it on a future earth (cf. Bellamy and Morris) or on a different (though still inhabited by humans) planet (cf. Wells). In other words, the utopian project of the 19th century took on the challenge of imagining possibilities for improving the real. Most often this translated into a socialist project of imagining the possibilities for a post-capitalist future. This does not, however, mean that these visions shared much beyond the basis of their critique of capital, for these writers have very different understandings of what post-capitalism looks like, as well as the path taken to overcome the domination, exploitation, and alienation of their contemporaries. One question we must address is

what epistemological and ideological conditions lead to this development. What is it about late 19th century socialism that makes the utopian novel a prime site for theorization? What can this teach us about the political imagination of the late 19th and early 20th century? I begin with Morris and then expand to his interlocutors.

Blurring the Lines Between Labor and Leisure in *News from Nowhere*

While engaging Morris's most notorious and well-read work, the agrarian utopia *News from Nowhere*, there are several key issues and questions that may fruitfully guide our exploration.[330] We should be particularly attuned to the intersections of Morris's aesthetic theory with his politics within the novel, and ask what illustrations Morris utilizes to fictionalize his sympathies. Ultimately, we may recognize that Morris's oeuvre shows that his own inclination was to always view utopias as "necessarily provisional," for it is "impossible to predict the needs and wants of future generations," yet despite this provisional and hence limited political efficacy of the utopian form, it remains important to provide "images of the future before the eyes of the working class."[331]

What are the assumptions, for instance, regarding human attachments to work and pleasure are demonstrated in the text? Beyond this focus, however, should be attention to two particularly important features unique within Morris's oeuvre to *News from Nowhere*. This feature of note is that Morris's novel can only be complexly understood in conversation with his utopian predecessors, but even more

[330] Nowhere being, of course, a play on Thomas More's original pun of *Utopia* being derived from *eu-topos* and *ou-topos*, the Greek words for 'good place' and 'no-place' respectively.
[331] Levitas, Ruth. 2013. *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 113.

so his contemporaries. We must therefore begin by putting *News from Nowhere* into conversation with Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. In many ways, Morris's novel is a direct refutation of Bellamy's, as we shall see below. Published a mere two years after *Looking Backward*, the serialized *News from Nowhere* follows its predecessor's structure and time-traveling (Rip Van Winkle-esque) plotline in order to make nuanced arguments about socialism and hopes for a post-capitalist world.

For Morris, Bellamy's socialist future merely maintains the worst aesthetic (i.e. and therefore political) properties of capitalism, while only ostensibly changing the organization of labor. This is because Bellamy spends too much time discussing "the machinery of society rather than the life to be lived within it."[332] In other words, in *News from Nowhere* we can see Morris (almost prophetically) demonstrating that a mere shift in the ownership of production is not enough to ensure the liberation of humanity in their labors, relations, and lives. Life is what changes in Morris's utopian vision, not simply the allocation and distribution of labor and resources.

The Day is Coming[333]

Come hither, lads, and hearken, for a tale there is to tell,
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be.

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[332] Levitas, Ruth. 2013. *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 79.

[333] Over the remainder of this section, italicized portions from the poem/song "The Day is Coming" will be dispersed, demonstrating in a somewhat facile way the relevance of this particular chant to variety of topics, but also the usefulness in applying temporal interruptions for disrupting normative linear readings. These poetic lines are indented and italicized (for easy identification), and are presented in identical order of Morris's original poem. Contained in "Chants for Socialists," contained in *William Morris Pamphlets*, British Library Rare Books Collection, 502.fll (33).

There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.

For then--laugh not, but listen to this strange tale of mine -

All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.

In both of these texts, we witness a first person protagonist who is in a subject position of a walking anachronism. They do not belong in this time, and therefore the commonplace of the future presents itself to them mysteriously. Protagonists in *Looking Backward* and *News from Nowhere* both find themselves, like Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Author's Court*, utterly confused by their *temporal* location. But rather than traveling backwards to a long forgotten epoch, both of these move forward roughly a century into the future—which for them was the beginning of the 21st century. On the one hand, this is a strategic device useful in opening windows for explanation that members of the respective future societies would surely not need to provide each other. On the other, this unique perspective effectively makes both authors' contemporary moments strange, and in this strangeness, difficult to justify.

Bellamy combines Marxist socialism with Spencerite social Darwinism to envision the industrialized United States of *Looking Backward*. He systematically answers the most common questions and criticisms posed to socialists (e.g. how to provide for the idle, differentiation of labor, socialist vs. capitalist productivity). Yet, for all of the similarities in their political sympathies (and style, as Morris literally steals Bellamy's plotline for his response), their particular answers to questions of

socialism differ greatly. While the freedom from the yolk of capitalism in Bellamy's work appeals to Morris, he views the industrialized organization and aesthetics of Bellamy's imagination as not only repulsive (or even nightmarish), but indeed, not even truly socialist. While Bellamy views greater socialization through greater mechanization, Morris sees mechanization as an enemy of the working classes and human dignity. Why? Quite simply, Morris argues that mechanization and so-called 'labor-saving devices' actually increase the duration of workers' labor (contemporary labor statistics provide amble evidence of the validity of this argument), and equally or perhaps more importantly, mechanization removes the creative pleasures and capacities that humanity can bring to fruition through labor.

> *Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear*
> *For to-morrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf anear.*
>
> *O strange new wonderful justice! But for whom shall we gather the gain?*
> *For ourselves and for each of our fellows, and no hand shall labour in vain.*
>
> *Then all Mine and all Thine shall be Ours, and no more shall any man crave*
> *For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.*
>
> *And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold*
> *To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?*

The arguments that Morris puts forth against mechanization not only counter Bellamy, but seem also to complicate Marx. Marx is no proponent of agrarian, rural economies, and indeed sees mechanization as having a potentially freeing aspect. Perhaps the kernel of Morris in these arguments is to contest the inevitability of

capitalism. He does not share Marx's enthusiastic respect of the technological and industrial advancements of capital. Where Marx revels at bridges, canals, and other modes of 'development', Morris sees nothing but loss. This loss is not of productivity or efficiency (those features of capital that Marx celebrates as progressive necessities), but rather of beauty and human capacity. Morris laments the loss of artistic qualities of not-so-strictly defined art pieces. In other words, productions labeled as 'art' have continued under capitalism, yet the broadest experience of the art of the everyday has all but disappeared. Ancient and medieval 'art' wasn't considered art at the time of its production, yet was imbued with the qualities we now recognize and respect as artistic. This qualitative feature of useful goods, Morris argues, has been lost during capitalism in favor of mass production, alienation of the producer from her product, and wide investment in useless frivolities. Yet, his medievalism never seems to suggest a return to feudal, pre-capitalist economies in a material, so much as an imaginative, capacity. Another chant for socialists can demonstrate these ideas.

Morris refuses to believe that humanity is slovenly or lazy, or that people avoid work out of desire for idleness. As a follower of Marx (and therefore also an inheritor of Hegel), Morris believes in the inherent value and *pleasure* in the human transformation of the material world (i.e. labor). Work is not naturally unpleasant, but rather an enjoyable process yielding not only useful material, but also meaningful affective products. Instead of relying on notions of laziness or desire to not work, according to Morris resistance to labor within capitalism is due to the degrading work

conditions. Of course, as a disciple of Marx and Engels (the latter becoming his friend whom he frequently visited and sought activist advice from), he views such degradation as the means and product of labor alienation, capitalist ownership (i.e. 'monopoly') of the means of production, and the laws of surplus value and diminishing returns.[334] Indeed, he reiterates Marx's point on the worker's transformation into a mere cog in the capitalist machine.

However, Morris doesn't view mechanization, but rather creativity, as the salvation and freeing of labor. Useful work, for Morris, is that which is both needed and pleasurable, two aspects which thrive with creativity and whither in capitalism. In other words, necessary labor avoids "unnecessary toil" through proper craftsmanship of the crafters' own chosen craft, chosen methods, and chosen creations. This is part of why the artist (who in Morris's definition is also necessarily a craftsman or craftswoman) holds such a position of privilege in Morris's thought. Under capitalism, only artists maintain the freedom to be creative and pursue pleasure in their labor. The utopia that Morris imagines for a post-capitalist world is one in which all persons are able to pursue such meaningful work and meaningful contributions as they want to make to their communities. This also means the most highly educated folks would not longer sequester themselves off from handiwork, but

[334] MacCarthy, Fiona. 1995. *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Arnold Knopf, p. 509. It is also worth mentioning that, like Engels, Morris himself benefitted from capitalist ownership over a firm, and that, again like Engels, he used this income to invest in the workers' movement. Cf. Mackail, J.W. 1899. *The Life of William Morris, Vol. 2*. London: Longmans, Green, & Co., p. 139

would also be engaged in it; the negative stigma of so-called 'manual' labor having been erased.[335]

> *I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad*
> *Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had.*
>
> *For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,*
> *Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.*
>
> *Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,*
> *And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;*

The state, at least as understood as a set of authoritarian institutions, laws, and other mechanisms of control, has been dissolved in Morris's Nowhere-England. Morris hence does not envision a socialist future in which ownership and control of the state has shifted towards a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or a state run by the people. Rather, the people, having already seized the state, eventually find that it is an outdated and unneeded institution. In other words, in Morris's vision, the oppression of the state can be eliminated at the very moment of the dissolution of capitalist exploitation. In order to explain this, Morris presents a protagonist who is confused at how this could be. How could people possibility co-exist in peace if there were no system of laws and lawgivers? The answer is surprisingly simple, for essentially there is no need for a Parliament when the "present parliament would be hard to house in one place, because the whole people is our parliament."[336] Morris's fictional

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[335] Ibid, p. 591.
[336] *News from Nowhere*, contained in Morris, William. 2012. *Collected Works, Vol. 16*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 75. On a more recent account of contesting the social split of mental/manual labor, see Crawford, Matthew. 2009. *Shop Class as Soul Craft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*. New York: Penguin Books.

interlocutor then goes on to explain that with the elimination of capitalism, the mechanisms of state control and force become largely obsolete. For example, the military and police are no longer necessary, for they have no rich to protect and no capitalist incentive to promote any further conflict (at home or abroad).[337] With the dissolution of these state apparatuses, people are significantly freer to take a hand in their own lives. It is tempting to refer to such an organization as 'self-governance,' but I think perhaps it is more accurate to label it non-governance or even anti-governance. What Morris has done in this description but to combine elements from Kropotkin, Marx, and somewhat surprisingly, Rousseau's notion of the general will.

> *And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead;*
> *And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;*
>
> *And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvellous fiddle-bow,*
> *And the banded choirs of music: all those that do and know.*

The earliest of these three, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, outlines his ideal social contract as that agreement which preserves and perpetuates the "natural" freedom of humanity. Though more attuned to hypothetical outlines than describing mechanisms of operation, Rousseau pictures governance akin more to voluntary association than oppressive state structures (that is, in the most generous reading of his thought). However, Rousseau has also been understood as a philosophical predecessor to the sanitizing and normalizing impulses of fascism (particularly in their utopian dogmas of 'purifying' the body politics). Unlike Rousseau, Morris provides accounts of dissenting subjects who are neither excluded from the polity, nor silenced. Their

[337] Ibid, pp. 76-9.

dissent is heard, and they are fully allowed and fully capable of living in the mode most suitable to them. There is not, in other words, an assertion or an implication that anyone in *Nowhere* is "forced to be free."[338]

Indeed, as Marcus Waithe has convincingly shown, it is the possibility for tolerance that distinguishes Morris's utopian project.[339] The openness, hospitality, and tolerance available in Morris's *Nowhere* also provides a critical distance from the failed (fascist and state-communist) national-utopian experiments of the 20th century, as these latter were largely predicated on notions of population control and purity (two features that are categorically opposed to Morris's propositions). Instead, in Nowhere, we witness liberated, autonomous labor, or labor-as-pleasure that grows from the bottom up, and with allowances for diversity and solidarity rather than simplistic unity through consensus. In Morris's imagination, in other words, the melody of history may turn towards socialism justly, only when it fully embraces the harmony of dissensus. How then, does Morris imagine we get there? Before turning to the details of Morris's utopian society in the next chapter, let us first consider what he imagines as the events unfolding between Nowhere-England's present (Morris's socialist future) and Morris's present (or Nowhere-England's past).

> *For all these shall be ours and all men's, nor shall any lack a share*
> *Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair.*

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[338] *On the Social Contract* contained in Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1987. *The Basic Political Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, pp. 139-227.
[339] Waithe, Marcus. 2006. *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, pp. 194-198.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But what are the deeds of to-day,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting? There are three words to speak:
WE WILL IT, and what is the foeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?

"How the Change Came" in Morris's Utopia

O why and for what are we waiting? While our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed hungry hell?

The accounts of how labor is liberated and how capital is overcome are as marked a distinction between Edward Bellamy's vision of mechanized, technological socialism in *Looking Backward* and Morris as the oft-cited urban/rural distinction. For Bellamy, the U.S. of the year 2000 recounts the revolutionary struggle as consisting entirely of argument once "public opinion had become fully ripe for" socialism, and therefore there "was absolutely no violence."[340] Morris saw the revolution in different terms, and was much less hopeful for a peaceful transition of power or a seamless reorganization of society. He did imagine a future that is almost completely peaceful, but not without bloodshed in the intermediate time between his present and this future. No small part of Morris's belief on the violence inherent in overturning the capitalist system were his own experiences demonstrating with workers in the 19th century.

[340] Bellamy, Edward. 1982. *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 66.

Morris was not necessarily an advocate of violence, and according to his daughter, he even had an "intense dislike" for it, consistently critiquing violence for the fact that it "leads nowhere save suffering and loss of life."[341] Yet, his experiences in the streets of London exposed him to violence beyond what he supported, cautioned against, or expected. Most of this violence was, of course, initiated by the state, and Morris was time and time again involved in skirmishes with police. This police violence was not limited only to the requisite arrests of demonstrators, nor even the violent mishandling of such activists, but also included destruction of socialist meeting halls, personal property of the League's members, and other forms of intimidation. Legal redress sought in the courts of London were consistently unsuccessful (although Morris did one time talk his way out of an arrest—and proceeded to lambast the court officials for the absurdity of police mistreatment of marchers). In his diaries, lectures, and other writings, we have Morris's accounts of some of the most grievous of the police actions against his fellow socialists, or just of the lower classes in general,

> One incident struck me with considerable force and disgust. As I was being led out of the crowd a poor woman asked a police inspector (I think) or a sergeant if he had seen a child she had lost. His answer was to tell her she was a 'damned whore,' and to knock her down. I never till that time completely realized how utterly servile and cowardly an English crowd is…we are so accustomed to bow the knee before wealth and riches, to repeat to ourselves we are a free nation, that in the end we have got to believe it, and the grossest acts of injustice may be perpetuated under our very eyes.[342]

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[341] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 222.
[342] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 263.

Such 'cowardice' on the part of the crowd that Morris critiques begins to wane in the 1880s, as the socialist message becomes more widely disseminated, and crowds at demonstrations grew larger and more brazen. How did Morris come to counter such cowardice and promote action on the part of the working people? Largely, though he was involved in true on the ground organization and demonstration, he largely viewed his role as one of a propagandist, and one with a particularly public platform from which to preach his message of liberation.

> I say that the real business of us propagandists is to instill this aim of the workers becoming the masters of their own destinies, their own live, and this can be effected when a sufficient number of them are convinced of the fact by the establishment of a vast labour organization—the federation according to their crafts, if you will, of all the workmen who have awoke to the fact that they are the slaves of monopoly, and therefore being awaked, its rebels also; men who are convinced that the raw material and instruments of labour can only belong to those who can use them: let them announce that transformation of these things into common property as their programme, and look upon anything else they may have to do before they have conquered that programme, as so much necessary work by the way to enable them to live till they have marched to the great battlefield…Could armed reaction triumph? Certainly only for a while; that at the worst…What would be the use of the authoritative government making laws for people who denied its right, and felt it to be their duty to evade or resist them at every point? Nothing would come of them.[343]

These instances of police violence had some unintentional positive effects as well, as Morris on more than one occasion writes of the publicity that such clashes with police had in spreading the message of socialism beyond its usual corridors, not the least of which was the acceptance of Morris himself of the importance of direct action. Slowly and reluctantly, Morris began to recognize that the capitalist system would not

[343] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 444-445.

go quietly or easily into that good night. Ultimately, he began to push for a continuance of the socialist cause, even if it contributed briefly to violence, rather than maintaining what he thought was an unsustainable and cowardly position of pacifism.[344] Morris always keeps a critical tone, however, when dealing with "indiscriminate" violence, for only violent acts such as the seizure of the modes of production in a quick and tactical strike were of a type that Morris could fully support.[345]

> The riot, or whatever it may be called, of February 8th, though a small matter in itself, became of importance because it has got to be a fixed idea in the heads of—well—most men, men of all classes, that the English workman had at last been brought to the point of incapacity of expressing his grievances by anything more threatening than an election riot…Here was a crowd of genuine workingmen, who were angry, or excited, or miserable enough to cast off their habitual fear of consequences for an hour or two, and indulge in a threat to the Society which had made them the lower classes.[346]

The police response, according to Morris, arises both from the desire for 'order' and 'clean' streets, but also from the cowardice of the bourgeoisie to engage the workers' demands and desires. Rather than contribute to a discussion, or engage with the workers in any way that required them to leave the plush "calm of their luxury," and so instead send their "immediate servants" the police to put down the demonstrations.[347] The growing discontent, swelling crowds, and police response were all factors in the growth of the socialist movement in Morris's eyes. He writes,

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[344] MacCarthy, Fiona. 1995. *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Arnold Knopf, p. 490.
[345] Ibid, p. 545.
[346] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 230-231, cf. 238.
[347] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 238.

> The general feeling which has taken the place of the smug satisfaction in existing society, the tacit belief in its finality, which were general a few years since. Now I hope that the cause of this stir and aspiration lies deeper than the passing events of surface economics.[348]

This more widespread discontent is precisely the disruption of the aesthetic in the above section. In explanation, the 'smug satisfaction' the Morris saw in previous years was one of comfort in the present, rife with the idea that the end of history had been arrived at and the present would be both stable and finalistic. The change from Victorian capitalism to Nowhere-ian communalism also marks the sudden arrival of a politics and a new aesthetic organization.

Interestingly, as print media has largely disappeared into small niche corners in Nowhere, Morris's character William Guest must seek a historical lesson from an elderly neighbor. His guide through Nowhere, Dick, takes him to see an elderly family member, Old Hammond, who is an amateur folklorist and historian of sorts. Dick takes William Guest to talk with him, primarily because he believes the conversation will be pleasurable and of interest to both.[349] Over the course of several brief chapters, William and Hammond have a prolonged discussion on a variety of topics, from labor to fashion, to eros in Nowhere. Eventually, however, William asks Hammond to explain how all of these immense changes have come to society.

> "Tell me one thing, if you can," said I. "Did the change, the 'revolution' it used to be called, come peacefully?"

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348 Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 422.

349 Although, not to Dick personally, as he absconds with Clara for some sensual privacy while the two older men carry on their conversation.

> "Peacefully?" said he; "what peace was there amongst those poor confused wretches of the nineteenth century? It was war from beginning to end: bitter war, till hope and pleasure put an end to it."
>
> "Do you mean actual fighting with weapons?" said I, "or the strikes and lock-outs and starvation of which we have heard?"
>
> "Both, both," he said.[350]

Hammond proceeds to fill in William on the history of the socialist revolution. Notably, he begins in the 19th century with many of the actions that Morris himself was directly involved in. Specifically, Hammond describes the manner in which "the civic bourgeois guard (called the police)" brutally repressed a demonstration at Trafalgar Square in 1887 (collectively known during Morris's time as 'Bloody Sunday', and an event that he not only personally witnessed, but was indeed was among the injured victims).[351] So, the actions of Morris's own socialist league become the starting point of Hammond's narrative, underscoring Morris's strong belief (or perhaps even overly inflated arrogance) about the impact these events would eventually have. Following this narrative, which gives Morris the opportunity to portray 'Bloody Sunday' in whatever terms he wishes, Hammond continues down a historical litany of revolutionary events.

Eventually, Hammond relays a violent reactionary police response to the workers' demonstrations that led to the Parliamentary declaration of a state of emergency. Trafalgar Square reemerges in this narrative, and becomes the site of an

[350] Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 104.
[351] Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 111.

even worse massacre than that witnessed by Morris in 1887. Guest declares in his shock of how many were killed and wounded,

> "How fearful! And I suppose that this massacre put an end to the whole revolution for that time?
> "No, no," cried old Hammond; "it began it!"[352]

Here we see Morris presenting the end of the "cowardice" of the crowd in the quotation cited above. The crowd had had enough following this later clash at Trafalgar Square, and this event served to spark the larger revolution. Hammond continues with his story, filling in a series of additional clashes between revolutionaries and reactionaries, until

> [A]ll ideas of peace on a basis of compromise had disappeared on either side. The end, it was seen clearly, must be either absolute slavery for all but the privileged, or a system of life founded on equality and Communism."[353]

Obviously, to get to the Nowhere that William is experiencing, it was the latter of these that was victorious. Eventually, and here Morris is at his most optimistic, the armed guards, police, and soldiers filing out the ranks of governmental institutions would effectively switch sides in recognition of their own interests most closely aligning with the people.[354]

> *Through squalid life they laboured, in sordid grief they died,*
> *Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of England's pride.*
>
> *They are gone; there is none can undo it, nor save our souls from the curse;*
> *But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or worse?*

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[352] *Ibid*, p. 117.
[353] Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 128.
[354] Ibid, p. 129.

It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot hope of the poor.

This brief telling of an imagined history of the future reveals Morris's skepticism of the efficacy of pacifist strategies in achieving the overthrow of capitalism. It would be incendiary and inaccurate to claim that this chapter *advocates* violence, for it is presented harshly, the human suffering endured described in horrific detail. It is also important to note that Morris is here making a claim that it is likely violence on the part of the state that will lead to an expansion of workers' consciousness, revolutionary zeal, and collective action. Each step in the progression of this revolutionary narrative sees a peoples' demonstration met with violent state repression. Eventually, however, enough sympathy is generated for the cause that fighting is no longer necessary.

So, although on a personal level, Morris clearly abhors violence, he prophesized its inevitability in the overthrow the capital/state system. He may not openly endorse violence, yet sees it as a necessary evil when the final blows of the revolution must strike against the death rattle of the old system. Yet, even in this dismal vision of available tactics, Morris presents a ray of hope in *News from Nowhere*. That is, the response of the younger generations to the stories of past violence is one of shock and disbelief. Dick and Clara are unable to fully comprehend what Hammond relays, Dick even going so far as to question why people would *ever* have put up with a repressive state and its violent apparatuses like the police. So, the violence may come, but it will itself represent a moratorium on

violence (at least at the macro level, for indeed the occasional interpersonal conflict lingers within Nowhere).

> *Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their unlearned discontent,*
> *We must give it voice and wisdom till the waiting-tide be spent.*
>
> *Come, then, since all things call us, the living and the dead,*
> *And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed.*
>
> *Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and put by ease and rest,*
> *For the CAUSE alone is worthy till the good days bring the best.*
>
> *Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,*
> *Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still prevail.*
>
> *Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at least, we know:*
> *That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the Banners go.*

Chapter 4

Nowhere in No Time

"*News from Nowhere* was written not as a work to convert people to socialism, but to sustain socialists by giving them a glimpse of the socialist future."
--David Goodway[355]

In November 1896, Peter Kropotkin wrote a tribute to his colleague Morris, providing the following praise for *News from Nowhere*, "Perhaps the most thorough, and deeply anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written."[356] This may be because of the mutual respect shared by these two thinker/writer/radical activists. They also share some striking similarities, and it is clear why Kropotkin lavished such praise on *News from Nowhere* in particular. The intersections between these two is unpacked in various ways in our handling of Morris's most famous, most highly regarded, and most widely read text.

On the topics of enhancing human life through art and beauty, the collective ownership of human histories and historical properties, and luxury in particular, Morris sounds remarkably like Peter Kropotkin. Indeed, E.P. Thompson argues that in addition to the highly publicized state murder of the Chicago Anarchists and public lectures in the U.K. by Lucy Parsons, it was Morris's lectures on art and society that paved the road for the ascendance of Kropotkin's influence in the English Socialist League.[357] Like Morris, Kropotkin advocates useful, non-alienated, pleasurable work. In Kropotkin's call for anarcho-communism (which has many important

[355] Goodway, David. 2012. *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarianism Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 19.
[356] Kropotkin, Peter. November 1896 "In Memory of William Morris," *Freedom*. quoted in Goodway, p. 21.
[357] Thompson, E.P. p. 506.

similarities with Morris's vision of socialism), practical material sustenance is of the highest priority in providing for all people. Yet, Kropotkin doesn't end with this level of providing for people in a future society, but sees the possibility of "comfort" and even "luxurious leisure" as later goals of communalist living.[358] Like Morris, Kropotkin views emancipation from capitalist exploitation as containing an emancipation of art and literature, which "must only be cultivated by free men."[359] The freedom to express creativity, Kropotkin argues, "exists in all" despite differing tastes and modes of expression.[360] Yet, until "*all* in society enjoy comfort and leisure" can art do anything but "vegetate."[361] As Morris puts it, "pleasure and interest in the work itself are necessary to the production of a work of art…[and] this pleasure and interest can only be present when the workman is free in his work."[362] In neatly dialectical fashion, freedom can exist in art only when art exists in freedom. This theme is also elaborated in Kropotkin's "Appeal to the Young" in which he declares that artists of his contemporary moment "cannot remain neutral," and indeed must join the cause of the people politically and artistically, for "art without the revolutionary idea can only degenerate."[363] These goals resonate quite well with Morris's goals. In *New from Nowhere*, this conversation between Morris and

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[358] Kropotkin, Peter. 2005. *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writ*ings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 30 & 94.
[359] *Ibid*, p. 100.
[360] *Ibid*, p. 95. On the differences among artistic productions, see the discussion of art as "the unique result of a unique temperament" in Wilde, Oscar. 1909. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. Portland: Mosher, pp. 41 & 54.
[361] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, pp. 103-5.
[362] "Art and Its Producers" contained in Morris, William. 1966. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXII*. New York: Russell & Russell, p. 351.
[363] Kropotkin, Peter and Baldwin, Roger (ed.). 1970. *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets: A Collection of Writings by Peter Kropotkin*. New York: Dover Books, p. 273.

Kropotkin gain an important depth of substance, most especially on the subject of luxury.

In his most famous text, *News from Nowhere*, Morris presents an imagined future that aligns nicely with anarchist visions of communal cooperation and mutual aid.[364] Most especially, what I will draw out in this chapter is the way in which the production and consumption of the aesthetic object in Nowhere neatly summarizes Morris's idea of (non-exploitative) labor as pleasure and the ways in which social organization must change to accommodate this mode of labor on a macro scale. More precisely, in closely examining Morris's thought, we can draw out the conclusion that pleasurable labor and social re-organization away from capitalism and commerce are mutually informed. Therefore the imagined shift in the socio-political organization (in his specific imaginary case of 19th-to-21st century London) can only occur parallel to aesthetic re-organization. Specifically, as we shall see below, a focus on the aesthetic object of the tobacco pipe in chapter six of *News from Nowhere* shows an imagined materialization of Morris's pleasure/art product of authentically human production.

Given these similarities, it is clear that it is no small coincidence that one of Morris's key interlocutors in the Hammersmith Socialist League, and the anarchist with whom he had the best rapport, was Peter Kropotkin. We can especially see this

[364] I should point out here that Morris went to great pains in his lifetime to differentiate himself from his contemporary English anarchists, whom he saw as disorganized and too violent. He preferred the label 'socialist', for at the time he felt it better reflected his political sympathies of ending exploitation and liberating humanity from the clutches of capitalism. Yet, his friendship and collaboration with Kropotkin indicate that Morris was sympathetic to some ideas that now form a part of the anarchist canon. His stateless society in *Nowhere* also seems to align him with anarchists of the late 20th century, particularly those of the socialist-anarchist vein of Murray Bookchin, for instance.

overlapping of radical sympathies in *News from Nowhere*. Specifically, what *News from Nowhere* offers is a window in to the leisurely yet productive life Kropotkin foresees in post-revolution anarcho-communism. In *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin's primary argument and political project is to outline the material necessities of maintaining revolutionary activity. He begins by describing the need for basics, such as food and shelter, which the revolution must immediately provide at the outset, so that workers do not suffer due to the cessation of industry. These necessities, he argues, will also be consistently provided for all in the post-revolution world with a bare minimum of collectivist labor.[365] Half of a worker's day, week, or year will suffice to produce the necessities for herself, her family, and her community. What then, becomes of the remainder of her time? It is towards this question that Kropotkin turns in Chapter IX, "The *need* for luxury," (my emphasis).

For Kropotkin, leisure is the ultimate realization of humanity's potential, and arguably the ultimate end of the revolution. "We expect more from the revolution," he says, than just material sustenance, for an anarchist commune "produces all that is necessary for material life, it must also strive to satisfy all manifestations of the human mind."[366] Of course, he is dedicated to expropriation and a re-organization of society for the liberating of workers and the providing of human needs. It is this latter point that leads us to leisure, for Kropotkin argues that leisure itself is a necessity, and it is leisure that produces new knowledge. The leisurely activities that

[365] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, pp. 52-74, 87-93, 152-157, 160-168.
[366] Ibid, p. 94 & 96.

lend themselves to the artistic pursuits are uniquely human endeavors, and can even be means through which identities are created.

> Man is not a being whose exclusive purpose in life is eating, drinking, and providing shelter for himself. As soon as his material wants are satisfied, other needs, which, generally speaking may be described as of an artistic character, will thrust themselves forward…it is precisely these trifles that break the monotony of existence and make it agreeable.[367]

Under the capitalist system, he shows, workers are often unable even to subsist on their wages (provided that they indeed have work), and are therefore even more unable to pursue these higher, properly human aspirations, for they spend the entirety of their lives attempting to survive.

> We see that the worker, compelled to struggle painfully for bare existence, is reduced to ignore the higher delights, the highest within man's reach, of science, and especially of scientific discovery; of art, and especially of artistic creation. It is in order to obtain for all of us joys that are now reserved for the few; in order to give leisure and the possibility of developing everyone's intellectual capabilities, that the social revolution must guarantee daily bread to all. After bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim. No doubt, nowadays, when hundreds and thousands of human beings are in need of bread, coal, clothing, and shelter, luxury is a crime; to satisfy it, the worker's child must go without bread! But in a society in which all have the necessary food and shelter, the needs which we consider luxuries today will be more keenly felt.[368]

Here we see Kropotkin present bread as not simply an end of the revolution (i.e. in his insistence on sustenance for all), but also a means toward greater human endeavors such as art. Those leisurely goods and activities that only *appear* as luxurious, due to their rarity within the capitalist modes of production and existence, are indeed genuine human *needs*. It is through this definition that the tension in Kropotkin's

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[367] Ibid, p. 94.
[368] Ibid. pp. 94-95.

chapter title springs forth, for luxury is by definition not a need (except perhaps as a means for keeping workers engaged, cf. Mandeville), but an exuberant expenditure that exceeds the necessary.[369] He is not making a Dionysian or hedonistic argument here, along the lines of celebrating excess and pleasure. Instead, he is insisting upon a redefinition of those goods, activities, and expenditures that are identified as luxury under capitalism.

Luxury, in other words, will not exist under anarcho-communism, but will instead be redefined as needful enjoyment. Morris contributes to this line of thought in multiple ways. The first of these is the consistent critique he levels against the luxury of his day, as in his view said luxury is always already a mechanism of exclusion and haughty extravagance that flies in the face of the aims of art, "the middle classes of our civilization have embraced luxury instead of art."[370] Luxury operates to the exclusion of art, for it is produced via exploitative labor (and art for Morris can only be produced freely), and luxury is always classed. In fact, as shown in the lecture excerpt below, Morris finds excessive luxury to be an embarrassment, both to the rich and poor alike. Luxury as such isn't conducive to art, and indeed is corrosive to it.

> [N]o room of the richest man should look grand enough to make a simple man shrink in it, or luxurious enough to make a thoughtful man feel ashamed in it; it will not do so if Art be at home there, for she has no foes so deadly as insolence and waste. Indeed, I fear that at present the decoration of rich men's houses is mostly wrought out at the bidding of grandeur and luxury, and that art has been mostly cowed or shamed out of them; nor when I come to think

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[369] CITE: Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees

[370] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 148.

> of it will I lament it overmuch. Art was not born in the palace; rather she fell sick there, and it will take more bracing air than that of rich men's houses to heal her again. If she is ever to be strong enough to help mankind once more, she must gather strength in simple places…Meantime now, when rich men won't have art, and poor men can't, there is, nevertheless, some unthinking craving for it, some restless feeling in men's minds of something lacking somewhere, which has made many benevolent people seek the possibility of cheap art. What do they mean by that? One art for the rich and another for the poor? No, she won't have it. Art is not so accommodating as the justice and religion of society, and she won't have it.[371]

In other words, despite Morris's own penchant for finery and beauty, he can't abide by luxurious frivolities, most especially at the exclusion of the poor and working classes. Art is hence not a luxurious good, but rather an enslaved commodity under a capitalistic regime that disallows free expression.

Survival will be ensured in the imagined future beyond capitalism, so other more pleasurable endeavors and labors beyond mere survival (including crafts, arts, and scientific experimentation/discovery) can be pursued not by the few fortunate members of the upper and middle class intelligentsia, but by all. The definition of 'luxury' as it has previously existed will cease, for people will be by-in-large free to pursue the arts, crafts, education, and relationships that they fancy, and that capital had previously denied them. This coincides with Morris's dual elimination in his imagined future society (in a nonfiction context, e.g. the lecture "The Society of the Future") of asceticism and luxury. Asceticism is to be "made extinct" for it "makes us ashamed" or even prevents us from pursuing "the good life" consisting of

[371] Ibid, p. 114. See also Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 382.

"natural" pleasures like "being amorous or merry."[372] Yet, in simultaneously calling for the extinction of luxury, Morris recognizes that this may seem to be a paradox, though "it ought not to do so. What brings about luxury but a sickly discontent with the simple joys of the lovely earth?"[373] So, luxury is the domain of the current wealthy, as a sort of depreciation of organic beauty, though importantly not the domain of the future equal subjects. Instead, what may be considered luxurious now through the perversions of capital will no longer have this status, and only those things which are considered "pleasant" will be freely and voluntarily produced, and the "reward" of a "decent life, a share in the common life" among equals is all that anyone can justly ask for.[374] This new mode of production will be congealed in the aesthetic object, discussed further in a section below.

The most explicit overlap between the thought of Kropotkin and Morris is precisely on the insistence of leisure and the pleasure within labor in a post-revolution/post-capitalist world. They agree on the universal claim that "the artistic need exists in all" and that the hand/mind split in types of labor is a falsity perpetuated by capitalist constructions.[375] In his lectures, Morris explicitly outlines the universal existence, presences, and potentiality of artistic needs and desires in connection to his theory on non-alienated work. Work is a pleasure for Morris when

[372] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 457.
[373] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 458.
[374] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 459 & 495.
[375] Ibid. pp. 95 & 98.

it is not pursued for the profit of the capitalist (i.e. estranged wage labor) or beyond the choice of the laborer (i.e. slavery, serfdom).

Kropotkin outlines the importance of "agreeable work," much in the way that Morris describes the pleasurable work of "useful labor."[376] For one, Kropotkin allows for the fact that disagreeable tasks remain in society, no matter what the economic structure. Yet, advancements can be and are made to improve the pleasantness of workers' surroundings, eliminate threats to the workers' health and safety, and eliminate all labor not necessary to the community (or that cannot be efficiently done by mechanization). With such change, Kropotkin proposes that even the most disagreeable tasks can be improved, especially if such tasks are incentivized through the carrying lighter loads or fewer hours of designated labor than more agreeable work. Work, most especially the least attractive work, should be limited to "four or five hours a day" and no one worker should ever be stuck in a given profession, but would have "the possibility of varying it according to his tastes."[377] This variety of labors is also present in the imagined future of Nowhere, for one person may work in agriculture, preparing food, crafting goods, or scholarly work. In Nowhere, workers do not see their labor as drudgery, but often as a source of great pleasure, exercise, opportunities for learning, etc.

The other important facet of free labor/pleasure labor is that in the post-capitalist society, Morris and Kropotkin agree that mutual aid and solidarity will be

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376 "Useful Work v. Useless Toil" contained in Morris, William. 1966. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXIII*. New York: Russell & Russell, pp. 98-120.

377 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, p. 107.

(once again) the crucial organizing factor of economies. Morris claims that happiness in pleasurable labor will only take place if labor is defined by the "new cooperative art of life" that can only exist "if mutual help be its moving principle."[378]

Spatial Organization in Nowhere

What we also witness in *News from Nowhere* is a direct refutation of the industry promoted by Bellamy in favor of agrarianism. Morris's fascination with medievalism is apparent in Nowhere-England, but importantly this is a society with the agrarian aesthetic of the medieval but none of the exploitations or inequalities of feudalism. Instead, we see communalism, cooperation, and hospitality in accord with traditional notions of human dignity. The subtitle to *News from Nowhere* is *An Epoch of Rest*, which nicely demonstrates Morris's belief that the emancipation of humanity from capitalism will lead to a future society in which labor and gain are no longer the definers of status or the singular focus of life. The anachronism is novel, but not absolute, for production revives the craftsmanship of the pre-capitalist epoch while liberating said craftsmanship from feudal exploitation. In other words, Morris's medievalism is not a return to prior-existing modes of existence (which would be a pure form of anachronism par excellence), but rather a progressive move forward by recognizing the emancipatory elements within a previously existing epoch.

In Nowhere's spatial organization, Morris shows similarities with Kropotkin in being influenced by the Paris Commune of 1871. His use of space in Nowhere demonstrates his appreciation and his critiques of the Commune. That is, Morris

[378] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 373 & 374.

demonstrates an imagined future in which public space is largely democratized, yet has not been subject to wholesale demolition but rather retooling and re-functioning in many cases. Morris's future London makes use of the ruins of Victorian architecture and specific buildings held in high regard during his own capitalist epoch. The British Museum, for instance, is not maintained as a tourist destination displaying the stolen historical artifacts from the old empire, but is rather the site of a large communal house. In other words, this utopia reclaims the ruins of the capitalist system, reallocating and repurposing them to better serve communal needs. This use of space is particularly important in Morris's aesthetic theory, wherein he follows his teacher John Ruskin in understanding architecture as the superior (or the exemplar) art. This is due to the fact that architecture sections off and structures the spaces in which art is produced and consumed. The context for artistic production and consumption is of particular important in Morris's theory, and therefore architecture is supremely important. Poor, ugly, or 'cockneyfied' (in other words, utilitarian capitalist) architecture can only yield productions of lesser quality, whereas beautiful surroundings yield superior creative and useful works.

This understanding of space is also seen in Morris's presentation of landscape, as the external beauty, the natural aesthetic of the land is 'restored' in this future Nowhere-England. We follow William and his new friends on a trip along the Thames River, taking in the countryside of Southern England. For instance, the protagonist cannot immediately recognize the Thames because it is so translucent, clean, and beautiful, absent of the corruptions and pollutions of Morris's 19th century.

Morris himself lived most of his adult life in Kelmscott House in Hammersmith, London, on a modest estate mere footsteps from the Thames. He often rowed in the river for exercise. He also took many leisurely journeys with friends and family both up and down the river to his other country homes, to accept friends' invitations to visit, and to further explore parts of the country he had visited while young or while giving lecture tours.[379] In other words, Morris had a deep personal attachment to the Thames, as well as an extensive knowledge of it.

For Morris, contra Bellamy, space in a socialist utopia is used temporarily, as inhabitants of any space are mobile, transitory, and mutable enough to move between spaces more than settle down to them. Hospitality is therefore also a central component of this society of neighbors. As the protagonist William Guest demonstrates, the mobile lives of Nowhere's citizens often necessitates on their calling upon friends and neighbors for food, lodging, etc. all in a free and reciprocal manner.

Morris demonstrates a commitment to the idea that it is capitalism, not labor itself, that is the source of displeasure in work. Work itself, he argues, can and should be a keen source of pleasure in the human experience. Echoes of Marx spring forth in this argument, in the very idea that labor is a most fundamentally human experience, i.e. the physical transformation of the material world (ostensibly for the better). What can we make of this postulation of work as a source of pleasure? In conversation with not only Kropotkin and Marx, placing Morris into conversation with 20th century

[379] William Morris original journals, contained Morris Papers, Vol. XVII, British Library Manuscripts Collection.

theorists of excess and pleasure, such as Bataille and Vaneigem can reveal much of his idea of work as pleasure principle.

Situationist Raoul Vaneigem argues that work and pleasure are incompatible, the former precluding the existence of the latter due to coercion (physical and psychic). But what Vaneigem also does is connect work to a system of exchange (what Morris would refer to as commerce). He writes that "All pleasure is creative if it avoids exchange" but that often the creations of the working class have been stolen by the bourgeoisie.[380] He therefore seeks the ultimate pleasure, i.e. the pleasure of doing what he wants, in "utter gratuitousness, utterly useless pleasure."[381] Couldn't this be pleasurable, creative production? Bataille also finds an important role for the expressions of pleasure, most especially in similar excesses.

Sovereignty is, for Bataille, an expression that connotes freedom from labor and the ability for useless consumption (i.e. useless consumption can take various forms, such as sacrifice, eroticism, idleness, alcohol).[382] In other words, the sovereign is one who consumes without producing.[383] This could be either the richest or the poorest in a given society, for the definition of sovereignty relies only on excessive consumption, i.e. consumption without production (or taking without giving). In the absolute expression of desire and useless consumption and the complete attention to the present moment (rather than possible futurities or the horror/specter of death) the symbol that Bataille presents as representative of

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[380] Vaneigem, Raoul. 1983. *The Book of Pleasures*. London: Pending Press, pp. 24-25.
[381] Vaneigem, Raoul. 1983. *The Book of Pleasures*. London: Pending Press, p. 34.
[382] Bataille, Georges. 1991. *The Accursed Share, Vol. 1*. New York: Zone Books, p. 119.
[383] Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share, Vol. 2 & 3*. pp. 198-9 and 226.

sovereignty is the festival.[384] What must be understood, however, is that even in the festival, i.e. that which is *closest* to sovereignty, full sovereignty is but an ideal. Indeed, sovereignty is "the impossible" ideal toward which Bataille strives, "the impossible thus revealed is not an equivocal position; it is the sovereign self-consciousness that, precisely, no longer turns away from itself."[385] This "sovereign self-consciousness" that faces itself seems to encapsulate the ideal of never fully realized, impossible authenticity. In other words, not only is the accursed share excessive, but it is categorically opposed to all possible (and hitherto realized) modes labor and use value (those fundamental features of capitalism).

Productive work is clearly *useful*, for Morris's calculation, all humanely created goods are both useful and beautiful (or perhaps useful *in* their beauty). Even Vaneigem, however, sees the pleasure in what he calls the "self-employment" of D.I.Y. productions and consumptions, for these "creative pleasures" are not a part of the capitalistic "imperative to produce."[386] Additionally, Bataille never denies the labor that goes into the accursed share, e.g. the labor that is invested in preserved cheese (the accursed share of milk) or fermenting wine (the accursed share of grapes). Yet, this labor is not performed by the sovereign who enjoys the excess, but by the workers who do not. The sovereign enjoys in luxury what the workers who produce the surplus are denied. Luxury, for Bataille, is but one of two options (the other being war) for expenditure of surplus, that excess of energy in the economic ecosystem.

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[384] Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 2 & 3*., pp. 231, 241, 245. Note the consistency with Nietzsche's discussion of the festival of punishment. See also Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, p. 103 on "letting oneself lose time."
[385] Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, p. 111.
[386] Vaneigem, Raoul. 1983. *The Book of Pleasures*. London: Pending Press, p. 18.

And this expenditure must be a squandering, useless investment, for any use value will not in fact be an expenditure of excess but a cyclical reinvestment of the productive system. As we will explore below, however, in the elimination of class and exploitative labor in his imagined future, Morris outlines the ways in which finery can be produced and consumed by workers, i.e. the workers are not excluded from sovereignty, but in contradistinction to Bataille, claim it through their practices of pleasurable labor. In addition, perhaps the figure of the guest to Morris is akin to Bataille's sovereign, as in this epoch of hospitality the guest is welcomed and provided for, without the necessary expectation of reciprocity, payment, or labor.

Are work and pleasure really so incompatible? Perhaps the beginning of an answer comes from Marx, in the recognition that it is not labor that the worker sells to the capitalist, but labor *power*, that is, labor transformed into commodity. In explanation, Marx reiterates the Hegelian respect for labor, which is naturally a positive endeavor through which humans can transform the material world. Yet, this naturally positive (dare we say *pleasurable*) experience is negated by the unnatural processes that capitalism utilizes to alienate the worker from her product (and therefore also her work, her self, and ultimately her species being—that is, the potentiality of her humanity). Alienated labor is hence a perversion of work that removes all progressive, liberating, and humane aspects from it, and serves only to further the returns of the capitalist, achieved through the objectification of workers. Marx describes this multi-stage process of objectification beginning with "the worker

[who] puts his life into the object…the worker becomes a slave of his object."[387] It is indeed this alienated labor that creates surplus value for the profit of the capitalist, labor that is further alienated in the valorization process of the commodity that further separates the wage of the worker from the value of the commodity.[388]

This object in which the worker has poured their labor, confronts her as alien, "belonging to a being *other* than me" which necessitates the fact that "man's relation to himself becomes *objective* and *real* for him through his relation to the other man" (emphasis his).[389] The worker is hence alienated not simply from the product of her labor, but also from her self-understanding, in that even her relation to herself is mediated, and the alienation of labor, the object, and from fellow men and women "is the loss of [their] self."[390] Again, I must emphasize that this is not labor itself that is so inculcated with loss and alienation, but rather the labor power that is sold to and is exploited by the capitalist. For all of these negative aspects of alienated labor, we still witness Marx and Engels celebrating the potential, and natural pleasure that work can have. In the examination above of Kropotkin's theory and Morris's Nowhere, we can clearly see that each takes seriously one of the most celebrated passages in Marx & Engels's *The German Ideology* that under communism,

> Nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes…making it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the

[387] Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, p. 72.
[388] i.e. In that value of exchange that exceeds the cost of production (including the cost of labor). Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*., pp. 293-306.
[389] Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, pp. 79-80.
[390] Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, p. 74.

> afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic.[391]

Within each of these modes of free labor, Morris identifies and celebrates qualities of health, enjoyment, and pleasure. Given Marx's infamous declaration of the necessary escape of the "idiocy of the country," how might Morris cite Marxist socialism while maintaining agrarian sympathies? The short answer is that Morris is familiar with Marx, and made great use of much of his corpus, yet never openly aligns his socialism with any particular orthodoxy. An exploration of *News from Nowhere* also reveals that Morris departs from Marx on the role of the state in the revolution, and especially post-revolution. Morris doesn't see the state as promoting a rule of the proletariat to eventually wither away, but rather sees the state (again a striking similarity to Kropotkin) as the hired guns of capital and therefore the enemy of the working classes.

Morris is also quite open on the fact that he is no authority on political economy, which explains in part his foci on leisurely life and aesthetics in a future post-capitalist epoch. Yet, Morris is explicitly opposed to luxurious goods, which he defines as those goods denied the working classes. But what if no one were denied access or enjoyment of things that are defined as luxury under bourgeois capitalism? Those very products and modes of being that are viewed as luxurious in Morris's own time (e.g. beautiful artworks and tapestries, fine food and wine, and literature) are precisely what he hopes socialism can gain for all. It is with this imperative that he

[391] Marx, *The German Ideology*, p. 47. See also Kropotkin's similar phrase describing diversity of labors "in the same individual," *The Conquest of Bread*, p. 74.

claims, "I do not want art for the few any more than I want education for the few."[392] Let us now turn to a specific example of 'luxury' in Morris's Nowhere, to see both the function and the banality of elements of enjoyment and leisure present in his utopian vision. Also important in this account will be the way in which luxury has been redefined, or perhaps even erased as a concept no longer relevant to the Nowhere of abundance.

For Morris, there is under capitalism a certain uniqueness to the art object, but that this uniqueness is a problematic product of the economic form. This sublime quality of the art object is in decline under capital, however, and Morris's concern with increasing mechanization is that it will further the decline, and perhaps lead to an ultimate demise, of art as a human endeavor. This anxiety is strangely resonant with the later critique of Cornelius Castoriadis, who declares the post-industrial, mechanized society as *more* restrictive on creative thinking and artistic expression, countering the promise of mechanization's liberating potential. Unlike Morris, however, Castoriadis argues that leisure and creativity are not always mutually constituting, but in fact the former could inhibit the latter. This argument provides a necessary critique of Morris's Nowhere, and hence is worth quoting at length;

> Were it not for the continuous manufacturing of new "needs" and the built-in obsolescence of most products, "primary" and "secondary" production must come to absorb a vanishing quantum of human time. In brief, a leisure society is, theoretically, within reach, whereas a society with creative, personal roles for all seems as remote now as it was during the nineteenth century.[393]

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392 "The Art of the People" contained in Morris, William. 1966. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXII*. New York: Russell & Russell, pp. 28-50.

393 Castoriadis, Cornelius. 1997. *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 33.

Here Castoriadis claims that capitalism, in particular post-industrial capitalism, is actually quite good at absorbing excess labor. Granted, Morris did not live in a time of designed obsolescence in expendable consumer technologies, yet he does still offer critiques of what he calls the "shoddy" work of his time. In a certain way, capitalo-efficiency models always contain some element of obsolescence inherent in the modes of production, for diminishing returns and the profit motive necessitate that markets continuously expand (e.g. hence repeatedly selling their "shoddy" lower quality widgets to consumers is better for the capitalist than selling one, long-lasting quality widget). Morris anticipates the further development of artificiality, claiming that "we are helpless in the face of the necessities we have created, and which, in spite of our anxiety about art, are at present driving us into luxury unredeemed by beauty."[394]

Castoriadis's point in important here, though, for not only does he reiterate Morris's anxiety about workers' hours of labor not being diminished by mechanization (but rather their quotas increased, which Castoriadis correctly claims has in fact occurred), but that much labor is expended in the production of manufactured "needs" that are in fact useless expenditure of artificial luxury. Artificial needs, that is, that serve no real purpose for the consumer, and are merely the capitalist's hedge against diminishing returns and devaluation. It is increasingly the case, as well, that working class consumers are indebted to financial institutions

[394] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 339.

(that often have interests that overlap with the same capitalist employers they work for) in order to "afford" these frivolous goods. Beyond this increasingly nebulous concentration of wealth in the hands of the few by selling the many manufactured unnecessary "needs" designed specifically to require constant upgrades and repurchase, Castoriadis does still see some modicum of hope in the very fact of the constructed quality of these commodities. As these goods are not actually needed, they can be done away with, with relatively low material (though perhaps a substantial psychological) cost to consumers. In fact, he unpacks here the claim that if we were to eliminate the unnecessary expenditure of labor on these unnecessary items, we could in fact utilize mechanization to diminish the need for human labor time (not to mention environmental degradation), and hence usher in an age of increased leisure. But, and this is where Castoriadis breaks most sharply with Morris, a leisure society is not equivocal to a creative or liberated society. In other words, Castoriadis sees a possibility for a leisure society complete with pleasure, but absent of excess, creative labor, whereas for Morris, creative labor *is* leisurely and pleasurable. But it is only the free, creative labor which can be pleasurable, and he argues that in order to make labor processes pleasurable writ large, there must be a concerted effort to "add to all necessary articles of use of a certain portion of beauty and interest, which the user desires to have and the maker to make."[395]

> *Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,*
>
> *Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.*

[395] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 343.

For Morris, leisure involves creative labor, for only through non-exploitative laboring processes can humans produce the materialization of their desires. According to Morris, such an organization of labor is the only organization conducive to the productive of true art, "the pleasure and interest in the work itself are necessary to the production of art however humble; this pleasure and interest can only be present when the workman is free in his work," which is not allowed or allowable under the "present system of industrial production."[396] To support these claims, Morris turns to pre-capitalist antiquity to celebrate the ways in which beauty was produced, consumed, and circulated in what he takes to be both a more leisurely, more creative, and ultimately, most authentically human and hospitable epoch.

Why might Castoriadis see a split between a leisure society and a creative one? Is there an assumption about humans' relationship to work as fundamentally undesirable and incompatible with leisure? It seems that the crux of Castoriadis's argument here is that the more mechanized labor processes become, the less human workers will need to labor, and the more they can live a leisurely (and ostensibly labor free) lifestyle. Morris fundamentally rejects the idea that leisure without labor is acceptable to most, instead taking the optimistic view that when labor is not alienated (or alienating), most people will want to engage in it. One crucial aspect of this blurring of the lines between labor and leisure, or the concept of what we can call *productive* leisure, is the recognition of the diversity of human talents coupled with the social organization that allows for the voluntary furtherance of this diversity.

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[396] Ibid, p. 351.

Part of the interest in a text like *News from Nowhere*, as with its intellectual (still, yet differently, socialist) rival *Looking Backward* is the element of time travel that makes strange the present tense by imagining a radically different future for which the protagonist must explain and justify his own present. Embedded within such a narrative structure, however, is the assumption that "the corrupt society of the present" from which the text is written, and to which the imagined future reflects back, contains "forces which could revolutionize the future."[397] In other words, these novels don't take place within a parallel universe or dimension, but rather in an imagined future that demonstrates the victory of liberating tactics, mechanisms, organizations, and aesthetics, all of which have come to an imagined fruition. Artisanal production, for instance, never disappears, and was very much present within the 19th century London from which Morris writes. Of course, such production, which Morris not only celebrates but also actively participates in, is at a decided disadvantage to the efficiency of industrial mass production. But the seed of small-scale, non-exploitative, and even aesthetically oriented production is still there, and hence it doesn't need to be created so much as protected and furthered.

The other crucial development that the future oriented narrative structure allows Morris is the opportunity to discuss a utopian future rather than outline the ways in which he foresees the struggle for liberation unfolding. To be sure, Morris does outline some of the important political events and developments that would help to bring the downfall of capitalism and the emergence of agrarian non-state socialism.

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[397] Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 175.

However, this struggle exists in the in-between, for it occurs in the protagonist's future and his interlocutor's past. In his political essays and lectures, Morris is clear that though there are crucial rupture points, the transition to socialism will be slow, and indeed, will take "many generations of effort in perfecting the transformation."[398] Along these lines, Morris is able to present a future in which art has be reborn, for as Thompson rightly argues, in the 1880s Morris demonstrates a nearly obsessive attention to the need for art to "die within capitalist society", so that it could be "reborn when Socialist society had for many years been established."[399] Hence, on the one hand, we can understand Nowhere as an instance of Lacan's "future perfect," as that imagined idyllic future from which the present can be affected and shaped. Indeed, Morris's imagined future perfect, read retroactively through the romanticized version of mediaeval maker culture, allows for "the pleasurable exercise of our energies, which is the only true source of happiness."[400] Even further, Morris suggests that "the creation of beautiful things," that is the productive desire to create being fulfilled through pleasurable labor, is in fact "greatest pleasure in the world."[401] Yet, one the other hand, there are elements of imperfection—perhaps even a token attention to realism—throughout the text as well. Not only does this imperfection appear in the struggles and occasional conflicts in the future perfect of Nowhere, but also in the very aesthetic objects which Morris is so keen to focus on. Indeed, the

[398] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. p. 337
[399] Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 664.
[400] Morris, William. 2012. *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. 22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. p. 358
[401] Ibid, pp. 435-437.

marks of the maker and the human capacity for imperfection provides an interesting critique of the emotionless, faceless perfection of mechanized production, as well as a human imperative towards the improvement of laboring processes and the growth of aesthetic possibility.[402]

This *Is* a Pipe: The Aesthetic Object of Morris's Utopia

In Chapter VI of *News from Nowhere*, 'A Little Shopping,' we witness William Guest in what initially appears as a strikingly ordinary set of errands at a sort of market.[403] The brilliance of this short chapter is that it concisely encapsulates the kernel of Morris's politico-aesthetic theory. The encounter with the aesthetic object, i.e. the tobacco pipe, affords our protagonist the opportunity not only to reflect on the value of beauty, but also the pleasure within labor processes in Nowhere. In other words, as will be discussed in depth below, the aesthetic object is the literal materialization of pleasurable—and hence non-alienated—labor. I argue that this seemingly insignificant foray into a 'market' underlines the radical potentiality of a Morrisean re-imagining of both labor and exchange. This re-imagining of labor as pleasurable and exchange as equitable is materialized in the aesthetic object of the pipe Guest acquires in Nowhere.

I qualify the descriptor of 'market' because what perplexes our time-traveling Victorian William Guest, however, is that though the buildings and interactions of the London market seem and feel familiar, no one is engaged in commerce, strictly

[402] Sennett, Richard. 2008. *The Craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 9, 65-66, 145.
[403] Guest is Morris's imagined—and hence fictionalized—future self and our protagonist in *News from Nowhere*, whose surname should be recognized as signifying his status in the future epoch.

speaking. However, Guest does witness many goods, though no currency, changing hands. This is neither a credit-based system, nor a barter system, but one in which goods are recognized as belonging collectively by all Nowhereans. This arrangement is not against private ownership of individual goods, but rather recognition that individual members of this society have rights to the goods they need *and* the goods they desire. Of course, we shouldn't overemphasize the rights-based discourse here, as this may carry undue consumerist overtones. Indeed, the 'right' towards fulfillment of desires in Nowhere is entirely dependent on the communal, gift-based economy. The short and seemingly insignificant interaction at the tobacconist actually pulls together the most crucial of Morris's aesthetic and economic arguments. Not only is this the moment Guest begins to understand his new temporal surroundings, but it is also the reader's first real glimpse into the relational functioning of a post-capitalist exchange. It is significant that the primary desire of our protagonist is to procure an unessential, yet very much desired good, for Guest's necessities are met immediately with nearly no expenditure of effort on his part.

In a reversal of Dickensian London, in Morris's imagined Nowhere-London, want is met and abundance is keenly felt. Guest is accompanied to Piccadilly, which he is told is 'a very good market for pretty things, and is mostly kept for the handsomer goods, as the Houses-of-Parliament market, where they sell cabbages and turnips and such like things, along with beer and the rougher kind of wine, is so

near.'[404] The space of the Houses of Parliament has been converted to the sale of necessary goods, means of subsistence, and baser goods. But, and this is the crucial point of this chapter, these necessities are not the limit of productivity or consumption. Indeed, there are 'pretty things' for enjoyment.

The object of beauty plays an important role in the interactions, movements, and desires of Morris's Nowhere-England. The aesthetic object, of which the tobacco pipe examined below is the primary example in Morris's text, acts as both a materialization of beauty in an object (brought about not simply in the end product of the object, but indeed in its very productive and consumptive processes) and an example of Morrissean handicraft. What the aesthetic object in Nowhere represents is a multi-faceted critique of the mechanization and alienation of the worker under capitalism, both from her work and from the other members of her community. To elaborate, what we find in Nowhere is not just the reorganization of the modes of production, but also the introduction of a categorically different aesthetic regime. The revolution that occurred in the interim between Morris's late 19th century and the early 21st century in which the novel is set was clearly and evidently fought simultaneously on social and aesthetic registers.

The most remarkable example of desire invested into an object is the aforementioned tobacco pipe that Guest procures early in the novel. Guest enters the shop with no money or goods for barter, and leaves with a beautiful pipe and beautifully filled pouch of tobacco. His interactions with the adolescents working

[404] William Morris & May Morris (ed.), *The Collected Works of William Morris*, *Vol. 16*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 34.

there is a pleasure in-itself, as they view *him* as having done *them* a service, simply by sharing part of the day with them, enjoying their company, and partaking of their goods. His presence and patronage are appreciated as compliments to their non-alienated labor, as hospitality has become reciprocal and mutually beneficial in this utopia. After requesting tobacco, and producing a tired and tattered piece of cloth that Guest embarrassingly uses as a pouch, the girl at the counter insisted that she be allowed to give him a proper pouch to use.

> The girl held up in her finger and thumb a red morocco bag, gaily embroidered, and said, "There, I have chosen one for you, and you are to have it: it is pretty, and will hold a lot."
>
> Therewith she fell to cramming it with tobacco, and laid it down by me and said, "Now for the pipe: that also you must let me choose for you; there are three pretty ones just come in."
>
> She disappeared again, and came back with a big-bowled pipe in her hand, carved out of some hard wood very elaborately, and mounted in gold sprinkled with little gems. It was, in short, as pretty and gay a toy as I had ever seen; something like the best Japanese work, but better.
>
> "Dear me!" said I, when I set eyes on it, "this is altogether too grand for me, or for anybody but the Emperor of the World. Besides, I shall lose it: I always lose my pipes."
>
> The child seemed rather dashed, and said, "Don't you like it, neighbor?"
>
> "O yes," I said, "of course I like it."
>
> "Well, then, take it," said she, "and don't trouble about losing it. What will it matter if you do? Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another."[405]

This scene from Nowhere demonstrates several key points about the aesthetic object and its liberation from exploitative processes. The material beauty of the object is of

[405] *Ibid*, p. 37.

course important, and Morris describes the 'gold sprinkled with little gems' to show the sparkling splendor and extravagance of the pipe. Yet, this gold and gem encrusted pipe also demonstrates the way in which these materials that were once considered so precious, and hence were the exclusive property of wealthy elites and the cause of much bloodshed, have now been broadly democratized. The value of gold and gemstones are purely aesthetic here, for exchange is of no concern, and the commodity form has eroded.

For these imagined future folks, the pipe is pretty and has aesthetic value, but exchange/commodity value is no even within their consciousness. There is no typical separation between the useful and the beautiful in this object, for it fulfills both aesthetic and ostensibly utilitarian purposes, and the beauty of the pipe *is* its use. An avid clay pipe smoker himself, Morris was undoubtedly aware of the unnecessary excess in the design and crafting of the pipe (not to mention the fashioning of which may negative effect the evenness, smoothness, and pleasure of the pipe while actually smoking). Why, then, present a pipe made of gold and encrusted with gemstones? For one, the most straightforward interpretation is that the pipe is demonstrative of the total disregard for previous tokens of wealth, embodied here in gold and gems.

Another possible interpretation of Guest's tobacco pipe is that the extravagance of its design indicates the pleasure of the maker. In Morris's politico-aesthetic theorization, work itself (when it is 'useful labor') is a source of pleasure when it is chosen freely and perfected (or at least, when perfection is the goal) by the producer. Crafts, for Morris personally as well as embodied in Nowhere in the pipe,

are sources of great endeavors, but also sources of great pride and pleasure. The pipe-maker, for instance, would have no need to crank out large numbers of ugly or flawed pipes once she escapes from the capital-exchange economy. The pipe-maker, like any craftsmen and craftswomen in Nowhere is only limited by their time and skill. Of these, only the latter is a true limitation, for though there would be training and education available, the social functioning of Nowhere acknowledges in Fourierian the heterogeneous nature of talents and skills, encouraging *but not demanding* that people pursue those activities most suited to their aptitudes, sympathies, and skills *as well as* desires. Time would therefore only be a limitation on the labor of a certain craft (e.g. pipe making) in so far as the laborer may wish to spend time outside one particular craft in order to pursue different and divergent tasks.

The other particularly striking thing about this scene is the evident pleasure the young girl has in the older man's consumption of her wares. So, the pipe is not only pleasurable to its maker in its making, and to the consumer in their consumption, but also to the maker (and in the case of these children, distributor) in its consumption. The young girl seems unduly stressed at the suggestion that Guest may not accept the pipe, initially thinking that the only possible explanation is that he is unhappy with it. Luckily, he alleviates this concern by stating that it is too grand a piece for him to possibly accept. To assuage his guilt about possessing, and possibly even losing, this splendiferous pipe, the girl assures him that he is not only entitled to such a pipe, but also gives the distinct impression that he may be hard pressed to find

a pipe that isn't similarly adorned. If no one is forced to make ugly commodities, then their existence in the world will largely fade away, to the eventuality witnessed in Nowhere that only beautiful objects (or aborted attempts at beautiful objects, i.e. as in practice or learning/experience based objects may still be put to use) are indeed produced at all.[406] Guest then graciously accepts the grand pipe, which he will put to good use later in the novel. This consumption of the beautiful takes heart from Morris's great teacher John Ruskin, who wrote that 'wise consumption is a far more difficult art than wise production…The vital question, for individual and for nation, is, never "how much do they make?" but "to what purpose do they spend".'[407] The pleasure in the shopkeepers' labor also has an especial resonance in increasingly service-based economies.

Continuing on Morris's lecture themes, we can view the tobacco pipe in Nowhere as materialization of the beauty that Morris defines as radical. Morris argues that his aesthetic goal of perfecting beauty has a two-fold political agenda informing it. In 'The Aims of Art,' Morris tells us that his goal (achievable through art and art alone) is to soothe, mitigate suffering, and in short to increase the pleasure and happiness of humanity.[408] This goal is only universalized when capitalism, most

[406]For example, Dick presents his handcrafted belt-buckle as an "early" attempt (and one that he is not particularly proud of) that is still utilized and is indeed still beautiful, *Ibid*, pp. 6-8. In fact, part of the beauty of this object is its imperfection, for Morris presents a respect for the handcrafted strikingly similar to Lao-Tzu's connection between achievement (and so-called *high* perfection) and minor imperfections elaborated upon in the *Tao Te Ching*.
[407] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, Oakland: PM Press, 2011, p. 199.
[408] William Morris, "The Aims of Art," contained in Gary Zabel (ed.), *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*, 1993 Boston: George's Hill, pp. 113-126. See also "Signs of Change" contained in Morris, William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXIII*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, p. 21.

especially the mechanization and industrialism so prevalent in capitalist modes of production, is negated. The second, and more radical, of Morris's goals in pursuing aesthetic beauty is to instill discontent in the working classes by demonstrating the possibilities for beauty they are denied. In other words, the aesthetic experience of beauty can be politically mobilizing when it demonstrates to the working classes what they could have access to, but are denied under capitalism. Of course, in this future context, the beauty of the object is no longer considered radical, but rather ordinary, because *beauty is the norm in a post-capitalist world*. The elimination of commerce also eliminates a good deal of ugliness in Morris's thought, for once the useful is linked to the beautiful, "trade finish" is forever done away with, yielding to "artistic finish."[409] But beyond being the ontological other to ugliness, or the counter to utilitarian limitations, beauty is for Morris a *necessary* feature of economies *preceding* (medievalism) and *postdating* (utopian socialism) capitalism. Beauty is the necessary norm for it 'adds beauty to the results of the work of man,' which has the multiple effects hitherto discussed (e.g. alleviating suffering, adding to the potentiality for happiness, etc.), but beauty also, and perhaps more importantly 'adds pleasure to the work itself, which would otherwise be painful and disgustful.'[410] The medievalist past and utopian future again underline Morris's playfulness with temporality.

[409] William Morris & May Morris (ed.), *The Collected Works of William Morris*, *Vol. 22*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 365.
[410] *Ibid*, p. 356.

Guest's response to being given the gilded pipe gives an incredible account of the subject position of a 19th century shopper/consumer-class Londoner. This is too much. This object is so beautiful it should *rightfully belong* to royalty. Why do *I*, of all people, *deserve* this? To steal a phrase from Kropotkin, anyone and everyone in Nowhere should have a claim to such objects of beauty, for this is truly a site of 'well-being for all.'[411] Guest's reaction to the beauty of the pipe demonstrates how culturally embedded definitions of beauty are, in striking tension to Morris's usual, more universalist understandings of beauty. His Victorian definition of excess and his view of the pipe as elaborate demonstrate well the value of gold and jewels in Victorian England, but also the status these aesthetics have as imparting value to their owner. The definition of the pipe as beautiful has a lessened meaning in Nowhere, for beauty is normative, while such a pipe would clearly have been considered exceptional (except in the hands of a monarch) in Victorian England.

Guest's very sensory perception (in the case of the pipe, sight and texture, but in other cases he is astounded by the sounds, smells, and tastes of Nowhere) have been conditioned and dulled by his Victorian experience. He is categorically unable to accept the evidence of his senses at first, and even believes that his compatriots must be deceiving him or that he must be dreaming. What we witness is an instance where the regime of the sensible is incompatible with the observer because his perception was trained by a different (and opposed) regime. His repeated use of the phrase 'very fine' in the text to describe his meals, tobacco, buildings, clothing, and

[411] Peter Kropotkin & Shatz, Marshall S. Shatz (ed.), *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 20.

more indicates almost an excess of finery, i.e. and an inability of William to fully enjoy all that his surroundings can offer him.

What William Guest comes to learn in Nowhere, however, is that such needless but beautiful excess is precisely the expression of the freedom that humanity enjoys after escaping capitalist alienation. Such objects of beauty are perhaps examples of the excess Georges Bataille celebrates, as they are neither necessary nor connected to the reproduction of productive cycles nor the reproduction of cycles of life. Such consumables, despite their capacity for being usable, are not utilitarian in that the labor, materials, and energy expended in the production of such aesthetic objects are *useless* futile expenditures, in precisely the fact of their not contributing to further circulation of energy. With tobacco, energy is literally expended by going up in smoke. Indeed, Bataille even identifies tobacco smoking specifically as a 'purely glorious expenditure, having for its goal to procure for the smoker an atmosphere detached from the general mechanics of things.'[412] How is it that Morris, that utopian socialist, can come to have such seemingly Dionysian excess and pleasure in his Nowhere? Pleasure is indeed a crucial aspect of Morris's vision, as the subtitle even indicates that this is the tale of *A Epoch of Rest*. In other words, Morris is not so interested in describing the economic efficiencies of full employment and non-alienated labor. Rather, he focuses on the improved pleasures of a more leisurely, non-capitalist countryside. The purpose driven labor of Nowhere-England is importantly not toil, but in its usefulness, voluntary nature, vigor in pursuit, and

[412] Georges Bataille Georges, *The Unfinished System of NonKnowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 6.

creative possibilities, work is itself a source of pleasure. This can be a powerful tactic connecting revelation with revolution, in terms of revealing attractive improvements in lifestyle that could appeal to oppressed classes on an affective level that often cold economic arguments of Marxist orthodoxy cannot reach.

We witness a similar excessive expenditure as Chapter VI continues, and the children request that Guest toast a glass of wine with them. The ugliness and distaste of inferior goods is gone now, as the end of commercial competition has removed mechanistic efficiency from producers' concerns. This absence of inferior goods is also perplexing to our guide, and he comments that he 'made a mental note to ask Dick how they managed to make fine wine when there were no longer labourers compelled to drink rot-gut instead of the fine wine which they themselves made.'[413] Under capitalism, finery is reserved for the leisure class, as the 'public needs are subordinated to the interest of capitalist masters' who can indeed 'force the public to put up with the less desirable article' while the workers producing said finery are explicitly excluded via scarcity and price.[414] In this forcing of the inferior, Morris even declares that under such exploitative power relations, the 'gross luxury' of the rich coupled with the 'useless toil' and suffering of the exploited classes, results in a degradation of humanity, a state in which 'our boasted individuality is a sham.'[415]

Yet, in Nowhere, *everyone* (all who are able that is) labors, though they engage in activities that are both productive and pleasurable, and labor that is

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413 Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 34.

414 Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 333.

415 *Ibid*, pp. 341 & 333.

voluntary pursued by each. No one lives off of inherited wealth of trust funds and private estates, but rather all live off the collective wealth of the community's past and present accumulation of 'wealth' more broadly defined than capital could ever allow. Wealth here is the collectively shared knowledge, resources, and pleasure. Something as banal as pipe-making ability, for instance, can be the result of collectively shared practices and techniques of smelting, carpentry, design, and aesthetics, as well as the practical demands of a smoking instrument. So, although the folks of Nowhere are engaged in labor, they themselves benefit from this labor on multiple registers; enjoying the fruits of their labor, finding pleasure in their free choice of what talents to hone and hence what labor to participate in, and enjoying the benefits of leisure without the past attachment of it to class position. Scarcity isn't here, but an excess of the very finest goods. In addition, the happenstance of this scene also demonstrates the lack of distribution and/or consumption regulation. Guest simply walks into the tobacconist, no one nor any institutional structure mandated that he has access to either this class of goods nor these specific goods. In fact, there are no ruling institutions at all in Nowhere, but rather an intricately connect cooperation among residents. Indeed, as Ruth Levitas comments, Morris abolishes

> [C]alculus and rationing, and imagines a society in which "the free development of each is the free development of all." The absence of a social machinery of rationed distribution in *News from Nowhere* then appears as a deliberate act of negation, not of social institutions per se, but of those specific processes.[416]

[416] Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 201.

There is no need for such an apparatus of distribution, for abundance in subsistence exists, and mutual cooperation makes it discourteous to take more than what one will rightfully use. Such communal abundance only occurs at the expense of individual miserliness, and also demonstrates the shift in morality that occurs with this equitable utopia, a shift that accompanies parallel shifts in labor, exchange, and aesthetics. If there is no need to supervise distribution, there is truly no need for the state in Morris's vision, for the organic organization among the people in Nowhere means that their labor processes, consumption habits, travel, discourse, and everyday practices requires no regulatory or controlling institutions of governance. There is no sovereign state, but rather a more complex understanding of sovereignty at work in this text.

But people in Nowhere don't fit into either of Bataille's categories of the sovereign non-laborer, for they are neither kings and queens nor the scoffing homeless.[417] Indeed, *everyone* that William Guest encounters is engaged in some sort of productive, agricultural, artistic, or hospitable labor. Yet, *everyone* also seems completely free to indulge in luxurious goods and activities. These expenditures are not excessive in Bataille's sense, but they are sovereign. Objects such as tobacco pipes, especially those as magnificent as that which Guest possesses, are not part of an accursed share, but rather are the necessary and inevitable outcome of totally liberated labor, of a society comprised entirely of self-ruling sovereigns.

[417] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Vol. 1*., New York: Zone Books, 1991, pp. 76 & 119.

The pipe itself is well crafted, showing the agreeableness of its production to the maker. There is nothing *necessary* in the pipe, as it relates to subsistence and survival, but rather there is something necessarily human, and perhaps even sovereign, in the enjoyment of this object on the parts of both producers and consumers. It is also on this point that we can turn to Kropotkin on the social *necessity* of luxury goods. The tobacco pipe is a materialization of the very needs that Kropotkin outlines as luxurious under capitalism, but simply human (as humans possess artistic needs and aspirations) under anarcho-communism. The very existence of the pipe in Nowhere, within an open and free market for 'pretty things' assumes that the basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, etc. have already been met. Indeed, bread has been conquered, so luxury may now follow, as another important human need.

The splendor of the pipe also represents an inter-temporal rupture for the character William Guest, as it is reminiscent for him of the luxurious goods of the former elite. In other words, the pipe is not so much out of place as it is out of time. Luxurious goods owned in by elites in Guest's native 19th century London seem fundamentally incompatible with the agrarian simplicity of Nowhere. The simple agrarian future in which William finds himself appears to be incompatible with all luxurious goods of past epochs. Yet, the exuberance of the pipe demonstrates that such artisanal processes from the pre-modern era produce precisely the most beautiful objects, surpassing the supposed efficiency and invisible hand of the modern era. The rupture represented by the pipe also indicated a coming together of aesthetic and

utilitarian goals, goals that were only falsely separated under capitalism but 'the two elements of use and beauty' can very much be adjoined.[418] So, we find in the pipe a radically inter-temporal object, anachronistically presenting the "finest work" of the past in the context of the future.

The existence of the tobacco pipe, as it is described, is of such importance because elsewhere Morris takes such pains to discount bourgeois luxury as not only unnecessary, but as directly harmful through the exploitation of the working classes. Again Kropotkin is useful, for the luxury he describes, and hence the features I am connecting to William Guest's tobacco pipe in Nowhere are not strictly 'luxury' in the bourgeois sense. The nuanced shift in definition is also a product of the fact that alienated, exploitative labor no longer exists in Morris's future England, and all goods are therefore made freely, and via pleasure rather than suffering. In his own time, Morris was an outspoken critic of bourgeois luxury, on both political and aesthetic grounds. As a socialist class warrior, he often wrote and lectured on what he refers to as the 'frivolities' of luxury, which is categorically opposed in his thought to art.[419] Elaborating on the frivolous nature of bourgeois luxury, he claims that not only are these products not necessary but they are the direct cause of working class exploitation, as wage labor works to fulfill the desires of the rich few rather than the needs of the many (i.e. and beauty is a necessity for Morris).

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[418] Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 155.

[419] "The Prospects of Architecture" contained in William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXII*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, p. 148.

Beyond this political economic critique, however, he also critiques bourgeois taste for its aesthetic ugliness. 'Frivolous luxury' is concerned with show, i.e. displaying the wealth and means of its owner, while 'art' is concerned only with beauty (and all that Morris believes beauty can accomplish in one's life). Morris established his design company in an effort to combat the ugly aesthetics not only of industrialism, but also the callous display of wealth in Victorian London. Wealth too is ugly to Morris, as he writes that 'Art was not born in the palace; rather, she fell sick there, and it will take more than the bracing air of rich men's houses to heal her again.'[420] So, in Morris's formulation, luxury is the ugly, garish display of rich bourgeois' misunderstanding of the beautiful and the societal role of art. Hence, in *Nowhere*, Morris is able to describe *seemingly* excessive, beautiful products without referring to them as luxuries not only due to the absence of wage slavery but also due to the functionality of the use-art object. These objects are all goods but not luxuries, for the latter descriptor relies upon a class separation that no longer exists.

The other key component in redefining such goods as pleasurable rather than bourgeois luxury is that the excellence seen in the pipe is not exceptional after all. Goods in Nowhere are crafted, not machined, and according to Morris's sympathies this *always* yields superior products.[421] From a different angle, what is also revealed in the commonplace excellence is that there exists no exploited class that is forced to

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[420] "Making the Best of It" contained in William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXII*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, p. 113.

[421] In this way, Morris seems to anticipate the luxury and maker cultures that followed in the 20th and 21st centuries that often put a premium on the hand-crafted, the tool marks of the crafts worker, and notions of authenticity in both production and consumption practices.

consume lesser quality goods or services. It's not as if the existence of the exuberant décor of the pipe Guest is given only exists as an exception. Indeed, there is no mention of the use of small, cheap, clay pipes that were once so common among the working classes. To consume in Nowhere means to consume only the very best, for with the abolition of the class system comes the abolition of inferior shoddy goods.

Further, in his lectures, Morris is clear that the beautiful and the useful are categorically *not* luxurious in the bourgeois sense. In describing the adornment of tapestries, for instance, he claims 'this is not luxury, if it be done for beauty's sake, and not for show: it does not break our golden rule: *Have nothing in your houses which you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful*.'[422] Among the many historical events that informed this position that Morris takes on the utility of beauty, or more precisely the interactions between the beautiful and the useful, is the Paris Commune of 1871. As Kristen Ross demonstrates, the art of the Commune was multifaceted, and not limited to so-called finery, writing;

> The Commune's overcoming of the division between fine and decorative artists—the principal dimension of its revolutionary arts program—proved to be as short-lived as the insurrection itself. Professional artists and crafts workers were to draw apart once again after this period. But, during the Commune, the objective basis in social and economic life for their rapprochement is understood, and *their equality is seen not as a goal to attain but rather posited from the outset* and reposited again and again in the course of the Commune's brief existence. It is worth noting that the Federation's members exhibited no concern whatsoever over what was to be counted as a work of art, nor over any aesthetic criteria for judging the worthiness of an artisanal product. They did not presume to act as judge or evaluator from an artistic point of view, acting rather as the driving force of a mechanism capable of assuring the liberty of all. This is particularly important since it

[422] "The Beauty of Life" contained in William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris, Vol. XXII*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, p. 77.

> shifts value away from market evaluation, and even from the art object itself *onto the process of making* and onto the artist, whose labor generates value. *All art, in their view, was artisanal and skilled in its production and in the socialization of its makers*.[423]

In this imagining, based undoubtedly at least in part on what information Morris had on the Paris Commune, the post-capitalist world would see more efficient labor, in that only the useful and the beautiful would be produced. In other words, though the move away from capitalism may decrease the efficient production of quantity, Morris argues that in the post-capitalist world where handicraft thrives, a demonstrable increase in the quality of goods shall take place. No more shall anyone labor at a task they do not choose, and no longer will artificial needs hold a central economic function. In fact, the entire labor force will be employed in tasks of their choosing 'in making nothing but useful things; among which, of course, I include works of art of various kinds.'[424]

Morris elaborates on this point that beauty and utility are *not* luxury (most especially when they are produced absent of any form of exploitation) when William Guest and Dick are invited to a glass of wine at the tobacconist shop. The children that give Guest his pipe and tobacco do not imbibe, not because it is forbidden, but simply because it is not to their taste. Yet, upon there recognition of the special status and features of William (i.e. claiming that 'we do not have guests like this everyday'), they insist that *he* try the wine that they are clearly proud of.[425] And while William

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[423] Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*, New York: Verso, 2015, pp. 57-58. Emphasis added.
[424] Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 350.
[425] Morris, *Collected Works, Vol. 16*, p. 38.

enjoys his delicious glass, partly due to propriety and partly due to his thirst on a hot day, he makes a that 'mental note' to ask how this could be made when workers themselves also had access to it, he indicates that it is not only honored visitors that receive the fineries of the community, but everyone within it.[426] Social status is negated all the way down the line, including the very (to the Nowherian Neighbors straightforward) ability to enjoy all the fruits of the community's many varied labors.

Additionally, we have the somewhat awkward excuse that Guest gives to the child for why he is especially unworthy of such a magnificent pipe; that is that he is bound to lose it. If the pipe is lost, someone else will find it, so there is no loss to the community. Not only does this indicate the unimportance of property in Nowhere, but also that the disposability of capitalism has been replaced by an impulse to reuse, or put to use that which has bee discarded.

We may continue to dwell on the pipe, for it is not only a "glorious expenditure," but perhaps also paradoxically an example of idyllic *im*perfection (i.e. the sovereign accursed share). We must ask why of all possible products for Guest to look for, find, and enjoy, it had to be a tobacco pipe.

Tobacco is not a crop usually sown and grown in England, having only been introduced to the European continent through imperialistic exploitation of the New World, so its presence may suggest prolonged global commerce, if not outright imperialism. Yet, wouldn't such international trade depend upon alienated labor, if not at home than certainly abroad? Certainly, in our globalized world in which so-

[426] Ibid.

called ‘post-industrial’ economies very much exploit so-called ‘developing’ ones through relocation of production to regions where labor and environmental abuse is rife. Or, are we to believe that in the future Nowhere, the English have cultivated a tobacco strain that can be produced domestically? This is a remote possibility, further undermined by the fact that William requests and receives Latakia, a tobacco grown and cured almost exclusively in Syria, Cyprus, and Turkey. What are we to make of the ease with which William can procure and enjoy this particular type and blend of tobacco? The most probable explanation is that this future Nowhere-England is still engaged in international commerce, suggesting the perpetuation of national borders, trade, and something that serves as currency in such transactions. This begs the question; need we demand of such utopias as Morris’s that they take a more internationalist perspective in explaining their visions of communism? If we don’t, and are content to utopias limited to a domestic context, how might this cause problems in a world in which global elite do live exuberantly off the backs of the working classes? Without a clear picture of the international context in which Nowhere exists, it is more than conceivable that an imperialistic mechanism is a work, and what props up the idyllic communal living of the metropole is the labor of people of color in the global south.

On the other hand, the attending girl encourages William to fill his (new) pouch, for he may not have access to Latakia for some time. Is it a rare commodity after all? Do we find in Latakia an example of scarcity? If scarcity does exist in this future, then we must account for the deprivation that some will experience. Such

deprivation is clearly a source of inequality, for some will gain access to rare goods while others will not, though importantly this deprivation is not a source of oppression. He again we witness Morris playing with uncertainty, tension, and imperfection. We may read this detail of the pipe scene as indicative of the uncertainty in the procurement of certain pleasurable, but unnecessary, goods. This could demonstrate that other more essential goods are of greater priority, for though a particular blend of tobacco may be in greater or lesser supply, we never encounter a moment in Nowhere with an analogous shortage of food, shelter, clothing, hospitality, aesthetics, or the other necessaries of life. Additionally, we may read the projected shortage of Latakia as the recognition of seasonal limitations on crops in an economic mode that doesn't ruthlessly exploit the globe to provide uniform supply in the metropole.

What, then, does Guest's pipe demonstrate about Morris's theory of the uniqueness of the aesthetic object? This uniqueness that Morris sees in the aesthetic object has bearing not only on the enjoyment of the consumption, appreciation or use of the object, but also on its unique qualities of production. All objects made in pleasure contain elements of art for Morris, and the pleasure in its production exponentially increases the pleasure in consumption. Beyond this, however, the interactions with the pipe suggest something deeper at stake in the luxurious, freely and pleasurably produced object. This deeper, embedded claim is that *only* such art objects are authentic goods, for in a classless society and lesser pipe would not only be considered inadequate, but indeed not a pipe at all in actuality but only in

simulacra. It is therefore only by eschewing the efficiency models of modern industrial capitalism that genuine, quality, aesthetic objects can be made. Such a pipe, in other words, could only be available for Guest in a post-capitalist world.

Luxuriously beautiful objects are, in this sense, anachronistic, for the pipe Guest holds in enamoring attention would only materialize beyond the strictures of mass, mechanized production. Yet, and this is as central, the luxurious pipe is *not* a commodity. The art object cannot be a commodity, for commerce (and hence exchange value) is ended. Because of the end of exchange value, the modern, liberal-Enlightenment, (and most of all) Romantic emphasis on authenticity is also undermined through its very fulfillment. Whereas once, "commodities are vehicles of individual expression, even the self-definition of identity" through consumer manipulation, fashion in Nowhere truly is most often the expression of the individual's desire (and often the product of their own hands).[427] What Charles Taylor critiques as the

> Culture of "authenticity." I mean the understanding of life which emerges with the Romantic expressivism of the late-eighteenth century, that each of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from the outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority.[428]

This Romantic-Liberal conception of the authentic individual, Taylor argues, is what is manipulated by a cultural industry selling fashions as 'lifestyles.' Even Romanticism itself is attached to a particular market emphasizing the autonomy of the

[427] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 483.
[428] *Ibid*, p. 475.

individual, and beauty that reveals truth through its *individual* representations, perceptions, and authentic experiences. However, what we have just read of Morris's Nowhere, we have a paradoxical development of fulfillment of authentic life in its individual complexities, absent of the manipulation of consumer culture. Must we, in abandoning the liberal-capitalist couplet (a utopian perspective of far greater error than Morris's), finally also abandon this language of authenticity? If so, what could we replace it with? Species being? Potentiality? Or, on a deeper level, could it be that such terms would be fundamentally problematic in a post-capitalist world in which human freedom has been actualized? In other words, would claims to authenticity even be necessary if all humans were truly free to pursue whatever tasks they wished, and goods were no longer made simply as commodities to maximize profit.

Of course, we must acknowledge the ambiguity contained in the fact that the pipe is a fictional object that Morris imagines, not an actually existing aesthetic object in the world. Yet, in this future, we see the pipe as one among many examples of public, freely enjoyed beauty. Again we see an influence and overlap with the Paris Commune, for whom 'beauty [must] flourish in spaces shared in common and not just in special privatized preserves,' with the implication that what this entails is 'reconfiguring art to be fully integrated into everyday life and not just the endpoint of special excursions.'[429] Morris consistently calls for an art for all, a goal that biographically shifts Morris's relationship to his own art, and leads him in at least some capacity to a politics of socialist liberation. In other words, Morris concludes

[429] Ross, *Communal Luxury,* p. 58.

that art must be liberated from the rich, and this is part and parcel to the liberation of workers from capitalist exploitation.

> Despair for art fueled his desire for a full systemic socialist transformation and his decision to work for the end of class society…Senseless luxury, which Morris knew cannot exist without slavery of some kind, would be replaced by communal luxury, or equality in abundance…Morris saw an art that was not external to the everyday or, as is supposed, elevated above it and trying vainly to enter it. Morris saw a *style* of life.[430]

Such a publicly experienced art would paradoxically liberate beauty from the domain of the rich while neutering the experience of the beautiful from its potentially shocking elements. Further, Morris refuses to see his utopia—and the shared enjoyment of such niceties as the splendid pipe—as an imagined impossible, for the changes that he describes, including the entre of the beautiful into all of societal life, he sees as very much achievable. 'As to its being impossible, I do not believe it. The men of this generation even have accomplished matters that but a very little while ago would have been thought impossible.'[431]

Ideal Imperfection

Yet, as the discussion above of the complications related to the supply of tobacco, for all of the idyllic aspects within the novel, there are still struggles in Morris's imagined Nowhere. I go so far as to argue that even more important than this situating of *News from Nowhere* within larger traditions, and putting it into conversation with its contemporaries, is to recognize the exceptional qualities of it. Among these qualities are Morris's accounts of imperfection, dissent, and violence

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[431] *Ibid*, pp. 62-63.
Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 173.

leading to and *contained within* utopian society. In other words, different from so many of his utopian predecessors and contemporaries, Morris grapples with the problems of utopia and is not willing to present a utopian future as total perfection. His Nowhere-England, in other words, is of particular note for the contradictions and tensions that Morris works through. Idyllic it may be, but perfect it is not.

Part of the significance of the imperfections in Nowhere, including but not limited to discontent, violence, and even murder is to engage the very features of sociality often ignored in Utopian literature. Despite his quip on Utopias merely informing us about the whims of their authors, Morris quite clearly takes great effort to make Nowhere-England imaginable and attractive to a wide public.[432] There is almost a taste of realism in these pages, for though there is leisure and pleasure, there is no euphoria, Dionysian excess, or waste. Some of Morris's critiques and proposed solutions may not present themselves as practicable, especially with our modernist lens retroactively evaluating his solutions informed by his contemporary Victorian episteme. Yet, even so (and despite the time travel), there is little fantasy in Nowhere, as the entirety of the novel focuses on the banality of the everyday, that is, labor, interactions, travel, shopping, eating, drinking, resting, etc. The fanciful is reserved simply for establishing how William arrives in Nowhere. All other explanations are painfully logical. Even so, Morris never denies the possibility for disagreement. Discontent still exists in Nowhere, but not in the *material*. When labor and embodied needs are fulfilled, discontent springs only from non-essential

[432] Morris, William. "Review of *Looking Backward*" in 1993. *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, p. 354.

desires, not from physical needs. Psychological and ideological discontent, it seems, are more difficult to eradicate, for neither happiness nor pleasure are resources or goods that can be distributed.

It is also worth a brief engagement with the competing concepts of perfection and practicality. Depending on one's interpretation and one's tastes and sympathies, *News from Nowhere* can be read as practicable or not practicable. There is room for these competing accounts. Yet, a reading of Nowhere as perfect is highly problematic and difficult to sustain.

One aspect that Morris's utopia shares with Bellamy's is that it is a temporal projection into the future. Many of their predecessors wrote their Utopias as separated from their context spatially, as some distant place that was uncontaminated by the ills they identified in their contemporary. For instance, texts ranging from More's narrative in *Utopia*, to the feminist critiques of Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, place their perfect societies in far off geographies, or 'undiscovered' lands superior in organization, social relations, and perhaps most basically humanity to modernity as understood in the writers' time. One of the founders of the genre now widely known as science fiction, H.G. Wells, even goes so far as to create new worlds and parallel universes as the sites of utopia.[433]

For both Morris and Bellamy, such a spatial quarantine is unsatisfactory. They are not interested in finding a utopia lost to modern maps (or as yet undiscovered), but rather in building one out of the ashes of their 19th century homes.

[433] H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*. See also Frederic Jameson's extensive study on Science Fiction and fantasy *Archaeologies of the Future*.

We should not look to the corners of the Earth or to the stars to find fulfillment of such desires as freedom, dignity, and plenty, but should rather look around us for the ways to bring about the context in which these can flourish. In other words, neither Morris nor Bellamy looks to find a utopia uncontaminated by capitalism, but rather a future utopia that has *passed through and overcome* capitalism. This is a crucial distinction, for it requires that both seek solutions to societal contradictions that can be imagined without necessitating that we start completely anew from scratch. There is a surprising element of realist ambition in presenting an imaginably possible social future, rather than either of our previously stated options typically confining utopias; i.e. that of a blueprint for the ideal future, or of a straightforward critique of the present.

As we saw in the example of shopping at the tobacconist, it turns out that many of the most banal tasks, inhabitants of Nowhere, those drawn most explicitly from previous—even ancient—practices, for are the most profound and glorious for William. This pleasure in the seemingly small, insignificant things of a free life are further explored beyond Nowhere in Morris's many other utopias. And so finally, before concluding this chapter, it is important to turn to not only Morris's other utopian visions and the operation of radical anachronism therein, but also to briefly discuss the variety of responses his utopian visions provoked.

Morris's Other Utopian Writings & Contemporaneous Responses

The late Morris returns to the medieval in both fantastic (e.g. *The Well at Worlds End*) and historical (e.g. *A Dream of John Ball*) imaginings. His utilization of

anachronistic settings not only display his fetishistic attachment to medieval England, but also the radical potential embedded within such a mobilization of past-oriented, anachronistic imaginaries.

John Ball imagines the medieval cleric who led a revolt in conversation with his own historical significance. Morris writes that *John Ball*, among other writings, reveal his "dream of past, present, and to come" in the revisionist imaginings of a medieval "revolt in solidarity and fellowship…setting an example of selflessly concerted political action," all in an argument that not-so-subtly presents "communism as indigenous to England."[434]

Of course, it is important to articulate contemporary critiques of utopianism in general and Morris's utopian imaginary in particular to outline some of the limitations to this writing strategy. The most common critique of Utopian thought and literature is that it is too idealistic, which is often taken to mean unrealistic. It is important to indicate and understand that despite the interpretive problems with such a reading of Utopias, much of Utopian thought and literature has been widely read in just such a way. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that answers to popular Utopias, anti-Utopian writing, and critiques of Utopias (both individual examples and collectively) often turn on identifying those aspects that seem least 'realistic' or indeed, least likely. If we view utopianism as critique rather than model, such objections are roundly countered.

[434] Courtney, Julia. Summer 2015. "Versions of the Past, Problems of the Present, Hopes for the Future: Morris and others rewrite the Peasants' Revolt," *The Journal of William Morris Studies*. Volume XXI, Number 2, pp. 12, 18, 20.

The Utopian novelists of the 19th century that we have dwelt upon were not dealing in impossibilities, however, but merely in improbabilities. It is also important that we not mistake the Bellamy-Morris dialogue as purely representative of utopias of this time period. Not only were there disparate utopian imaginatives contemporaneous to Bellamy and Morris, they also both inspired an array of literary responses from authors similarly interested in describing their ideal polities. From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th, we witness what appears to be a shift in consciousness and imagination. The search for supposed origins of this shift are contentious at best, and dogmatic at worst. What we do seem to able to point to is the anti-Utopian sentiment following the reaction against Romanticism, identified most obviously with Dostoevsky. Dystopian literature, film, art, and music becomes predominant by the second half of the 20th century, not as a replacement to utopian thought but rather as a particular and different articulation of it. In other words, dystopian imaginaries offer the same structural critique of the present that utopian imaginaries do; that is, the presentation of a fictional society that we do not have, yet could easily recognize similarities with, as a fundamental form of critique of the normative and the contemporary. In this way, a nightmarish vision of the future can function in much the same way as an idyllic one, in putting the problems and inequities of contemporary society into sharp relief with a fictionalized alternative.

Among late 19th century writers and critics, however, the renaissance in utopian thought pushed critical responses into alternate fictional imaginaries rather than direct engagement with any particular author's presentation. As mentioned

above, Morris wrote *News from Nowhere* not necessarily as a completely independent and closed work, but rather as his serialized response to Bellamy's imagined utopia. Morris did compose a short critical review of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, but evidently felt that in order to truly critique Bellamy's imaginary necessitated the presentation of an alternative imagined future. This tact of countering fiction with fiction became quite central in the 19th century debates about *which* utopian future, and this is certainly the case in the direct responses to *News from Nowhere*.

Following the Morris-Bellamy utopian conversation, several other notable authors followed suit, offering their own visions of a future society. Charlotte Perkins-Gilman, H.G. Wells, and G.K. Chesterton are among the most notable contemporary engagements with utopian projections. The first two of these authors return to the Thomas More mold of utopian writing that largely takes the form of a travel discourse. Chesterton, on the other hand, sticks closer to a localized if mysterious narrative, more akin to Bellamy and Morris, though drastically different in its sympathies. Each of these offers a different vision, underlining the crux of Morris's own statement that utopias do little but indicate the particular sympathies of their authors.[435]

The most complete refutation of Morris comes from G.K. Chesterton's brief novella *The Man Who was Thursday*. This text responds to socialist utopianism by providing neither a utopian nor dystopian alternative, but rather a narrative of an imagined society that is somewhere in between such extremes. Chesterton's

[435] Morris, William. "Review of *Looking Backward*" in 1993. *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, p. 354.

imagined society is fundamentally distinct from both Bellamy and Morris in that he presents characters locked in explicit ideological struggle.[436] Yet, even this struggle is purely farcical, for the 'anarchist' characters turn out to all be—unbeknownst to each other—undercover police operatives. Indeed, this police manipulation in creating and reifying the idea of an oppositional force is nicely summarized in Chesterton's claim that "the rare, strange thing is to hit the mark; the gross, obvious thing is to miss it."[437]

In this text, Chesterton certainly presents an elaborate state apparatus that might imply a dystopian police state, yet the police are also all engaged in a fight against an imagined enemy. There are no authentically anarchist characters in *The Man Who was Thursday*. Instead, every anarchist leader (what a contradiction!) turns out to be a police plant. This could be due read as either utopian or dystopian.[438] For instance, what does it tell us if the only opposition to the state is *planted* opposition? Is this a critique against the notion—or the actuality—of supposed 'true' believers in a radical cause, in presenting them as the unwitting agents of the state? In operation, this deception allows conservative police forces to exert direct state power over the entirety of the social body, all under the guise of public safety (or read 'national security' in our contemporary parlance).

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[436] One more than one occasion, Morris even went to great lengths to distance himself from Marxist ideology, which he thought had a tendency towards dogmatism. Cf. Blasier, J. Bruce. 1921. *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement*. London: Longman, Green, and Co., p. 142.
[437] Chesterton, G.K. 2001. *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*. New York: The Modern Library Classics, p. 11.
[438] Beyond fiction, the reality of infiltration of radical groups is a longstanding police practice, utilizing the techniques of informants, agent provocateurs, and now social media bots.

The detective whom the narrative centers around describes his own conservatism as a "rebellion against rebellion," or the conservative, counterrevolutionary backlash embodied in state reactionaries.[439] Though clearly coming from a different ideological position than Morris, Chesterton here presents a fear similar to one of Morris's own, that is, of the violent state repression of the new. Of course, Chesterton is also fully in support of this repression, for the sake of stability, for the 'nightmare' according to him is that once the state apparatus has been fully successful in rooting out dissent, it will only be able to reinforce its own legitimacy through inventing new adversaries to combat. The prophetic aspect of such a vision is striking, considering especially the history of the late 20th and early 21st centuries in the United States. Yet, even in Chesterton and Morris's contemporary time period, the attachment to appearance on the part of the state is noteworthy. Morris was quite critical of the complicity of public figures such as Gladstone, as well as the police violence towards labor and socialist activists section yet he also understood the importance of imagery and imagination in the reification of state power. His was definitely a world of state carrots and sticks.

At a deeper level, however, what a writer as reactionary as Chesterton reveals in such a text is the developing aesthetization of politics in his own time that wouldn't reach full maturity until the rise of European fascism. He saw the overwhelming importance of appearance in the legitimization of repressive state forces. This invented adversary, created by the police and reified by the complicit media, hence

[439] Chesterton, p. 39.

can become more powerful in the public imagination than actual radical forces. The existence of movements like Morris's end up have the unintentional consequence of affecting the popular imagination just enough that it lingers in said social imagination as a threat to the status quo. The status quo then must be zealously defended against such 'chaotic' forces that threaten to destroy it. Obviously, neither Morris, Kropotkin, nor the Socialist League were interested in the destruction of society, but simply the more equitable reorganization of it. Yet, the highly publicized violent incidents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by so-called anarchists helped to solidify this idea of the lurking—often racialized as Semitic—bomb-totting other who simply wants to destroy. Chesterton presents radical ideologies as both vacuous and as serving state interests, perhaps the most holistic and strongest critique that one could level against the likes of Morris. The predominance of appearances, however, in this imagined future is paradoxically reliant upon the presence of radical movements within the consciousness and imaginaries of his contemporary readers.[440]

How might Morris have responded, had he lived to the publication of *The Man Who Was Thursday* in 1908? Obviously, Morris is consistently skeptical of police action, most especially the violence inherent in their protection of the elites' property. As seen in many sources, however, this was not an obstacle that Morris thought would be stable or long-lasting. Instead, after a few decisive events (notably victories for the working people), the police would no longer be a large factor. Maybe this is itself the most utopian of Morris's thoughts, for it largely ignores the

[440] cf. Chesterton, p. 138 on the maddening realization of appearances' dictation of reality.

tactics of agent provocateurs and the legitimacy the public bestows upon both the status quo itself and upon the state agencies (up to and including violent suppression) tasked with the enforcement and protection of it. Yet, Morris also traveled in radical circles that are completely absent in Chesterton. Radicals in Chesterton's imagined society are very, very few, and are only those operatives manipulated by state forces into believing they are undermining the state, all while actually serving to bolster it. Morris was not so quick to jump to skepticism, and instead saw a tremendous amount of hope in the workers' movements. Indeed, there may have been infiltrators present, but they were largely swimming against the tide. Like Marx, Morris saw socialism and the emancipation of the worker as a historical inevitability. But Chesterton's critique is largely unanswerable by Morris's thought when it is invested in an ongoing struggle, for that struggle itself can conceivably serve to empower and embolden the police in precisely these types of ways.

A junior member of the Socialist League in Morris's London was the widely famous science fiction writer H.G. Wells. Wells sought to reconcile the utopianism of Morris's agrarian vision with the more sinister skepticism of Chesterton and others. Wells largely interpreted *News from Nowhere* as too utopian, a product of unrealistic idealism. He sets out to write a more realistic utopia, which he takes to be a narrative of interplanetary travel.

> The utopia of a modern dreamer must needs differ in one fundamental aspect form the Nowheres and Utopias men planed before Darwin quickened the thought of the world. Those were all perfect and static States, a balance of happiness won for ever against the forces of unrest and disorder that inhere in things…Change and development were dammed back by invincible dams for ever. But the Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as

> a permanent state but as a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages. Nowadays we do not resist and overcome the great stream of things, but rather float upon it. We build now not citadels, but ships of state…Our business here is to be Utopian, to make vivid and credible, if we can, first this facet and then that, of an imaginary whole and happy world. Our deliberate intention is to be not, indeed, impossible, but most distinctly impracticable by every scale that reaches only between today and tomorrow… Our proposal here is upon a more practical plane at least than that…everything, in fact, that it lies within man's power to alter…And much of the essential value of all such speculations lies in this assumption of emancipation, lies in that regard towards human freedom, in the undying interest of the human power of self-escape, the power to resist the causation of the past, and to evade, initiate, endeavor and overcome."[441]

The supposed realism, which Wells takes to be a distinguishing feature between his vision and Morris's, is encapsulated in the passage above. Both authors agree on utopian futures that are "not static but kinetic," as neither vision has the sense of closure or conclusion. The revolutionary struggle, in other words, continues.

The key element of Morris that Wells critiques as too idyllic is on the subject of labor, which Wells saw a certain necessity of suffering in. Instead, Wells offers a 'more just' organization of labor, but he also maintains hierarchies. As Morris is a revolutionist, Wells is a reformist.

> As in Morris and the outright Return-to-Nature Utopians—a bold make-believe that all toil may be made a joy, and with that a leveling down of all society to an equal participation in labour. But indeed this is against all the observed behavior of mankind…A certain amount of bodily or mental exercise, a considerable amount of doing things under the direction of one's free imagination is quite another matter. Artistic production, for example, when it is at its best, when a man is freely obeying himself and not troubling to please others, is really not toil at all. It is quite a different thing digging potatoes, as boys say, 'for a lark', and digging them because otherwise you will stave, digging them day after day as a dull, unavoidable imperative. The essence of toil is that imperative, and the fact that the attention *must* cramp

[441] Wells, H.G. 2005. *A Modern Utopia*. New York: Penguin Books. pp. 11-13.

> itself to the work in hand—that it excludes freedom, and not that it involves fatigue.[442]

Wells hence argues that labor can indeed be freed, but doesn't follow Morris in further arguing that this freedom will do away with toil. Relying on supposed observation of a naturalized pattern of human behavior, Wells argues that toil is inherent in some unattractive forms of labor. Morris only has a weak response to this point (although he does indeed have a sunnier view of humanity and human morality), and that is the reliance upon mechanization for these unattractive tasks.[443] But, of course, Morris also found pleasure in the physical chores like "digging potatoes" that Wells maligns. Additionally, Morris argues that society can fulfill humanity's *needs* through strictly "unwearisome work."[444]

Despite their differences, Wells does agree with Morris in the aesthetic needs of imagined future epochs,

> A modern Utopia differs from all the older Utopias in its recognition of the need of poietic activities—one sees this new consideration creeping into thought for the first time in the phrasing of Comte's insistence that 'spiritual' must precede political reconstruction, and in his admission of the necessity of recurrent books and poems about Utopia—and at first this recognition appears to admit only an added complication to a problem already unmanageably complex.[445]

Of these socialist utopias cited thus far, only Wells's contains a section entirely devoted to examining women and gender relations in a utopian context. For both Bellamy and Morris, women represent an object of desire and intrigue in their

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[442] Wells, pp. 72-73.
[443] Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 461.
[444] Morris, William and Lemire, Eugene (ed.). 1962. *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 49.
[445] Wells, p. 184.

imaginations. For the former, this desire is fulfilled, while for the later woman is by nature an unobtainable desire. How might we find these expressions of desire affecting not only the position(s) of equality in these novels, but also how such notions of gender affect larger structures and interactions in these future societies? Is woman, for instance, the desired within the desire of Utopia itself? In Morris's *News from Nowhere*, gender is a consistently present, though never directly addressed, issue. Unlike Bellamy, Wells, and many feminist utopias, Morris doesn't discount the value of domestic labor, nor does he propose the mechanization of it. As Ady Mineo argues, Morris does go further than his contemporaries (Bellamy among them) to eliminate all forms of gendered inequality in his imagined future, "deconstructing the static binary opposition of masculinity and femininity," in both the character traits of his fictional interlocutors (who are no longer subject to patriarchal oppression in developing certain 'manly' or 'womanly' emotions, features, exercises), as well as the diversity of activities and labors that we witness both men and women engaged in.[446]

With Charlotte Perkins Gilman, we finally see a Utopian novel dedicated to issues of gender, equality, and patriarchy. In *Herland*, Perkins Gilman presents a fictionalized account elaborating on the ideas in her *Women and Economics*, most especially on the centrally feminine modes of labor (e.g. motherhood) so degraded by patriarchy. Perkins Gilman is largely in dialogue with Morris, Bellamy, and Wells in outlining her 'lost' women's state. It should not be overlooked that there are three

[446] Mineo, Ady. "Beyond the Law of the Father: The 'New Woman' in *News from Nowhere*," *William Morris: Centenary Essays*. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (ed). 1999. Exeter: University of Exeter Press pp. 201, 204, 205.

men who travel to Herland, each one representing one of these characters of the major 19th century socialist utopian novelists aforementioned.

> Such high ideals as they had! Beauty, Health, Strength, Intellect, Goodness—for these they prayed and worked. They had no enemies; they themselves were all sisters and friends. The land was fair before them, and a great Future began to form itself in their minds…But very early they recognized the need of improvement as well as of mere repetition, and devoted their combined intelligence to that problem—how to make the best kind of people. First this was merely the hope of bearing better ones, and then they recognized that however the children differed at birth, the real growth lay later—through education. Then things began to hum. As I learned more and more to appreciate what these women had accomplished, the less proud I was of what we, with all our manhood, had done. You see, they had no wars. They had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies. They were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together—not by competition, but by united action.[447]

Clearly, with her emphasis on beauty, Perkins Gilman has some intersecting sympathies with Morris. Like Morris, she also emphasizes an increase in opportunities for children outside of a capitalist system. The imperative to 'grow together' also seems quite analogous to the society of neighbors encountered in Nowhere. This togetherness is further articulated in the community mindedness that Perkins Gilman presents,

> They thought in terms of the community. As such, their time-sense was not limited to the hopes and ambitions of an individual life. Therefore, they habitually considered and carried out plans for improvement which might cover centuries.[448]

Like the laborers in Nowhere, Perkins Gilman presents a community in which the variety of labors, activities, the good and the bad parts of life, are shared equally by all. Of course, her utopia is isolated in a way that I've argued above Nowhere is not.

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[447] Perkins Gilman, Charlotte. 2009. *The Yellow Wall-Paper, Herland, and Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics, p. 61.
[448] Perkins Gilman, p. 80.

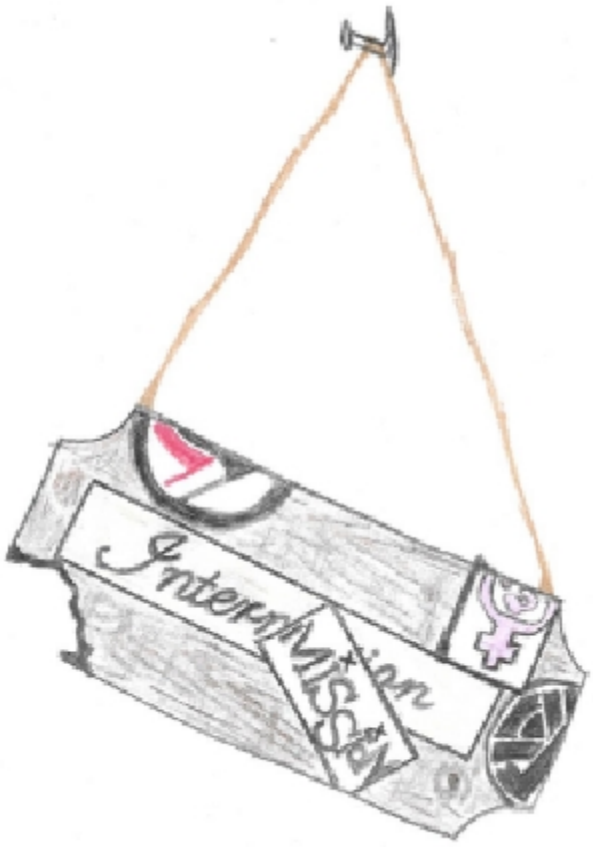
And, of course, the gendered aspect of Perkins Gilman is central, in that the masculinized conflicts of capital, the state, colonialism, and aggression have been eliminated. Yet, so has individualism. The communal organization in Perkins Gilman is even more radically community focused than Morris's Nowhere, for while Morris centers on individualism as the basis from which all other freedoms spring, Perkins Gilman presents individualism as an impediment to true freedom, and it is only by becoming attached to a fully just and equal community can humanity's true and full potential be reached.

Truth and Beauty; or, How might we hope for change?

Utopias are often a mechanism for critiquing present historical, economic, social, and political contexts. As we have seen, more often than not, there is an account of change given in such prose fiction that lends itself to direct materialist goals in the present to provide for either the realization or the prevention of the projected hypothetical future. Equally important as these material changes, to the 19th century Utopian novelists, were changes in the imagined possibilities and impossibilities for politics. The Utopias we have examined here are not particularly invested in a pure thought experiment, but rather in promoting ideal-yet-possible postulations that each author views as a possible outcome of their contemporary moment.

While Morris and Bellamy share the optimism of Marx, Engels, and Kropotkin that capitalism is inevitably doomed to be overthrown and replaced by a

non-alienated socialism (be it communism, state-socialism, or anarcho-communism), others we have examined do not share this optimism. It is also perhaps important to indicate that never do the thinkers within the progressive narrative of history imply that subjects should sit peacefully watching and waiting for the change to come, but rather each provides explications of tactics of organization and resistance, as well as presentations of the importance of such direct action. There is a strong rejection of the modernist aesthetic of industrialism in Morris, which he critiques by looking backward to a pre-capitalist mode of production and the epochal aesthetics of this previous mode. Yet, this looking backward is paradoxically his method for looking forward. As such, Morris provides a model for the *radical* allocation of anachronism as a potential tactic or technique for seeking to undermine the hegemonic systems of capital. That model he calls Nowhere.


Intermission

Chapter 5

A Tale of Two Cities (…just not the two you expect)

"If I was 17 back in 1969, I wouldn't have gone to Woodstock. I would've gone to Detroit."
--Kim Thayil[449]

"Alice Cooper were punk rock before anyone thought of punk rock."
--Rob Zombie[450]

We have explored, then, in the socialist/handicraft movement of William Morris one way in which anachronism has been employed in pursuance of radical social change, and will be turning in the next section to punk rock cultures. However, it would be remiss to skip over the approximate century of artistic radicalism between Morris and punk rock without acknowledging certain important developments. Many avant-garde movements, ranging from surrealism to jazz to rock n' roll have great cultural and aesthetic influence on contemporary thinking about politics and imaginations, as do particular iconic composers that represent more than simple artistry but complex events (e.g. Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Coltrane, Zappa). As with the intermission in a musical or theatrical performance, this section is intended as a brief detour rather than opening up entirely new areas for deep analysis. Indeed, many great works have been produced on each example here, and so our intermission is a brief blitzkrieg through these examples to tie together our dual foci on handicraft and punk.

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[449] Waksman, Steve. 2009. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 302.
[450] Rob Zombie inducting Alice Cooper in to the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame. See Also, Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUGsHz8YJmM Last Accessed 04/11/2018.

In the choice to not dwell on these moments for long, I have two main arguments in mind. This first is the straightforward acknowledgement that each of these events and subsequent scenes/movements (be they the riots following the inaugural performances of the *Rites of Spring*, the social phenomenon of 'Beatlemania' and subsequent Beatle burnings, or the artistic revelations brought on by the advent of recording technology, cf. Friedrich Kittler) are deserving of book-length examinations to unpack their contingencies and complexities. Many volumes have already been published to this end, which shouldn't suggest that additional work couldn't or shouldn't be done here, but simply to indicate that these investigations represent different intellectual projects separate, though not entirely separable, from this current study. We must bear in the influence these aesthetic (particularly musical) developments had not only on our theoretical interlocutors, but also on the second of our politico-aesthetic movements under consideration.

The second reason informing my decision to not dwell deeply on these important artistic events of the early-to-mid 20th century has a more explicitly epistemological justification. That is, that if we proceed with a method that requires a straightforward telling of all important and influential aesthetic moments and developments of this temporality, we would not only succumb to an inexhaustible (and therefore by definition incomplete) study, but we would also fall into the problems of linear conceptions of (aesthetic) time and the often too simplistic narratives such a linear conception of history produces. That is, we would lose the genealogical possibility of stark historical rupture by such a linear telling, in addition

to the illuminations we can gain through a direct confrontation between Morris and punk. Even so, we must give some detailed attention to two politico-aesthetic movements of the 20th century that in many important ways bridge Morris and punk in theoretical, political, and aesthetic ways. Normative narratives of punk's history attempt to show ultimate rupture between previously existing scenes and aesthetics, and the situating of punk's origins in New York and London (and a bit later, Los Angeles) is central to this claim. One issue that is immediately raised by this New York/London-centric focus is that it reproduces old imperialist center/periphery models in which cultural innovation begins at the Metropole and expands outward to the colonies. While it is true that both of these cities saw important aesthetic developments that certainly had a massive influence on emerging punk cultures (none greater than the Velvet Underground in NYC), many other locations (including, for instance, Peru, Russia, and Turkey) were central to the immergence of punk culture. Two far less celebrated cities (in terms of punk that is) fostered artists in the 60s who arguably contributed equally, or even greater amounts to what would become known as punk. These two are cities are Paris, France and Detroit, Michigan.

Paris

"Revolution is not 'showing' life to people, but bringing them to life. A revolutionary organization must always remember that its aim is not getting its adherents to listen to convincing talks by expert leaders, but getting them to speak for themselves, in order to achieve, or at least strive towards, an equal degree of participation."
--Guy Debord[451]

[451] Knabb, Ken (ed). 2006. *Situationist International Anthology* (Revised & Expanded Edition). Berkeley: Bureau of Public Services, p. 396.

"Crises multiply, we no longer count the shocks, the old State and economic edifice reels. You might think a huge burst of laughter would bring it down."
-- Raoul Vaneigem[452]



The first of these movements is the politicized culmination of Dada and Surrealism influence that found expression in the Situationist International of 1960s Paris. Concerned initially with art (or more precisely, so-called 'anti-art'), the Situationists eventually morphed into a small group of theoretically informed radical activists. The Situationists utilize a strategy they call *détournement*, or to "hijack, lead astray, and appropriate" aesthetic strategies, akin to a deliberately plagiarism.[453] Similar to Kropotkin's idea that property (including knowledge) is the mutual property of all humanity (for we all inherit the accumulated knowledge of past generations), the Situationists justify this strategy in their *User's Guide* by arguing essentially that "all culture is derivative."[454] Their guiding ambition, as the name implies, was the creation of situations in order to show "the concrete construction of momentary ambivalences of life" through "temporary, provisional constructions of

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452 Vaneigem, Raoul. 1983. *The Book of Pleasures*. London: Pending Press.

453 Wark, p. 35.
454 Kropotkin, Peter. 2005. *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writ*ings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press & Wark, p. 37.

situations."[455] These situations were conceptualized as rupture, a "breakdown of events" in which there was an "emphasis on experiencing new possibilities and introducing unforeseeable actions."[456]

A feature of this fleeting situation was the precise declaration that in its temporary temporality, each situation exists "without a future," for it is the space "where the present becoming is tested, a bit of 'life' even on the ground of the 'society of the spectacle' in which you usually only care about surviving. Nevertheless, testing the situation best corresponds to what is imaginable."[457] This "free play with urban space" implies connection with both Morris and punk cultures.[458]

Anticipating the sloganeering graffiti campaign of punk and hip hop, Situationists peppered Paris with graffiti, including phrases such as (translated from the original French)

Boredom is counterrevolutionary.

Reform my ass.

Down with the state.

Let's not change bosses, let's change life.

Don't liberate me—I'll take care of that.

Abolish class society.

Politics is in the streets.

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[455] Raunig, Gerald. 2007. *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), p. 172.
[456] Ibid, p. 174.
[457] Ibid, p. 172.
[458] Ibid, p. 173.

Never Work.

Workers of all countries, enjoy!

The passion of destruction is a creative joy (Bakunin).

We are all German Jews. We are all 'undesirables.'

Anarchy is me.

Practice wishful thinking.

Be realistic, demand the impossible.

Power to the imagination.[459]

There is a playful humor at work in these slogans, coupled somewhat uncomfortably with the serious political points raised. 'Free' time is also a central concern of the Situationists, which they understand not as bourgeois 'leisure', but more akin to Morris's pleasurable labor. Indeed, Situationists describe liberated time not only as a place of consumption, but also one of creation.[460] There was also an interest in democratizing art (and political critique), which is why they adopted comics for mass distribution of their ideas, as in Morris before and punk after.[461]

The most widely cited of those associated with situationism is Guy Debord, primarily for his now canonical work on the spectacle. Guy Debord goes so far as to claim that art not only becomes the servant of power, but the ensuing spectacle is both the model and the goal of capitalist political economy. Even the *avant garde* is stuck in the impasse of the spectacle for Debord, as it "is at once an art of change and the

[459] Knabb, pp. 445-455.
[460] Knabb, p. 75.
[461] Knabb, p. 275.

purest expression of the impossibility of change."[462] The spectacle can contain the "parodic" suspension of rules during festive events, but these events may actually serve to reinforce the power of the spectacular institutions and ideologies as they still conform to prescribe social expectations.[463] A situation may only defy spectacle if it is *unexpected* and somewhat illegible.

Debord also re-conceptualizes temporality in *Society of the Spectacle*, arguing that the regimentation of time that labor has succumbed to under capital may be countered through an (anachronistic) engagement with cyclical time. In other words, as discussed in preceding chapters, the human construction of time as linear largely fulfills an economic function in the interests of capital and empire. He compares historical narrative to the ocular functioning of "the modern telescope whose power enables one to look back *in time*" to stars that have long since receded or been extinguished.[464]

Paradoxically, Debord also views cyclical time as a functioning of an older, "static type of society," yet also—echoing Nietzsche—in a "more complex society" that "finally becomes conscious of time, it tries to negate it—it views time not as something that passes, but as something that returns."[465] "Eternity is *within* this time, it is the return of the same here on earth."[466] Although very much present in the original *Society of the Spectacle*, by 1990's *Comments*, Debord was even more loudly

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[462] Debord, Guy. 2000. *Society the Spectacle of*. London: Rebel Press, pp. 105.
[463] Debord, Guy. 1998. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Verso, p. 10.
[464] Debord, Guy. 2000. *Society the Spectacle of*. London: Rebel Press, pp. 73.
[465] Ibid, p. 73.
[466] Ibid, p. 74.

proclaiming the death of art, perhaps connecting his earlier texts to Rancière's themes explored throughout this study.[467]

Just as relevant for a study engaging Morris and punk is the work of Debord's colleague Raoul Vaneigem. He is often labeled the 'anarchist' to Debord's 'Marxist', though both of these labels have been subject of dispute. Vaneigem focuses on pleasure and radical change within daily life. "Choice" is but an illusion in the contemporary society of the spectacle, perhaps most of all in the realm of teenagers and even "youth gangs" (as a group specifically marketed to as the term "teengager" itself "identifies buyers and what they buy"), for the choices these folks have does not comprise a "real variety," but instead are always already reduced to a "circumscribed range of commodities (records, guitars, Levis, etc.)."[468] Hobbies, the arts, and other forms of consumption may in fact undermine revolutionary change, as he demonstrates, "our apparent freedom to do whatever we like shows how whatever we choose serves the economy."[469] Even within "do-it-yourself trades," pleasurable seemingly free from exploitation, the economic system may in fact be tricking us into productivity, simply turning us from exploited workers into *self*-exploited workers, "transforming life into work."[470]

Therefore, the only non-commodified pleasure that Vaneigem thinks worthy of pursuit is similar to that sought by both Bataille's accursed share and that found in

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[467] Debord, *Comments*, pp. 77-78.
[468] Vaneigem, Raoul. 2012. *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Oakland: PM Press, pp. 53, 159, 195, & 215.
[469] Vaneigem, Raoul. 1983. *The Book of Pleasures*. London: Pending Press, p. 8.
[470] *Ibid*, pp. 18 & 45.

Bey's T.A.Z., "utter gratuitousness, utterly useless personal pleasure."[471] Here, pleasure as an end unto itself is the means for self-discovery and authentic living, all in pursuit of the "dreams and desires which never leave me, the wish to live authentically and without restraint."[472] However "gratuitous" or "utterly useless" these pleasures may be, however, *achieving* them is no small task. Indeed, for pleasure to be so autonomous from the productive/consumptive economy, a re-structuring of society is implied. These dreams can only be pursued, according to Vaneigem, through the revolutionary struggle (in both politics and the arts),

> The unstated agenda of every insurrectionary movement is the transformation of the world and the reinvention of life. No theorist formulates these demands; rather, they are the sole foundation of poetic creativity…Its [revolution] integrity is forged continuously in the everyday clandestinity of acts and dreams.[473]

This creativity is not limited to the works produced by the artist, but indeed, also the "lived experience of the artist and the abandonment of this experience to an abstraction of substantial creation, namely the aesthetic form."[474] Importantly, this isn't just towards the end of producing sublimity, but also affects of horror, anxiety, and discomfort. He explains, "the unpleasant in art is just a reflection of the art of unpleasure practiced everywhere under the rule of power."[475] All of this, Vaneigem argues (as a core goal of the Situationists), is to move in the direction not just of

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[471] *Ibid*, p. 34.
[472] Vaneigem, Raoul. 2012. *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 9.
[473] *Ibid*, p. 94.
[474] *Ibid*, pp. 95-96.
[475] *Ibid*, p. 158.

individuals' liberation, but rather towards building a new society of "real equality among members—not as a metaphysical right, but as the norm to be respected."[476]

In an effort to maintain a conversation between the two movements of handicraft and punk examined herein without succumbing to a flattening of their complexities, it is helpful to consider the different aesthetic epistemes within which each was birthed. In an engagement with the shocking, and in the wake of the S.I., Hakim Bey is primarily concerned with mobilizing art towards attempts (however brief or fleeting) at autonomous existence. As with some of the artists and writers above, he views the imagination as an important site of political contestation. Like Rancière, Bey is concern with the sensible. But like several of the Situationists, Bey is in favor of disruption through the non-sensible, that is, situations defying explanations. Yet, Bey wants to violently rupture existing subjectivities and expectations through strategies of *non*-sensibility, what he variously calls "aesthetic shock," "art sabotage," and "poetic terrorism."[477] These forms of aesthetic shock work on changing the political imaginative by confronting it with a non-sensible affront, creating a "jolt to complacency."[478] The perceiving subject need not understand or process what they experience; in fact, they *shouldn't* understand it immediately. The intended outcome of aesthetic shock is the emotion that it inspires, emotion that must have the strength of "terror, powerful disgust, sexual arousal, superstitious awe, sudden intuitive breakthrough, dada-esque angst," emotions so

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[476] *Ibid*, p. 246.
[477] Bey, Hakim. 2011. *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone,* Los Angeles: Pacific Publishing Group, pp. 7-9, 26-9, 40, 91.
[478] *Ibid*, p. 8.

strong that indeed "if it does not change someone's life (aside from the artist), it fails."[479]

Are we asking too much of art here? Changing lives is certainly no small task, whether this change is as slight as a fleeting moment of humor or as radical as a disruption of subjectivity or an audience's "ability to *become* the art that it experiences."[480] How can non-sensible shock possibly make this change, especially when it is not understandable? Bey tells us that in reflection of what they have experienced, the perceiver "will come to realize that for a few moments they believed in something extraordinary, & will perhaps be driven as a result to seek out some more intense mode of existence."[481] The actual political content of a given piece of art is hardly as important as the visceral shock, or the genuine surprise in experiencing it. In other words, Bey is concerned with form just as much as content. Yet, must the form always be as violent as Bey claims? Can political rupture occur without violence?

Through such strategies, Bey hopes not only to disturb hegemonic ideologies and subjectivities and play with and defy expectations, but he also views these strategies as the hope for spaces of autonomy. His overarching political concern is with the establishment of what he calls the "Temporary Autonomous Zone" (or "T.A.Z."), (un)defined loosely as those temporal and spatial locations in the present, within the current state/capital regime, in which "virtual," "imaginative," or physical

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[479] *Ibid*, p. 3.
[480] *Ibid*, p. 27.
[481] *Ibid*, p. 2.

"uprisings of free enclaves" can "escape the notice" of power.[482] It is only in these fleeting moments and spaces that humans can hope to have authentic, non-mediated experiences of freedom. A defining feature of the T.A.Z. is its invisibility to power, as the "State cannot recognize it because History has no definition of it. As soon as the T.A.Z. is named (represented, mediated), it must vanish, it will vanish…only to spring up again somewhere else" and therefore the T.A.Z. can only appear in the "cracks and vacancies" of the "omnipresent" state.[483]

The invisibility of the T.A.Z. here does not strictly mean unseen, but is rather similar to Rancière's insensible, i.e. that the T.A.Z. is invisible so long as it cannot be *named* by power. For example, Bey cites histories of piracy, festival, carnival, etc. as open sites of autonomous existence via mockery of power. Yet, some of these were not only openly celebrated, but indeed being seen was the entire point. How then can we look upon festival, carnival, etc. as seen while still maintaining the *in*visibility of the T.A.Z.? I argue that the only way to reconcile the invisibility of the T.A.Z. with the visibility of aesthetic shock is to conceptualize the former as illegible rather than literally unseen. Naming and representing are actions involving linguistic labeling of a space, an action that seems to me to be at least one step *beyond* the mere sight of something. It is instead the cognition that follows sensory perception. This coming into visibility or sensibility of these radical arts is hence not the aesthetic experience itself, but rather the reflection upon it after the fact. But, the deeper question here is what these so-called T.A.Z.s in the past accomplished? Did they achieve autonomy

[482] *Ibid*, pp. 68, 70, 72, 76.
[483] *Ibid*, p. 70.

under Bey's definition? If so, do they represent a rejection of transformational, revolutionary politics in favor of personal, lifestyle, or even entertainment choices?

Murray Bookchin warns against commitment to autonomy as such, and he focuses his critique most especially on Bey. For Bookchin, the type of individualist 'anarchist' thought exemplified by Bey is the product of leftist disillusionment following the dissolving of the Soviet Union. As collectivism and communalism fell out of favor in radical leftist circles (both activist and theoretical), individualism and autonomy gained favor. Bookchin is reluctant to accept any iteration of individualism or Stirnerite egoism, as he takes these ideologies to be mere articulations of narcissism absent of action directly seeking change for all.[484] Bookchin is not interested in changes individual lives in 'autonomous' moments and experience so much as overthrowing the system and achieving real, sustained freedom for all. Put simply, Bookchin's point is that when anarchists frame their actions and professed 'resistance' in terms of their chosen lifestyle, they have lost the political commitment of direct action and systemic revolution. Since "the bourgeoisie has nothing to fear from such lifestyle declamations," he argues that anarchism must be socialist in a very real and literal sense and it must continually seek total transformation.[485]

Interestingly, in his critique of Bey, Bookchin seems to align himself with Rancière's commitment to dissensus. Bookchin argues against consensus-based

[484] Bookchin, Murray. 1995. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*. San Francisco: AK Press, pp. 10-11.
[485] *Ibid*, p. 25.

decision making in favor of democratic processes precisely because consensus precludes the rich discussion, discourse, and difference that are the product of dissensus. This dissensus is not only important politically in terms of the introduction of new ideas and a truly democratic mode of discourse from multiple voices, but it is also important creatively. He states, "dissensus—the all-important process of continual dialogue, disagreement, challenge, and counter-challenge, without which social as well as individual creativity would be impossible."[486] The struggle is hence constant, and there is no definable endpoint to resistance. This doesn't mean that there are no goals, for Bookchin is very clear about the goal of overthrowing capitalism and ending exploitation. But, because people are diverse and ever changing, the types of politics we should be striving for leading up to and following revolution should be able to account for this immense difference.

I do not think Bey can withstand Bookchin's critique, certainly not among political radicals seeking revolution. Yet, I am not interested in choosing sides between social anarchism exemplified by Bookchin and lifestyle anarchism exemplified by Bey. Instead, I seek to reconcile this supposed "unbridgeable chasm," a chasm that I argue is actually reconcilable. The cases I examine show the overlaps between Bookchin's socialist engagement towards macro-level change with Bey's "new music, totally insane but life-affirming, rhythmically subtle yet powerful."[487] Both are strangely interested in violence, begging the question of how can ruptures with the current capitalist system be achieved? Are there forms of contestation (i.e.

[486] *Ibid*, p. 17.
[487] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, p. 43.

forms of politics) that truly are more than war by other means, or are we left with the pessimistic choice of violent revolution if we desire change? What might be the role of art in contributing to or alleviating political violence? Shock value may indeed render an affective shock, but it is important that this shock is registered aesthetically, emotionally, or even illegibly, and not necessarily via physically violent means.

The other important feature of shock is that it must *remain* illegible. The paradox is that once shock has been recognized as shock, it is no longer shocking. As Edgar Wind warns, "the shock wears off when it becomes familiar," a feature he also sees within the broader loss of "art's sting" in a public under constant barrage of visual-sonic stimuli.[488] Theodor Adorno goes even further by suggesting that aesthetic shock (his particular example is Schoenberg's music) "becomes formulaic as soon as they are even once repeated."[489] This is a critique that many shocking, or more precisely *once*-shocking, artistic moves have been unable to answer, particularly when they find their works displayed in the very galleries and museums they positioned themselves against. How could we ever hope to capture and radically mobilize aesthetic shock if it is so ephemeral? Instead of ending with this inescapable recognition of the temporary, fleeting capacities of shock, I propose that in conjunction with aesthetic shock, aesthetic wound be employed for a deeper subjective troubling.

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[488] Wind, Edgar. 1985. *Art and Anarchy*. Great Britain: Northwestern University Press, pp. 8 & 88.
[489] Adorno, Theodor. 2006. *Philosophy of New Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 42.

Adorno indeed uses this language of wounding to describe the musical subject's response to the shock of Stravinsky (an example Adorno turns to not only for its [a]tonality but also for what he identifies as sadomasochistic pleasure). The immediacy of the shock of "depositional chords" itself is an experience that so radically engages the subject that it is "reconciled" in illusion with the object of the music, for the work of music "represents the truth of society against an individual that knows its untruth and is itself this untruth."[490] The very truths and falsities of societies and individuals are hence troubled by the discordant. The musical shock here is what "bluntly exists in itself," an existence that necessarily separates the shock from the subject, as it "cannot be integrated into the self."[491] Shock becomes the irreconcilable other *par excellence*. If we turn to Barthes, as we will in more depth as we explore Pussy Riot (among other examples) find another useful discussion of aesthetic experience that can pain the perceiver. Barthes presents *punctum* as the specific detail in the photograph that "pierces" or "wounds" the viewer.[492] This wound inspires reflection on the photograph itself and also on the viewers' own subject positions that they bring to their viewing experience. This affect is not only of horror, but also of uncertainty, for only the unnamable truly shocks or surprises, for "what I can name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good

[490] *Ibid*, p. 43.
[491] *Ibid*, pp. 117-118.
[492] Barthes, Roland. 1980. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 32, 45, 51, 59, 96.

symptom of disturbance."[493] Must this incapacity to name be horrifyingly pessimistic, or could it be optimistic, even *utopian*?

One of my guiding interpretive arguments here is that what the sublime, the uncanny, and the *punctum* share is precisely such a rupture (especially when encountered in aesthetics), and that through this rupture we can witness a radical troubling of subjectivity. In other words, aesthetic shock can be more than just offensive (i.e. offensive here is meant to apply to both content and form), but actually politically important in disrupting what may have previously been held as the limits of the sensible. This troubling, in turn, opens new possibilities for imaginative work, not just aesthetically but also politically by introducing subjects to the ambiguity and contingency of their own subjectivities. In other words, this trifecta of analytical concepts presents us with related but distinct ways in which subjects are jolted out of banality. This rupture or jolt has the potential for imagining *and bringing into being* the possibility of new possibilities. This possibility is what I argue an often-ignored political content of aesthetics, most especially in the introduction of the new. Is it possible that the most important political content of art is not always the explicitly political content, but sometimes the elements of surprise in its form?

Though many of our theoretical questions for engaging Morris will be the same questions posed to punk cultures, there are also particularities that we would be remiss to pass over. What are the ways in which reading punk alongside Morris can illuminate crucial aspects of its cultures that a singular attention to punk might forgo?

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[493] *Ibid*, p. 51.

As we examine the anachronistic aspects of punk rock, must we decide that this usage of anachronism is the same as Morris's? What are the specific similarities and differences in both their understandings of anachronism, and what can the different ways they mobilize anachronistic forms suggest about anachronism *itself*, as a vehicle for radical critique. Onward toward the second of the two cities whose music and culture most influenced the emergence of punk cultures, which is Detroit, Michigan.



(Tattoos by: Ron Nelson)

Detroit

"People were bored with peace and love. I always said that we were the band that drove the stake through the heart of the love generation."
--Alice Cooper[494]

Influencing the emergence of punk in the same time period of the 1960s-early 1970s as saw the Situationists activity in Paris is the activist and musical cultural

[494] *Alice Cooper Inducted into Rock & Roll Hall of Fame*. Originally broadcast by Fuse TV. Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSSzj01qdWo Last Accessed 04/06/2018.

context of Detroit.. This time period saw the emergence of a heavy, energetic, yet somewhat amateurish version of rock n' roll in the motor city. The shocking darkness of Alice Cooper, the radical message and sound of the MC5 (Motor City 5), their 'little brother band' the Stooges, and later on Death established a new sound that is so influential and so widely imitated that punk is hardly conceivable without it. Like the Situationists, the limited Detroit acts discussed here have decidedly different aesthetics, goals, and politics, but can be understood at least as well through their connections—that is, the assemblage they comprise—than by their divergences.

Formed in 1964, the MC5 took their love of rhythm and blues, Motown, Delta blues, and the original rock n' roll from such performers as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Dick Dale, and Fats Domino into a musical setting of amped up, energetic rock music roughly a decade after their heroes had emerged and popularized the genre. The energy of these early innovators also continues throughout punk rock histories through the MC5's promotion of them, as well as dedicated fans like Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead who created a new sound (often credited by fans of both punk and thrash/speed metal) that was truly based on these older influences (just in a decidedly heavier, more distorted version).[495]

The lyrics to MC5's "American Ruse" are as follows:

They told you in school about freedom
But when you try to be free they never let ya
They said "it's easy , nothing to it"
And now the army's out to get ya

[495] Lemmy, in fact, eventually performed with the reformed MC5, and both artists have recorded cover versions of early rock n' roll songs like "Tutti Frutti."

Chorus
Sixty-nine America in terminal stasis
The air's so thick it's like drowning in molasses
I'm sick and tired of paying these dues
And I'm finally getting hip to the American ruse

I learned to say the pledge of allegiance
Before they beat me bloody down at the station
They haven't got a word out of me since
I got a billion years probation
(Chorus)
Phony stars, oh no! crummy cars, oh no!
Cheap guitars, oh no! Joe's primitive bar... nah!
Rock'em back, Sonic !
The way they pull you over it's suspicious
Yeah, for something that just ain't your fault
If you complain they're gonna get vicious
Kick in the teeth and charge you with assault
Yeah, but I can see the chickens coming home to roost
Young people everywhere are gonna cook their goose
Lots of kids are working to get rid of these blues
Cause everybody's sick of the American ruse
Well well well , take a look around![496]

MC5 also attracted controversy by being one of the first groups to not only shout "motherfucker" from the stage, but also to include this word on their record *Kick Out the Jams*. The eventual manager/leader of the MC5, the radical activist John Sinclair, gained even greater notoriety immediately when he was arrested for marijuana possession and his harsh sentence was immortalized in a John Lennon composition. Founder of the White Panthers (originally just known as the MC5 fan club) out of solidarity with the Black Panthers (and under the guidance of Huey P. Newton), Sinclair also hoped to put the MC5 to good use politically. As guitarist Wayne Kramer explains, "we knew the world generally sucked and we didn't want to be a

[496] MC5. 1970. *Back in the U.S.A*. Atlantic. LP.

part of it. We wanted to do something else," but the members now admit that there were real limitations to their political efficacy.[497] This is especially true in terms of the band's "sexist bastards," despite their "rhetoric of being revolutionary."[498]

One incident in the band's history reveals the playfulness, humor, and political posturing of the MC5. A department store (Hudson's) refused to carry their debut album *Kick out the Jams* because it contained the word "motherfucker" (indeed, the album opens with it). The band agreed to edit out the offending word, coalescing to the store's demands. But, at the same time, they took out advertisements saying "fuck Hudson's," inspiring their record label (Elecktra) to drop them.[499] Perhaps their greatest legacy, however, is that before they dissolved, they turned Elecktra onto the Stooges.

James Osterberg, better known as Iggy Pop, is so roundly credited within punk cultures that he is often bestowed the paternal title of the 'godfather' of punk rock. With his no-holds-barred approach to performance, he expanded upon Jim Morrison's stage antics to bring to the stage an illustration of the self-destructive acts rock stars typically kept behind closed doors. He wasn't interested in consuming large quantities of narcotics on stage, but instead transforms his body into the conduit through which a numbing energy flows and energizes the crowd. Iggy Pop rolled around in glass, cut himself with broken bottles thrown at him on stage, and invented the stage dive by literally erasing the barrier between audience and artist by flinging

[497] McNeil, Legs & McCain, Gillian. 1996. *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*. New York: Grove Press, p. 46.
[498] Ibid, p. 47.
[499] Nuzum, Eric. 2001. *Parental advisory: Music Censorship in America*. New York: HarperCollins, p. 232.

himself down into the pit—initially being caught and then uplifted by the arms of his admiring fans, but also communing with them on their level. He also has a penchant for performing shirtless, but in earlier days would gender bend and perform in make up and drag (for instance, wearing a g-string and ballet tutu to perform in a biker bar), and spitting on the audience, behaviors that attracted a record scout's attention more so than his musical talent.[500]

The lyrical and sonic aesthetics of the Stooges is often referred to as 'proto-punk,' a label that Pop doesn't deny. But unlike his contemporaries in Alice Cooper, the blood produced on stage by Iggy Pop is *real*. He literally bleeds for his art, regardless of whether or not he is performing a persona or character, and this sacrifice gives him shock value to be sure, but also a certain weight of authenticity that not only his fans but also many punks enjoy demanding. As Steve Waksman describes, "that Iggy's pain is self-inflicted only increases the connotation of realism and authenticity surrounding the event…it is an extreme instance of the immediacy and spontaneity that attend any given Stooges show."[501] Pop's gyrations, mutilations, spastic movements, leaps, etc. also point to a nearly gymnastic level of body flexibility and fluidity, perhaps unparalleled in popular music until the breakers and poppers of hip-hop in later decades. This embodied act, Waksman goes on to describe as distinct in the examples of both Iggy Pop and Alice Cooper, which he argues is distinct from, say David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust persona, in that these stage personas

[500] Brown, Pam. April 1976. "An Afternoon with Iggy Pop," *Punk*. Issue 4. Cf. Jarmusch, Jim. 2016. *Gimme Danger: The Story of the Stooges*. Low Mind Films.
[501] Waksman, p. 72.

were not ends unto themselves, but rather means employed in order to further their aesthetic goal of confrontation.[502] Pop's stage dive isn't just about looking cool, in other words, but "unsettles the crowd" by defying expectations and exploding the traditional boundary between rock icon and adoring fans. The space between the stage and the crowd becomes an "ever permeable boundary" that Pop could break whenever he saw fit.

This flux in traditional boundaries dissolves even further in punk cultures, which like the Stooges, also consists in a de-skilling or anti-elitist inclusion of who can be on the stage in the first place, and a radical troubling of the hierarchy normally established between the artist and their audience. Again, this de-skilling is often presented as a democratizing move, showing that "anyone can do this."[503] In his analysis of Iggy Pop, Waksman again shows insight that is not only applicable to Pop, but also to the punk cultures he anticipated, writing that Pop stage performance "did not undo the hierarchy of rock, so much as it made that hierarchy a matter of contestation."[504] As we will see, punk too challenges traditional hierarchies, but perhaps also doesn't 'succeed' in undoing them, so much as re-introducing contestation into the assumptions of hierarchical society. This contestation is also present in the simple yet brutal sonic intensity of the Stooges' sound. Indeed, it is fitting that their third album be named Raw Power. Powerful yet raw is the best way

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[502] It should also be mentioned here that Ziggy is in no small part based at least partially on Iggy. The connection between Bowie and Pop involved the former's re-ignition for his hero's career, both with a reformed Stooges to record *Search and Destroy*, but also in Pop's initial solo career albums.
[503] See David Johansen's claim to this effect in reference to the New York Dolls, McNeil & McCain, p. 118.
[504] Waksman, pp. 97 & 101-102.

to describe the aesthetic of the Stooges, and by titling their album such, they acknowledge their intentionality behind this artistic choice.

Pop's influence has been cited by nearly every punk innovator, and he has been afforded tributes a diverse as Henry Rollins's back tattoo to the invitation to write and perform the theme song to the film *Repo Man*. Iggy Pop continues to perform for audiences both punk and mainstream, and whether punks love or hate his art, they almost universally acknowledge him as the 'godfather' of punk rock.

The Alice Cooper band is an undeniable influence on punk, most especially the darker veins within its shock strategies.[505] Originally from Arizona, the members of the band initially moved to Los Angeles following their dreams of rock n' roll stardom, and even managed to freak out the king of freak, Frank Zappa himself (leading to the band signing to Zappa's own label). After being shunned, criticized, or even worse—ignored—in L.A., Alice Cooper relocated to Detroit.

Dubbed 'shock rock' by the media, Alice Cooper sang about the darker side of life—similarly to Black Sabbath—but also employed horrific imagery not only in the lyrics but also the elaborate stage show, incorporating dancing ghouls, graveyard motifs, a fully grown python, multiple costume changes (including a straight jacket for the vocalist), beheadings, mutilations of adults and infants, and gallons of fake

[505] In its original formation, and for more than the first decade of the band's existence, Alice Cooper was the name of the *band*, not simply the singer. That singer, Vincent Fournier, of course eventually took the name of the band as his stage persona, and continues in his solo musical career—begun when the original band dissolved in 1975—by continuing to write, record, and tour until the present (at least at the time of this writing).

blood.[506] Of course, Screamin' Jay Hawkins had employed a coffin (from which he emerged) on stage more than a decade before Alice Cooper, Screaming Lord Sutch had also dealt with issues of murder and the macabre in his tunes, and the Who and Jimi Hendrix had famously destroyed their guitars. But Alice Cooper intensified these elements, creating a spectacle unparalleled in popular music.

Parents, preachers, politicians, and teachers all voiced their offense at Alice Cooper, perhaps evoking ire equivalent to any other rock n' roll scandal, at least up until that point—producing something akin to what some cultural scholars refer to as a 'moral panic,' which is also something Alice Cooper shares with punk.[507] Indeed, a decade before punk's 'moral panic' and two decades before Tipper Gore's PMRC crusade, Alice Cooper faced threats of censorship (based not only on the band's actual performance, but also on rumors, such as the infamous chicken incident—to which they responded, "Col. Sanders kills chickens, I don't!").[508]

Alice Cooper doesn't just say, "hey teacher, leave those kids alone," but rather that "school's out forever!"[509] Not just a critique of the repressive U.S. school system,

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[506] Not only has I had the privilege of witnessing this rock spectacle, but it is worth mentioning that *every* written piece about Alice Cooper for the last four decades has included some description of this stage antics. For one example, see Whitely, Sheila. 1992. *The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture*. New York: Routledge, pp. 85-86. So-called 'shock rock' continues in several genres, though in varying levels of spectacle and deliberate offensiveness, but most of all in metal (e.g. Anal Cunt, Cannibal Corpse, Gwar, Marilyn Manson, Slayer, Rob Zombie, etc.) and punk (e.g. G.G. Allin, Anti-Nowhere League, Butthole Surfers, Dwarves, Insaints, King Diamond, Meatmen, Mentors, Misfits, Plasmatics, Turbonegro).

[507] For a broader and more detailed examination of censorship in the music industry (in the U.S. that is), see Nuzum, Eric. 2001. *Parental advisory: Music Censorship in America*. New York: HarperCollins.

[508] *Alice Cooper Inducted into Rock & Roll Hall of Fame*. Originally broadcast by Fuse TV. Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSSzj01qdWo Last Accessed 04/06/2018.

[509] Pink Floyd. 1979. *The Wall*. Harvest. Double Album. Alice Cooper. 1972. *School's Out*. Warner Brothers. LP. A broader discussion of education as viewed through the lens of rock n' roll is available

but also of American society (particularly in its ideological patriotism), by stating "*we can't salute you*, can't find a flag, if that don't suit you, that's a drag." The emphasis on escaping the ideological edifice of school is re-articulated in punk not only I serious ways, such as Crass's "at school they give you shit, drop you in the pit" or "watch out for the quiet ones in the back," Leftover Crack's deliberate use of insensitive Columbine imagery stating that "we'll shoot the kids at school cuz they'll just grow up to be another asshole just like you," but also in the much sillier, more lighthearted Ramones *Rock n' Roll High School*.[510] Further, Alice Cooper bends gender in lyrics ("she asks me why the singer's name was Alice," "I'll wear lace and I'll wear black leather") and attire, such as makeup, anticipating the subgenre of rock n' roll known as glam, which comprised of a multitude of bands that also massively influenced punk (e.g. not just the New York Dolls, but also Bowie, Slade, T-Rex, Mott the Hoople, etc.).[511]

As Waksman writes, Alice Cooper is prophetic in anticipating punk through the use of "gender fucking" and shock strategies, "not simply to 'turn on' and audience but to leave them wondering what hit them." Incomprehensibility and surprise are hence central to the Alice Cooper spectacle, and these strategies we will see become not only influential, but indeed *central* to punk cultures. Not only—as legend has it—did Alice Cooper so influence the young John Lydon (Rotten) so much that he auditioned for the Sex Pistols by singing the group's "I'm Eighteen" (a lyrical

in Pattison, Robert. 1987. *The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, especially pp. 95-110.

[510] Crass. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP. Leftöver Crack. 2004. *Fuck World Trade*. Alternative Tentacles. LP/CD. The Ramones. 1979. *Rock n' Roll High School*. Sire. LP.

[511] "Killer" title track on Alice Cooper. 1971. *Killer*. Warner Brothers.

masterpiece of teenage confusion and anxiety about one's adolescent role in society) but stylistically (both tonally and in attire) and thematically, groups like the New York Dolls and the Damned clearly give rock n' roll homage to Alice Cooper on their early recordings. Having once run into Jello Biafra—who was exuding an almost childlike giddiness in his enjoyment—at an Alice Cooper show in San Francisco, another key influence is obvious. Clearly, the reach of Alice Cooper in punk not only explains some of the darker themes punks explore on record, or the glam/goth punk/'post'-punk scenes bathed in gothic allusion, but even the shock tactics and humor of the Dead Kennedys becomes much more clear. Of course, this influence on punk doesn't mean that Alice Cooper is *universally* influential on the culture, or even that a majority of punks recognize his influence, most especially once the solo albums went in a decidedly more commercial direction.[512]



"Death's music was definitely ahead of its time. They really predated what we know as the punk movement."
--Questlove[513]

The other most known band from Detroit in this time period of the late 60s/early-to-mid 70s is Death, who were in fact 'lost' for decades, but revived recently once their LP was released for mass consumption. Three black brothers

[512] See multiple critiques of Alice Cooper in *Punk* magazine, reproduced in Holmstrom, John and Hurd, Bridget (ed.). 2012. *The Best of Punk Magazine*. New York: HarperCollins.
[513] Covino, Mark. 2012. *(Before there was punk, there was) A Band Called Death*. Haven Entertainment. Film.

(Bobby, David, and Dannis Hackney) in Detroit laid down some of the most interesting, fast, and creative music of their time and place, if only anyone got to hear it. Death struggled to find success as a working band, which their contemporary Alice Cooper explains, is largely because of the broad assumption and expectation that to be a black musician in Detroit at the time was to be "stereotyped that they had to be Motown."[514] Sure, the members of Death describe the influence of Motown on their music, but also that of Jimi Hendrix, the MC5, and the Stooges. They began as a funk fusion band (similar to the story of D.C.'s Bad Brains a decade later), but describe the revelation of seeing the Who perform in Detroit, and event which inspired them to shift gears towards a more rock n' roll sound. They became "Rock n' Roll Victims," unable to "live without their stereo," "rolling grass" and "shaking ass."[515]

They play a tight and smooth brand of rock n' roll, demonstrating musical virtuosity as well as creativity. There is a certain heaviness to the guitar/bass/drum trio sound that they produce, as well as a tempo now recognizable as akin to punk rock (only, this was years before such a thing as 'punk' was used as a label for particular aesthetics). Rhythm changes and break downs are also common in their music, in which an ethereal, even airy soundscape may—at any moment—burst forth into an exuberant sprint. The lyrical content of Death circulates between political realities (such as politicians "sending young men to die") and the spiritual realm of (particularly David's) intense quasi-mystical Christian belief. Yet, because of their

[514] Covino, Mark. 2012. *(Before there was punk, there was) A Band Called Death*. Haven Entertainment. Film.
[515] All lyrical references from Death refer to the (much later released) album Death. 2009. *For the Whole World to See*. Drag City Records. LP/CD, a release which also includes the two earlier released tracks from their infamous 7".

'shocking' name, record labels were largely uninterested in what they thought was an unsellable commodity. This use of shock, and their commitment to it is also relevant to discuss in Death's anticipation of punk. Because of their name, police often followed the band (or the information on their flyers) to gigs, expecting some sort of who knows what (e.g. ruckus? Satanic ritual?). When the band refused to change their name, Arista records cancelled the deal they hoped to sign to their label. In another instance of what would later become central to many punk rockers, Death's integrity to their vision as a band was prioritized over commercial considerations.

The emergence of Death as an *acknowledged* 'before their time' proto-punk band has an interesting lineage. Record collectors, most notably Jello Biafra, celebrated the only Death material to ever be pressed onto vinyl during the band's existence, which was the single "Politicians in My Eyes."[516] These record collectors, not limited to punk but in this case with strong connections to it, did some digging and found out as much as they could about the band that produced this highly prized, lost treasure of a record. Luckily, the now deceased guitarist and songwriter, David Hackney, had saved the master tapes and (upon learning of his terminal illness), gave them to his brother Bobby. Death has reformed with a new guitarist, and has toured across the U.S. playing the material no label dared release when it was recorded

[516] Biafra was personally thanked by the band from the stage at the Chapel venue in San Francisco show on March 23rd, 2014 in which they credited him and other record collectors like him for 'discovering' and then supporting Death.

decades earlier. They are now well recognized and respected within punk cultures, both in 'Afro-punk' and far beyond.[517]

Now:

The stage is set,

the guitars are *maybe* tuned,

the amps are turned to eleven…

[517] Even so, Bad Brains is still usually the most discussed black punk band, so even though Death predates Bad Brains, they are still struggling to get out of their shadow (and all the pressures of fetish and tokenism that their new found fame has brought). Cf. Spooner, James. 2003. *Afro-Punk*. Afro-Punk Films.


MOVEMENT
2!

“WITHOUT MUSIC, LIFE WOULD BE A MISTAKE.”

–FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
(*Twilight of the Idols*)

“I’M A BLUES MAN IN THE LIFE OF THE MIND; I’M A JAZZ MAN IN THE WORLD OF IDEAS. THEREFORE, FOR ME, MUSIC IS CENTRAL. SO WHEN YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT POETRY, FOR THE MOST PART PLATO IS TALKING ABOUT WORDS, WHEREAS I TALK ABOUT NOTES, I TALK ABOUT TONE, I TALK ABOUT TEMPO, I TALK ABOUT RHYTHMS. YOU SEE, FOR ME, MUSIC IS FUNDAMENTAL. PHILOSOPHY MUST GO TO SCHOOL, NOT ONLY WITH THE POETS; PHILOSOPHY MUST GO TO SCHOOL WITH THE MUSICIANS.”

–CORNEL WEST
(*Examined Life*)

“'THE TRANSFORMATION OF WASTE IS PERHAPS THE OLDEST PRE-OCCUPATION OF MAN. MAN BEING THE CHOSEN ALLOY, HE MUST BE RECONNECTED VIA SHIT, AT ALL COST. INHERENT WITHIN US IS THE DREAM OF THE TASK OF THE ALCHEMIST TO CREATE FROM THE CLAY OF MAN, AND TO RECREATE FROM EXCRETION OF MAN PURE AND THEN SOFT AND THEN SOLID GOLD. ALL MUST NOT BE ART. SOME ART WE MUST DISINTEGRATE. POSITIVE ANARCHY MUST EXIST.”

–PATTI SMITH
(“25th Floor”)

Chapter 6

Theorizing Punk's Crass Event

"Punk was as much an aesthetic and philosophical stance as a musical genre.
It rejected authority of all kinds, which I'm sure is the reason it appealed."
--Greg Graffin[518]

"Of course, we now know that punk was not a brave new dawn,
but the sound of the last rites being administered,
over the last throw of the dying rock-corpse."
--Steve Lake[519]

On November 26th, 2016 (the fortieth anniversary of the Sex Pistols release of "Anarchy in the UK"), fashion and lingerie magnate Joe Corré burned his collection of early punk memorabilia (valued at an estimated £5 million) on a small barge on the Thames river in west London. Corré is the son of fashionista Vivienne Westwood (who accompanied him at this event) and entrepreneur-turned-Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McClaren. The Westwood & McClaren shop called Sex/Seditionaries on Kings Road was a key location for the fashion pushed by the Sex Pistols' version of punk, for both bands and fans who could afford their fare throughout the late 1970s. This burning spectacle occurred a mere three weeks after the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. This context is perplexing given that in the Brexit/Trump era rise in far-right activity, Corré felt that punk was the most fitting or

[518] Graffin, Greg and Olson, Steve. 2010. *Anarchy Evolution: Faith, Science, and Bad Religion in a World Without God*. New York: Harper Collins, p. 10.
[519] Lake, Steve. 2013. *Zounds Demystified: Lyrics and Notes*. Active Distribution/Bev Records, p. 66. Quite a different sentiment than Penny Rimbaud's, "we were attempting to create a new future by trashing the past." Cabut, Richard & Gallix, Andrew. 2017. *Punk is Dead: Modernity Killed Every Night*. Winchester: Zero Books, p. 172. Although, Rimbaud has also claimed a connection to the past through his perception that punk is yet the next stage in the long line of counter-cultural youth-based aesthetic movements, from bohemians to beatniks to hippies.

deserving target for his protest. The U.S. election is also relevant in this context for this front cover of the *Daily Mirror*, on November 10, 2016,



The image of 'Lady Liberty' covering her face (seemingly in tears) is a watercolor painting by Gee Vaucher, a member and the visual artist of punk group Crass.[520] Originally produced by request for a different band's album (though they ended up going in another direction), this image, titled *Oh, America* has not only adorned the album art for Penny Rimbaud's poetic performance of the same title, but has also taken on a visible life in activist circles. Vaucher herself once told me that she was rather pleased that the image has so clearly struck a chord and been utilized by groups, such as Black Lives Matter and immigrant advocacy groups, though she also

[520] Though Vaucher has said that one could imagine under different circumstances, her hands covering her face in laughter rather than tears. A close examination of the figure itself (separate from the background present here) does seem to bear out this assertion of ambiguity. But of course, we have the dystopian context in the painting, and so tears seem most likely.

admitted that she doesn't spend much time following what uses her work is put to.[521] It is certainly possible that Corré has never seen this image, and even if he had passed in on a Tube newsstand, would be unaware of its origin. It is also quite possible that the editors of the *Daily Mirror* were themselves ignorant of who produced this image.

Many musicians and activists (including John Lydon of the Sex Pistols himself) called on Corré to auction off or otherwise sell the memorabilia in order to give the proceeds to a charitable organization, especially those supporting youth music. He refused, choosing the public burning option, as he felt the state-sponsored Punk London exhibits deserved a strong counter. Apparently, the son of McClaren/Westwood 'punk' elites has somehow assumed the authority to claim that punk is now "dead," and an outdated "McDonald's brand" that simply needs to go away. He states, that punk in the 21st century is nothing more than a farce "conning a younger generation that it somehow has any currency to deal with the issues that they face or has any currency to create the way out of the issues that they face."[522] Clearly, not everyone agrees.

On the one hand, in the context of the Clash's music being used to sell luxury cars, John Lydon and Iggy Pop hocking butter and insurance respectively on television commercials, the recently announced "bollocks," "anarchy" and other Sex Pistols credit card designs, and the facsimile of the CBGB's awning over a bourgeois

[521] That is, unless some irritating enthusiasts like myself inform her, for then she is more than happy to comment.

[522] Ellis-Petersen, Hannah. 24 November 2016. **"**'Punk is a McDonald's brand': Malcolm McLaren's son on burning £5m of items," *The Guardian*. Web, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/nov/24/malcolm-mclarens-son-punk-has-become-a-brand-like-mcdonalds. Last Accessed 08/01/2017

restaurant in a Newark, NJ airport terminal, it is not hard to see Corré's point about punk's cooptation.[523] Even Andy Palmer of Crass (the group which the following chapters largely center on) discussed the problems with punk conformity decades ago, stating that "punk has become a standard—it was initially a rejection of standards—to which bands conform in the way they present themselves, the way they present their music, in the way they write their lyrics."[524] On the other hand, Corré demonstrates a limited view of what punk is and its possibilities. He has chosen to view punk as entirely situated in the past, claiming that, "the artifacts represent the ideas—they're in the past, and it's the ideas that are important, not the memorabilia."[525] But for many, punk is not so firmly situated in the past, and certain of Corré's undefined 'ideas' from punk cultures continue to resonate. Is it not also possible that punks may radically rethink or utilize anachronistic aesthetics in a way that is not so simply nostalgic as Corré suggests?

Here the relevance of Trump's election is significant, for 1982's Texas punk band MDC song "Born to Die" includes the chant "No war, No KKK, No Fascist

[523] Sharp, Johnny. 9 June 2015 "Filthy Lucre: What the Sex Pistols Can Teach Us About Finance," *The Guardian*. Web, https://www.theguardian.com/money/shortcuts/2015/jun/09/filthy-lucre-what-the-sex-pistols-can-teach-us-about-finance. Last Accessed 08/18/17. Cf. Jones, Rupert. 8 June 2015. "Punk Rock Brand: The Sex Pistols to Feature on a Range of Credit Cards," *The Guardian*. Web, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jun/09/punk-rock-brand-the-sex-pistols-to-feature-on-a-range-of-credit-cards. Last Accessed 08/18/2017. Coughlin, Deborah. 9 June 2015 "There is No Such Thing as a Punk Credit Card," *The Guardian*. Web, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/09/no-such-thing-punk-credit-card-sex-pistols-iggy-pop. Last Accessed 08/18/17.

[524] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 245. Brad Warner makes a similar point, stating, "punks weren't real nonconformists—they just had a different standard they thought people should conform to." Warner, Brad. 2003. *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies, and the Truth About Reality*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, p. 28.

[525] Pattenden, Mike. "Joe Corré on burning his Sex Pistols collection: 'It's the ideas that are important, not the memorabilia'." *The Guardian*. Web, https://www.theguardian.com/music/shortcuts/2016/mar/20/joe-corre-burning-sex-pistols-collection-memorabilia-punk-anniversary. Last Accessed 08/20/17.

USA."[526] Though originally composed to protest right wing, KKK, and fascist groups recruiting and violence at punk shows (and beyond) during the eighties (especially given that MDC was among the earliest openly queer and gender fluid—not to mention vegan and anarchist—bands in the U.S. scene), the song continues to resonate.[527] This line has been used in the resistance movements against the Trump regime, beginning on election night, with the president's name replacing "war" in the chant (including by MDC themselves, but also—perhaps most visibly—by pop-punk Green Day, who led the crowd at the American Music Awards in a chant of "No Trump, No KKK, No Fascist U.S.A.," November 20th, 2016). In the handful of U.S. cities I have been able to demonstrate in following the election, I have personally witnessed tens of thousands of activists chant this phrase—whether or not they know of its punk origins—and thousands more can be seen doing so online, via media outlets, Youtube, and social media. Additionally, protesters successfully utilized this chant to interrupt January 10th, 2017 confirmation hearings for Attorney General Jeff Sessions.[528]

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[526] Millions of Dead Cops.1982. *Millions of Dead Cops*. R Radical: Alternative Tentacles. LP. MDC has changed the meaning of its acronymic moniker throughout the several decades of its performance and recording career, variously going as Millions of Dead Cops, Multi-Death Corporations, Millions of Dead Capitalists, Millions of Dead Children, Massacred and Dismembered Culture, Millions of Damn Christians, and more. It is also worth pointing out that in 2017, MDC re-recorded this song for their release: MDC. 2017. *Mein Trumpf*. Primordial Records. CD/Free online.

[527] Grow, Kory. November 21, 2016. 'No Trump! No KKK! No Fascist USA!': The Punk History. M.D.C. singer Dave Dictor looks back on "Born to Die" lyric that inspired punks and protesters alike," *Rolling Stone*, Web. http://www.rollingstone.com/music/features/green-days-anti-trump-amas-chant-the-punk-history-w451677. Last Accessed 08/21/17.

[528] Lynskey, Dorian. 31 January 2017. "'No Trump! No KKK! No Fascist USA!'—the punk chant that soundtracks the protests," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/shortcuts/2017/jan/31/no-trump-no-kkk-no-fascist-usa-green-day-punk-chant-protest-soundtrack. Last Accessed 09/10/17.



(Anarchist Publisher PM Press Tables at a Doom (U.K.) show, Oakland, CA on 8/22/17. Note the t-shirt of "No Trump, No KKK, No Fascist USA").

This example is not meant to claim ownership over the phrase, or to give any particular importance to the punk origins of it, but simply to point out that clearly an imaginative chord was struck here. Nor do I mean to overstate the importance of this one activist chant, but it helps to underline that punk cultures continue to influence political discourse, despite what some elites may claim as its 'death' or irrelevance (not just Corré, but other musicians, artists, academics, and participants past and present). The use of this chant by activists protesting the neo-fascist elements within Trump's administration and supporters is also underscored by the immense cross-pollination of influence between the loose assemblage of anti-fascists groups known as Antifa and punk rock cultures. Mark Bray, Antifa activist and author of *Antifa: The Anti-fascist Handbook*, traces both the origins and the current influences of the anti-

fascist movement in the United States from punk scenes.[529] Anti-Racist Action, for instance, grew out of a group of leftist punks and (mostly) skinheads in the American mid-west who founded the group both out of self defense, but also as a statement laying claim to the anti-racist and anti-fascist tenants they conceived as central to a punk identity. Variations on the phraseology 'there is no room for hatred in our scene' and calls for 'unity' have abounded for decades, and continue to be consistently and loudly heard in punk spaces.

What is it about punk in particular that has the potentiality to lend itself to such radical politics? Is there, in fact, something unique about the spaces punk inhabits, the ideas circulating there, and/or the particular aesthetics that opens possibilities for political imagining and action that may be precluded by more industrialized and commodified mainstream cultures? How might music be utilized as an instrument of social change? Are we simply grasping at straws here, in an attempt to convince ourselves that our entertainment media has a greater importance than it does?

For illumination at the onset of our investigation here, let's turn to something of a counter-example. For decades, Muzak Company has provided standardized soundscapes for purchase by corporate offices, retail shops, amusement parks, and shopping malls. Their pitch point has been to provide background "music" that reputedly enhances productivity and customer experiences within the private business (and now also the public) sector. It turns out that this scheme has produced millions

[529] Bray, Mark. 2017. *Antifa: The Anti-fascist Handbook*. New York: Melville House Books.

of dollars in exchange and revenue. Muzak has been so successful that it recently changed its name to Mood Media, Inc., for the former name has be so proliferated that it is now associated with an entire genre/stylistic of sound, and not just the productions of the original company. It seems, then, that despite aesthetic theory's ocular-centrism, that many capitalists, industrialists, and the managerial class in the United States has been firmly convinced of the importance of background sound and its effects on behavior.[530]

What can we make of this? How does background sound actually affect not only our senses, but also our behavior, consumption, even our politics? William S. Burroughs's story "The Electronic Revolution" and Klaus Maeck's 1984 film based on it, *Decoder*, offer a unique dystopian window in to consideration of these issues, especially in relation to the punk cultures we are then turning to in this chapter. These punk cultures, in all their ideological diversity, may be conceptualized as similar attempts a disruption and in similar methods as in the film.[531] *Decoder* also invites us to consider the fragility of our sensory perception, and the sonic landscapes that we often take for granted. In this story and film, Muzak is omnipresent in the lives of actors, affecting both their relationships with each other and their other sensory experiences.

In the film, the protagonist is even named after airwaves, known simply as FM. He is an out-of-work performer and amateur sound engineer conducting

[530] On the ocular-centrism of aesthetic theory (focused largely on Rancière), see Panagia, Davide. 2009. *The Political Life of Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press.
[531] Burroughs, in particular, was directly involved in the punk scene through his influence and mentorship over Patti Smith, among others.

experiments on sound-waves. At the onset of the film, he has a vague sense that something is deeply wrong in the soundscapes of Muzak, though he hasn't yet pinpointed what. What occurs when FM blocks consumption of Muzak is that, as in the cross-sensorial theory of Fred Moten, his change in auditory perception also affects his visual frame.[532] What seemed wholesome, jovial, and pleasant with Muzak appears as frightening and disgusting without it. FM recognizes that the Muzak used by H-burger (the stand-in for fast food chains, but with a more obviously fascist quality) does much more than provide a soothing backdrop to commercial consumption. He realizes at this point how soundscapes directly affect perception, and therefore behavior, without subjects even being aware. In his studio, he discovers an unknown frequency that drastically alters the totality of his perception (including sight, hearing, feeling, and tasting), and alters the behavior of both himself and his pet frogs. Hoping to further explore this discovery, he returns to H-burger to counter their Muzak with his new recording. The restaurant goers become sick after hearing FM's cassette, and can neither finish their meals nor remain inside the space the sound occupies. This infiltration and occupation of space with sound is immediately recognized by the H-burger corporation as a threat to the "smooth running of business," and they hire an assassin to put an end to FM's resistant recordings. It is important to note that interactions between the corporate owners and FM are always mediated by a screen; a screen that only gives an image of him, removing sound altogether. In other words, the owners are unwilling to subject themselves to the

[532] Moten, Fred. 2003. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 235.

soundscapes they commission to control their customers. H-burger is ultimately unsuccessful in their murderous plot, however, and F.M. joins radicals in further disseminating his recordings systematically. These characters pursue this direct action, and we witness the violent state response.

When the protagonist, and later his anarchist compatriots, disturb the conventional, hegemonic soundscape, they produce a series of events that undermine oppressive structures of power. The only way the corporate capitalists, and later the state that supports them, know how to react is through militarized structural violence. This response, in turn, leads to further rioting, and a further destabilization of the corporate state. The effects of sonic terrorism are directly materialized in *Decoder*, as listeners revolt from normal cycles of production and consumption, as well as in the physical destruction that follows. In other words, we witness in *Decoder* that sound possesses a physical, material quality, making it fully capable of occupying and modifying physical space. The conclusion of *Decoder* is ambiguous, for the violent uprisings of freedom fighters are met by state violence. We are left with their contest still undecided, yet the definitive conclusion that the occupation of space with sound has not only sonic and psychic, but also material effects. Not only do FM's recordings shock subjects out of their banal complacency, but this sensory jolt is enough to inspire further breakdowns of hegemonic mechanisms of control. In other words, we can view and listen to *Decoder* as a demonstration of the inter-relationship of structures of the state/capital and the sensorium.

But this is fiction; can we also look to factual use of similar tactics of occupying space with sound? Sure, in a generous reading of *Decoder*, we could consider the film itself a sensory shock, as it is positioning itself in contra-distinction from the actual Muzak company. Yet, it cannot be considered shocking forever. Aesthetic shock can only operate in fleeting performances, for shock is an event, so once it proliferates, it becomes part of the realm of the expected, or at least the sensible. It is the possibilities of such effects and affects that this chapter explores, focusing on the particular potentialities of punk rock cultures. Yet, we could also look to examples of sonic warfare, for instance, to understand military power's use of the sonic to influence the material.[533] Many institutions of power utilize sonic devices to influence behavior, and many actors and groups have attempted to counter these.[534] Punk is but one cultural assemblage attempting to act as FM does, to shock folks out of complacency with sound.

What is this culture/scene/genre, punk?

In his systematic study of musical genre, Franco Fabbri offers a compelling set of features useful in defining a musical (or in our case, made even more complex as we are examining a musical/political/cultural) genre. There is a loose, but more or

[533] For instance, Cuba has recently been accused of such a "sonic attack" on a U.S. government building. The use of sonic warfare by the U.S. military, especially in its numerous invasions of Iraq, has been well documented. See Bures, Frank. February 1, 2018. "Cuba's Sonic Attack Show Us Just How Susceptible Our Brains are to Mass Hysteria." *Slate*. Web: https://slate.com/technology/2018/02/cubas-sonic-attacks-show-us-just-how-susceptible-our-brains-are-to-mass-hysteria.html

[534] The usages of such sonic strategies are not always nebulous, but *are* most often an attempt at behavioral manipulation. This applies to sonic warfare, Muzak, to more banal examples like the frequency used by emergency vehicles' sirens to clear lanes in traffic. See Goodman, Steve. 2012. *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

less defined "set of rules" or "non-written agreement" which "set the course" for a particular genre, as well as "social acceptance" within a given scene.[535] The functioning of these rules is by definition reductive, for every sonic experience is beyond total human comprehension, and rules provide necessary codes for recognizing "what is significant and what is not."[536] The rules of genre can function within a musical scene, influencing the ways in which music is made and experienced (not to mention *what* music is made and how), but genre is also helpful in simply allowing us to speak of musical events, to put into language a musical force that might otherwise be indescribable.[537] These rules apply to context, content, and form of the genre—framing the acceptable experiences of both cultural producers (including the composer or performer's intentionality behind the aesthetic production) and consumers. These rules are indicative not only the aesthetic parameters of a given genre, but also of the separation of labor within a genre, economic position of the genre or individual artist, competence (in a given skill set, as well as in coded messaging), perceptions of sincerity, the space in which a genre is produced and consumed, the scale of a production, the age group of the audience, musical communities, and more, which Fabbri argues are believed and enforced at (almost) the level of ideological faith and adherence.[538]

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[535] Fabbri, Franco. 1981. "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications." *Popular Music Perspectives*. ed. D. Horn and P. Tagg; 1981, Göteborg and Exeter: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, pp. 52 & 57.
[536] Fabbri, 1981. p. 56.
[537] Fabbri, Franco (translated by Chambers, Iain). 1982. "What Kind of Music?" *Popular Music, Vol 2: Theory and Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 142.
[538] Fabbri, 1981. p. 80.

The ideology of a given genre, however, often has less to do with aesthetics, than it does with sociality, for "the ideology of a genre is not to be defined as a vision of the world connoted by the genre, but as a system of values that form a hierarchy inside the principles of the genre."[539] Hierarchies of authenticity, or evaluations of the 'real', the related valuation of D.I.Y. and autonomous production, and longstanding participation and influence will be the primary valuating schema of punk cultures in our study. Fabbri takes these ideological codes of a genre to be "false consciousness" in that participants take as "natural" what signs that are in fact contingent and contrived.[540] Punk helps to problematize this assertion, drawing instead upon critiques of capital not dependent upon the elitism of the vanguard or of broad declarations of false consciousness. Though ever critical, punk culture instead invites people to be informed, to resist authority, but not within a consistent political ideology. The noise of confusion surrounding the political positioning of punk can actually prove to be one of its strengths, allowing punks to be both radical and non-dogmatic.

Musical genres can also, of course, "denote and connote different signs" to different people, and hence however codified a given genre may be, there is always a diversity of meanings and significations of it.[541] Adherence to (or breaking of) rules shapes aesthetic experiences, identity formations, and more through the coded messages that such adherence or defiance send. Codes are therefore various between genres, and carry very difference meanings depending on which musical context one

[539] Fabbri and Chambers, 1982, p. 142.
[540] Ibid, p. 143.
[541] Fabbri and Chambers, 1982, p. 132.

encounters them within. Think, for instance, of another register, like the semiology of clothing fashion. Codes of acceptable participation and attire in the musical community at a hip-hop club show are often quite different from the attire deemed acceptable at a symphonic or operatic concert hall, which are perhaps both different from what might be expected at a sporting event, for instance. These codes can obviously carry social significance as well as aesthetic importance, and hence genre can serve as a sort of signal for the initiated of their inclusion, safety, authenticity, etc. Steve Waksman neatly summarizes genre in Fabbri's multi-faceted sense as "such a powerful tool for understanding popular music because it stands at the nexus of musical forms, social organization, and cultural identity."[542] As we shall hear, the "musical forms, social organization, and cultural identity" equally inform both definitions of and contradictions within punk cultures.[543]

Etymologically speaking, 'punk' has many connotations, and throughout much of the 20th century signified assumptions of delinquency (or—especially among incarcerated populations—sexual submissiveness). The term 'punk' is first used to signify a musical form when music journalists began a campaign to salvage and celebrate early amateur/garage bands during the supposed domestication/maturation period of rock music. The *Nuggets* compilation, for instance, put out material from the late 1950s and early 1960s by these little known groups, celebrating them for their

[542] Waksman, Steve. 2009. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 8.
[543] This isn't to say, however, that folks following Fabbri haven't gone in different directions in defining genre. Jennifer Lena, for instance, takes these concepts and mobilizes a more communal understanding of how genres are congealed, by focusing on the particular community contexts in which they arise. See Lena, Jennifer C. 2012. *Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

raw energy and jovial rebelliousness.[544] These journalists called this earlier, simpler form of rock'n'roll 'punk' music, ostensibly because it was so often performed by 'street punks' in the mold of Marlon Brando's infamous character Johnny in *The Wild One*, who responds to the question 'what are you rebelling against' with the pithy "What'd you got?" As mentioned in the previous chapter, Alice Cooper was referred to as a 'punk' in the music press, not as a genre signifier but rather to indicate their shock value and disrespectful, non-canonical sound.[545] Punk is perplexing within wider discussions of genres' normative rules, for punk so often espouses anarchic distrust for rules while simultaneously trafficking heavily in hierarchies based largely in rule enforcement for its alternative rule set. For instance, rather than developing technical acumen and musical complexity, punks often opt for simplicity. Simon Reynolds nicely summarizes this anachronistic quality of the sonic aesthetics of (at least many parts of) punk rock,

> There is a paradox right at the heart of punk: this most revolutionary movement in rock history was actually born from reactionary impulses. Punk opposed itself to progress. Musically, it rejected the sixties idea of progression and maturity that had led to prog rock and to other sophisticated seventies sounds. A concerted effort to turn back the clock to rock's teenage past, to fifties rock'n'roll and sixties garage, punk rock also rejected the notion of progress in a broader philosophical sense. Driven by an apocalyptic appetite for destruction and collapse, its vision was literally hope-less.[546]

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[544] Waksman, Steve. 2009. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[545] Some, though not all, punks later soured on Alice Cooper—most often the breaking point is the dissolving of the original band and the personal of the singer becoming Alice Cooper the solo artist. *Punk* magazine, for instance, critiqued Alice Cooper of becoming predictable and too mainstream, a position shared by Frank Zappa when he happily transferred the band's recordings to another record company, for he felt their sound had become too commercial.

[546] Reynolds, Simon. 2011. *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*. New York: Faber & Faber, Inc., p. 240.

Of course, all rock music is derived ultimately from black aesthetics, specifically the Mississippi Delta Blues traditions.[547] For much of the mid-20th century, much of the music industry was focused entirely on the production and distribution of records as commodities, with radio, television, and even live tours serving merely as a marketing tool for the sale of polished, expertly recorded singles and albums. Sharing a proclivity towards the live performance (even when not perfected through manipulative recording engineers) situates punk closer to the marginalized genres of the blues, jazz, and folk than to the bloated rock n' roll industry of the decade immediately preceding its emergence. Punk delves into these forms, as well as the expressions of immigrant post-colonial experience in reggae and ska music. All of these older sonic modes find their way into punk sounds, though not always in readily apparent ways. These borrowings from previously existing forms suggest that punk, rather than being inventive, is in fact reactive through the process of complex reclaiming and reallocating. Complexity and experimentation is distrusted while conformity to the aesthetic traditions is celebrated? That is, conformity to the 'real' or 'authentic' sounds of a bygone or hitherto underappreciated radical sound. In other words, there is all too often an insistence on musical conformity to punk's ostensibly non-conformist histories. Despite this de-skilling (or perhaps we could call it a

[547] For a small sampling of the histories of style, content, and politics of the Delta blues, see Davis, Angela. 1999. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York: Vintage. Davis, Francis. 2003. *The History of the Blues: The Roots, The Music, The People*. Boston: Da Capo Press. Jones, Leroi. 1999. *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. New York: Harper Perennial. Palmer, Robert. 1982. *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta*. New York: Penguin Books. Wald, Elijah. 2004. *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues*. New York: Amistad/HarperCollins.

democratizing of the performance space), punks still produce not only passionate material, but often musically interesting, sometimes surprisingly sound, sounds.

Crass, for instance, harkens to jazz, improvisation, and ambient noise, due in no small part to the fact that "apart from Pete, our bassist, none of us could make any reasonable claim to be musicians, preferring as we did to depend on attitude and a fair dose of chutzpah."[548] This "attitude" driven music—a position taken repeatedly by punks of various stripes—somehow create a de-skilled minimalist approach even when the musicians become more skilled (if they do, that is).[549] Such a paradox will be encountered again when we explore the fidelity/infidelity dilemma within the Crass event, as a struggle of organically produced leadership positions hoisted upon unwitting artists attempting to subvert hierarchies and authority.

So the *appearance* of lawlessness is more common than actual anarchy in this music and culture. Fabbri again is useful, for he encourages us not to be fooled by perceptions of either total rigidity or fluidity in musical genres. For although, "the guitarists in a punk group and Andres Segovia have different ideas on the concept of tuning and memory," both demonstrate a cultivated skill set referencing the rules of their respective genre or musical community despite the former being significantly less traditionally defined and formally trained and more orally based.[550]

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[548] Rimbaud, Penny. 2016. "Banned from the Roxy" contained in *Punk is Dead: Modernity Killed Every Night*, p. 171.

[549] Fat Mike has claimed that his band NOFX's EP *Fuck the Kids* was deliberately made in lo-fi fashion because they had "gotten too good" and wanted to return—at least temporarily—to their roots in incompetence. Liner notes, NOFX. 2002. *45 or 46 Songs That Weren't Good Enough for Our Other Records*. Fat Wreck Chords. LP/CD.

[550] The latter reference is to the 'grandfather of classical guitar', Spanish virtuoso Andres Segovia Torres. Fabbri, 1981. p. 55.

Punk is surely not unique in its imaginative possibility, though it is particular, and the particularized features of punk explored here make it an ideal field for studying a musical, cultural, and fashion styling with meaningful intersections and influences in popular political imagination.[551] "The major problem with trying to explain punk is that it is not something that fits neatly into a box or category. Not surprising, as punk had made the explicit aim of trying to destroy all boxes and labels."[552] Though definitions in academic writings are often ascribed a certain weight of authority, I make no claims to authoritatively defining punk. In other words, I do not claim that my particular definitions are necessarily more valid than many others, nor do I have any more right than anyone else to decide what is and what isn't punk. Of course, I think that the collage constructed in this chapter is accurate, but that doesn't necessarily give it more validity than others' parallel, perpendicular, or even contrary definitions and understandings of punk cultures. Sprinkled throughout the rest of the punk chapters will therefore be others' voices in how they define punk or

[551] Similar points can be made regarding the explosion of jazz creativity during the first decades of the 20th century (mentioned in our context here in the context of studies by Adorno, Kun, and Moten). The most similar trajectory, however, is in the realm of hip-hop; from it's origins in marginalized, diverse communities, its radical imagery and lyrical content, and the even in massive growth of DJs and MCs arising out of the wide-scale expropriation of stereo equipment during the 1977 New York blackout (in my opinion, probably the most radical origins story of a musical genre we've yet seen). Artists, fans, participants, and scholars of hip-hop culture are doing interesting work on this culture, both autonomously and occasionally in connection to other scenes, including punk. The best works done on this early history on hip-hop include Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, Chang, Jeff. 2005. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: Picador. and the collections of essays edited by Miller, Paul D. aka DJ Spooky (ed.)2008. *Sound Unsound: Sampling, Digital Music, and Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, and Forman, Murray and Neal, Mark Anthony. 2011. *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.

[552] Marc Bayard, "Introduction" to O'Hara, Craig. 1999. *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise. 2nd Edition*. San Francisco: AK Press, p. 11.

what punk means to them.[553] This is similar to the clichéd joke that if you ask fifty anarchists their definition of anarchism, you are likely to hear fifty different answers. The features that I, and these others, point to should help construct a collage of the assembled, myriad cultures understood as punk, rather than a unified or singular definition. As Constant describes the Situationist International, so can I—hesitantly—describe punk, for perhaps it "did not constitute a real movement. The adherents came and went and the only view they shared was their contempt for the current art practice."[554] Supplement 'art practice' in this statement with state, religion, capital, and/or a more encompassing (yet also more vaguely defined) 'system' or 'authority', and you find a relatively accurate definition of the loose assemblage of punk artists, audiences, producers, and consumers.

> "I'm so confused, I wanna go punk, but there's way too many rules…I wanna be unusual, I wanna be punk rock…So what's your core?..Ska core, snow core, hardcore, Homo core, Alba core…I can't take it anymore. My core, your core, this core, that core, one core."
> --Guttermouth[555]

The lyric quoted above demonstrates a key point of contention and contradiction within punk, which revolves around the contested definition of what 'is' and what 'isn't' punk. Minus the joke about tuna, each of the 'cores' listed is such a

[553] One further note on sources and citation: whenever possible full citation information is given in these chapters focused on punk. However, there are occasions in which full citation information is not available, most especially when referring to zines, in which authors' names are either omitted, or only partially given (i.e. most often, zine writers—most especially the avowed anarchist writers—prefer to either only give a first name, or some nickname or 'punk' name. These will be referred to as such. Therefore, if a last name is absent, it is because this reflects the anonymity sought by the writer in only providing a first name, not an error in citation format.

[554] Wark, McKenzie. 2015. *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*. Brooklyn: Verso, p. 142.

[555] Guttermouth. 1997. "Baker's Dozen," *Musical Monkey*. Nitro Records. CD.

site of contention, or 'sub' genres of punk culture (along with, but not limited to Riot Grrrl, Anarcho, Straightedge, Hardline, Power Violence, Oi!, Peace Punk, Crust Punk, Youth Crew, Horror Punk/Psychobilly, Street Punk, Skate Punk, Pop Punk, Crossover, Afro-core, Grindcore, Queercore, seemingly any combination of the aforementioned styles, and more).[556] If anything has become clear in the last four decades of change in these scenes, as David Ensminger has described it, a "moving metaphor…[that] grows in sudden spurts and fissures," there is no such thing as a singular punk culture. To assume such would ignore the variety not only of musical styles, but of participants, influences, fashions, and ideologies.

Even in the so-called 'early' days, in which so many authors, scholars, and indeed punk participants wax nostalgic for some sort of golden age of CBGB's glory, there was no single aesthetic one could use to define punk rock. Indeed, the sounds alone spanned from the Andy Warhol endorsed, feedback rhythm & blues freak-out happenings of the Velvet Underground, to the jazzy improvisational explorations of Television, to the beat poet William Burroughs's influenced Patti Smith, to the surf rock cum chainsaw of the Ramones, to the risqué bubblegum of Blondie, the art student meandering experimentation and pop sensibilities of the Talking Heads, the nihilistic and horny snarl of the Dead Boys, and dozens less commercially successful

[556] Sources in this project are drawn from each of these, as well as their intersections. For more on the ways in which punk's own set of rules, norms, and practices were sometimes felt as stifling, elitist, or unfairly restrictive, see also Marcus, Sara. 2010. *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*. New York: Perennial, p. 46. Brownstein, Carrie. 2015. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*. New York: Riverhead Books, pp. 129-135 & 195-196.

groups…and this all in those supposedly unified early days of New York City.[557] If one city's punk scene was so diverse in its earliest incarnations, how could we possibly hope to offer a singular definition of scenes all over the world decades later? What ostensibly connects such a diversity of scenes under the banner of punk is an oppositional position, an attitude of defiance towards traditional authority figures and structures. As Dave Dictor, the singer of MDC and lyricist cited at the opening of this chapter describes,

> Punk, to me, amounts to an angst railing against the conformity of the status quo. I saw firsthand the ideals of the hippie world fail and turn against itself. They embraced the consumerism and commodification of music as an industry, which turned rock and roll into a machine and musicians into cogs in that machine. That was my impetus to break free from corporate culture and fully submerge myself in punk. I'm always so happy to see those new crops of kids who are looking to bust out from the norms shoved down their throats. Those kids give me hope, and I believe punk rock will never die as long as the kids find passion, cause, and voice.[558]

The features of age and iconoclastic angst (often associated with youth cultures) are striking here, coming particularly from a middle aged musician extolling the virtues of these 'new crops' of youth, rather than questioning their authenticity for arriving to the party 'too late.'

Finally, in the last consideration of punk as a specific cultural scene (beyond, yet including and irrevocably linked, to a specific musical genre), the fundamentally anachronistic elements of punk aesthetics need to be unpacked. What we mean here is

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[557] There are monograph---length studies of each of these groups. For a broad overview, see Heylin, Clinton. 2005 (1993). *From the Velvets to the Voidoids: The Birth of American Punk Rock*. Chicago: A Cappella Books.

[558] Dictor, Dave. 2016. *MDC: Memoir from a Damaged Civilization. Stories of Punk, Fear, and Redemption*. San Francisco: Music D Press, pp. 187-188.

that punk rock, for all of its trafficking in the new and novel, functionally sounds out of time more so than out of place. This isn't the place to describe the entire history of rock'n'roll music, but only to give a brief synopsis in order to situate punk within it. Rock'n'roll music of the simple, 4/4 or 2/4 time measure, played with a repertoire of just a few chords and basic harmony (or, alternatively dissonant noise) was prevalent in the decade of rock'n'roll's birth. As mentioned above, the term "punk" as applied to musicians and their songs was originally utilized to describe the amateur, hyper, and largely unsuccessful garage-based bands of the 1950s and 60s, as well as the shocking rock villains in Alice Cooper.[559] Yet, by the 1970s, musical charts and labels saw a plethora of 'rock' genres and subgenres emerged, many of which are vastly more complex than the initial chaotic and youthful sound. The bombastic arena shows of mega-stars, the theatrical costuming and make-up of posing rock/pop teenage idols, the ethereal meanderings of progressive experimenters, the nauseatingly commodified aspects that was becoming increasingly visible in the music industry (not to mention the explosive popularity of disco) became the targets of punk's ire and the basis of their defiance.

Instead, punk culture sought to recover the paths *not* taken in corporate rock'n'roll, but rather harken back to its amateur roots. That is, the roots of rock n' roll in black roots/blues music. Indeed, many punk bands share a sonic aesthetic closer to figures like Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf, and Little Richard than Bob Dylan, the Grateful Dead, or Pink Floyd. This may have been a romanticized view of past

[559] Waksman, Steve. 2009. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

glories (demonstrated perhaps in the shear number of punk groups who cover of Richard Berry's "Louie, Louie" among other 'classics'). McCaffery offers a description of the 'new' within aesthetics that emphasizes "the ideas of rupture, seepage, and commingling seem more attractive than the ones of discretion and continuity…To recycle yet again Arthur Koestler's inspiration adage, 'the prerequisite of originality is forgetting, at the proper moment, what we know.'" Rupture with the present through commingling with the past seems to be a nice descriptor for much of what punk hoped and hopes to achieve through stripped down rock n' roll sounds (and the intensified modifications and ruptures with these). The vision of freedom taken to be in the garage rather than on the Madison Square Garden stage is an "image" of the "past…seized only at the instant when it is recognized and never seen again."[560] As Fabbri writes,

> A new genre is not born in an empty space but in a musical system that is already structured. Therefore a considerable part of the rules that define it are common to other genres already existing within the system, those that individualize the new genre being relatively few. In this context it is understandable that the characteristic group of rules is formed through the codification of those which in the beginning are only transgressions to the rules of other genres.[561]

It is hence not out of thin air, but rather out of this rock'n'roll tradition of simplistic joy and inclusiveness of amateur musicians that 'punk *rock*' emerges. This isn't to suggest that there haven't been incredibly skilled and talented musicians within the genre, but rather than musical virtuosity isn't the central goal of punk musicians or

[560] Benjamin, Theses on the Philosophy of History, contained in Benjamin, Walter. Arendt, Hannah (ed.) 1968. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Random House, p. 255.
[561] Fabbri, 1981, p. 61.

the central desire of their audiences. Of course, punk *did* eventually enter the commercial space of corporate rock in terms of record and ticket sales, though this contentious position will be discussed more below in terms of the contradictory elements of the sponsored punk festival in the 21st century. There is also a romanticized aspect to the persistence of such a culture as punk. The insistence that 'punk's not dead' is often not only a rallying cry of punk rock survivors, adorning jackets, shirts, records, and tattoos, but of a certain faith that the culture will continue, and will be able to weather the loss of elite figures, artists, and even spaces better than more traditional, hierarchical cultures may have been able to.[562] The survival of the scene is contingent on cooperation and solidarity, and may also require the sacrifice of individual egos, labels, or spaces for the better positioning of the culture.[563] In her 1915 novel *Herland*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman describes such cooperation as a cornerstone of her feminist utopia, writing of the women-only society that, "they thought in terms of the community. As such, their time-sense was not limited to the hopes and ambitions of an individual life. Therefore, they habitually considered and carried out plans for improvement which might cover centuries."[564] The long view towards systemic change or "improvement," which paradoxically appears to also be

[562] Hippie culture, for instance, seems hardly able to fathom the loss of figures like John Lennon or Jerry Garcia—not to mention the yuppification policies of gentrification and wealth in the decades immediately following the summer of love, Vietnam, and Watergate.
[563] For instance, ABC No Rio was evicted from its long time location, but has sought to continue its work through shows and other event "in exile," while scouting new locales for the venue to occupy. The thought behind this is that the collective will fight to continue to support its community, even if the state institutions have further marginalized them.
[564] Perkins Gilman, Charlotte. *Herland*, contained in 2009. *The Yellow Wall-paper, Herland, and Selected Writings*. New York: Penguin, p. 80.

present in the most radical contingencies within punk—that culture so often associated with and accused of short-term, living-in-the-moment hedonism.

"I don't wanna be a punk, I just wanna be."
--Iggy Pop[565]

In addition to genre, punk can also be analyzed in terms of the avant-garde, though this relationship also isn't agreed upon. Although many artists with an avant-garde background participate in punk, there exists no consensus that punk *itself* belongs to this category. Utilizing Badiou, I do insist on a particular understanding of both punk and avant-garde that make such a positioning of the former appropriate. The defining features of avant-garde that Badiou specifically highlights revolve around avant-gardes' relationship to time and temporality.

> Every avant-garde declares a formal break with preceding artistic schemata. It presents itself as the bearer of a power of destruction directed against the formal consensus which, at a given moment, defines what merits the name of art…An avant-garde aims to break with any notion that there exist formal laws of the Beautiful drawn from the accord between our sensory receptors and intellectual expression…The avant-gardes only think of art in the present and want to force the recognition of this present. This is their way of assuming the newly acquired passion for the real. Invention is intrinsically valuable, novelty as such delectable. Repetition and the old are despicable, so that absolute rupture, which restricts one to the consequences of the present alone, is salutary…Art is no longer essentially a production of eternity, the creation of work to be judged by the future. The avant-gardes want there to be a pure present for art. There is no time to wait. There is no posterity, only an artistic struggle against sclerosis and death; victory must be achieved, here and now. And since the present is constantly threatened by the past, since it is fragile, it's necessary to impose the provocative intervention of the group, which alone ensures the salvation of the instant and the ephemeral against the established and the instituted…It is in the nature of declarations to invent a future for the present of art…The avant-gardes activated formal ruptures in the present and at the same time produced—in the form of manifestos and

[565] Jarmusch, Jim. 2016. *Gimme Danger: The Story of the Stooges*. Low Mind Films.

> declarations—the rhetorical envelope for the activation. They produced the envelopment of a real present in a fictive future.[566]

In addition to these defining temporal conditions of avant-gardes, Badiou also draws a connection between the aesthetic and the politically revolutionary, particularly as seen in a figure like Guy Debord. Polarizing figure Malcolm McLaren openly cites the influence of Situationism on his early punk productions, and remarks that his aesthetic experiments up to and including the Sex Pistols were, "part of the legacy laid down by ***William Morris***: art for art's sake, which we attempted to create and indeed succeeded at one level. We made ugliness beautiful."[567] With a few notable exceptions, much of the organizations and leaders behind radical movements in the world have been reluctant to reach out to or include punk activists.[568] Ever the reveler in paradox, at a conference in 2011, Penny Rimbaud provided the paradoxical definition of punk, that punk "isn't." By this he explains in classic liberal terms that punk is merely the search for the authentic, a fundamentally individual endeavor that is universally connected to preceding artistic movements,

> I imagine we are talking about…something we call 'punk.' Well, I've got the answer to what punk is. And it is very simple. It isn't. Period. It's whatever…one makes of it where they make it. It has strong traditions since the beginning of the last century with bohemianism, Dadaism, and running through to the beatniks. It's all one and the same thing, a quest for an authentic voice. Not a political authentic voice, voice of the individuals expressing themselves as individuals…I think that in its origin punk, like all new forms, like be bop, like free jazz, was the expression of the avant-garde and in that case one might argue that punk was an expression of the avant-garde. But the crucial question is: Can you extend on the avant-garde?

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[566] Badiou, Alain. 2007. *The Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 133-134 & 139.
[567] Robb, John. 2012. *Punk Rock: An Oral History*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 121. Emphasis added.
[568] See, for instance, the split 7" record by Bad Religion and Noam Chomsky. 1991. "New World Order #1: War." MaximumRocknRoll Records, or Youtube videos of Jello Biafra, NOFX, and other punk artists at Occupy.

> Answer—no. The avant-garde is the avant-garde. Period. That is its voice. It cannot be viewed. It can have no overview. I think, the overview of authenticity is a difficult problem to deal with as well, because by the very nature of authenticity…it is beyond definition. The moment it is defined then it ceases to be. That has been the case of all great cultural movements. Define them and they are dead…Punk was dead in this country the moment it was defined. Then you create some sort of sub sections, anarcho-punk. That was dead before it even started.[569]

Dead before it started? We shall see, perhaps if only in an (un)dead form, perhaps in a living, breathing, and changing assemblage of cultures and cultural forms.

Ambivalence & Ambiguity

"Punk, or underground music, hardcore, whatever you want to call it, is not singular."
--Ian MacKaye[570]

"More often than not, what punk delivered was a fusion of opposing ideas—holding the tension of contradiction…one of punk's very first roles was to debate its own definition—to make dissent an integral part of its own identity."
--Michael Bracewell[571]

Given the aforementioned openness in definition in the following examination of punk cultures, it is of utmost importance that we maintain a critically ambivalent lens through which we may better recognize the diverse and sometimes contradictory articulations of these scenes. In his text on Rock Against Racism, Ian Goodyer nicely summarizes the openness within punk's spaces for tensions, "Punk was a markedly ambivalent cultural phenomenon, which could accommodate diverse political

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[569] Rimbaud at *Rottenbeat: Academic and Musical Dialogue with New Russian Punk Workshop* Conference. London, May 4th, 2011. Transcript excerpt reproduced in Steinholt, Yngvar B. 2012. "Punk is punk but by no means punk: Definition, genre evasion, and the quest for an authentic voice in contemporary Russia," *Punk & Post Punk*. Vol. I: 3, p. 268.
[570] Kuhn, Gabriel (ed.) 2010. *Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 26.
[571] Robb, John. 2012. *Punk Rock: An Oral History*. Oakland: PM Press, p. xii.

stances."[572] This ambivalence, or sheer diversity of perspectives accommodated, is maintained in this study. It would be disingenuous for us to even begin to assume a singularity out of these cultural assemblages, or to apply singular definitions and meanings to them. But, we must provide something of an outline, or certain key features that recur from these diverse positions that comprise the cultural assemblage we're calling 'punk.'

Punk in this study is that varied constellation of art, music, politics, fashion, writing, and lifestyle most often attributed to the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, but which continues through the present. An obvious, cursory reading of punk cultures would likely conclude that punk presents a dystopian, anti-romantic, anti-humanist aesthetic/political movement. In fact, many studies from the fields of sociology and cultural studies cited below have argued precisely this view. However, there are important interventions that punk cultures have made in more utopian modes of thought. What is similar to our previous study of William Morris is the engagement with oppression and systematic structures that are to be critiqued, undermined, or subverted. Even with little or no aesthetic continuity, there is nonetheless some continuity with Morris at the level of what Jean Baudrillard labels the "withdrawal of consent."[573] Another similarity is the basis of the movement not only on freedom, but also on the ultimate goal of that freedom as the condition for bringing human happiness into being. What is precisely different from Morris,

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[572] Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 17.
[573] Baudrillard, Jean. "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media," contained in Duncombe, Stephen (ed.). 2002. *Cultural Resistance Reader*. New York: Verso, pp. 101-113.

however, is that punks consistently seek this happiness and freedom (i.e. Becker's 'micro-utopia' or Bey's 'T.A.Z.') through a constant engagement with ugliness and anger.

The most utopian reading of punk can reveal that in exposing the ugliness of contemporary capitalism and statism, punk could negate said ugliness with ugliness (taken to absurdist extremes), all in an attempt to demonstrate what must be alleviated to construct a new world on the ashes of the old. But what this new world may look and sound like is very far from decided within punk, and varying interpretations ranging the full prophetic spectrum from utopia to apocalypse have been given. For many, there may be a *desire* for a radical politics of punk, as Dave Dictor of MDC says, "I always *wanted* to *perceive* punk as political," but this doesn't necessarily translate into the realization of such.[574] Indeed, most bands attempting to raise awareness to their particular cause have likely faced boos, flying projectiles, shouted accusations of "preaching", or insistence that they "shut up and play." After all, some punks are only there to have a good time…Yet many radicals may have found their revolutionary politics within punk, despite not necessarily looking for them.

"Punk gave women a chance to really explore who they wanted to be."
--Zillah Minx[575]

Let's begin with parents. As Stuart Hall *et al* argue, the key (defining and shared) feature of youth subcultures is a break from the normative on two fronts. First, there is a break with "parent culture" and the establishment of a set of different

[574] Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, p. 140. Emphasis Added.
[575] Lake, Steve. 2013. *Zounds Demystified: Lyrics and Notes*. Active Distribution/Bev Records, p. 41.

enough preferences and practices to distinguish one generation from that preceding it.[576] Second, Hall argues that youth subculture consists of "distinctive groupings" of working class youths that break from " 'ordinary' working class boys (and, to a more limited extent, girls)."[577] In other words, subcultures are constituted by a break from the normative behavior of parents and mainstream-conforming (typically white) masculine/macho men. It is crucial to indicate here that Hall strongly posits these subcultures as existing ever within "the more inclusive culture of the class from which they spring," hence the prefix.[578] Therefore, while it may be possible for subcultural adherents to escape the moral, sexual, religious, party, etc. norms of their class position, their economic constraints prevent them from making a total break. Subcultures are therefore not a total escape (or even an escape at all) from the capitalist class system, but rather a site of resistance internal to this very system. Even within a highly policed (or even inescapable) mainstream setting, however, a subculture "knowingly opposes acceptable behavior norms" and can therefore be positioned as "the most radical gesture of all [which is] to stand for something at all."[579]

Punks are not unique in either their aesthetically shocking tactics or their 'do-it-yourself' productive techniques. D.I.Y., for instance, may sound strange in cultural contexts where the invitation to create music is so open as to not need announcement.

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[576] Hall, Stuart. Clarke, John. Jefferson, Tony. And Roberts, Brian. 1975. Contained in Gelder, Ken. 2005. *The Subcultures Reader, Second Edition*. New York: Routledge, pp. 94-5. See also Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge. p. 120.
[577] Hall, p. 95.
[578] *Ibid*, p. 95.
[579] Johnston, Denah A. 2012. *No Future Now: A Nomadology of Resistance and Subversion*. New York: Atropos Press, p. 28.

For instance, Thomas Turino discusses the common phrases heard in the United States context in everyday conversation, such as 'I don't know anything about music', or 'I am not musical' would be surprising to people in societies where participatory music is common.[580] In other words, in many cultures, producing music is historical and consistently a communal enterprise. In such locales, the audience/performer split so familiar to observers of U.S./U.K. pop music as we are observing has not existed in the first place, and so punks' subversion of this hierarchy would be no big breakthrough. Similarly, traditions of carnival, masquerade, Mardi Gras, etc. have long utilized surprising or 'shocking' overturns of everyday aesthetics in their (participatory) celebrations, and so the use of shock tactics by punks isn't a massive innovation. What punks *have* done is employ D.I.Y. and shocking tactics of subversion on a scale that situates these two features as central to their cultures. You simply *can't have* punk without D.I.Y. or subversion of the status quo of bourgeois normativity.

In their music, art, bodily aesthetics, use of language, punks are actively "playing with expectations, subverting them, making them question what they thought they knew."[581] Even the very names of punk groups themselves often put shock tactics on the forefront.[582] Others—most notoriously Iggy Pop of the Stooges,

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[580] Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 98.

[581] Ignorant, Steve with Pottinger, Steve. 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 124.

[582] e.g. Adicts, Angry Samoans, Antichrist Demoncore (ACxDC), Appalachian Terror Unit, Assrash, Bad Religion, the Bastards, Bullet Treatment, Burnt Cross, Butthole Surfers, Caustic Christ, Cerebral Ballzy, Cheap Sex, Christ on Parade, Circle Jerks, the Clits, CUM, Cunts, Crucifucks, the Damned, Dayglo Abortions, Dead Kennedys, Death, Death March, Dickies, Dicks, Dictators, Druglords of the

Stiv Baters of the Dead Boys, Darby Crash of the Germs, Wendy O. Williams of the Plasmatics, G.G. Allin, and Marion Anderson of the Insaints—utilize not only deliberately offensive lyrics, but also deliberately disturbing, violent gestures and sex acts on stage, often involving bodily fluids.[583] But a crucial question posed is, who is shocked? "Which kind of listener (a 'mainstream' one, a 'punk' one) and what kind of shock?"[584] There are many answers here, for depending on the particular context where punks target mainstream norms and adherents, as well as punk initiates and punk culture itself. The other question embedded here is *why* or *how* this is shocking? In the case of the band names noted above, many are offensive in their insensitivity, their hyper-masculinity, and their playful mockery of revered concepts, institutions, or some combination thereof.

However interesting or occasionally insightful the cultural studies approaches of Hall, Hebdige, etc. may be in examining punk cultures, they all too often focus on

Avenues, Dwarves, Eyehategod, the 4-skins, Fucked Up, Fucktard, the Fuck-Ups (F.U.'s), Great Bodily Harm (G.B.H.), (Jello Biafra and) the Guantanamo School of Medicine, John Cougar Concentration Camp, Joy Division, Kill Your Idols, Meat Sluts, Murder Junkies, Nihilist Cunt, Pansy Division, Pink Panzer, Pisschrist, Pure Hell, Reagan Youth, Sic Fucks, Sex Pistols, the Slits, Smut Peddlers, Suicidal Tendencies, Turbonegro, U.S. Bombs, Whorehouse of Representatives, etc. This domain of offensive band names is not unique to punk of course, as other genres have certainly produced their own examples (e.g. To list only a few, organized by genre include Metal: Anal Cunt, Body Count, Cannibal Corpse, Cattle Decapitation, Christian Death, Goatwhore, Judas Priest, Nashville Pussy, Orgy, Revolting Cocks; Rap: C-Murder, Cunninlynguists, Ghostface Killa, N.W.A.; and even mainstream pop: Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Barenaked Ladies). And even the much more subtle (and mainstream) Pearl Jam, Steely Dan, Nine Inch Nails have courted controversy over their names. One group, the Slants, fought a legal battle resulting in a 2017 SCOTUS decision allowing the all Asian-American band to use their name that some find to be discriminatory towards Asian populations. Deliberately shocking stage shows can be seen in other groups, such a Gwar, Marilyn Manson, Rob Zombie, and the original shock-rocker, Alice Cooper. But, with the possible exception of metal, shock within band names is not nearly as present in these genres as it is in punk.

[583] Such groups also include the deliberately shocking, controversial, and/or offensive Anti-Nowhere League, Dead Kennedys, Germs, Meatmen, Mentors, Misfits, NOFX, Rotters, Sloppy Seconds, and of course, the godfather, Iggy Pop, plus many others—including several aforementioned bands.

[584] Laing, Dave. 1985. "Listening to Punk, contained in Gelder, Ken (ed.) *The Subcultures Reader*, Second Edition. New York: Routledge, p. 454.

uncovering the definitive meanings of both form and content. I want to avoid facile interpretations of bodily, lyrical, and aesthetic signifiers as fixed, but rather argue that the reason punk cultures provide such an important case study is precisely the fact that they defy such interpretations. Punk, in other words, is a (politically, aesthetically, ideologically) highly fraught set of cultures. Instead, meaning is mutable and contested in punk, and occurs in spaces open for dissensus *and* agonism. This is especially clear when we see (as Rancière introduces) rudeness and excess as tools for "intruding into otherwise ontologically and politically stable orders."[585] As Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor point out, "punk was riddled with a series of paradoxes: it hymned authenticity but relied heavily on simulation in its performance…it presented itself both as a simple negation and as something far more knowing."[586] The abundance and manipulation of shock is just the most obvious case of such contestation and contradiction. Through constructing a collage of punk experiences, spaces, aesthetics, art forms, histories, and more can we begin to see the nuance, complexity, and multitude of productive and destruction potentialities punks embody. What is both interesting intellectually and important politically about punk is precisely this ambiguity and the openness of potential. In other words, our method of analysis must strive towards the very ambiguity and openness that our site already possesses.

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[585] Wright, Stephen. Summer 2008. "Behind Police Lines: Art Visible and Invisible," *Art & Research*. Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 1.
[586] Barker, Hugh and Taylor, Yuval. 2007. *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 265.

For example, in punk performances, the dividing line between performer and audience is undone, creating a semblance of equality via undermining the autonomy and authority of the stage. The stage is made safer for audience members to enter by removing policing obstacles, yet this opportunity often creates a physically risky endeavor.[587] What such phenomena indicate is the not only the belief in the possibility for changing expectations and political norms, but also the direct implementation of said change in micro-levels. Punk is one space of deeply engaged political play of trying out alternative modes of existence, as well as expression. One of the alternatives sought was in reaction to the self-righteous pretensions of rock music's mega-stars of the 1960s and 1970s.[588] The musical performance is reclaimed and hence repurposed in ways often hoped to be done democratically.

Echoing so many past participants of youth cultures (including activist student cultures), Simon Reynolds concludes that his own lack of involvement, his own exposure from the outside of underground scenes must indicate that no such culture exists. He writes,

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[587] This shattering of the performer/audience divide is not in itself a new concern for radical art, as the politicized theatre of Brecht and Boal, the public installations of the Surrealists and the Situationists, and the REPOhistory project of publicly reclaiming 'queer spaces' differently show. Indeed, the variety of possible examples indicates that different radical groups with different political goals have held similar ideas about the participation of the perceiving subject of their artistic protest. Brecht specifically conceives of self-aware/self-conscious acting that does away with any pretense of representing reality and rather problematizes reality through its realism. For example, an actor that stands at the front of the theatre an gives a metanarrative along the lines of, "I am acting like a capitalist and will now exploit my workers" and then proceeds to act out the scenario he has just described demonstrates the absurdity of actual capitalism. Brecht, Bertolt. 1964. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. New York: Hill & Wang, pp. 31, 92-6, 143. Boal, Augusto. 1993. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. New York: Theatre Communications Group. Hebdige, p. 110. and Scholette, p. 72.

[588] Hebdige, p. 62. Graffin, Greg & Olson, Steve. 2010. *Anarchy Evolution: Faith, Science, and Bad Religion in a World Without God*. New York: It Books, pp. 10, 24-31.

> Dylan Jones retraces in *iPod, Therefore I Am* the trajectory by which seventies punk evolved into eighties style culture, which in turn led to the current state of play, where nothing is subcultural any more and ideas of 'underground' and 'subversive' seem untenable, at least within popular music."[589]

Others, however, do not view punk as something they either did in their youth, or that they now restrict to weekend festival participation, but rather as an ongoing influence in their lives. These folks often do stay involved in underground cultures either directly, or in the influence that it has on other domains of their lives beyond the cultural scene itself.[590]

> "There still is an underground, and it's a beautiful thing."
> --Keith Morris[591]

This move of reclaiming and repurposing has been a key strategy of many radicals, and so it is in punk, a culture sprung largely from disaffected, marginalized, and poor youth.[592] As Sab Grey (Iron Cross) explains,

> Everybody was in it together. There were no categories, we were all punk or hardcore punk. There wasn't any Oi or anything, well there wasn't very many of us. We all had to stick together. It was kinda like the island of misfit toys with all the weirdos and all the smart kids. And most people were pretty smart, that were into it, and we all found each other.[593]

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[589] Reynolds, Simon. 2011. *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*. New York: Faber & Faber, Inc., p. p. 115.
[590] Cf. Furness, Zach (ed.). 2012. *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia. Biel, Joe (ed.). 2012. *Beyond the Music: How Punks are Saving the World with DIY Ethics, Skills, & Values*. Portland: Cantankerous Titles. See also my upcoming edited collection of essays from a variety of perspectives, entitled *Punk Beyond Rock: The Continuing Influence of a Radical Youth Culture*, which is comprised of over a dozen punk's essays detailing how their experiences in punk culture inspires them in other social actions (be they activist or careerist).
[591] Dynner, Susan. 2007. *Punk's Not Dead*. Aberration Films.
[592] Vaneigem, Raoul. 2012. *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 239.
[593] Crawford, Scott. 2014. *Salad Days: A Decade of Punk In Washington, D.C.* (1980-1990). New Rose Films.

Part of this 'island of misfit toys' is the creative repurposing of objects of fashion, music, art, and other aesthetics. Embodied signifiers of poverty are repositioned in punk as points of pride and utilized as fashion objects to mock and decry the mainstream fashion market. As Dick Hebdige puts it, such objects are

> [C]onverted into icons (the safety pin, the rip, the mindless lean and hungry look) these paradigms of crisis could live a double life, at once fictional and real. They reflected in a heightened form a perceived condition…of unmitigated exile, voluntarily assumed.[594]

This quote also indicates the element of self-othering inherent to punk, i.e. the denial or disowning of systematic norms and oppressive expectations.[595] But, there is also a danger of conformity to the non-mainstream here.

> Some people were starting to call these bands "punk rock," but none of them were in quite the same style as any of the others and no one really knew *who* was punk but in general it meant, "Not too pro," "Not too good and proud of it," or something like that…When they [Johnny Thunders's Heartbreakers following their Anarchy Tour of the U.K] came back they looked like clowns…They were completely "Sex Pistolified," which I thought was a shame. It was a little like they were copying the band that had been copying *them*. Besides, I liked the new style much less than the old one. All these punks were starting to look pretty silly with their safety pins and their swastikas, and that style was becoming way too commercialized to still be cool. Everybody had a faze razor blade hanging around their neck now, and you could already find pink spandex T-shirts covered with zippers at Macy's. It was becoming a cliché. As soon as punk became acceptable, it wasn't punk anymore. How could you be rebellious and different if you were wearing the same uniform as everyone else? We, on the other hand, thought it was way more punk to dare to be something else. If you were punk, you weren't, and if you weren't, you were. It was complicated![596]

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[594] Hebdige, p. 65.

[595] Of course, such self-othering also implies a certain amount of privilege that is forfeited or countered—or a sort of voluntary self-exclusion from mainstream society—in a way that marginalized populations typically don't have any choices *but* to be excluded.

[596] Marcade, Phil. 2017. *Punk Avenue: Inside the New York City Underground 1972-1982*. New York: Three Rooms Press, pp. 59-60 & 84. Emphasis in original.

Erik Melvin of NOFX counters, "People sometimes say Mohawks are part of a punk rock 'uniform,' but no two Mohawks were alike. Everyone spun the punk rock style his or her own way."[597] This example is important, however, in also demonstrating another aspect of ambiguity within punk. That is, sometimes fashion choices are just that, and songs are just songs. In other words, one doesn't have to sign onto any sort of political agenda or radical politics in order to partake in punk cultures, even anarcho-punk. Indeed, many punk productions are consumed just as much (or more so) for "pleasure rather than protest."[598] What this means, of course, is that we must be wary of generalized statements about punks, and be ever mindful of the ambiguity even among fans (or indeed, musical membership) of a singular band. The collage method is most useful here, in allowing contradictory elements of this culture to be fully presented in all their tensions, complexities, positives, and negatives.

"Being caught in a system that you can't identify with, that you don't support, and like, just being contrary. That's the true energy of what punk is. I think one of the punkest people I can think of in history is Nina Simone…it doesn't have to be the stereotypical Sid Vicious as the poster boy for punk.
--Tamar-Kali Brown[599]

But class is certainly not the only marginalized identity to emerge and become celebrated within punk visually, spatially, or sonically. Indeed, many sociologists argue that punk exists in dialectical relationship with reggae, both formatively and aesthetically. Not only are there reggae influences in punk and punk influences in reggae, many have argued that this aesthetic move is just as significant in anti-racist

[597] NOFX with Alulis, Jeff. 2016. *NOFX: The Hepatitis Bathtub and Other Stories*. Boston: De Capo Press, p. 28.
[598] Laughey, Dan. 2006. *Music and Youth Culture*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, p. 35 Cf. Laing 1985, p. 56.
[599] Spooner, James. 2003. *Afro-Punk*. Afro-Punk Films.

struggle as the more explicitly anti-racist lyrics. Such a dialectical relationship also problematizes race within punk cultures. How is it that racist, neo-Nazi ideologies and artists have cropped up in punk scenes, alongside and in opposition to anti-racist, anti-fascist ideologies and artists? It can't simply be that they don't 'get it,' though this argument has been made by anti-racist and anarchist punks. What is it about punk cultures in particular that open spaces for direct, confrontational, and sometimes violent clashes between such radically different positions? Do these clashes point to dissensus? Antagonisms? Utter confusion? Is there tension in the dialectic between punk and reggae, between contested notions of whiteness and blackness?

Despite the stereotype of punk as an exclusively white and male movement, women and people of color have consistently been participants, performers, producers, and leaders within this cultural scene. Additionally, punk cultures have long been international in scope, and though each individual scene has its own unique rituals, structures, and contributions, a loose sort of solidarity exists. As Eric Mueller, founder and owner of Pirates Press Records, attests,

> In many ways, the strength of the punk rock identity and scenes exists because of how international it is. Whether you're in South America, Eastern Europe, or anywhere else, there are other likeminded people who will spot your Chuck Taylors or DM's, or mohawk - and will strike up a conversation based simply on the assumption that you hold similar values and ideals.[600]

Again, with a focus on variety and diversity of scenes and scene-sters, Golnar Nikpour does a compelling job demonstrating the existence of racial and gender

[600] Interview with author, 10/17/2016.

problems within punk culture, but also acknowledges the diversity of punk scenes and the troubling of said privilege that occurs within them,

> I am the last person to romanticize punk as the colorblind utopia (or gender-neutral or transcendent of class, etc.)…[we] must take into account the profoundly different racial/ethnic/class/gender classifications that are at work in any given context… [additionally] *almost every single one* of the most popular early '80s U.S. hardcore bands featured one or more punks of color![601]

The privileges of whiteness and maleness—as well as the U.S./U.K. supremacy assumed by many histories, narratives, and academic accounts—are hence contested and problematized within punk, yet very far from resolved. Indeed, recent studies have focused on the punk cultures of Peru, Cuba, Mexico, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Pakistan, and more.[602] In other words, the imperialistic logic of a one-sided core/periphery distribution of cultural production is not only categorically incorrect, but is also being recognized as such.

Punk is often inconsistent in that it is "at once a movement/idea aspiring to absolute freedom (anarchy) while embodying an ultimate exclusivity in its endless

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[601] Nikpour, Golnar. January 2012. *"White Riot*: Another Failure…" *Maximum Rocknroll*. Also available digitally at http://maximumrocknroll.com/white-riot-another-failure/ (Last Accessed 02/16/14).

[602] Cf. Green, Shane. 2016. *Punk and Revolution: 7 More Interpretations of Peruvian Reality*. Durham: Duke University Press. Lee, Julian C.H. & Ferrarese, Marco (ed.s). 2016. *Punks, Monks, and Politics: Authenticity in Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. O'Dell, David. 2014. *Inseparable, the Memoirs of an American and the Story of Chinese Punk Rock*. Publisher: lulu.com. Ramirez, Jose Agustin. 2007. *La contracultura in Mexico*. Barcelona: Debolsillo. Zavella, Patricia. 7 December 2011 (2012 print). "Beyond the Screams: Latino Punkeros Contest Nativist Discourses. *Latin American Perspectives*. Vol. 39: 27, pp. 27-41. Wilson, Ian. June 2013. "Indonesian Punk: A Brief Snapshot," *Le Banian*. No. 15, Web: http://pasarmalam.free.fr/banian/index.html. Majeed, Omar. 2009. *Taqwacore: The Birth of Punk Islam*. Lorber Films, Jefford, Shaun. 2010. *Beijing Punk*. Seminal Films.

cliques and factions."[603] Punk spaces ostensibly become available for anti-racist messages, art, and dialogue all within the quasi-utopian idea of living out the alternative.[604] Indeed, even the outlandish, shocking bodily aesthetics of punks that are sometimes claimed as a sort of "self-othering" or a signifier of solidarity with marginalized groups in society can become signifiers also of inclusion or initiation into punk culture.[605] These dancehall solidarities find their greatest political visibility in the founding and continued activism of Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League in the U.K. and Anti-Racist Action in the U.S. but do not often enough translate into actually inclusionary spaces and attitudes.[606] Yet, despite these efforts, racism, sexism, homophobia, and jingoism have not been successfully exorcised from punk cultures and find expression in both implicit and explicit gestures. Part of this contradiction is clearly attributable to "a dangerous irony common amongst punks."[607] This doesn't mean, however, that there aren't concerted efforts within the culture to be ever more inclusive.

> "When we first came to the U.S. in '81, I gotta be honest, I didn't think much of the punk scene here. But when we came back in 2001, it was fantastic, and what

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[603] Johnston, Denah A. 2012. *No Future Now: A Nomadology of Resistance and Subversion*. New York: Atropos Press, p. 152.
[604] Olson, Joel. "A New Punk Manifesto," contained in Duncombe, Steven (ed). and Tremblay, Maxwell (ed). 2011. *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*. New York: Verso, pp. 190-194.
[605] Anonymous, "Not Just Posing for the Postcard: A Discussion of Punk and the New Abolition" contained in Duncombe, Steven (ed). and Tremblay, Maxwell (ed). 2011. *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*. New York: Verso, pp. 194-199.
[606] Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Machester: Manchester University Press. See also Gilroy, Paul. 1987. *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 117-152. Hebdige, pp. 26-9 & 62-70. Marshall, George. 1991. *The Spirit of '69: A Skinhead Bible*. Scotland: Dunoon, pp. 44-50 & 143.
[607] Penny Rimbaud. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP. Liner Notes to Reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD. (Crassical Collection Remaster).

made it so great is that there were Hispanic people, black people, and white people all together and all united."
--Thomas "Mensi" Mensforth[608]

Sexual identities, excess, and explicitness have also been the site of play (and inclusion/exclusion difficulties) within punk cultures. Even in the media of clothing, punk takes the styles and objects of fetish, "exhuming them from the boudoir, closet, and the pornographic film and placed on the street where there retained their forbidden connotations."[609] Sexual exploration and freedom are themes often expressed in these queering fashions, as well as in anti-homophobic lyrics. Riot Grrrl, queer-edge, and queer-core/homo-core are just a few of the 'sub' genres/scenes of punk that have formed and persisted to focus artistic critique around gender issues. Again, this critique is broader than mere lyrical content, and included such tactics as the reclaiming of masculinized space *within punk* for the equal participation of women.[610] Indeed, this move is not only a queering of 'the street' or broad culture, but also constitutes a queering of punk itself.[611]

The point of these examples is twofold; to demonstrate that punk is not typically shock for shock's sake (despite often being stereotyped as such) and to open

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[608] Angelic Upstarts set, Punk Rock Bowling 05/24/14.
[609] Hebdige, pp. 107 & 121.
[610] Marcus, Sara. 2010. *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Rev*olution. New York: Harper Perennial, pp. 124-136. See also "Partners in Crime: Interview with Kathleen Hanna," contained in Sinker, Daniel (ed.). 2008. *We Owe You Nothing: Punk Planet, The Collected Interviews*. Chicago: Punk Planet Books, pp. 61-77.
[611] Ensminger, David. March 2010. "Redefining the Body Electric: Queering Punk and Hardcore," *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. Vol. 22, Issue 1, pp. 50-67. See also Nyong'o, Tavia. Winter 2008. "Do You Want Queer Theory (or Do You Want the Truth)? Intersections of Punk and Queer in the 1970s," *Radical History Review*. Issue 100, pp. 103-119. Boulware, Jack and Tudor, Silke. 2009. *Gimme Something Better: The Profound, Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk from Dead Kennedys to Green Day*. New York: Penguin Group, pp. 408-419. See also Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: NYU Press, pp. 98-113.

punk up as a site for the production of multiple and contested possibilities. There are explicit targets for critique in punk (e.g. racism, fascism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia) and specific areas for proposed rupture and change. But these examples also clearly indicate that punk is quite far from the utopia it may strive to be, and its utopic claims must be critically evaluated. Rather than the lived utopia that may be its ideal, what punk represents is a space of experimentation in liberation. In its best moments, punk cultures recognize this political project as a "perpetual process" of changes in practical action.[612]

> "You know, there are a lot of bands that sing about unity…but they were homophobic. But it's cool because they're anti-racist? I mean, that's good and all, I'm pro anti-racism, but it's not unity if you're homophobic."
> --Stza Crack[613]

In a comparison with Dada, Dave Laing argues "punk use of language involved both the shock of the new…and the shock of the real."[614] This shock of the real is the figurative mirror that punk holds up to the context it feels alienated from. But the real is not meant to be conceptually stable or lasting, and indeed the mirror held up by punk is meant precisely as a destabilizing mechanism. But the performance space (be it a club, pub, squat, basement, punk house, garage, festival, park, etc.) is not the only attempt at a 'temporary autonomous zone' within punk cultures. Indeed, beyond these performance spaces, punk is articulated in a wide variety of politically engaged lifestyle choices. Reporting on his interviewing of

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[612] Dunn, Kevin. 2012. "Anarcho-punk and Resistance in Everyday Life," *Punk and Post-Punk.* Vol. 1, Number 2, p. 216.
[613] Leftover Crack set, Punk Rock Bowling 05/26/14. A similar statement is made almost every time Leftover Crack is set to perform their song "Gay Rude Boys Unite."
[614] Laing, Dave. 1985. "Listening to Punk," contained in Gelder, Ken (ed.) *The Subcultures Reader*, Second Edition. New York: Routledge, p. 456.

anarchist punks, Kevin Dunn reiterates the point that "rather than debate revolutionary theory, anarcho-punks are primarily interested in actions that, to them, will make a difference in daily life."[615]

I refuse to either accept unitary meanings in complex cultural scenes or the pretension of pointing to a culture and relying upon the language of '*this* is what *it means*." What the above descriptions make clear is that there is no singular meaning because there is no singular *it* to have this meaning, but rather such cultures as punk are best understood as assemblages, rife with all the complexities and contradictions implied in this term.[616] How confrontational is punk, both in relation to its declared institutional enemies (capitalism, the state, organized religion, etc.) as well as internal to itself? What is it about punk that opens the space for such open play with paradox and contradiction, i.e. in the contestation and sometimes coexistence of hegemonic and/or radical expressions of whiteness and blackness, masculinity and femininity, sexism and feminism, homophobia and gay-positive/queer groups, racism and anti-racism, neo-Nazism and anti-Nazism, nihilism and ideology, straight-edge sobriety and excessive drug abuse, etc. all within the same scenes and spaces? A turn towards the specific example of Crass will open possibilities for addressing these.

> "It's not only about the bands, the music, or the fashion. I've personally never been interested in the clothing or hairstyles. I'm more into the community, the lifestyle, and the attitude. Punk provides a place for outcasts, misfits, and rejects to come together, share ideas, and be part of a family of other like-minded lunatics. For me, punk rock is about not fitting in with the mainstream and not ever wanting to."

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[615] Dunn, Kevin. 2012. "Anarcho-punk and Resistance in Everyday Life," *Punk and Post-Punk.* Vol. 1, Number 2, p. 207.

[616] This recognition of diversity of definition is influenced by Edward Said's unpacking of much more high stakes categories like 'Islam' and the 'West', and the problems stereotypical assumptions influence these flattening categorizations.

--Matt "Mugs" Wedgley[617]

"Ladies and Gentlemen, it's Crass!"

Of all the myriad options of punk culture, why focus so much attention on Crass? What is important about this particular group that is neither entirely unique nor wholly original? More so than any particular or individualized importance as a group, Crass helps open a discussion of many sites of contestation within punk, from their non-violent pacifist stance, to the integration of radically different sonic and visual aesthetics, to their lifestyle performance. In other words, Crass is our entre into many important issues that are central to understanding punk, in all its potentiality, problems, and aesthetics (as well as such issues within radical cultures more generally). Crass is more than a musical band, operating variously as an art collective, a touring and recording band, an independent record label, a hippie informed intentional community of artists, and an ongoing open house welcoming strangers. They exclusively performed in non-commercial venues—often squatted clubs and residences—to benefit charitable causes, bringing both radical literature and homegrown organic vegetables for free distribution to audience members. Their pamphlets are, in a way, a perfect demonstration of the goals, tactics, and impact of Crass. For example, one contains instructions for making a paint bomb on one side, and instructions for making bread on the other. Crass has circulated importantly through punk spaces and scenes as an ideal as much as a band. One of the progenitors of a D.I.Y. method and fiercely independent lifestyle radicalism within a punk

[617] Interview with author, 12/14/2012.

context, Crass helped usher in an era of politically engaged and informed punk scenes. As a group, Crass is more concerned with potentiality rather than actuality, yet the former is interestingly the basis for which they are most often assessed.

If we take them at their word, and in this case I believe we should, Crass wrote love songs, though as aesthetically far from the doo-wop and bubblegum sounds that label is so often associated with. In their first experiment—even though this would turn out to be the band's swan song—in long-form free-jazz/punk/noise *Yes Sir, I Will*, Crass addresses the precise question of what they are and what they sing about. Rimbaud describes this as an abandonment of "any of the formulaic clichés of punk rock and take the improvisational approach of free jazz: no rehearsal, no preconception, no contrivance."[618] On this record, outraged by the question of "why don't you write love songs," Eve Libertine shouts, "*Everything* we write is a love song." In other words, on a record focused on anti-war messages, love for the lives destroyed by war and love for those who might be saved by peace is the guiding inspiration. Ultimately the anger and passion contained within their art was done out of love for the people and goodness within the world, as well as the hopeful love of a future world and a pure freedom. And the righteous rage of Crass is direct against those who would deny these to others. This love, however, must be unconditional, and the aphorism from Rimbaud's print (from Exitstencil Press) of "Love is All or Love is Not at All" was clearly the guiding light for the 2014 version of *Yes Sir*.

[618] Penny Rimbaud. 1983. *Yes Sir, I Will*. 121984. Crass Records. Liner Notes to Reissue 2011 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

The Rebellion festival re-imagining of *Yes Sir, I Will* was an impressive, if unexpected—or indeed, perhaps even eclectic *and* radically anachronistic—performance. Like improvisational jazz, the band Crass (taking their name from a David Bowie lyric "the kids were just crass") often opens and closes sonic space in ways that both defy expectations and resist interpretation.[619] Upon first encountering the wall of (often cacophonous) Crass sound, the listener would not be unreasonable in asking if they were hearing a guitar or a malfunctioning power tool. As Rimbaud has claimed, "I don't actually think Crass was very punk. It was far more avant-garde than it was punk. It was art punk, really."[620] Perhaps this is part of what actually *does* make Crass so punk—in their refusal to conform, even among non-conformists. This chapter is not a simplistic or straightforward telling of the history of Crass. In fact, this narrative, historical work about Crass and its impact has been done quite extensively by secondary authors, as well as the members themselves.[621] Surprisingly, however, is that through these histories' attempts to reinsert Crass into the punk narrative or canon from which they have typically been excluded, very little attention has been given to the aesthetics of their productions themselves. Usually, discussions of Crass revolve around their living in an open house and the outrage around their inordinate use of profanity. These accounts, for example, contain discussions of the

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619 Penny Rimbaud. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP. Liner Notes to Reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD. (Crassical Collection Remaster).

620 Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 149.

621 Most brilliantly by George McKay, Alastair Gordon, Ian Glasper, and George Berger. These several accounts of Crass's existence and activities as a band will be referenced throughout the remainder of these chapters, though a historical telling of Crass is less our focus then a rethinking of it. For a source specifically on the *Yes Sir, I Will* LP, cf. Antliff, Allan. 2007. *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, pp. 182-188.

attempts by the British state to prosecute Crass for "criminal blasphemy" for the *Reality Asylum* record, and the controversy surrounding their direct attacks on the Margaret Thatcher regime in "How Does it Feel (to be the Mother of 1,000 Dead)?", "You're Already Dead," "Sheep Farming in the Falklands," and their prank production of a false conversation between Thatcher and Reagan. At most, there is a detailed analysis of the lyrics to these four songs, usually to the effect of only sweeping commentary on the rest of their creative output. Yes, these critiques of religion and Thatcher are important aspects of the Crass event, yet so many of the possibilities that Crass presents us with are obscured by this narrow focus on but a small part of their productions. So it seems that there is an important aspect to Crass that is far too often ignored in romanticized narratives of their practices and productions, and that is the political openness that they actually espoused. The hegemonic left-right binary that informs the dominant paradigm for political organization is in-itself rejected in Crass lyrics.

There are several historical reasons for the one-sided account of Crass that has been inserted into punk (or broader cultural) histories. Among the reasons for such an account of Crass is the desire among some anarchists to completely co-opt Crass, and the stake that these political activists have in narrowly focusing on Crass's critique of conservative political and social forces (to the exclusion of all else they comment on). Some other studies, such as Alastair Gordon and Ian Glasper's work on Crass seek simply to include Crass in the punk story that they have often been excluded from. The former seeks to place Crass into conversation with the culture industry ideas of

Horkheimer and Adorno, putting forth an orthodox Marxian critique of the ways in which an anarchist band can contribute to class consciousness and struggle. The latter describes Crass as the progenitors of anarcho-punk, but seems to do little to emphasize their differences with other bands falling under this category in his history. Several similar accounts suffer from a sentimental attachment to the group, or a sense that a deep injustice has been done by whitewashing Crass out of dominant narratives of punk.

Both of the aforementioned studies, along with that of Richard Cross, position Crass as an important revitalization of punk, and are heavily couched in this limited scope by problematic conceptions of authenticity and sincerity. Sure, authenticity travels in punk cultures, nearly to the point of becoming a validation, or the currency of social capital. Additionally, Crass does in fact declare their desire to live and promote authentic lives. But, to assume a non-critical definition of authenticity, and to limit this conception to the spaces of punk are serious oversights. What Richard Cross does offer beyond the limitations of Gordon and Glasper is a conversation of the ways in which Crass offers a critique of punk itself, rather than simply being something like the 'next wave' or 'new spark' for punk's lives. All of these accounts of Crass firmly position them in the past, whereas I argue that we must account for continued articulations, influences, and circulations of Crass in the present. Other mentions of Crass have been less sympathetic, and instead critique the group on

grounds of inauthenticity, impossibility, or most of all, a certain sense that Crass somehow failed since the 'system' remains.[622]

The following chapters attempt to remedy these mistakes and oversights, and proceeds with theoretically and aesthetically detailed analysis of Crass itself (in its productions, forms, functioning, and consumptions), and the works of the artists involved preceding and antedating Crass, only tying in a minimalist telling of the linear history of Crass the band. Far too little attention has been paid to the works of these artists since the dissolution of the band in 1984, though their cultural productions continue to be as poetically and politically challenging as their punk music.

One of the key concepts articulated throughout the lives and works of Crass is a firm, uncompromising belief in D.I.Y., or 'do it yourself,' which I position as an unapologetically anachronistic practice eliding capitalist productive processes. This ethos represents an attempt to forgo complicity with capital by refusing participation in it as much as possible. There is no declaration to be completely divorced from hegemonic economic activities, but rather an insistence that we can do many, many things in life (from the growing of food to the production of a record) without capitalistic interference. D.I.Y. is certainly not a new concept, and many of its punk articulations bear striking resemblance to the handicraft advocated by William Morris, or many other writers' work on cooperation beyond capital. Yet, D.I.Y. as

[622] Cf. Thompson, Stacy. 2004. "Crass Commodities," *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 307-322. You can also see a discussion of these historical critiques in Dale, Pete. 2008. "It was easy, it was cheap, so what?" Reconsidering the D.I.Y. principle of punk and indie music," *Popular Music History* Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 180 nt. 8.

promoted and practiced by Crass is not only a political rally cry, or a lifestyle practice, but also as an experiment in autonomy—lived, learned, and taught.

> When, in 1976, punk first spewed itself across the nation's headlines with the message 'do it yourself', we, who in various ways and for many years had been doing just that, naively believed that Messrs. Rotten and Strummer etc. etc. meant it. At last we weren't alone…By now [summer 1977] we had realised that our fellow punks, The Pistols, The Clash and all the other muso-puppets weren't doing it at all. They may like to think that they ripped off the majors, but it was Joe Public who'd been ripped. They helped no one but themselves, started another facile fashion, brought a new lease of life to London's trendy Kings Road and claimed they'd started a revolution. Same old story. We were on our own again. Through the alcoholic haze we determined to make it our mission to create a real alternative to music-biz exploitation, we wanted to offer something that gave rather than took and, above all, we wanted to make it survive. Too many promises have been made from stages only to be forgotten on the streets.[623]

Why did the group decide (intentionally or not) to embrace this mode of production, rather than attempting to "strike it rich by marketing revolution" as major record label promoters attempted to convince them to do?[624] At the most basic, definitional level, D.I.Y. refers to counter-capitalist modes of production that are removed from exploitative processes and reclaimed as 'do-it-yourself.' This may refer broadly to a range of activities, from urban gardening, home repair, vehicle maintenance, and our focus here on artistic production. 'Do-it-yourself' production (or D.I.Y.) is the most commonly cited strategy of punk politics and aesthetics.[625] Echoes of William Morris

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[623] Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." Contained in the liner notes to 1986. *Best Before*… (Singles Collection). Crass Records. LP/CD.

[624] Crass. 1979. *Stations of the Crass*. 521984. Double Album. Crass Records. Penny Rimbaud Liner Notes contained in reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records Double CD. Cf. Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." Contained in the liner notes to 1986. *Best Before*… (Singles Collection). Crass Records. LP/CD.

[625] For just a few of the vast discussions of this tactic within punk, see Moore, Ryan. August 2007. "Friends Don't Let Friends Listen to Corporate Rock: Punk as a Field of Cultural Production," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Vol. 36, Number 4, pp. 438-474. O'Connor, Alan. 2008. *Punk Record*

can be heard in the assertion that at is most foundational level, the idea is that punk artistic production should resist cooptation and exploitation by utilizing self-recording, underground distribution, and independent labels to release and disseminate messages. D.I.Y. is not always a conscious political choice, however, as many artists, writers, and musicians have utilized it because it was the only method of production and distribution available to them.[626] For many groups (e.g. Black Flag, Minor Threat), independent record labels grew out of the fact that major labels had no interest in releasing their material. Necessity drove D.I.Y. for these artists, more so than a particular politics. Even amongst those for whom D.I.Y. was thrust out an exclusion from other modes of production, this necessity didn't preclude a political alignment with economic resistance to capital. Even in these cases, a political positionality often arises out of what once have been simple practicality or necessity. Yet, for others, D.I.Y. has always been an anti-capitalist stance. Gee Vaucher, describes D.I.Y. as one of the key ideas circulating in punk,

> I think the ideas underpinning punk, to 'do it yourself, give it a try, do what you feel is right, but not at the cost of anybody or the earth you live in.' For me, that's the philosophy which concerned the second wave of punk that Crass was part of. Crass was an extension of Dial House where we all live, of trying to work together, solve problems, be creative together and choosing to get out there and do it, whatever 'it' was. We were doing our best, having a

Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy. Lanham: Lexington Books. O'Hara, Craig. 1999. *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*. San Francisco: AK Press, pp. 67, 153-166. Boulware, Jack and Tudor, Silke. 2009. *Gimme Something Better: The Profound, Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk from Dead Kennedys to Green Day*. New York: Penguin Group. Strachan, Robert. 2003. *Do-It-Yourself: Industry, Ideology, Aesthetics, and Micro Independent Labels in the U.K.*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Liverpool.

[626] Chick, Steve. 2011. *Spray Paint the Walls: The Story of Black Flag*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 136. See also Moore, Ryan. August 2007. "Friends Don't Let Friends Listen to Corporate Rock: Punk as a Field of Cultural Production," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Vol. 36, Number 4, p. 460. Ignorant, Steve with Pottinger, Steve. 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, pp. 268 & 273.

> laugh and finding out about life, but it wasn't all easy. It got very serious at the end.[627]

Even prior to Crass, some of the first punk releases were released by the artists themselves, either because they lacked access to major labels' resources, or because of the weight of sincerity and belief self-released productions carry.[628] D.I.Y., in other words, carries an excess value within punk spaces that is not limited to the commodities themselves, but also shows the ideological desire for economic resistance to capital. Such an insistence, political or otherwise, on the inherent value of D.I.Y. has broader implications both for autonomy and inclusiveness within a counter-market, but also in challenging what J.K. Gibson-Graham and others have referred to as capital-o-centrism.[629] That is, the tendency of advocates, apologists, and opponents of capital alike to center all discussions of economies on the assumption of a sort of all-powerful hegemony of capitalism. As White and Williams have demonstrated, D.I.Y. presents us with an example in which capital is not even present; even so, whenever it is, it is of secondary importance. In other words, rather than assuming that participation in capitalistic methods is always the preferred production method of all actors, White and Williams show that in fact, with D.I.Y. we can see that many *prefer* so-called 'alternative' modes of production.[630] Yes, many

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627 Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 191.

628 For a discussion, for instance, of the original 1977 Buzzcocks release *Spiral Scratch*, cf. Dale, Pete. 2008. "It was easy, it was cheap, so what?" Reconsidering the D.I.Y. principle of punk and indie music," *Popular Music History* Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 171-193.

629 Gibson-Graham, J.K. 1996. *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

630 White, Richard J. and Williams, Colin C. 2016. "Beyond capitalocentricism: are non-capitalist work practices 'alternatives'? *Area*. Vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 325-331.

folks seek out 'alternative' economies because they are excluded from participation in the capitalist marketplace, yet for others, these 'alternatives' are in fact their first choice. They challenge us to move beyond this assertion of these productive modes existing beyond capital as 'alternative', for such language reinforces the centrality and implied attractiveness of capitalism. Instead, they argue, for many people non-capitalist, autonomous, and/or collectivist modes of production are the first choice (rather than the commonly held idea that such non-capitalist modes of production are only pursued when producers are excluded from capitalistic means for a variety of reasons). D.I.Y. in punk spaces may indeed have complex beginnings brought on by both necessity and preference, but the particular mode of D.I.Y. propagated and encouraged by Crass demonstrates a clear preference for D.I.Y. and a clear disdain and distrust of capitalism. In other words, even if (and indeed *when*) capitalist corporations become interested in Crass productions, they were swiftly shown the door. They have no desire for "revolution just for cash." Other artists wanting to "give it a try," to use Vaucher's words, were embraced and supported by Crass in creating and distributing their productions apart from the economic system of capital.

Clearly, there is a democratic rhetoric at work here, most especially in the invitation to "give it a try," and the open invitation towards "maximum participation."[631] D.I.Y. in many of its articulations carries this democratizing air as it circulates in punk cultures, for no ones approval (least of all the state's or capital's) is

631 Dale, Pete. 2008. "It was easy, it was cheap, so what?" Reconsidering the D.I.Y. principle of punk and indie music," *Popular Music History* Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 176. In this article, Dale also makes the important point that however broad this invitation may have been, admittedly not everyone *wanted to do it*, and hence an 'in' and 'out' group binary is established and reinforced.

required for one's cultural productions to come into being. Crass positions much of their lives *as performance* in providing an example of self-creating, self-directed life. In other words, beyond the direct political statements that Crass is so often associated with (and for good reason), their D.I.Y. practice and the lifestyle they perform is every bit as important a political statement as their art. Even so, they don't necessarily make arguments for the superiority of these productive processes, or their chosen lifestyle performance, voiced strongly through Rimbaud's argument that,

> We've never promoted our own lifestyle, which happens to be very quiet. This house is very restful—we work very hard but very quietly, be it gardening, writing, or rehearsing. We don't say 'This is the way people ought to live'—it's the way we as individuals enjoy living.[632]

Yet, can't this D.I.Y. ethic also be understood as radically individualistic, almost to the point of strengthening both the logics and economic manipulations of capital's friendliest ideological backing in liberalism? Surely, an individual effort to *do* oneself can be tremendously isolating, or can even be seen as undermining feelings of solidarity. Some have even argued that the message of 'you can do it yourself' is doomed for failure from the start, for solidarity is a necessary means for resisting capital. Individualism, even expressed through D.I.Y. can actually end up being self-defeating in that it can actually undermine solidarity, making it easier for culture to be consolidated and limited (especially music—which is held by five corporate

632 "Crass Interview 1984," *Mucilage* zine, Issue 2

conglomerates).[633] How can we answer this charge? Can D.I.Y., with its emphatic inclusion of a self to 'do it,' in fact still be a wellspring of solidarity, rather than isolated individualism? Can we conceptualize D.I.Y., at least in some articulations, as alternatively a space of mutual aid, in which the 'it' done by the self is supported and supplemented by others' 'its'—be they actions, productions, etc.?[634] In resistance to a narrow solipsism, we can view events such as Crass as an attempt to combine individual and collective projects of change and resistance to the status quo.

This effort of a D.I.Y. which is both heavily reliant on a self and a community was largely mobilized by Crass in an effort to "try to live in harmony with our friends and amongst the people and environment in which we move…try to be creative…learn to reject the stupid roles that we are told to accept."[635] D.I.Y. is hence not only a reclaiming of labor processes and a subversion of capitalism, but it is also a subversion of the power relations implied in the rule of experts (i.e. or those we are told we *must* rely on and/or obey). It is not meant, in the Crass version, to elevate the self to elite status, but rather to allow the self more opportunities for hospitality and sharing. D.I.Y. claims, "anyone can do anything without [formal] training," an extension of which can be seen in the encapsulation of punk music, the oft-cited

[633] See this claim promoted in Uehlein, Joe. Fall/Winter 2001. "An Overture to the Future: Music of Social Justice," *New Labor Forum*, p. 26. The five he identifies as dominant are AOL/Time Warner, BMG, Capitol-EMI, Sony, and Universal.
[634] For a discussion of this, cf. Cross, Richard. May 2014. "The Hippies Now Wear Black: Crass and the anarcho-punk movement, 1977-1984," *Socialist History*, Vol. 26. pp. 9-10. Glasper, Ian. 2006. *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984. London: Cherry Red Books*. Antliff, Allan. 2007. *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
[635] Crass. 1982. *Christ- the Album*. BOLLOX 2U2. Double Album. Crass Records. Reissued 2011 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

diagram in the *Strangled* fanzine (and famously reproduced in *Sideburns* & *Sniffin' Glue*), "Here is a chord, here are two more, now go start a band."[636] D.I.Y. also affords artists "total freedom" in liberating them from the concerns of producers, labels, record executives, advertisers, etc.[637] D.I.Y. has spread "beyond the music" in punk cultures to a verifiable network of productions and lifestyles, including but not limited to squats and other free housing projects, guerilla gardening, printing and publishing, journalism, film, courier services, and even free medical clinics.[638]

Like Morris, the D.I.Y. punk ethic is not only an attempt to subvert capitalism, but is also an assertion of the pleasure and quality in self-made goods. Many specific examples would be illustrative here, and there are many spaces (physical and imaginative) within punk that deserve analysis as attempts at autonomy or micro-utopia.[639] Such spaces may take the form of the ugliest of abandoned warehouses, or in the case of Dial House, the most beautiful of idyllic agrarian cottages and gardens. "Having defined 'the system' as anything or anyone that got in the way of our birthright to live lives of our own choosing, we had then set about questioning and,

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[636] Johnston, Denah A. 2012. *No Future Now: A Nomadology of Resistance and Subversion*. New York: Atropos Press, p. 65, and *Sniffin' Glue* reproduced in Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 5. and Hebdige, p. 112. Although this diagram was not originally created by Mark P. of *Sniffin' Glue*, but rather Tony Moon of *Sideburns*, it was reproduced and distributed in mass by the former, which had a much wider readership.

[637] Johnston, p. 84.

[638] Biel, Joe (ed.). 2012. *Beyond the Music: How Punks are Saving the World with DIY Ethics, Skills, & Values*. Portland: Cantankerous Titles.

[639] See, for instance, this collection of writings and visual prints related to the 924 Gilman Street Project, a volunteer-run, all ages, non-profit (decidedly anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic) punk, art, and community center/club in Berkeley, CA: Edge, Brian (ed.). 2004. *924 Gilman*. San Francisco: Maximum Rocknroll.

where possible, undermining any belief in that system."[640] D.I.Y. provides many of these tools in allowing Crass to "live lives of our own choosing," so that such systematic questioning can occur, and their lives could literally take on the idealized form life similarly described in *The German Ideology*, gardening in the morning, sewing in the afternoon, cooking in the evening, and criticizing at night. More depth and detail on the particular ways in which Crass mobilizes D.I.Y. is provided in the next chapter.

Members of Crass consistently argue that they understand their activities and art in these terms, as an invitation to question and an introduction to radical thought and action, not in leadership roles but ultimately to "stand back and clear the floor for people."[641] When asked in 1981 if they sought to "convert" people to their "way of thinking," guitarist Phil Free answered by demonstrating this invitation to radical questioning by arguing, "No way, because that would be setting up yet another system. What we're trying to do is get people to question things instead of just accepting everything that comes along."[642] Crass fully embraces the paradox of telling people to think for themselves, i.e. paradoxical because they would also then be undermining their own authority in a certain way, for they would also need to be questioned. The basic assumption of this idea is that once societal norms and mores are deeply questioned, more folks would come to the same critical conclusions.

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[640] Liner notes Crass. 1982. *Christ- the Album*. BOLLOX 2U2. Double Album. Crass Records. Penny Rimbaud, Liner notes to reissue 2011 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.
[641] "Crass Interview 1984," *Mucilage* zine, Issue 2.
[642] Drake, Francis & Gilbert, Peter. 1981. "Crass Hysteria." *Don't Care*. Available from *Don't Care Archives* and Web: http://punkrocker.org.uk/punkinterviews/crass.html Last Accessed 5/10/17.

Complicity or participation in the state/capital/religion triad they critique seems to always be built upon lies, for Crass doesn't really seem to allow for the possibility that many people have *chosen* conformity, so much as having it forced upon them. Yet, they also seem to realize that their ideas will not be roundly accepted, or even listened to. Legions of their fans may not even seriously engage Crass other than as entertainment, yet as Penny Rimbaud argues, "if people only have fun, well so fucking what! It's better than not having fun."[643] Although, as per usual, playful contradiction arises when examining a plethora of zine interviews, and such statements from Steve Ignorant as "I'm not interested in entertaining people. I want to be the worst fucking noise that ever was and I want those bastards to know" consistently arise, or Rimbaud himself in an outtake of "Have a Nice Day" when he claims, "We're not interested in being a comfortable commodity. We want to go on being a thorn in the side of both ourselves and of others."[644]

Though this effort towards autonomy may be considered radical or not, depending on the context, following the election of Margaret Thatcher to the position of British prime minister, Crass took on a decidedly *more* confrontational position. But even so, the D.I.Y. ethos and the open house lifestyle performance are maintained. However radicalized and confrontational the art is, the maintenance of the radically *not* neo-liberal lifestyle built around sharing, hospitality, questioning, and mutual aid in the face of Thatcherism (or the subsequent administrations of John

[643] "Crass Interview 1984," *Mucilage* zine, Issue 2
[644] *No Class Fanzine*. Web: http://www.noclass.co.uk/crassinterview.html Last Accessed 05/08/17.

Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Theresa May for that matter) is itself an important, lived statement.

> Bit by bit we found ourselves being forced into a form of radicalism which none of us would have claimed to have wanted. Yes, we had set out to promote a greater sense of social and personal freedom, but as a creative rather than an oppositional force. Initially our message had been one of 'do it yourself', but how could you do it yourself if that self was going to be crushed by the forces of tyranny? We had wanted simply to live our own lives in whatever way we chose, and to *encourage others to do the same*, but it was now becoming increasingly obvious that this was a right which would have to be fought for.[645]

This conjunction of aesthetic and lifestyle political performance should not just be of interest to punks and artists, but also to anti-state, anti-capitalist theorists and activists of many stripes. Much of the rest of this chapter looks to individual members of Crass, not to offer an individualist slant to each contributor to the project, but rather to allow different voices to come through to form a collage of the group. Some members of Crass have moved on completely, and have remained silent about their participation or connection to the group. Most especially, this is the case with Andy (aka NA) Palmer, the rhythm guitarist of Crass, who has refused even to comment on Crass since 1984. So, we may never know his perspective on the collective, their art, or punk in general, as his focus is now on painting.[646] Other members Phil Free, Joy De Vivre, and Eve Libertine may not have severed their ties to Crass completely, but are largely uninterested in continuing to dwell on that aspect of their lives and art.

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[645] Crass. 1981. *Penis Envy*. 321984. Crass Records. Penny Rimbaud, Liner notes to Reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD. Emphasis Added. Cf. Sword, Harry. July 17, 2012. "I Can See Clearly Now…Penny Rimbaud of Crass Interviewed," *The Quietus* Web: http://thequietus.comarticles/09366-penny-rimbaud-crass-interview-2 Last Accessed 05/08/17.
[646] https://www.saatchiart.com/andypalmer Last Accessed 09/02/2017.

Their voices can be heard in conversations regarding Crass, but in a more muted way than others.

Therefore, Rimbaud and Vaucher are the primary foci, due to their guiding aesthetic directions and their consistent operation of the Dial House space, as well as their strong assertions that they both conceive, in similar ways, their ongoing aesthetic projects to be a continuation (rather than break from) the Crass project.[647] Yet even here, their productions are largely conceived in conversation with both their influences and the environs. "There were, and still are, ideas within the words of these Crass songs which can act as tools to choose and use for a while as you go on your own crazy, sweet way. When they no longer serve you, discard them. Good luck…and laugh."[648] Their voices are hence important contributions to the following chapters and the description of the Crass event. Beyond this, as Vaucher and Rimbaud continue at Dial House and have always been the major intellectual artists of Crass.

"It [punk rock] makes us feel like we're a part or something"
--Stephanie Mendez[649]

Crass as Event

Jeremy John Ratter, a.k.a. Penny Rimbaud, has gained notoriety in punk circles primarily through his founding membership, lyrics, and drumming in inaugural anarcho-punk band Crass. He refashioned himself Rimbaud (after Arthur)

[647] In maintaining the open house, they also remain the most open—and accessible—members of the group.
[648] Crass. 1981. *Penis Envy*. 321984. Crass Records. Eve Libertine. Liner notes in Reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD. Ellipses in original.
[649] Boatwright, Angela. 2016. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*. Agi Orsi Productions.

and Penny (both for gender ambiguity and a tongue-in-cheek gesture of self-criticism, as in his ideas only being worth the small denomination of one penny—of see the literature colloquially known as the 'penny dreadful'—which he also describes as the same price needed to use a public toilet), both to "liberate" himself from the "weight of the father and mother," freeing himself to represent only himself.[650] At the opening of his novel *This Crippled Flesh*, Rimbaud describes his book in a way that nicely applies to his entire oeuvre, "I like to call the results of my efforts 'poetics', a mixture of poetry, philosophy, and politics."[651] Yet, immediately following this description, he also writes that he is "full of shit," and a "wanker," themes returned to abundantly in the novel.[652]

> I'm not really too keen on labels…Whereas Pete would tend to see things through the eyes of what to me was an abstract notion of the 'people,' I would tend to see things very much more from an individual viewpoint. I would consider what I might feel about any given situation, while he would try and imagine what the 'people' might feel. I used to ask him who these people were, but I don't think I ever got an understandable answer. Equally, whereas I am inclined to believe that real answers come from looking inwards to the deeper, inner self, he seemed to see both problems and answers emanating from the 'outside.' In this sense, whereas he was probably essentially a materialist, I am essentially a mystic…I'm an existentialist, although politically I feel closer to libertarianism than I do anarchism. As you said in another interview, there seems to be too many rules and do's and don'ts associated with anarchism to make it an attractive option. As a political theory, it seems to have developed a politically correct code of words and actions, which seems every bit as oppressive as that of any religious fundamentalism.[653]

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[650] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, pp. 68-69.
[651] Rimbaud, Penny. 2010. *This Crippled Flesh: A Book of Philosophy and Filth*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 3.
[652] Ibid.
[653] Meghan. April 11, 2013. "The Heavy Mental Interview with Penny Rimbaud of Crass," *CVLT Nation*. Web: http:www.cvltnation.com/the-heavy-mental-interview-with-penny-rimbaud/ Last Accessed 05/08/17. I have personally heard this sentiment explained repeatedly by Rimbaud. In one instance, I deliberately echoed Fanon's notion of individual problems reflecting societal ills, and

Labels are often contested within punk spaces in such critical ways. Yet, for a genre ostensibly about the rejection of labels, labels tend to flourish in punk contexts. Not only the discussion of what is *really* punk, but also the dozens of sub-genres that have sprouted from punk soil, many of which take particular pride in labeling themselves as 'hardcore', 'riot grrrl', 'folk punk', or 'anarcho', for instance. In large part, sub-genres are identified with a smaller subset of bands and fans, usually originating in one particular city (e.g. NYHC, or New York Hardcore). Adherence to the ideal, archetypal bands' aesthetics becomes a right of passage and inclusion, a litmus test of sorts, in the proving ground of subgenre. Using this same example of NYHC, one must look to the 1980s Lower East Side to find the crossover punk/metal amalgamation that would become the defining sound in bands like Cro-Mags, Agnostic Front, Warzone, Sheer Terror, Madball, Sick of it All, Antidote, Murphy's Law, and many others. Though each of these certainly develops their own stylistic signature, certain features (most of all the volume and velocity of their sound, but also New York, typically 1980s scene, affiliation) are prerequisite for the NYHC label to apply. In a similar vein, we can see other sub-genre labels spring up, with their own ideal bands defining the styles (sonic, visual, attitudinal, or even political), and sympathies of their own complexly autonomous yet connected to broader punk cultures. Crass is one such ideal, with perhaps a particularly *political* influence exceeding others.

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therefore social problems must be addressed in order to fix individual ones, and he responded that he is more likely to think that individual problems must be addressed in order to fix social ills.

As we shall see below, Crass has circulated importantly through punk (and activist) spaces and scenes as an ideal as much as a band. Many activists (punk or otherwise) are echoed by Mike Diehl when he argues that, "Crass released albums, yes, but those served as manifestos for the underground."[654] Unlike dogmatic and ideological manifestos, however, these Crass manifestos, are more invitation than declaration. The collective of Crass is far more than the sum of its individuals or the discography they produced. Rather than simply a musical/artistic/political group, we should consider Crass as an event in Alain Badiou's sense of the term. Ironically, for a group so opposed to formal political ideologies as Crass, it is this French Maoist philosopher that presents a conception of the event that best frames a discussion of Crass's productions and impacts. The tension between the reality of the Crass event and the ideal of Badiou's event concept is productive in analyzing both the band and the philosopher.

In *The Idea of Communism*, Badiou describes the crucial features of an event, that it "surprises us" and introduces "the possibility of new possibilities."[655] I argue that Crass indeed presents the possibility of new possibilities through their sonic, lyrical, and visual aesthetics, their political activities, and their lifestyle performance. These possibilities, although new in the present, are not necessarily new inventions. In a similar sense, Karl Bohrer's concept of the "suddenness" of an aesthetic moment is in line with this event rupture. He writes that the "sudden appearance" of "the

[654] Matt Diehl quoted in Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, p. 81.
[655] Badiou, Alain. 2010. *The Communist Hypothesis*. London: Verso, p. 12.

dissimilar" or the "surprising" tells us how we are affected by art.[656] What is important is, in Bohrer's terms, in such interventions is their surprising quality, and "the way it takes us by surprise and forces us to think something we have never thought before" by, at least for a moment, being autonomous from a culture that is trying desperately to coopt or absorb them.[657] New thoughts, and new possibilities imagined through such surprising processes may in fact be older, forgotten, or even dusty ideas, yet seem strikingly new in a particular spatial and temporal context.[658] Bohrer continues by claiming two groups in contemporary society are typically most culpable for these effects, and most likely to produce them, which are children and artists. The latter of these, and our subject here, he writes elicit moments of unpredictability and discomfort "because they deviate from the norm" they have quite literally "forgotten every taboo" when they leap into the unknown.[659]

That is, the *new* component may be better understood as a temporal newness rather than an ontological one, for Crass presents new strategies of resistance and autonomy by reviving anachronistic modes of production. Rimbaud even goes so far as to argue that it is

> [R]idiculous to think that Crass "created anything" wholly original, but rather they have "re-promoted a series of ideas which have roots way back through history…these are quite simply 'sod all authority, I as an individual have something worthwhile about me.' That sort of thinking seems to go in

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[656] Bohrer, Karl. 1984. *Suddenness: On the Moment of Aesthetic Appearance*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 88.
[657] Ibid, p. 6.
[658] One need only look at the long-used protest tactic of occupation that took one surprisingly new connotations following 2011's actions in Zuccotti Park and throughout the world.
[659] Bohrer, pp. 71 & 72.

> cycles…What we've done isn't so important, what is important is that across the world there are people that are closer to a sense of their own lives.[660]

This inter-temporal rupture, therefore, disturbs the present by introducing methods and processes from the past. Crass can certainly be understood in line with the central rupturing of the event, as defined by Badiou, as a "breaking with the presentational logic" governing (that is, politically and ontologically) their pre-existing world.[661]

The event "brings to pass something other," something "unpredictable, which vanishes as soon as it appears" and represents an "immanent and continuing break" with the situation.[662] I position Crass as an event that represents such a break with the situation of punk, or more broadly the situation of rock'n'roll music and its overlapping intersections with economics and politics. In the realm of poetics (specifically Mallarmé), Badiou argues that an event can be "interpreted on the basis of the traces it leaves behind," otherwise put the "consequences" of the event, rather than a singular "hero."[663] This trace is, in some ways, effectively what I am referring to as inter-temporal rupture, in that the "incorporation of the world's past to the present" is "opened up by the trace."[664] It is such 'traces' that we may interpret the Crass event, 'traces' belonging to aesthetic (sonic, poetic, visual), philosophical, and political registers.

Badiou further defines the event as a rupture that so dis-settles the "count" of expectations of the hitherto known "real" that it actually "compels us to decide a *new*

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[660] "Crass Interview 1984," *Mucilage* zine, Issue 2
[661] Badiou, *Logic of Worlds*, p. 79.
[662] Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 67.
[663] Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 191 & 207.
[664] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 507.

way of being."[665] Important here is that the event compels *us* to decide on this new mode of being; it doesn't decide for us. Yet, the site of the event can only be decided upon in retrospect. For instance, Badiou describes "France" as the existing site of the "revolution of 1789" not in the sense that the site "necessitates" the event, but rather the event of the revolution "has since retroactively given meaning…to that historical situation that we call France."[666] It would be absurd to argue that the Crass event 'gives meaning' retroactively to the wider punk cultures, but the trace of the Crass event *does* give meaning to the site we now call anarcho-punk. In other words, the site of anarcho-punk, not defined contemporaneously with the Crass event, is retroactively applied to the situations and occurrences that construct its meanings.

In their propositional modes, Crass does indeed present key elements of Badiou's event. As Badiou describes, it is

> [A]n immense task to try to propose a few examples, in the plural—a few possibilities other than what we are told is possible. It is a matter of showing how the space of the possible is larger than the one we are assigned—that something else is possible, but not that everything is possible. In any case, it is essential that politics renounce the category of totality.[667]

Being, understood as "pure multiplicity" always already contains elements of possibility for change, or "effective discontinuity on the world where it takes place."[668] The event in art is especially difficult for Badiou to conceptualize in the present, as his insistence on the "new" is at odds with the absence of examples.[669]

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[665] Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 41.
[666] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 203.
[667] Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 115.
[668] Badiou, *Logic of Worlds*, p. 357.
[669] Noys, Benjamin. July 2009. "Monumental Construction: Badiou and the Politics of Aesthetics." *Third Text*, Vol. 23, Issue 4. pp. 383-394.

Perhaps with Crass—and their mobilization of a creative anachronism—the paradox of the new can surprisingly be addressed by a rethinking and modification of the old. This troubles not only complacency in the present, but also the insistence on progression of history. For instance, why is the 'impossible' thought to be something hitherto not experienced, rather than an anachronistic (or 'dead', 'lost', etc.) form? Such notions from the past may indeed be just as forbidden, or just as outrageous, as the 'new' conceived as novel or wholly original. Hospitality, for instance, as we saw in Morris's *Nowhere* is radically mobilized, not as a new invention but as a reclaiming, reshaping of an anachronistic practice of mutual aid.

Let's take a brief step back. It would be misleading to imply that expanding Badiou to the musical realm is entirely new. Indeed, in *Logic of Worlds*, Badiou himself dips into discussions of musicological theory. For Badiou, a musicological event is encapsulated in a composer like Schoenberg, who abolishes previously existing norms and expectations of tonal music, "which breaks the history of music in two by affirming the possibility of a sonic world no longer ruled by the tonal system."[670] Yet, Schoenberg is not the *only* example of a musical event for Badiou. Another such event is named Hadyn/Mozart/Beethoven, who help the assemblage or "configurations" of 'classical' music to become recognizable.[671] The "Hadyn-event," he writes constitutes "a wholly new architectonic and thematic principle, a new way of developing musical writing" which could previously "not be perceived."[672]

[670] Badiou, *Logic of Worlds*, p. 80.
[671] Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 142.
[672] Badiou, *Ethics*, pp. 68-69.

But far before Badiou, many other important thinkers have described musical consumption in romanticized, mystical, or spiritual terms that seem to contain the radical—ontological—potentiality that will be relevant in influencing Badiou's concept and our application of it to the Crass event. Nietzsche, for instance, describes his first sonic encounter with Wagner as a revelation on the higher potentiality of humankind. Nietzsche eventually lost faith in Wagner as a potential revolutionary force, and abandons model of the Greek tragedy for a far grander philosophical system. Even so, music never looses its force of potential and affirmation in Nietzsche's imagination. Badiou nicely summarizes this Nietzschean point, "this total affirmation is also an absolute rupture."[673] Nietzsche's concept of the eternal recurrence is also helpful in framing discussion on the radical potential of anachronistic D.I.Y. modes of production and exchange.

The event in studies of music is normally reduced to a singular occurrence, such as the rioting at Stravinsky's debut of *Rites of Spring*,[674] Stalin's angry exit at a performance of *Lady MacBeth* and its subsequent banning, Elvis Presley or the Beatles appearing on the Ed Sullivan show, Woodstock, the murder at Altamont, or in the punk realm, the Sex Pistols profanity on the Bill Grundy show.[675] These applications are appropriate, for it is undeniable that there are some singular situations that do have deep cultural and political resonance. Musical events are also

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[673] Badiou, Alain. 2007. *The Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 16.
[674] It is perhaps worth noting that a hardcore band in the Washington D.C. punk scene took its name from this piece.
[675] For example, see Steve Waksman's comparative analysis of two events, the Beatles and later Grand Funk Railroad concerts at Shea Stadium. Waksman, Steve. 2009. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

analyzed in jazz studies, primarily with attention to the openness of possibilities in improvisational forms.[676] Yet, the event in music mustn't necessarily be so limited to singularities. Applying Badiou's notion of the event to Crass, I argue that their entire existence as creative producers (both as an active band and as a legacy) can be understood as constituting an event. A 'Crass moment' or Crass-as-event will hence frame this and the following chapters, and each section will comprise an examination of a different component of this event. One can hear the echoes of the entirety in the Crass event in Rimbaud's declaration to, "set harmony against conformity to describe the indescribable."[677] As we'll see in turning the lifestyle practices of Crass, the group is better understood as theater—in Badiou's definition—than as purely (or simply) music.

> Theater is an experiment—simultaneously textual and material—in simplification. Theater separates what is mixed and confused, and this separation guides the truths of which theater is capable…When all is said and done, theater thinks, in the space opened between life and death, the knot that binds together desire and politics. It thinks this knot in the form of an event, that is, in the form of the intrigue or the catastrophe…[and, the articulation of the theater's idea, always being incomplete because] the theater idea *comes forth* only in the brief time of its performance, of its representation…The public comes to the theater to be *struck*. Struck by theater-ideas. It does not leave the theater cultivated, but stunned, fatigued (thought is tiring), pensive. Even in the loudest laughter, it has not encountered any satisfaction. It has encountered ideas whose existence it hitherto did not suspect.[678]

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[676] Cf. O'Meally, Robert G. (ed.). 1998. *Jazz: The Cadence of American Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press. Moten, Fred. 2003. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[677] From the poem "Same Fire" in Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Universal Other (of which I am one and a part): A Collection of Poems*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 123.

[678] Badiou, Alain. 2005. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 73 & 77. Emphasis in original.

What possibilities does Crass introduce aesthetically? Culturally? Politically? Are these possibilities in themselves? Rather than ends unto themselves, the possibilities discussed here are best conceived as an invitation to explore other possibilities. After summarizing some of the art projects (novels, visual art, films—in addition to music) and the influential work done for the vegetarian movement at Dial House, Rimbaud discusses the possibilities opened up in these activities in terms strikingly similar to Badiou,

> That one acre has produced thousands if not millions of acres of possibility, and that's the *cultural* effect. Now, if we had sought in a cynical or contrived way to achieve that effect, then I would say that we probably would have had no effect whatsoever. The simple fact is we were *living* the truth, and failing some, quite often, within that very truth, [of] the unconditional nature of existence.[679]

In other words, there is not necessarily intentionality in the event, but for the necessary openness. Crass doesn't tell you "what to do, what to think, or how to feel", but by declaring "there is no authority but yourself," they radically undermine hegemonic power relations by inviting our introversive questioning.[680] In an interview, they elaborate, "we're reluctant to stray into the area when we start giving people orders. Like, I'm a vegetarian, but I wouldn't dream of telling other people to stop eating meat. Living in this environment suits us, but it may not suit everybody."[681] Living your life your way is assumed to be a radical move here.

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[679] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 85.
[680] Chaplin, Charlie. 1940. *The Great Dictator*. Charlie Chaplin Productions.
[681] Simon D. Summer 1980. "How Much Space Do you Give?" *Rapid Eye Movement*, Standard Issue 3, p. 27.

But, of course, much of the world's population seemingly chooses capitalistic endeavors voluntarily. So, their faith in the fundamental goodness of humanity may be misplaced, but Crass presents possibilities that they conclude are precluded by capital, religion, and the state. Once these possibilities are opened, new possibilities for human harmony and cooperation are thought to arise, and the (post)modern worship of Mammon will be subverted. The Crass event continues to reverberate in multiple spaces, for instance, not only on the clothing and playlists of occupiers in New York's Zuccotti Park, but also in an uncannily coincidental display of their zine art presented by Gee Vaucher at the Boo Horray Gallery in the fall of 2011.[682]

A character in *This Crippled Flesh*, who is described only as a "middle-aged woman," formally dressed, who is an interlocutor of the protagonist's father claims, "Time is illusion…don't be fooled by it."[683] There are numerous additional examples in his poetry of ruminating on time, most especially in his 21st century writings, after an apparent interest in quantum physics influences his thought. In Rimbaud's series of online aphorisms ranging from 2013-2014, time is again a recurrent theme:

> 23. The present is an impression of the immediate past. Now then, where am I?
>
> 33. Whereas linear time is a construct within space, real time is space. Time and space are one and the same.
>
> 57. Time is in denial of the multidimensional space/eternity in which we exist.

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[682] Hurst, Howard. October 17, 2011. "A Zine Archive 30 Years Later is Still Punk as Fuck," *Hyperallergic* Web: https://hyperallergic.com/38315/a-zine-archive-30-years-later-is-still-punk-as-fuck Last Accessed 05/15/17.

[683] Rimbaud, Penny. 2010. *This Crippled Flesh: A Book of Philosophy and Filth*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 37.

It seems, then, that Rimbaud reads Einstein as a poet. We can hear him repeatedly refer to the insights of quantum physics, including his own collaboration with academics working within the theoretical side of that field.

> 58. Time is the dimension in and by which we limit the multiple possibilities of existence.
>
> 59. Time is the linear dimension of our conceits.
>
> 128. In this light, all light exists. In this moment, all moment exists. No beginning. No end.
>
> 139. The moment of now is eternity's sunrise; all potential, no loss.
>
> 143. The newness of the past is what we carry into the future. The choice is ours.

The immanence on the future here is connected to the ever-fading newness of the recently past.

> 144. It is only in the now that we might become unenlightened: beyond that, the light shines and great silence prevails.
>
> 259. The past exists only in that it serves the vanities of its teller.

Similarly, Morris positions utopian literature as merely providing a looking glass into the proclivities of its individual author. Past, tastes, and self are subjectivized for both thinkers.

> 265. The construct of time limits us to the everyday; beyond it, the possibilities are infinite. In this we are the many.
>
> 279. Diverted from the present by our attachment to an illusory past, we drift towards the all-engulfing quicksand of an invented future.
>
> 280. Whatever the deal, the future cannot be bought.
>
> 306. In the material world, the future is reversed time destined to devour the

present. At that point, where will we be?

330. How is it that we come to imagine time as passing when all the time we are so irrevocably a part of it.[684]

Zen is an important part of Rimbaud's life, not only in his sitting zazen practice, but also in his ideas and writing. When recommending Zen texts on time, he once told me that time is admittedly complex and perplexing, stating "time is a real tricky one—it's there and it isn't there—a construct void of essence (as, I guess, all are)."[685]

This influence of Zen is a thread that weaves in and out of many of his texts, including those dealing with time. The interconnectedness of time, space, and self as concepts is one that is dealt with in many Zen texts, for instance, in Dainin Katagiri's *Each Moment Is the Universe*. In this text, Katagiri explains that the separateness of time from ourselves, exemplified in the commodification of time in our work, leisure, and thought, is but a wayward western conception. Within Zen Buddhism, he writes, moments contain the ultimate potentiality of all things in all times. Each moment, pregnant with the emergence *and* transience of all beings, demonstrates the true interconnectedness of all beings, including our selves, and hence the challenge of Zen is to *be time*.[686] Simultaneity demonstrates the perplexity of time, for even though we may not witness the full simultaneity of all things in all moments, we do have the imaginative capability of thinking multiple things simultaneously.[687] This ability

[684] This aphorisms were originally published through the online platform of Twitter and later collected and published as: Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *365 Aphorisms + 1*. Essex: Exitstencil Press.
[685] Email correspondence with author.
[686] Katagiri, Dainin. 2008. *Each Moment Is the Universe: Zen and the Way of Being Time*. Boston: Shambhala, pp. 4, 11, 72, 193.
[687] Katagiri, p. 72

gives us a glimpse into the larger truth of the ever changing yet ever-presence of time/being.

> When you are thinking about the past and future, the contents of the present are just imaginary pictures of the past and future, pictures fabricated by your consciousness at the pivot of nothingness, so it is not the real present. The real present is the full aliveness that exists at the pivot of nothingness before your conceptual thinking creates an imaginary world through human consciousness.[688]

Rimbaud's answer is, essentially, that we must get out of our own way. All of the governmental, religious, and cultural targets of his vengeful ire are merely additional outgrowths of this getting in our own way, just at the collective, societal level. The 'anarchy' he pushes for is one in which these social constraints no longer keep the individual from free, autonomous self-exploration and lifestyle. The ability to live according to one's own choosing is not simply *achieved* through D.I.Y. for Rimbaud, but rather the daily obstacles that D.I.Y. present represent the parameters of his chosen mode of becoming. And just as Zen Buddhism makes no distinction between mental and physical acts of becoming, the *do* in Rimbaud's D.I.Y. most of all includes these philosophical journeys and exercises.[689]

Additionally, Katagiri argues that we ornament our lives with cultural beauty due to our inability to "recognize the flux of moments" as time itself (and therefore we with it) are actually moving at such a pace or "tempo that is too quick for your mind to keep up with, so you sense a gap between you and time."[690] The way in which we dwell on a nonexistent gap between our selves and time, Katagiri argues,

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[688] Katagiri, p. 77
[689] Katagiri, p. 175.
[690] Katagiri, pp. 4, 7.

also leads to universal dissatisfaction (i.e. this perceived gap is the origin of human suffering), for the equivalence between time and change also means that "there can be no permanent satisfaction," but only satisfaction that is fleeting and temporary.[691] This Zen notion of the suffering from perceived gaps between self and time is strikingly similar to Emmanuel Levinas's argument that time presents itself to us, it is as 'the other' (that entity through which we hope to dialectically reflect and recognize the self) *par excellence*.[692] Levinas also views time as beyond the "inaptitude of knowledge as such."[693] That is, just as 'the other' (be they embodied as brother, sister lover, enemy, or friend) always contains the "mystery" of the stranger, exemplified by what is outside of the self, and there is no greater stranger to our consciousness than time. As opposed to the congealed representation of knowledge, Levinas argues that time, in being "beyond being" "signifies a relationship that does not compromise the other's alterity."[694] Time, it seems, is irreconcilable and indecipherable difference.

When Rimbaud critiques materialism, he is doing so from a position similar to Katagiri but breaking from Levinas, that the material is but an ornamental distraction from the pursuit of a deeper knowledge or truth. This interconnectedness between all beings, or a sort of 'all-ness' is very much a guiding principle in Rimbaud's work. Love, which is seemingly a placeholder for the summation of human goodness—or in the goodness of all things for Rimbaud, is also presented in connection to time, or rather in its overcoming of it. Unlike Levinas, who positions love as the "condition of

[691] Katagiri, p. 40.
[692] Levinas, Emmanuel. 1987. *Time and the Other*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, p. 35.
[693] Levinas, p. 32.
[694] Levinas, p. 31.

the very possibility of uniqueness" within the beloved, Rimbaud positions love as precisely what isn't (or at least shouldn't be) unique.[695] His poems position love not only as the ultimate of human goals, confirming his hippie 'free love' roots, but also as the most powerful—and ungovernable—force we can understand,

> And all the time, the time,
> The twist of the immediate
> Which is the framework of eternity.[696]
> (from "The Wait")

Again, we hear the influence of a peculiar Zen universalism, the almost atomistic connectivity of all things. The present has an intertwining, swirling relationship with both the past and futurity here.

> Listen,
> I speak to you beyond time.
> You are not entity,
> And I too am not.
> We are all things
> And there can be no separateness.
> If human frailty decrees otherwise,
> Insisting that we be defined as individual,
> Know that that is but arrogance,
> A self-protectionism in which self will never be known
> …
> So do not tangle me with sentimentality
> Nor cast spells of common intrigue.
> We are not measure of time,
> But time itself.
> We are not the quantification of space,
> But space itself.[697]
> (from "Then No This [Diego's Lament]")

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[695] Levinas, p. 108.

[696] Rimbaud, Penny. 2007. *And Now it Rains: A Series of Poems 2005-2007*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 32.

[697] Rimbaud, Penny. 2007. *And Now it Rains*, p. 137.

Love is an elemental force in Rimbaud's writing, encompassing the universe of being beyond being. Love is constructed of all of the world's positive energy, and is conceptualized here as all-powerful and absolutist.

> Then know this.
> Love is greater than yourself.
> It is in every moment before and after your conceits.
> It cannot grow, for it is already full grown,
> Full size, full spectrum, indefinable,
> Shot out beyond time constrained.
>
> Love is complete, or else love is obsolete.
> (from "You Brave Old Land")[698]

There cannot be any limitations imposed on love, be these limitations based on gender, sexual, economic, geographic, or racial terms, or in the more straightforward interpretation of a universal loving respect for all living things. The universalism within Rimbaud's conception of love is in complex relationship with his more pessimistic view of social control and constriction. In a strange and undoubtedly unintentional way, he almost aligns himself with Margaret Thatcher's emphasis on the individual and the non-existence of society. "The common idea that we are 'progressing' in some way is quite absurd. In my view, general culture is becoming tighter and tighter…on the level of the political 'war on terror.'"[699] This tightening can be connected to the destruction of ambiguity that Rimbaud attributes to the information age,

> We're destroying ambiguity. Google will systematically destroy the concept of ambiguity if it's allowed to do so, or if people allow it to do so. It already

[698] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Universal Other (of which I am one and a part): A Collection of Poems*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 23.
[699] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 34.

> *has* destroyed the sense of ambiguity that any individual is capable of if the first thing he or she does is 'Oh, hang on—,' that sort of loathsome situation when you're in dialogue with someone and out comes the iPhone or whatever it's called, and they tap on the very thing you're talking about, so they can say, 'Well *actually* Descartes said [gibberish]'…We are becoming the automatons that we imitate.[700]

Interestingly, however, despite his skepticism towards progressive understandings of time and human evolution, there is also an emphasis on hope, and particularly, love in Rimbaud's writings. As Henri Bergson writes, hope is by definition an inter-temporal desire, for the very attractiveness of hope is "the fact that the future, which we dispose of to our liking, appears to us at the same time under a multitude of forms, equally attractive and equally possible," and these possibilities are, of course, more credible within the imagination than in materiality.[701] The future, Bergson continues, is an ideal "pregnant with an infinity of possibilities" and as such, the infinity within the *idea* of the future is "more fruitful" and "more charming" than the future itself. Dreams and hope carry more emotional weight for Bergson than do "possession" and "reality."[702]

> Mortal are we and mortal we be,
> But that's no denial of immortality.
> Despite the now, we are both before and again,
> Existing together throughout all time…
> Clothing ourselves in the rags of conformity,
> We barter our souls for a deluded normality.[703]
> (from "Of Substance Unknown")

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[700] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, pp. 56-57. Emphasis in original.
[701] Bergson, Henri. 2001. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Mineola: New York, pp. 9-10.
[702] Ibid, p. 10.
[703] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Universal Other (of which I am one and a part): A Collection of Poems*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, pp. 43-44.

> It is the temporal which confines belief,
> Yet what can we truly know that is not absolute
> And which thereby contains us as absolute?
> ...In our imaginings,
> we own life, when, in truth, it is life which owns us.[704]
> (from "Where the Longing")

Again we see Rimbaud placing certainty of existence into the uncertain terrain of the imagination.

Crass also complicates Badiou's conceptions, so we mustn't fall into the trap of applying the latter wholesale to the former. For instance, Badiou—in a more politicized register—argues that alternative economies are not only wrong-headed "abstractions," but may in fact contribute to "capital's own reorganization" by providing capital with "new fields of investment, new inflections, and new deployments."[705] Badiou here echoes conventional 20th century wisdom on the ability of capital to morph and coopt, even if what it is coopting ostensibly began as an anti-capitalist (or simply non-capitalist) endeavor. He is not wrong in many historical examples. Yet, Crass troubles this conventional wisdom by categorically refusing to be coopted, and maintaining at least a semblance of an alternative (i.e. D.I.Y.) economy.[706]

Beyond this, Badiou also asserts that art must be a wholly separate, independent endeavor. All other registers (including politics) must be expunged from art in order for it to be true art.[707] This is what Badiou calls "inaesthetics", a concept

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[704] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Universal Other*, p. 90.
[705] Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 106.
[706] They did, however, have to buy into the institution of private property when, facing eviction, they gathered funds to purchase Dial House.
[707] CITE Badiou *Inaesthetics* & Noys 2009.

he mobilizes to provide for the complete autonomy for art.[708] Art must have this autonomy for Badiou, as must philosophy and politics, for each of these "paths to truth" has their own particularities we must respect. Instead of simply putting art into conversation with other modes of truth production (asking, for instance, what art can offer philosophy, politics, etc.), Badiou insists that we recognize "Art *itself* is a truth procedure," and that all truths ("the plural is crucial") are "processes" that always "begin with an event."[709] So, in other words, Badiou is opposed to "turning art into an object for philosophy," but rather in examining the "intraphilosophical effects" produced by "independent" art.[710] "Art," he writes, "does not pertain to the theoretical, but to the ethical…It follows that the norm of art is to be found in its utility for treatment of the affections of the soul."[711] It is through this supposed autonomy, Badiou writes, that "true art has always pierced holes in ideology."[712] Again, the Crass event paradoxically embodies *and* complicates Badiou, for the defining feature of their art and their lifestyle is precisely the intersections of these different registers.

What is much less clear in understanding Crass as a Badiouian event is whether or not Crass requires fidelity. Badiou's understanding of time comes from the void left between two events, and so "organized control of time" is presented as

[708] Defined in the frontispiece of Badiou, Alain. 2005. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
[709] Badiou, *Inaesthetics*, p. 9. Emphasis in original. & p. 55
[710] Ibid.
[711] Badiou, *Inaesthetics*, p. 4.
[712] Badiou, *Inaesthetics*, p. 84.

what he calls "fidelity" to the preceding event.[713] He further explains, "to intervene is

to enact, on the border of the void, being-faithful to its previous border."[714] Such fidelity to the event is always some form of "continuous constraint", in necessitating loyal adherence to the change wrought by the event.[715] This fidelity, in turn, positions the "subject [as] the militant of the truth" through their continual (or recurring) "choice" of fidelity."[716] From all indications, Crass opens the possibilities for new possibilities by offering invitations, but not through dogmatic insistence on conformity to their ideals. In other words, Crass demonstrate a way out of Badiou's insistence on fidelity to the event by actively resisting the trappings of dogmatism. Does Crass then provide an answer of how to be militant without being dogmatic? If so, the importance of understanding the Crass event within a radical activist context is seemingly quite stark.

But if we understand Crass's version of anarchy as non-ideological, non-institutional, and anti-authoritarian (even of their own authority), we are left with a paradox. That is, to give fidelity to the Crass event would both undermine and bolster said event. By undermining insistence on fidelity, Crass opens possibilities for new possibilities without a prescribed program in place, thereby keeping open individualistic lifestyle and aesthetic choices. One does not have to follow Crass all the way down, for the openness, which defines their event, requires *individual* choices, not conformity to the choices Crass makes. Over and over again, they insist

[713] Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 210-211.
[714] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 211.
[715] Badiou, *Inaesthetics*, p. 26.
[716]Badiou, *Inaesthetics*, p. 55.

that Dial House is not a model for everyone, but simply what they chose—given the freedom (material and ideological) they posit as necessary and important to all. To *really get* what it is their message conveys is to *think for oneself*, whether or not one comes to agree with all of Crass's ideas. But the insistence to think for oneself is itself a demand, and a demand requiring fidelity to the event inspiring this reflexive practice. This being the case, Crass paradoxically demands fidelity to non-fidelity. This paradox seems inescapable—yet potentially productive—for an anarchist articulation of the Badiouean event, or anyone seeking to retain the kernel of Badiou's militancy without ascribing to any of his dogmatic or ideological constrictions.

Interestingly, Crass *fans* may actually demand more fidelity to the event than Crass themselves.[717] The ways in which authenticity, for instance, circulates as the primary form of social capital among many anarchist punks demonstrates performed adherence to the standards set by Crass, perhaps presenting a form of fidelity. Crass themselves may be more precisely understood in close conversation with their kindred spirits and collaborating band Flux of Pink Indians, whose song lyric and group motto is "strive to survive causing the least suffering possible."[718] The crucial word here is *strive*, which is heard repeatedly in Crass's invitation to both thought and action. Yet, for many of their fans and followers, such striving isn't enough, and radical lifestyles (by their definition) must be actualized.

[717] Similar, perhaps to other personified events in Badiou's calculation, e.g. Che Guevara, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao Tse Tung.
[718] Flux of Pink Indians. 1983. *Strive to Survive Causing the Least Suffering Possible*. Southern. LP.

For Badiou, the manner in which we can be "faithful to an event" is to proceed through a situation by "*thinking* the situation according to the event."[719] As a sort of standard-bearer, Crass indeed circulates as the event through which the situation can be thought, for various anarchist punks often compare themselves and other artists/musicians/radicals to the pure performance of ideals by Crass. The idea of being "more punk" (or more *authentically* punk that is) than anyone else is sometimes judged by these standards, for if Crass *really* meant it, do you? Carrie Brownstein (Sleater-Kinney) describes the question of what is acceptable or not according to the punk scene and its definitions of "selling out" as internalized in the all-encompassing "What will the [punk] community think?"[720] Playing with this idea, radical songwriter David Rovics often performs the song "I'm A Better Anarchist Than You," which largely consists of a litany of all the 'right' things to be done in the rather solidified idea among anarcho-punks of what it means to be anarchist.[721] So although Crass themselves may not have been out to convert anyone, their ideals have at times been picked up and proliferated by non-apologetic militants who *have* codified and standardized Crass (and other anarcho-punks, figures, and icons) as an ideal to which others can be, and are, actively compared. Authenticity carries a great deal of weight for the Crass event, as perhaps the most famous historian of punk Jon Savage demonstrates,

> Crass were the only band who really impressed me by actually walking the walk. Punk was very male at that point in time, and they had two women

[719] Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 41 Emphasis in Original.
[720] Brownstein, Carrie. 2015. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*. New York: Riverhead, p. 132.
[721] Rovics, David. 2007. *The Commons*. Irregular Records. CD.

> onstage, talking about gender issues. But they weren't dogmatic, they wanted a conversation not to shout you down.[722]

In bringing us to the discussion of authenticity, that supposed feature of 'true believers' who are indeed ever faithful to their events, this invitation of the Crass event also needs to be understood in conversation with Marxian and Nietzschean concepts on 'the authentic.' In contemporary parlance, authenticity is more often applied to objects than subjects. Brian Spooner argues that the need that authenticity fulfills is the differentiation of the "plethora of objects and categories of objects that it [capitalism] produces…Authenticity is a form of cultural discrimination projected onto objects."[723] Authentication becomes a valuation mechanism used to establish, maintain, and privilege certain commodities. Authenticity carries authoritative weight by declaring an object as 'real,' i.e. that it *actually is* what it is *claimed* to be.[724] The narrative matches the essence.[725] Yet, the authentication process, the functioning of authenticity, and the meaning of authenticity itself cannot be generalized. As Spooner argues, "authenticity is…elusive, inadequately defined, other cultural, socially ordered genuineness" that is constituted by "objective attributes…subjective assessment of those attributes, shared cultural choice of what to

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[722] Swash, Rosie. October 23, 2010. "Crass's Political Punk is as Relevant Now as Ever," *The Guardian*. Web: http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/oct/24/crass-penny-rimbaud-steve-ignorant. Last Accessed 07/05/17.

[723] Spooner, "Weavers and Dealers," contained in Appadurai, Arjun. 2011. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 226.

[724] This can take on spiritual and political, as well as economic, value.

[725] This projection is often problematically applied in an orientalist search for truth in 'the other.' In Spooner's study, this is explained through the authentication, pricing, and trading of 'oriental' carpets. On this point, see also Kimberly Lau's discussion of the commodity fetishization of "Eastern" practices such as yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, etc. and their de-spiritualization/commoditization for U.S. consumers. Lau, Kimberly. 2000. *New Age Capitalism: Making Money East of Eden*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

look for in authenticity, and the social mechanism of the negotiation of authenticity."[726] It is only through attention to the particular processes (and temporal and spatial contingency) that we can see how authenticity functions. Authenticity in this economic sense is linked to greater value and price, as it lends the authority of 'the real' (or 'the original') to the object in question.[727] We will see below that a similar authority is attached to authenticity as it relates to people and politics.

Beyond economics, authenticity has many more valences and possible meanings in political thought. I understand authenticity through its related concepts of self-sameness, identity, originality, individuality, and essence. Though none of these related concepts are precisely synonymous with authenticity, the interplay between them provides theoretical purchase for identifying and analyzing key dilemmas contained within authenticity. But what is the core of authenticity? Oscar Wilde writes that the historical transition to modernity is accompanied by and typified by an epochal shift from the imperative of "know thyself" towards "be thyself."[728] To *be thyself* is the key paradox of authenticity, for how could one be anything else? Is there a self that one can (and cannot) be? This being of one's self typifies the individualist turn of modernity. In order to get to the importance of these questions, we must look to the self, society, and power within modernity as both obstacles and avenues to authenticity, to the very possibility of being one's self.

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[726] Spooner, Brian. "Weavers and Dealers," pp. 225 and 220.
[727] Trilling, Lionel. 1971. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[728] Wilde, Oscar. 2001. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. New York: Penguin Classics.

We begin with an opposition, as much theorizing around authenticity revolves around the problem of *in*authenticity and related issues of insincerity, inconsistency, contradiction, and artificiality in the current epoch. Marshall Berman argues that the "paradox of modernity" is that it creates *and* confines the individual self. The problematic of inauthenticity and insincerity is what precedes and constitutes the problem of authenticity, in that "insincerity presupposed the existence of a 'real' identity, a 'true' self, which the individual could then conceal. But modern society had made the very self-identity of the individual deeply problematical."[729] This deep problematic was/is the paradox of self-recognition mediated through the other(s), a problem identified by Berman as central not only in the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, but also in the early liberal traditions of Montesquieu, Rousseau, and later, Romanticism.[730] How can the self be sought in others? Is this recognition possible in inauthentic others or societies? How does artificiality affect this recognition? When Crass insists "there is no authority but yourself," they seem also to imply an engagement with these types of questions.

Question from caller, "Who's punk rock besides you?"
The Germs (in unison), "Nothing!"[731]

In the 20th century, Walter Benjamin also takes up the issue of artificiality in capitalism—specifically that aspect of capitalism involving mechanization. In his most famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"

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[729] Berman, Marshall. 2009. *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society*. New York: Verso, p. 141.
[730] *Ibid*, p. 188.
[731] DJ Rodney Bingenheimer. 11/30/1979. "Interview with the Germs," *Rodney on the Rock*. KROQ. Los Angeles Radio Station.

Benjamin introduces the concept of "aura" to discuss what he posits is lost in the transference from an original work to a reproduction of it. The "original," Benjamin argues, "is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity."[732] In other words, *only* the original work can claim the authority of authenticity.[733] The aura of the original translates into the original's authenticity because it is positioned as the *real* vs. the *artificial* of the replicated copies. Brush strokes, non-amplified performance, tool marks, and other indications of human touch are what this characterization is based on.

The authenticity of the original, for Benjamin, "has its basis in ritual" (i.e. we could call this the authentication process), a basis that changes with the advent of "mechanical reproduction", when art becomes "designed for reproducibility", and authenticity is no longer "applicable" in relation to art. Instead, "ritual" is replaced with "politics" as the basis of art.[734] Politics in this sense refers to manipulation, replication, and authority derived from institutions. This authority of politics is fundamentally different from the authority of authenticity in that while the former emerges from force and violence, the latter emerges from aura and spirit.[735]

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[732] Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" contained in Arendt, Hannah (ed.) 1968. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Random House, p. 220.
[733] In the case of a painting, for instance, "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense." Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 224.
[734] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 224. Some works of art, Benjamin argues, such as the silent film, "generated reactions that were hard to control and hence politically dangerous." So it is not simply that politics becomes the basis for art (replacing ritual), but that these politics have dangerous potentiality. "Benjamin's Response to Adorno" contained in Adorno, et al. 1977. *Aethetics and Politics*. New York: Verso, p. 140.
[735] To apply Nietzsche to Benjamin, we could claim that politics for Benjamin is the realm of the state, that "coldest of all cold monsters," while aura is the domain of the "human, all too human." Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1995. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*. New York: The Modern Library, p. 48.

Benjamin also links "aura" (or the ethereal authenticity of the original) to people within society. He claims, for instance, that "the cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person, but the 'spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity."[736] This commodification of the celebrity rings of Marx's objectification of the worker. In Benjamin's example, however, we have a spectacular commodification, i.e. a more visible, clear exploitation that transmits signs of aura destruction through the camera. Crucially, this insight identifies these commoditized people as the symbolic figureheads of a "cult." As such, they not only have their own aura diminished, but they are also normative models for broad imitation. Here we have the destruction of authenticity not simply through alienated labor, but through the spectacular self-presentation modeled on inauthentic cults of celebrity. As Benjamin argues, the loss of the aura in original works of art is tragic in itself, but the loss of the "unique aura of the person" (or the self) is overwhelmingly more tragic. In addition, these two losses are mutually constitutive, for "art will often…precede the perceptible reality for years" and hence serve to frame perceptions and experiences of the social reality.[737] Social reality hence becomes less authentic and more political. The social becomes colder and less human.

In *The Jargon of Authenticity* and (along with Max Horkheimer) in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno engages Benjamin on originality and the aural

[736] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 231.
[737] Benjamin, *Arcades*, [B1, 9], p. 63. and Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 221.

aspects of aesthetic works.[738] Specifically around works of art, Adorno argues that "the concept of a genuine style becomes transparent in the culture industry as the aesthetic equivalent of power."[739] In other words, within aesthetics, it is not a *particular* style that is to be resisted, but the very *idea* of a *genuine* style. The *genuine* here is problematically essentialist, and as an articulation of power, should be resisted. Adorno writes that such internal concerns of authenticity (or "self-sameness" or "self identity") are highly problematic because attention to universal essence "hides from men the unalleviated discriminations of social power."[740] As he also points out, one could be an authentic or sincere person who still acts problematically in discursive or even violent ways. Authenticity should therefore never take the place of 'the good', for as he says, "in the name of contemporary authenticity even a torturer could put in all sorts of claims for compensation, to the extent that he was simply a true torturer" and hence authenticity can become a politically dangerous concept.[741] Authenticity as a political goal in itself is hence troubled and Adorno demonstrates that we must interrogate *what* authenticity is being sought and *to what end*.

Adorno's point on the political danger in accepting authenticity as a placeholder for the good is not unfounded, and it raises an important issue that any attempt to penetrate the politics of authenticity must address. There is also a

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[738] Another major component of this work is the problematizing of authenticity within Heidegger's *dasein*.
[739] Horkheimer, Max. and Adorno, Theodor. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 103.
[740] Adorno, Theodor. 1964. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. New York: Routledge, pp. 53. See also 60-61.
[741] *Ibid.* p. 102.

connection we can make with aura and authenticity in Bataille's conception of sovereignty and the related concept of the accursed share. Bataille describes two modes of living that are possible for humans, the servile and the sovereign. The former "*subordinates* men's activity to ends other than the useless consumption of their resources."[742] The servile is akin to Nietzsche's slave morality, but with a nod to the split between the conscious and the unconscious desires of humans.[743] Consciousness can hide desire, and desire is at the heart of sovereignty.

Bataille wants to overturn the insistence on rationality and to suggest that consciousness hides too much for reason to be our sole concern. What sets humans apart from animals is not consciousness itself, but rather the transcendence of the self, as "the transcendence of things in relation to consciousness (or of consciousness in relation to things) is manifested."[744] Just as Nietzsche acknowledges that slave morality too can exert a will to power, Bataille identifies a *moralizing* sovereignty (Christianity) that he positions as Nietzsche's opponent.[745] In the overcoming of this moralizing sovereignty, Nietzsche is positioned to "rediscover lost sovereignty" in an effort to "free the *subject*."[746] Crass wants to free subjects, sometimes from these same institutions of morality.

Following this Nietzschean legacy, Bataille claims "everything that 'justifies' our behavior needs to be reexamined *and overturned*…[thought] is the subordination

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[742] Bataille, Georges. 2007. *The Accursed Share, Vol. 2 & 3*. New York: Zone Books, p. 14.
[743] *Ibid.* p. 225.
[744] Bataille, Georges. 1992. *Theory of Religion*. New York: Zone Books, p. 24.
[745] Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 2 & 3*., p. 367.
[746] *Ibid*, p. 367.

of the heart, or passion, to incomplete economic calculations."[747] Desire is therefore crucial in Bataille's project, as that which econometrics (and the morality based around such calculus) ignores and obscures. This desire can be aligned with the satisfaction of self-sameness seen in an authentic ideal. How can desire be connected to authenticity? Bataille answers that the satisfaction of desire is the defining feature of sovereignty, which we will see is both ideal and impossible.

Desire, for Bataille, is what connects resistance and authenticity, "it often seems that, by overcoming a resistance, desire becomes more meaningful; resistance is the test that assures us of desire's authenticity."[748] As Nietzsche describes freedom as that which overcomes resistance, Bataille describes desire as that which overcomes resistance. In Bataille's formulation, the *authenticity* of desire can be determined by the amount of resistance it can endure. What must be understood, however, is that even in the festival (a punk performance, say), i.e. that which is *closest* to sovereignty and the expression of desire, sovereignty is but an ideal.[749]

> "This was 'art for art's sake', a perhaps outlandishly outdated concept in today's neo-conservative, post-Thatcherite non-society."[750]

Indeed, sovereignty is "the impossible" ideal toward which Bataille strives, "the impossible...is the sovereign self-consciousness that, precisely, no longer turns away from itself."[751] This "sovereign self-consciousness" that faces itself seems to

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[747] *Ibid.* p. 105.
[748] *Ibid.* p. 95.
[749] *Ibid.* pp. 231, 241, 245. Note the consistency with Nietzsche's discussion of the festival of punishment. See also Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, p. 103 on "letting oneself lose time."
[750] Crass. 1986. *Ten Notes on a Summer's Day*. Crass Records. Penny Rimbaud liner notes in reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.
[751] Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, p. 111.

encapsulate the ideal of never fully realized, impossible authenticity, yet "so long as he is a subject, he tries to attain subjective sovereignty."[752] In this last quote, we can begin to see that what Bataille discusses in terms of sovereignty, Foucault will discuss in terms of resistance.

This also relates to Foucault's concept of the "care of the self." Like Nietzsche, Foucault wants to unearth forgotten knowledge systems (or "subjugated knowledges"), in order to reveal key aspects of the contemporary *episteme* (or the preconditions of knowledge) and its historical contingency.[753] In Foucault's thought, the idea of the authentic self is troubled, for if the subjectivity through which self-understanding comes into being is a product of power, can any idea of authenticity not also be brought into being by these same forces? Instead of a conscious subject/agent, it is the interplay between power and resistance that creates "different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" including language, state structures, economics, categories of madness and health, and even a "way in which a human being turns him or herself into a subject."[754] Can authenticity be an idea or an affect in which such self-subjugation can occur? If resistance is taken to be the expressions of authentic desires and authentic selves, can this in fact serve to reify the subjugation of the subjects that believe themselves to be resisting? Foucault doesn't answer directly, but instead begins to problematize the subject. Following

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[752] Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 2 & 3*., p. 351.
[753] Foucault, Michel. 2003. *"Society Must Be Defended:" Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*. New York: Picador, p. 10. Such subjugated knowledges bare a striking resemblance to Nietzsche's *genuine* that has been hidden, denied, and internalized, i.e. this is why Nietzsche turns to previous epochs for his "master", such as the Greeks (a more human, all too human polity).
[754] Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power," contained in Faubion, James (ed.) 2000. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3*. New York: The New Press, pp. 326-7.

Nietzsche, Foucault argues that to do genealogy, "one has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself" in order to pursue analyses "that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework."[755] Foucault argues that power operates in and through people, which leads Foucault to conclude "the individual is in fact a power-effect, and…the individual is a relay: power passes through the individuals it has constituted."[756]

The power-knowledge-resistance nexus hence creates 'the individual.' As Foucault describes, "in Nietzsche and Bataille, experience has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, or seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself."[757] He places himself in the Nietzschean tradition of *not* seeking origins and *not* presupposing subjects. This leads us to the third key problematic of power relations that Foucault engages, that everywhere power exists, it encounters resistance. Resistance and power relations are mutually constitutive. Foucault's elaboration on the connection between power and resistance in *The History of Sexuality* succinctly states, "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power…these points of

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[755] Foucault, "Truth and Power", p. 118.
[756] Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 30. The relaying capacity of the individual serves as the vessel through which normalization occurs and is transmitted. This is part of why Foucault also resists classification and categorization of his own work, as he wants to actively resist subjugation through conforming to normalized standards of academic research. Indeed, his resistant assertion of his particular *style* (i.e. "in contrast") is what Hayden White has attributed the "authority of Foucault's discourse" in that he is "willfully superficial…consistent with…[a dissolving of] the distinction between surfaces and depth, to show that wherever this distinction arises it is evidence of the play of organized power." White, Hayden. 1987. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 107.
[757] Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," p. 241.

resistance are present everywhere in the power network."[758] Particularly important here is the insistence that where power relations are present resistance is also *always* in play.[759]

Judith Butler also contributes to this conversation on authenticity by pointing away from Benjamin's idea of the original and the trouble a 'self' may face when attempting to discover this original. Instead, Butler focuses on such examples as drag to demonstrate that parody isn't simply a satirical critique of an original, but rather parody's critique "is *of* the very notion of the original."[760] Butler is, like Nietzsche, arguing no doer behind the deed, but goes further than Nietzsche in claiming *no genuine self*, specifically in terms of gender. In her theory of performativity, Butler argues that gender and the bodies that perform gender "have no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality."[761] In other words, there *is no authentic gender identity* behind the performative act. Crass implies that there is no anarchist identity behind the performative acts of helping one's community, critiquing the system, and anarchist *doing* in general. Instead, their emphasis seems to be on *being* rather than on doing, which isn't to imply that they are somehow not active. Instead, what I mean by this is that doing for the sake of itself, a sort of fetish of the action, is not what Crass promote. Nor do they necessarily promote their own

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[758] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, pp. 95-6. See also Foucault, "The Subject and Power," p. 347.
[759] "If there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you're not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with resistance. So I think that *resistance* is the main word, *the key word*, in this dynamic." Foucault, Michel. and Lotringer, Sylvere (ed.) 1996. *Foucault Live: Collected Interview, 1961-1984*. New York: Semiotext(e), p. 386.
[760] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 188.
[761] *Ibid.* p. 185.

art or their own lifestyles. What they do insist upon when they confront sonic audiences is engagement. *Think* about what they say, sing, play, and present. You are invited to the dance, as well as the dialogue.

Can't selves be constructed out of these aesthetic spaces, such as the example of the Crass event perhaps offers? Butler writes, "what we call identity politics is produced by a state which can only allocate recognition and rights to subjects totalized by the particularity that constitutes their plaintiff status."[762] The idea of an authentic identity (or an authentic self) seeking recognition from the modern state is itself a product of the modern state. We can again hear echoes of Berman's paradox of modernity, that it simultaneously creates and confines the individual. Butler's radical critique of authenticity demonstrates the essentialism that authenticity is often based on, and likewise the essentialism of resistance that is based around claims of authenticity. But what if we move beyond the straightforward resistance thesis that academic literatures on 'sub'-cultures are so rife with? Can't we focus elsewhere, perhaps on the *attempts* at resistance, or the *potentiality* of other modes of production, consumption, or even being?

Analysis of potentiality rather than actualization is, by definition, a romanticizing move. The possibility of new possibilities is an important cultural contribution, but the importance of it should not be overstated. It is on these grounds that we must turn to examining D.I.Y. productive processes in relationship to Crass (and punk more broadly). The next chapters will focus first on the space of Dial

[762] Butler, Judith. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 100.

House and the D.I.Y. (perhaps 'sovereign') productions there, Crass activism, and Crass/punk feminism. All of these represent attempts at speaking truth to power, participation in the festive carnival, and an invitation to consider the possibilities of new (or newness within older, anachronistic methods) possibilities. To loosely adapt Emma Goldman's famous aphorism and mold it into a question; have we found here in the Crass event a revolution worthy of dancing?

"Fuck all borders! Fuck everything that keeps us divided.
The only barriers that exist are the ones we put up."
--La Plebe[763]

[763] Punk Rock Bowling, 05/25/14. Author in attendance.

Chapter 7

Crass, Dial House, & D.I.Y. Possibilities

"Ideology is the rebel's tombstone."
--Raoul Vaneigem[764]

"We've all got a right to what we want to think,
but NO ONE has got the right to make us think THEIR way."
--Crass[765]

Punks spaces: a dirty warehouse on a working class street in Berkeley, an art collective in the Lower East Side, a festival of thousands of punks, and a collection of various bars, pubs, and parties in numerous squats, punk houses, basements, garages, VFW halls, community centers, legal and illegal venues, and even by way of generator, sidewalks and parking lots throughout and even in the middle of the deserts, woods, forests, and swamps across the Americas, U.K., Continental Europe, Asia, and Australia.[766] Yet surely this is not all, for punks have shows, make records, and express themselves in dozens of countries on six continents, sometimes in uniform and sometimes in more risky, dangerous fashions. And sometimes, there are punks where you wouldn't necessarily expect to find them, troubling the notion that punks are attached to any particular *physical* aspect of a space. Instead, perhaps punks are drawn by the affective qualities of given spaces, or simply the possibilities that a space can exude. Punks shape these spaces, and these spaces in turn shape punks, and

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[764] Vaneigem, Raoul. 2012. *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 93.
[765] This text taken from a Crass/Poison Girls gig pamphlet handed out after the Greater London Council (GLC) effectively forced the cancellation of their scheduled show. Reprinted in January 1980. *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, pp. 9-11.
[766] Even in my own (completely unsuccessful outside of tiny local scenes) low-key bands, I have personally performed in homes, garages, church basements, bars, camping sites, squats, pizza restaurants, parking lots, tennis courts, sidewalks, and warehouses. Shows I have attended have been in an even more various array of "venues."

we will look to only a very limited sampling of the potentiality of such spaces below. Let's begin by imagining a ballroom, built for and adorned with all of the decor, grandiosity, and social capital afforded contemporary operatic and symphonic performances.

We are in a dim, partially lit ballroom in northwest England on a Thursday afternoon in August, a couple thousand punks, skinheads, rude boys and girls, and other spectators meandered about. Some approached the stage barrier, leaning over it on their forearms for support, some rolled cigarettes, while others expressed excited energy and expectation by subtly shifting their weight from leg to leg, stomping to the rhythm of the records played over the sound system, or staring at, texting, or taking photos on their cell phones. The bar that comprises the entire wall of the Empress Ballroom—the largest venue inside of Blackpool's Winter Gardens complex—extending from stage right was packed several people deep at every tap. The murmur of conversation mixed with the occasional whistle and expressions of anticipation. From the balcony, between the hoot-n-hollers, a cockney accent rang out, "get on with it!" Overhead, the lights eventually go dim, and the blue stage lights come on, better illuminating not only the equipment typical of rock n' roll bands (guitar amplifiers, microphone stands, a drum kit), but also the flickering on of a film of a young face on the projection screen at the back of the stage. Solemnly, a half dozen people walked slowly from the side of the stage, to the sound of applause and cheers.

A thin man with shoulder-length gray hair—Penny Rimbaud—picked up a microphone and announces, "We'd like to dedicate this set to all those who have died,

are dying, and will continue to die in the killing fields of political and corporate madness. And blessings to the people of Gaza." Immediately following this dedication, much to my (and I suspect others') surprise, the band launched into the opening chords of The Who's "My Generation," setting the stage for a recollection and rumination on the so-called 'punk generation' or 'punk movement.' The opening lyric, changed slightly from the original Pete Townshend composition, rang out as "people try to put us down, just because we've *stuck* around." This would prove to not be the last of their musical departures from the three-chord, fast-paced accepted punk formula.

This performance was a partial reformation of one of the most influential, and as I will argue the most politically important, punk groups of 1970s-80s U.K., Crass. This version of *Yes Sir, I Will* was not a simple rehashing of the 1983 Crass record.[767] No, this was both a re-writing and a re-imagining in word and sound. Some of the original *Yes Sir* shined through, such as Penny Rimbaud's beautiful and Beatles-esque bridge "What Did You Know, What Did You Care?" though sung in this live performance in a lower register than the original record, providing a melodic, almost lullaby-like reprieve from the sonic tidal wave that was occupying the ballroom. Eve Libertine also brought in the classic Crass "Fight war not wars," "everything we write is a love song," and Steve Ignorant's "Five Knuckle Shuffle" sections originating not only in the 1983 *Yes Sir* but also from Crass material spanning their entire recording career. Rimbaud's "Acts of Love" also shined in at times, most especially in the

[767] The lyrical and sonic content of the original album is covered in a section below.

opening verses. Yet, despite these aspects of original, older work, the Rebellion performance definitely added components of 21st century culture and technology.[768]

For instance, a particularly poignant moment in the performance was when Penny Rimbaud declared that while people are starving in the world, too many of us are "tapping tittle tattle texts" and "sending selfies to ever-absent friends" at which point the music ceased and the performers all took phones out of their pockets.[769] "Hello? Where are you? Hello? No, I can't talk now." This was a brilliant display of the distracting, self-absorbed, and rude qualities that mobile technologies have disseminated and normalized by using phones to interrupt the song as they so often do in daily interactions. There were also moments of reflection upon Rimbaud's post-war, 20th/21st century lifetime, ranging from references to the political dreams and violent assassinations of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, performative homage to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, John Lennon's "Working Class Hero," broad and critical engagement with punk rock, and critiques of Hollywood, media, war, and nuclear weapons.

To those who were there, it should come as no surprise that Rimbaud would describe the sound as inspired by a "Zappa meets Coltrane" space, and that this was the only instruction beyond the lyrical script that the musicians were given. There were no breaks here (aside from the aforementioned phone performance) in the long-

[768] Sadly, the dedication to the victims of violence in Gaza, which was making headlines at the time of this performance, but such occurrences are not unique to only one time, and could be a dedication in any number of difference years that saw outbursts of Israeli bombing raids.

[769] An allusion, perhaps, to the Crass lyric and graffiti stencil design reading "In All Our Decadence, People Die." In a related note, Rimbaud prides himself on not owning a mobile device, so much so that his author bio for several of his books includes this in the list of normative 'possessions' he refuses (i.e. spousal 'ownership', car, mobile, dog, etc.).

form improvisation. And in addition to the typical rock instrumentation of drums, bass, and guitar (though I don't mean to belittle these musicians as typical, as they were far beyond that), there was also a palpable jazz sensibility and complexity added by saxophone and cello. Sonic registers typically associated with punk spaces? No!..and therefore all the more shocking and powerful. Also incredibly important to the 'success' of this performance was the visual aspect. The contrast between Penny moving, jumping, and marching around the stage and Eve's solemn entrapment at the microphone provided a visual stimulus that nicely complemented the sonic aesthetic.

Also in the visual register of this performance, a screen behind the musicians flickered images by Gee Vaucher, fluctuating seamlessly between beauty and innocence, to horror and sadness. The film, *Angel*, follows changes in Vaucher's young niece's facial expressions. These images nicely complemented Rimbaud's and Libertine's cries for us to take responsibility, for us to look beyond mere negative blaming and start looking toward positive action, juxtaposing sonic dissonance with this image of innocence. Penny Rimbaud later told me that when you point your finger to blame someone/anyone, you should really be looking into a mirror, "the responsibility is ours." I therefore like to think of *Yes Sir, I Will* in its new incarnation as an invitation to self-reflect, both for punks and everyone else. We are invited into a discussion about what authority means, who is deserving of blame, what punk has 'accomplished' or 'failed' at, and what we want to do. After roughly 45 minutes, the jam came to an end, and the performers left the stage to loud

applause. We had all been on a journey of sound and ideas quite unlike anything else that would grace the stage at Rebellion for the rest of the weekend.

This was only to be performed once (as are all improvisations), at the annual Rebellion festival in Blackpool.[770] Though Crass itself never performed in commercial venues (choosing instead to perform benefit gigs in squats and community centers for very low cost—the last ever full Crass gig being a benefit for striking miners in Aberdare, South Wales in 1984), this ensemble performed at the largest punk festival in Britain (and one of the largest, and longest running, in the world).[771] Of course, such a large performance carries certain risks regarding sound as well as audience reception. To heighten expectations and excitement, this performance (written especially to commemorate the centennial of World War I) inaugurated this 2014's Rebellion festival, as it had the opening slot in the Empress Ballroom on Thursday afternoon, August 7th, 2014. Did anyone join the conversation this performance implied or invited them to? Did anyone reflect on the claims therein, or did they just take this as 'another cheap product for the consumer's head,' shrug, and shuffle off to catch the next band on one of the other stages? Even the members of Crass themselves have disagreements in these considerations and questions, and differ on their answers and reflections about the entire history of their project.

The traditional and widely accepted narrative of Crass's beginnings involves a foray of the folks living at Dial House to see the Clash perform in 1977. Pete Wright

[770] This performance was, however, recorded and later released as a CD.
[771] Crass. 1986. *Ten Notes on a Summer's Day*. Crass Records. Penny Rimbaud liner notes in reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

and Steve Ignorant remember being positively influenced by what they witnessed. Not only the excitement of the aesthetic, but also the open invitation to 'do it yourself' emanating from Joe Strummer, the Clash's outspoken front-man that "if you think you can do any better, form your own fucking band!"[772] Penny Rimbaud also recalls the excitement of the scene of a Clash performance, but with his characteristic curmudgeonly skepticism, immediately recognized a problem, or even more strongly, a fundamental flaw with the spectacle at hand,

> There were very few punk bands I enjoyed listening to. I went to see the Clash and the Slits in Chelmsford. I thought the Clash were very exciting, but when I started looking at what they were doing, I couldn't continue my interest. It was another piece of pantomime. I thought they were taking the piss. I found the Slits more inspiring because the Clash were actually a very talented rock'n'roll band. But the Slits were bloody awful! I thought, well if they can do it…so we did.[773]

The animosity, particularly of Rimbaud, towards what he viewed as a masquerade at radicalism/activism led to such lyrics decrying the Clash as, "They said that we were trash, well the name is Crass not Clash. They can stuff their punk credentials, it's them that take the cash," as well as pointing out the hypocrisy of calling yourself radical while corporatized, "CBS promote the Clash."[774] In this chapter, we are turning to the spaces of Crass and their disciples, far beyond the gaze or the boundaries official, legitimized (and hence incomplete) narratives of the New

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[772] Ignorant, Steve with Pottinger, Steve. 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records. Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, pp. 75-76
[773] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 76.
[774] Crass. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000* and 1979. *Stations of the Crass*.

York/London/LA trifecta so overly emphasized in academic *and* pop culture historical memories.[775]

By comparison, Crass instilled strict policies—all mutually agreed upon by its members' unanimity—against capitalist cooptation. These policies ranged from living situations and style, musical aesthetic, political stances, other musical and political groups to support, and production methods. They long resisted the appeals of corporate interests who sought to exploit the group's revolutionary message and aesthetics for monetary gain.[776] Crass were happy to contrast their refusal to collude, concede, or be coopted with the likes of the Sex Pistols, the Clash, etc., whom they described as being "mostly concerned with their bank balances."[777] Partially, this was a choice for something like ideological purity. The political point of this purity was to both resist the "circle" of "all money requires banks, all banks require arms dealers, and all arms dealers require war."[778] Demonstrating that punk could exist apart from corporate control is clearly an important aesthetic-political point as well, especially in the context of the largest bands identified as 'punk,' perhaps actually offering a

[775] For instance, both the *Punk: Chaos to Couture* exhibition in the New York Met Museum in 2013 or the *Punk London: 1976-8 British Library* exhibition of 2016 (both attended and critiqued in conference presentations by the author) limited the scope of the punk "phenomenon" to a very few spaces and artists. In both of these cases, it is also noteworthy that punk is domesticated and whitewashed to the point that political groups such as Crass, women in the scene, and punks of color are effectively written out of the story. The same can be said of the more permanent fixture on punk in the British Music Experience, though this latter case does make a better effort at extending the timeframe parameters and pointing to the diversity of punk and its intersections with other scenes, such as reggae and ska.

[776] See, for example, their discussion of Wedge Music's 1978 offer of a £25,000 contract in Summer 1980. "How Much Space Do you Give?" *Rapid Eye Movement*, Standard Issue 3, p. 26.

[777] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Last of the Hippies: An Hysterical Romance*. Oakland: PM Press., pp. 1-3.

[778] Capper, Andy. July 31, 2010. "Anarchy and Peace, Litigated," *Vice*. Web: www.vice.com/en_us/article/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8 Last Accessed: 05/09/2017.

replicable, anti-capitalist mode of cultural production. But, another key consideration was that corporate cooptation also necessitates a domestication of material, "a form of self-imposed censorship that commerce inevitably brings into any enterprise."[779] They refused to sell merchandise, either at retailers, shows, or other outlets.[780] This is significant, for the primary income for most groups is not the number of records they sell, but rather the merchandising they can do of shirts, buttons/badges, posters, caps, stickers, jackets, etc. at their performances. Regardless, Crass continues to sell records, and well over a million copies of their work are in circulation.[781]

By refusing to merchandise in traditionally capitalist ways, Crass makes the bold statement that not only were they refusing to market themselves, but perhaps fans should begin questioning the monetizing of other bands (or other cultural products writ large) as well. Instead, they would distribute stencils, which could be applied to clothing just as easily as to walls, encouraging people to create their own Crass apparel. In other words, Crass openly invites their audience to join in their D.I.Y. ethos, and produce whatever 'punk' clothing they might want for themselves. In another articulation of this respect for D.I.Y., Crass refused interview requests from corporate media, but had a policy of answering all requests from D.I.Y. fanzines, again giving a possible leg-up to these non-capitalistic outlets—or at the

[779] Capper, Andy. July 31, 2010. "Anarchy and Peace, Litigated," *Vice*. Web: www.vice.com/en_us/article/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8 Last Accessed: 05/09/2017.
[780] 1985. "Crass-Volume II," *Terminal Boredom*, Issue 7.
[781] For a discussion on record sales, see Drake, Francis & Gilbert, Peter. 1981. "Crass Hysteria." *Don't Care*. Available from *Don't Care Archives* and Web: http://punkrocker.org.uk/punkinterviews/crass.html Last Accessed 5/10/17.

very least demonstrating their own preference for underground press.[782] This preference reflects not only a resistance to capitalist media, but also a reflection of taste and trust. Guitarist Phil Free explains, "What fanzines say is far more valid than anything the music press has got to say, it's far better."[783] They also had a policy of answering any letter sent by fans not only with a response letter by one of the band members, but also with badges upon request.[784]

Perhaps more than any previous youth culture, punks have consistently been obsessive about self-documentation, and a key component of this self-documentation is the internal debate of what the cultures of punk are, were, could be, or should/shouldn't be, most often in magazines published by fans (hence the name 'fanzine' for a fan-produced magazine, or simply 'zine').[785] Even the name of this cultural assemblage, 'punk,' even has an early articulation in the fanzine of the same name.[786] In true D.I.Y. fashion and utilizing the inexpensive production materials of newsprint, cut-n-paste collage, white out, and Xerox replication, punks have been able to produce a written discourse hitherto unparalleled in scale to other youth cultures.

Such small-scale, independent, and D.I.Y. publications are nothing new, and similar endeavors can be seen in the poetry chapbooks and radical pamphlets of the

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[782] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 170. Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Shibboleth: A Bit of My Revolting Life*. Essex: Existencil Press, p. 119.
[783] John, 1982. "Crass Interview," *A System Partly Revealed*, p. 6.
[784] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 170. Some of these original badges can, ironically, now fetch nice sums among collectors.
[785] For example: *Profane Existence, Sideburns, Sniffin' Glue, Cometbus, Maximum RocknRoll, Toxic Graffity, Touch n' Go, Razorcake, Kill Your Pet Puppy, Chainsaw, Slash, Jigsaw, PUNK*.
[786] Holmstrom, John and Hurd, Bridget (ed.). 2012. *The Best of Punk Magazine*. New York: HarperCollins.

18th-20th centuries (including the Socialist League of Morris!).[787] But what punk zines introduced on an unprecedented scale was their sheer volume of variety. Seemingly every city's scene, sub-genre, and political position present in punk cultures have their own dedicated zine(s), those that continue to be most widely circulated include *Profane Existence*, *Cometbus*, and *Maximum Rocknroll* (which is explored below in connection to the 924 Gilman Street club). Such informal and underground publication from within makes up a substantial source of information cited in this study.

"The great thing about punk was that it said *Anyone can do this*. It stripped away a lot of the mystique about making music."[788] Of course, in many cultures, the broad based participatory element of communal music making needs not be explained, it simply *is* how music is made. In other words, punk doesn't create or innovate the idea of a democratized form of music, for such communal practices have long histories in many parts of the world. The innovation of punk is to make an attempt towards democratizing art *within* industrialized, commodified cultures. In other words, in the context of musical scenes in which the definition of success (i.e. 'making it') involves collusion with capitalistic labels (of corporate ownership), punk inserts the insistence on communal, participatory music as a rethinking of 'success.'

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[787] It is, for instance, hardly avoidable to discuss more recent innovations, such as the proliferation of podcasts and blogs in which information *may* be more democratized and readily available and distributable by folks unattached or uninfluenced by corporate media structures.

[788] Lomas, Ross with Steve Pottinger. 2013. *City Baby: From Highgate to Hawaii…Life, and GBH*. UK: Ignite Books, p. 47. Of course, it should also be mentioned that some punks never "mature" in their musicality because they live in places where shows, and even practices, are likely to result in police shutting it down. If one can't even practice, one is unlikely to become more competent or sophisticated in one's approach, technique, and/or song-writing. Steineck, Joerg**.** 2016. *Lo Sound Desert*. Cinema Scope. Film.

Instead of focusing on records sold or arenas played, punk rethinks the goals of the music industry in terms of stripping the industry from the music. 'Do it yourself' becomes the charge, an emphasis on inspiring participation rather than celebrity or financial gain. One of the primary spaces where punk could 'do this' was in zines. Some groups, especially those most outspokenly anarchist and/or anti-capitalist (and not only Crass), even refused media interaction *except* through zines.[789]

In one anarchist zine *Toxic Graffity*, the writers and editorial staff wrote their critique of the terminology of 'fanzine,' due to the assumption of following (and hence hierarchical relationships of power) that fandom implies, "the 'fan' bit implies slave like following of the 'in' bands and other such shit. I prefer the title 'punkzine,' the anarchic, uncompromising spirit of punk as expressed through a cheaply produced magazine."[790]

But, of course, DIY publications were not the only media interested (or still interested) in punk rock. The aforementioned cottage industry on books (academic and otherwise) on the Sex Pistols and the Clash follows a pattern largely similar to the media frenzy surrounding these groups in the years of 1976 and 1977 especially. For instance, 1977, the so-called year that 'punk broke' (despite the fact that other genres—e.g. disco—far outsold punk records, dominating both the charts and radio airplay, as well as general popularity), was declared in the press more so than on the streets, squats, clubs and other spaces punks actually occupied. This media

[789] Crass is famously among these, having a policy of refusing all mainstream press interview requests—yet refusing no zine requests—during the time in which they were a band.
[790] M.V.D., Late 1979. Editorial Note, *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 23.

sensationalism, of course, increased the exposure of punk cultures, both attracting new initiates and influencing punks in many ways.[791] This exposure, and the soaring record sales that followed (despite little to no radio promotion) of newer, younger, and more 'dangerous' bands also led to increased interest in these aesthetics from record executives. Indeed, almost immediately after the Sex Pistols made their splash by swearing on British television, major labels were marketing "New Wave" music, what George Berger dubs "punk-lite," or what they presented as a successfully watered-down, domesticated version of punk more suitable for mass consumption.[792] Such trendsetting by punk has often followed this pattern, of marketing punk's safer derivatives.

Following the enormous success of the 'Nirvana moment' in which the Seattle punk/metal sound broke into mainstream consumption, and the subsequent explosion of Green Day, who broke punk's cardinal rule by signing to a major label—with the result of making *Dookie* a certified RIAA diamond record (representing a confirmed sales of greater than 10 million copies), the media and major music labels went on a blitzkrieg looking for anything resembling punk to cash in on. Fat Mike of NOFX explains this shift,

> In the '80s, punks were like the Freemasons or Skull and Bones. We had our own club, our own rituals. We could identify each other in public and, as far as straight society was concerned, we spoke a coded language. Punk allowed us to wear an outcast label as a badge of pride instead of a mark of shame. But suddenly our secret language was being decoded by the major labels. Our

[791] In other words, this is not some facile or infantile complaint that the media coverage of punk (either past or present) is—even though often inaccurate—something akin to 'fake news.'
[792] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, pp. 4 & 121.

> rituals were laid bare in the press. And the doors to our secret clubhouse were kicked open by MTV.[793]

Aside from such elitist mourning for the loss of a secret club, such media exposure of Nirvana, Green Day, the Offspring, and Rancid also translated into large increases in record sales, not just for these particular bands that the media focused so much on, but for other bands associated with them or united under the banner of punk. In other words, for all the hype and attention paid to the tens of millions of records Nirvana and Green Day were selling (as well as subsequent major label signings like AFI and the Offspring), much smaller independent acts like NOFX, Rancid, the Casualties and many others, as well as longstanding stalwarts like Bad Religion, Social Distortion, and the Descendents, also saw a corresponding surge in sales. A similar phenomenon surrounds the enormous commercial success of the Sex Pistols/Clash scene. But beyond the growth of punk music, punk culture remains as radical as it ever was in smaller, more underground articulations. Such commitment to anarcho ideals (or, we can potential say fidelity to the *Crass* event in particular) is often seen in zine publications decrying the "trendiness" of come-lately punks, often becoming or following "superstar trend setters" and their legions of "middle aged entrepreneurs wanting to cash in."[794] This culture, some say despite its success and some say

[793] NOFX with Alulis, Jeff. 2016. *NOFX: The Hepatitis Bathtub and Other Stories*. Boston: De Capo Press, p. 241.

[794] May/June 1992. "Making Punk a Trend Again," *Profane Existence*. No. 4, p. 2. Accessed in ABC No Rio zine archive. Specifically on the post-Green Day moment and the growth of Bad Religion's Epitaph Records as a premier independent punk label, see also April/May/June 1998. "Boycot (sic) Epitaph: There's no business like punk business," *Profane Existence*. No. 35, p. 56. Boycot is the name of the band in discussion here, though they also support a "boycott" of Epitaph. Epitaph now also co-distributes sister labels such as the punk rock Hellcat Records (owned by Tim Armstrong of Rancid), and the folk/country and blues of Fat Possum Records. It is also worth noting here that the scale and

because of it, continues to breathe, diversify, grow, and more than anything, extend the invitation for self-reflection, self-creation, and changing one's own life.

> "I never thought that punk/hardcore (or any kind of music, for that matter) will change the world, but I always thought that it can serve as a network for those who, among other things, want radical political and social change."
> --Federico Gomez[795]

> "Surely, punk wasn't just music, it was a way of thought?
> Surely it wasn't a fad, it was a way of being?"
> --Penny Rimbaud[796]

Changing lives is certainly no small task, whether this change is as slight as a fleeting moment of humor or as radical as a disruption of subjectivity or an audience's "ability to *become* the art that it experiences."[797] How can non-sensible shock possibly make this change, especially when it is not understandable? Hakim Bey tells us that in reflection of what they have experienced, the perceiver "will come to realize that for a few moments they believed in something extraordinary, & will perhaps be driven as a result to seek out some more intense mode of existence."[798] The actual political content of a given piece of art is hardly as important as the visceral shock, or the genuine surprise in experiencing it. In other words, Bey is

resources of Epitaph which may make it suspect for some punks are not considered negatives by self-professed 'underground' hip hop artists signed to Epitaph's subsidiaries Rhymesayers & Anti (including artists like Aesop Rock, Blackalicious, Brother Ali, MF Doom, and Sage Francis). Though not our focus here, a fascinating comparative study of equal length could be written on the parallel trajectories, connections, affinities, and productive and consumptive patterns, as well as the differences between punk and hip hop.

[795] Kuhn, Gabriel (ed.) 2010. *Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 261.

[796] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, pp. 71-72.

[797] *Ibid*, p. 27.

[798] *Ibid*, p. 2.

concerned with form just as much as content. Yet, must the form always be as violent as Bey claims? Can political rupture occur without violence?

Through such strategies, Bey hopes not only to disturb hegemonic ideologies and subjectivities and play with and defy expectations, but he also views these strategies as the hope for spaces of autonomy. His overarching political concern is with the establishment of what he calls the "Temporary Autonomous Zone" (or "T.A.Z."), (un)defined loosely as those temporal and spatial locations in the present, within the current state/capital regime, in which "virtual," "imaginative," or physical "uprisings of free enclaves" can "escape the notice" of power.[799] It is only in these fleeting moments and spaces that humans can hope to have authentic, non-mediated experiences of freedom. A defining feature of the T.A.Z. is its invisibility to power, as the "State cannot recognize it because History has no definition of it. As soon as the T.A.Z. is named (represented, mediated), it must vanish, it will vanish…only to spring up again somewhere else" and therefore the T.A.Z. can only appear in the "cracks and vacancies" of the "omnipresent" state.[800] This invisibility is obviously not a defining feature of some cultures that utilizing shocking, attention grabbing tactics.

The invisibility of the T.A.Z. here does not strictly mean unseen, but is rather similar to Rancière's insensible, i.e. that the T.A.Z. is invisible so long as it cannot be *named* by power. For example, Bey cites histories of piracy, festival, carnival, etc. as open sites of autonomous existence via mockery of power. Yet, some of these were not only openly celebrated, but indeed being seen was the entire point. How then can

[799] *Ibid*, pp. 68, 70, 72, 76.
[800] *Ibid*, p. 70.

we look upon festival, carnival, etc. as seen while still maintaining the *in*visibility of the T.A.Z.? I argue that the only way to reconcile the invisibility of the T.A.Z. with the visibility of aesthetic shock is to conceptualize the former as illegible rather than literally unseen. Naming and representing are actions involving linguistic labeling of a space, an action that seems to me to be at least one step *beyond* the mere sight of something. It is instead the cognition that follows sensory perception. This coming into visibility or sensibility of these radical arts is hence not the aesthetic experience itself, but rather the reflection upon it after the fact. Meaning is ascribed in the imminent future of reflection, rather than in the present of the event. But, the deeper question here is what these so-called T.A.Z.s in the past accomplished? Did they achieve autonomy under Bey's definition? If so, do they represent a rejection of transformational, revolutionary politics in favor of personal, lifestyle, or even entertainment choices? Can we consider any punk spaces—perhaps even Dial House—as T.A.Z.s?

Much of my exploration of punk cultures thus far has dealt with individuals, art, and politics. We could categorize this engagement as aesthetic space. As with Morris, so with punk must we account for its use of material space. For ultimately, what is a culture without a physical space for its expression? The following section focuses primarily on the spaces that punks occupy, reclaim, navigate through, and change. However, it is not the forum for a retelling of the hegemonic histories of punk (especially not punk-as-commodity). Indeed, a veritable cottage industry of publications has sprung forth in the last decade, producing a sea of articles, books,

and video documentaries focused on CBGB's in New York City and the Sex Pistols/Clash/'Top of the Pops' media frenzy in the U.K.[801] These histories shouldn't be ignored, of course, but nor should they be overstated.

Such narratives also situate punk cultures decidedly in the past, leading many to conclude that punk is indeed 'dead,' or that any lingering trace of punk culture is derivative, commodified, or anachronistic (in a negative, rather than our more radical, sense). Yet, punk continues to exist, and in some spaces, even to thrive. It is hence important to turn to a couple examples of these spaces as part of our discussion of so-called 'lifestyle anarchism' and the T.A.Z. These sites are not meant to be understood as fully representative of the divergent punk cultures around the globe, but rather indicate important trends and articulations demonstrative of some of the ways punks currently understand themselves, their scenes, and their potential political impact.

What is also clear about Crass in particular is their insistence that *you* change *your* life to best suit *your*self. They have never been interested in forcing an ideological message or a particular lifestyle upon anyone, so much as demonstrate what it is in their lifestyle choices that they find attractive. By demonstrating their own non-normative ontologies, Crass hopes not to convince anyone that such choices fit everyone, but rather to demonstrate the possibility of opting out of society's norms and expectations. Of course, there are also numerous more ideological artists and people within punk cultures, with more strictly defined argumentation and agendas.

[801] The best, and closest to definitive histories of these, are New York: McNeil, Legs & McCain, Gillian. 1996. *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*. New York: Grove Press. The 'early' U.K. scene: Savage, Jon. 1992. *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Yet, more so than this, punks seem to follow the Crass ethos of questioning power and seeking self-determination rather than imposing said determinations upon others. Nothing seems to turn off punks more than the 'preachy' artist attempting to push a certain agenda in a performance space (which of course, Crass is also accused of). Instead, information flows best in the culture through the introduction of ideas coupled with the insistence that individuals make up their own minds and think for themselves. The declaration of alignment with anarchy, for example, most often doesn't take the form of a lecture attempting to persuade folks to the virtues of this political position or in an attempt to garner new recruits, but rather in the demonstration that one may have found something positive in this politics that is systematically de-legitimized by the state/capitalist economy and therefore other folks should explore other similarly de-legitimized options for themselves.[802] As Gee Vaucher puts it, "with Crass, the intention was to share information we'd gather, and for people to make up their own minds. There was never an intention to make people change their mind."[803] Despite this openness, or perhaps *because* of it, Crass has in fact changed many minds and inspired radical questioning. Radicals the world over could learn from such an example how to be militantly opposed to the trifecta of capital-state-religion, yet without becoming dogmatic or overly prescription.

Two Coastal Sites: 924 Gilman Street and ABC No Rio

"Gilman is special, it has a rich history and it helped us have a voice. I will continue playing there until they say, 'no'."

[802] This is not to say that recruitment does occur, for it certainly does, across the political spectrum in punk spaces. The most noteworthy example of this is explored in the next chapter, in the examination of far-right/fascist recruitment efforts within the scene.
[803] Vaucher, Gee. 2016. *Introspective*. Essex: Firstsite, p. 25.

--Johnny "Peebucks" Bonnell[804]

The example of Dial House—the site of Crass and other activities—is perhaps seminal and original in terms of communal living within punk rock, but it is by no means unique as a form of community. Yet, this lifestyle lived by Crass and its associates further influence a vast array of DIY spaces for punks to gather, live, produce, and perform in multiple and diverse (though largely urban) locations. To demonstrate some ideal typical examples of DIY music venues in the U.S. punk scene, we need to turn to 924 Gilman Street (aka 'Gilman Street' or simply 'Gilman') in Berkeley, CA and ABC No Rio in New York City. Both of these venues are sites of concerts, art and music shows, community organizing, fundraising (both, for example, on the individualized level of raising money for a musician's medical bills as they battle cancer or to pay legal fees for activists at trail, or on the more institutionalized level of fundraising for women's health clinics, drug treatment and rehabilitation centers, homeless advocacy groups, etc.).

ABC No Rio has recently closed, but the name and collectivity still exists 'in exile', and new spaces are being explored for their relocation. Prior to eviction in 2016, ABC held art and music shows, contained a fanzine archive, contributed space and resources to activist and advocacy causes, and successfully fought for squatters' and artists' rights in resistance to the growing gentrification of New York's Lower East Side.[805] In addition to the performance space, ABC No Rio also housed a photo darkroom, workshop for silkscreen printing, and a meeting space for a variety of

[804] Interview with author, 10/19/2012.
[805] Tobocman, Seth. 2009. *You Don't Have to Fuck People Over to Survive*. San Francisco: AK Press.

community, activist, support, and educational groups.[806] This venue filled the hole left when the seminal CBGB's venue ceased holding their Sunday afternoon matinees in 1989, which offered young bands especially a place to perform. In addition to filling the Sunday matinee slot, zine editor and musician Mike 'Bullshit' describes his efforts in the venue as "trying to put bands that are not racist…Not "Fuck the immigrants" or "fag bash this" or "bitch, whore, slut." Bands that take a little more time to write their lyrics, take a little more time to think about what they're saying."[807] This is not to say that bands performing at ABC offended *no one*, but rather that they did not openly condone violence, nor did they support racist, fascist, sexist, heterosexist, or xenophobic politics. The targets for offense in such spaces were typically the racists, sexists, homophobic, and nationalistic aspects of society that groups often lambast in punk culture. Like at Gilman, this can involve the laborious process of pouring over lyrics and press clippings before booking an artist or band. Also like Gilman, it is ultimately the prerogative of a small number of people who decide which groups are appropriate for their audience, ironically tied to their conformity to their rules regarding inclusivity. But this was an important stance to take, most especially in the context of the prevalence of violence in many areas of the city's hardcore scene, as well as the conservative Guilliani coup of broken windows theory, stop-and-frisk, and gentrification throughout the 1990s.

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[806] Loorya, Alyssa. Ricciardi, Christopher, & Chrysalis Archaeological Consultants, Inc. 2012. *Phase IA Historical Documentary Report and Archaeological Assessment of 156 Rivington Street (Blcok 349, Lot 33), Manhattan (New York County), New York*. Prepared for New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, City of New York—Landmarks Preservation Commission, and ABC No Rio, p. 5.

[807] Blush, Steven. 2016. *New York Rock: From the Rise of the Velvet Underground to the Fall of CBGB*. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 226-227.

The space's ownership was taken over by the city of New York in 1970, and the venue has dealt with several legal battles, ultimately culminating in the collective's ownership of the space in 2007.[808] However, as mentioned above, the costs of upkeep and property management did force the collective out of the space recently, as they were denied eligibility for the National Registry of Historic Places and could not afford the costs of renovation. Beyond the space itself, however, the collective continues, as do many individuals and groups who participated in ABC on and beyond Rivington Street. As of this writing, new physical spaces continue to be explored for the collective's relocation.

"There's something really rad about watching a band that are doing it just because they love doing it, and they have no other inkling of doing it for any other reason."
--Sergie Loobkoff[809]

924 Gilman Street, however, continues to operate, despite past closings and re-openings, legal actions brought against the club and its associated artists, and gentrification in the area of Berkeley where the club sits. A least part of the founding of the club was ideologically based around anti-capitalist and anti-discrimination ideals, but more practically speaking was built to provide a space where shows had a better chance of occurring without police interference, and openness with landlords so that punks wouldn't be completely beholden to the "whims and desires of people who didn't understand us."[810] Those organizing the founding of the collective found a space on Gilman Street in Berkeley, in the back of a caning shop with an amenable

[808] Ibid, p. 19.
[809] *Gimme Something Better*, p. 307.
[810] Kamala Parks, interviewed in Boulware, Jack and Tudor, Silke. 2009. *Gimme Something Better: The Profound, Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk from Dead Kennedys to Green Day*. New York: Penguin Group, p. 281.

owner/operator. Mostly a youth-oriented, and indeed youth-run cooperative, the transformation from warehouse to venue was also largely done by youth participants in the scene (with the help of some willing, able, and open-minded parents), as has been the weekly operations of Gilman as a community space and punk club ('punk' here defined in broad since that also includes a plethora of performance art forms). This club has avoided legal action at times due to the fact that it is a 'private' club—a strategy that not only asks members to contribute a paltry $2 annual fee to contribute to upkeep, but also allows it a bit more leniency than commercial venues receive from the authorities.[811] Membership status also allows for participation in meetings and club decisions. As Martin Sprouse says, "a club run by the people, for the people…100 percent independent and consistent, and on the up and up, you know, not a squat," and one in which bands (regardless of stature) have equal shares in the door revenues once the club's expenses were paid.[812] Gilman also holds a place of nostalgic importance in the memories of older punks, musicians and audience members alike.

> My friends and I used to drive 3 hours to get there almost every weekend in the early 90's. It was such a nice change from the shows we were all used to. Back then there were a lot of Nazi skinheads, fights, and other typical '80's punk rock bullshit at every show we went to. Gilman Street seemed to be a place where none of that existed. It felt safe. It felt like they welcomed everybody with open arms. Once we discovered the Gilman community, we went to shows there almost exclusively. We dove right in, always making sure to get to the shows early enough to watch every band and there were always at

[811] See a scan of one of my own membership cards (for the 2015 year—which is in the best shape of the several I've had) is in the appendix.
[812] Ibid, p. 282. Cf. Edge, Brian. 2004. *924 Gilman: The Story So Far*...San Francisco: Maximum RocknRoll.

> least 5 on the bill. There were always great records for sale, local zines to read, and a ton of cool people to meet.[813]

Gilman Street serves as not only a central music venue in the East Bay punk scene, but also as a meeting place, fundraising space for radical causes, D.I.Y. workshop venue (including such artistic activities as screen-printing and zine making, as well as non-artistic workshops like navigating queer and trans healthcare issues, 12-step addiction rehabilitation programs, bike repair, and women's self-defense) and for lack of a better word, a community. Of course, this community is anything but static, as many hundreds of volunteers have come and gone over the years, usually in age-specific groups of friends. It's not that these folks become excluded after a given time, so much as changing life events (like relocating to attend college, increasing employment and family responsibilities), or losing interest or fun over time often leads to people "dropping out" or, indeed returning later on.[814]

The volunteer-run collective of Gilman Street has long set and enforced rules against any band, artist, group, or individual's use of racist, sexist, or homophobic language, imagery, or actions. There were also plenty of more practical rules, mostly out of caution to keep the doors open. This is a similar strategy as what Crass employs at Dial House. For instance, they have a long-standing prohibition on illegal drugs at their house, not so much out of a desire to discriminate against drug users, or to impose a draconian rule set, as a practical consideration. As police (uniformed or

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[813] Interview with author, 12/14/2012.

[814] For a discussion on this in/out migration among Gilman community members, one can tuen to nearly any article or interview related to the venue. For an exemplary case, see Celia S.'s entry in Edge, Brian. 2004. *924 Gilman: The Story So Far*...San Francisco: Maximum RocknRoll, pp. 217-220.

not) have made trips to the house to investigate complaints stemming from supposed obscenity or information leaks about the government, not allowing drugs is a sensible way to preclude unnecessary police interference by not giving the authorities any more excuses for infiltration. Similarly, many setting up the Gilman Street space say alcohol and other drug consumption would be opening a door to the club being shutdown on the grounds essentially of corrupting the youth. As former head booker Mike Avilez puts it,

> Back then, I didn't understand why there were a lot of rules at Gilman Street. Other clubs had no rules. A 12-year-old kid could drink beer. Anything goes at those underground venues, but they all get shut down. Gilman's been a club for over 20 years and it was all the rules that has actually kept it open.[815]

Even so, the club has come under increasing scrutiny as the surrounding neighborhood gentrifies and blames all urban plight upon the punks and their club (despite club members often going out of their way to *clean* litter, graffiti, and help mend ties in the community).[816] This strictness in creating a space of inclusion and safety also comes at the cost of excluding 'questionable' acts. In other words, the other crucially important point about both of these spaces is the manner in which they are both volunteer run and internally *policed*. Listen, for instance, to the insistence placed on particular D.I.Y. principles in the song "I'm Telling Tim," by NOFX:

> You better watch out, you better not cry (somebody's watching)

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[815] Boulware and Tudor. *Gimme Something Better*, p. 291.

[816] John H. February 1993. Untitled Letter, *Gilman Gazette*. Vol. 1, Issue 1. See also Long, Charles. 1996. "Gilman Street Gentrification," *Slingshot Newspaper*, LongShot Info shop, Berkeley. In order of contribution: Charles, Jesse, Clayton, Ed, Sita, Zarah, Ryan, Brian. January 1997. GILMAN, *Maximumrocknroll*. Thompson, A. Clay. January 6, 1999. "Seen But Not Heard: Berkeley police are cracking down on venerable punk club 924 Gilman. Is the city no longer safe for counterculture?" *SF Bay Guardian*, pp. 12-13.

You better put out records D.I.Y (punk rock cops)
Cause it's not what you've done it's what you've been
If you fuck up, I'm telling Tim

Take you out of *Book Your Own Life* part six
You won't play again at ABC*
You're gonna get ostracized like Lawrence
When I tell Tim, I'm telling Tim
I'm telling Tim, I'm telling Tim

*(*alternatively performed as* "Gilman Street")

Here we hear the consequences for not conforming to the D.I.Y. demands of the scene, and its representative here embodied in Tim Yohannon. Yohannon, a self-proclaimed Maoist, was the founder and long-time editor of perhaps the largest circulation zine, *Maximum RocknRoll* (hereafter *MRR*), in San Francisco, and the original overseer (and financial backer) of the Gilman Street project.[817] A known proponent of D.I.Y. methods, as well as ardent opponent of corporate labels, Yohannon often used his zine as a sort of rulebook, dictating what was ok and what was not within the punk scene. Many columns have a decidedly political agenda, promoting variously communism, animal rights, vegetarianism, feminism, and more. *MRR* was definitely Yohannon's project—his contribution that he zealously defended and utilized as something of a personal platform—and he even described himself as the *MRR* "tyrant" on his business cards. Often, Yohannon and company screened artists on the basis of either a) offending one of these liberal positions through their lyrical content, or b) complicity with corporate infrastructural, such as major labels,

[817] *MRR* began as a radio show, and continues in this capacity through online podcasts. After its initial closing, Yohannon and *MRR* took a step back from Gilman, and since its reopening it has been run by a different (and local) set of volunteer folks.

major distributers, or media (e.g. mainstream music press—i.e. *MRR*'s corporate owned competition, MTV, etc.). As Jello Biafra argues, this culture of "going after people" and "calling them out" on racism, sexism, homophobia, imperialism, etc. was also met with "backlash" in which *MRR* became seen as a beacon of the political correct, the safe, and the domesticated versions of punk rock.[818] Once blacklisted, certain artists were shunned entirely by the *MRR* community, which included their deep roots in both venues of focus in this section, 924 Gilman Street and ABC No Rio.

I don't want to misrepresent *MRR*, however, for it has long been an important discursive space to many punk cultures. *MRR* also ran extensive record reviews, of seemingly any group that mailed them a copy of their release. Many folks have also echoed Dave Dictor's claim that Yohannon was so central to the Bay Area scene that the existence of the scene as such is difficult to imagine without *MRR* and its networks as a sort of "focus" for the entire scene.[819] Yohannon and *MRR* definitely *did* quite a bit for punk rock—not only in the bay but in many other scenes and artists throughout the world—so no matter the problems within its production, *MRR* has long been an important resource and driver of many outlets for punk culture.[820] For some, their bands' relocation to the Bay Area was largely influenced by the existence and influence of *MRR*. Most especially, the scene reports, democratized record

[818] Boulware and Tudor. *Gimme Something Better*, p. 199.
[819] Ibid, p. 190.
[820] Similar stories of the positive and negative affects of many other zines take a very similar trajectory as *MRR*, often making crucial contributions to punk while also being akin to the Ouroboros (the mythical snake the devours its own tail). The Ouroboros is also featured in the Crass logo, suggesting not only the ways that the three fold system they oppose (God, Queen, Country) devours itself—but also how punks can also be guilty of this.

reviews, and other such features were an important way to spread information, especially among punks growing up in small, isolated, and/or rural communities (including this author). Whether or not his zine specifically represented such diversity consistently throughout its decades of publication, Yohannon personally defines punk openly, describing in its (often) confusing complexities,

> Well, people get involved with it for a lot of different reasons. Just like they did in the 60's you know. Some people get involved because they're alienated, they have fucked up families, they're looking for a family. Some of them are looking for an outlet for their aggression. Some of them are looking for a way to make music or create art. Some of them are looking for God. Same thing. But the difference from the '60's is that I think a lot of the kids that get involved with it are a lot less naïve and have grown up a lot quicker.[821]

Yet, such publications certainly promote their particular ideological view of what punk *should be*, and in the case of their sponsored venues, this can serve to exclude artists that don't fit that mold. Contributor Jeff Bale admits to the inordinate power within the scene that *MRR* wielded, "We had a lot of power in the punk scene. If we liked something, it became hugely popular. If we gave a band a bad review, that bad might have gotten popular anyway, but we really hurt them a lot."[822] Even Dictor, whose praise on Yohannon is cited above, has also criticized him for being "very dogmatic," and Biafra has referred to him as barking orders like a "general."[823] Tim Tonooka (of *Ripper* zine) describes that problematic assumptions of the Yohannon crew is that of "someone setting themselves up to be a self-appointed authority that

[821] Ayers, Lilly Scourtis. *Last Fast Ride: The Life, Love, and Death of a Punk Goddess*. Virgil Films.
[822] Boulware and Tudor. *Gimme Something Better*, p. 188.
[823] Ibid, p. 201 & 204.

needs to do other people's thinking for them…is elitist and condescending."[824] Again, we see the contradiction of authority within an anti-authoritarian scene at work. Of course, the infamous letters section was (and occasionally continues to be) a battleground of gossip, feuding, and self-righteous posturing, as sometimes are the columns.

And, as with all periodicals, *MRR* has gotten things wrong, with occasional infamous material consequences. Many of the reviews, columns, and interviews in *MRR* have always been pure opinion pieces. Often a negative review of a group's politics, lyrical content, or behavior in the pages of *MRR* could have serious effects in terms of limited said group's ability to book shows, expand their audience, sell records, or indeed survive as independent artists. Yet, there are also times when their accusation against artists have done more damage than reputation within the scene. For instance, when they declared Agnostic Front to be a Nazi band, this was not only untrue, but had quite negative consequences. While supportive of working class skinhead culture, the godfathers of New York hardcore Agnostic Front are not a racist band, despite *MRR's* accusation. Their lead singer is Roger Miret, the son of a Cuban immigrant and an outspoken anti-racist. Miret does often declare a patriotic sympathy for the U.S., but not support for the government. When arrested on drug charges, he was met in court with a copy of *MRR*, which the prosecutor exhibited as evidence of Miret's supposed Nazi leanings, hence increasing his sentence as a supposedly violent

[824] Ibid, p. 188. This charge of elitism also comes up often in discussions of particular clicks and cadres of volunteers at Gilman Street. Cf. Edge, Brian. 2004. *924 Gilman: The Story So Far*...San Francisco: Maximum RocknRoll, p. 212.

gang leader.[825] Sure, there are aggressive and macho elements within Agnostic Front's aesthetic—visual, sonic, and lyrical—but the inaccurate portrayal and irresponsible painting of them as Nazis in *MRR* didn't just discredit them in the eyes of some, but actually cost Miret his freedom in the form of this increased sentence.[826]

As discussed in the last chapter, fidelity to the Crass event is (though not put in these terms) insisted upon, and those who don't demonstrate their fidelity to D.I.Y. modes of production (and sometimes certain strictures of political correctness and identity politics) can face serious consequences. For example, in 1995 the anarcho-punk band Chaos U.K. embarked on a months long tour of the U.S. with New Orleans outfit Eyehategod. One of their stops was to be at Gilman, until the latter band was informed that the content of the records was too incendiary and politically incorrect for them to be allowed to play.[827] Dozens of other bands have similar accounts of their exclusion from the space, either for the offensiveness of their lyrical content (i.e. or shock tactics taken to be going 'too far'), their image, or perceived safety issues associated with the groups themselves or their audience.

Beyond adherence to particular views on 'offensiveness' at the club, Gilman has also instilled a consistent rejection of groups complicit in commercial exercises. Granted, the strictness of this policy is variant depending on who the head booker of shows is, the volunteer constituency of a given moment, etc., but by in large if a

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[825] Miret, Roger. 2017. *My Riot: Agnostic Front, Grit, Guts, and Glory*. New York: Lesser Gods. Cf. Boulware and Tudor. *Gimme Something Better*, p. 201.

[826] See also footnote 69 below, referencing an infamous attack at Gilman Street. Little is known about the assailants who fled the scene, but many speculate that *MRR*'s persistent and contemporaneous criticism of Biafra as a "sell out" and a "rich rock star" as a likely motive.

[827] Bennett, J. October 4, 2016. "Jimmy Bower on 'White Power,' Superjoint, and the N-Word," *CLRVYNT*. Web: http://clrvynt.com/jimmy-bower-interview/ Last Accessed 12/09/17.

group participates in MTV, signs to a major label, or even in some cases is covered in the mainstream music press, they are effectively banned from the club. Several groups who went on to major label success (e.g. Green Day, the Offspring, AFI, Jawbreaker) began in the Gilman scene, but have since been largely ousted or excluded from club activities, as have groups who stayed on independent labels but appeared on MTV (e.g. Rancid).[828] 924 Gilman still holds benefit (e.g. in 2017 alone, these benefits include shows for trans healthcare clinics, Food Not Bombs, and more) and non-benefit shows, exposes, art exhibits, and other community activities, though seemingly always in the shadow of imminent eviction.

Critique also continues to come from within the Gilman community. In previous years, most critique has been on the domestication of punk culture that occurs in such a structured environment, typified by Jesse Michaels (Operation Ivy/Common Rider/Classics of Love), "I thought it was really cool to have a great club, and there was a lot of good things about it. But I thought it was a little bit pretend, because it was so sterilized."[829] Recently, critique has come from a much different perspective, one vaunting the rules and demanding closer adherence to them. A group known as 'Boycott Gilman' has published accusations against the club, calling on punks to boycott Gilman on the grounds that it has not lived up to its promise of being an autonomous, safe community space.[830] The organizers of the

[828] More recently, however, such groups have been invited back. Green Day, for instance, recently played a benefit show at Gilman for AK Press, the anarchist publishers who had recently sustained fire damage. These events are the exception to the rule, and require a membership approval vote to take place.
[829] Boulware and Tudor. *Gimme Something Better*, p. 292.
[830] Perhaps we could also frame this example as an issue of fidelity to the ideal.

boycott begin their statement by referring to themselves as "punks who care deeply about the club" but who can no longer abide the decisions, attitudes, or positions of some higher ups in the supposedly non-hierarchical collective.[831] Their litany of problems with the club stem from a less-than-inclusive space for marginalized folks, the preference given to groups and individuals with higher social capital (regardless of other considerations), abuse enabling and support of rape culture (due to booking of bands with less than savory past reputations or not 'outing' alleged abusers publically), and most especially decisions made by former head booker Mike Avilez (who has also performed with the groups Oppressed Logic, Angry Samoans, and Guantanamo Dogpile). The Green Day secret benefit show of 2015 (and the taping of it, supposedly for an upcoming Warner Brothers release) is also one of the 'violations' the group points to. The boycott organizers attempt to provide a distinction between curating and censoring art, and they argue that such attempts as have been made at Gilman are in line with the former, and an effort to provide one special space where particular ideologies are not given amplification.

The boycott reveals several important aspects about DIY punk spaces. Whatever resolution (or lack thereof) the boycott comes to, such discourse reveals a long-standing infighting for definition within punk scenes. Clearly, those pushing a boycott have a very different understanding of what punk is and means than those they are opposing. The next section of this chapter turns to punk in the mega-festival venue, on sites that many thousands flock to each year, yet some punk purists view as

[831] Web: https://boycott924gilmanstreet.tumblr.com/ Last Accessed 12/15/2017.

a corruption and/or betrayal of punk idealism. What is interesting about the Gilman boycott is that it reveals the earnestness of some within punk culture, that even the most long-standing, well established, and idealistic D.I.Y. space for punk in the U.S. is not immune from criticism. Punks are clearly not abiding any traditionalist free passes for nostalgic spaces, but rather view spaces as ever changing, always in a state of becoming, and hence always open to revaluation. As we will see in the next chapter, violence does occur in punk scenes, even in such quasi-sacred spaces to punk culture as Gilman, and the boycott mentioned here only highlights the safety concerns for some participants.[832] But, the boycott also reveals another punk paradox, for how can one espouse a scene of openness and inclusion while excluding those who think differently? Clearly, some factions, i.e. neo-Nazis, bring physical violence or the threat thereof to any space they inhabit. No one really disputes the club's turning away of Nazis at the door. But, does this mean that a band eating hot dogs should be met with similar ire from militant vegetarians?

[832] Perhaps the most infamous instances of violence involved the breaking of Jello Biafra's leg.



(Left: ABC No Rio, prior to it's closing in 2016. Right: 924 Gilman Street)

Punk's Huge Second Life: The Festival Circuit

"Mass movements are always so unhip. That's what was great about punk. It was an anti-movement, because there was knowledge there from the very beginning that with mass appeal come all these tedious folks who need to be told what to think…Punk was like, this is new, this is now, the apotheosis, powerful. But it wasn't political. I mean, maybe that is political. I mean the great thing about punk was that it had no political agenda. It was about real freedom, personal freedom."
--Legs McNeil[833]

In the last two decades, two festival sites have emerged as dominant in punk circles, for they have exploded in terms of number of attendees, notoriety and influence, and artist participation. The first is Rebellion Festival (formally known as 'Holidays in the Sun,' and then 'Wasted') in Blackpool, England, and the second is Punk Rock Bowling in Las Vegas, NV. In this section, I am drawing upon

[833] McNeil, Legs & McCain, Gillian. 1996. *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*. New York: Grove Press. pp. 275 & 299.

documentation and media from these festivals, as well as observations based on my field-work at both Rebellion (2013, 2014, & 2016) and Punk Rock Bowling (2013, 2014, 2016, & 2017).[834] Of course, these festivals are not by any means exhaustive, but merely limited by financial means that necessitated difficult decisions about which festivals are most important to attend. There are dozens more that occur throughout the world, and these almost certainly have certain similarities as well as differences with those I describe below.[835] I do, however, argue that these two festivals are the most important in terms of scale, popularity, and influence, and demonstrate phenomena broadly applicable to other such sites. These festivals, in other words, are often viewed as the 'real' festivals of punk culture. Mike McColgan of Street Dogs said from the Empress Ballroom stage in 2014, "this is the best festival in the world. Only the real are here. Rebellion is for lifers. There's no room for posers of the faint of heart here."

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[834] I should also mention my experiences in field observation at the Staten Island Punk Festival (NYC, 2013), 1Fest (Oakland, 2017), Punk In Drublic (Concord, 2017), numerous day-long Pirates Press Anniversary festivals (San Francisco, 2014, 2015), Fat Wrecked for 25 Years (San Francisco, 2016), as well as the strong punk contingency in earlier years of the annual Bonnaroo (Tennessee, 2007, 2008), Pitchfork (Chicago 2009), Fun Fun Fun Fest (Austin, 2010), SXSW (Austin, 2010, 2011) festivals. These other festivals certainly inform my discussion here, but are either not demonstrably different enough or are so massively different in terms of size (or not considered exclusively, or even primarily, punk festivals) as to make an in depth inclusion of them either incomparable or wholly inadequate. These other events likely require further attention than I can provide here, and perhaps another study will be done on these. I believe I have chosen to elaborate on the two major standard bearers of punk festivals, which will include both similarities and differences with these other fests.

[835] These include the notable Riot Fest (Chicago, IL), Drop Dead Festival (multiple locations in North America and Europe), the Fest (Gainesville, FL), the now defunct Ink & Iron (Los Angeles, CA), Rebellion (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Carolina Rebellion (Charlotte, NC), Antifest (Svojšice, Czech Republic), Ieperfest (Ypres, Belgium) Sbäm Fest (Wels, Austria), Manchester Punk Festival (Manchester, UK), Blackout (Brantford, Ontario), and the long-running Warped Tour among many others. There are also many festivals that cater to both punk and metal artists and fans (rather than being exclusively punk) that occur in dozens of countries in every continent (excluding Antarctica, of course).

Why does it matter that punk festivals have grown to such proportions, or to such profitability? Surely there are positives to come from this; punks who don't live in urban areas with thriving scenes get a rare chance to see large numbers of acts, bands who otherwise would not have reformed are able to perform for a younger generation that didn't get to see them the first time around, feelings of community solidarity can grow from such large gatherings, and hence connections can be made, networking can occur, and the various punk scenes in the world can grow in conjunction with the growth of these mega festivals. But just as surely, there are negative aspects to such festivals as well. Not the least of these problems is the all-too-often corporate involvement (either in sponsoring, merchandising, or marketing) in these festival spaces. Punk Rock Bowling, for instance, has long been sponsored by Pabst Blue Ribbon, and the traveling Warped Tour by skate shoe company Vans (and more recently the retail giant Target). Rebellion, however, is a D.I.Y. hold out, still refusing any corporate involvement.

"Punk is for life, not just for Rebellion!"
--taken from a punk's jacket at Rebellion 2016

One of the most interesting phenomena of the punk festival circuit has been the re-uniting of long-ago dissolved bands. Groups like Sham 69, Menace, and Ruts have emerged from the shadows to play Rebellion. The original Misfits and Jawbreaker both reunited to appear together for the first time in decades at Chicago's Riot Fest. And, in a move that may indeed have begun this reunion ball rolling, members of Black Flag (minus founding guitarist Greg Ginn) reformed to perform as

Flag at Punk Rock Bowling 2013.[836] As Black Flag bassist Chuck Dukowski put it to close their set that night, for folks performing and most of those attending, punk "ain't no phase!" These groups reform for typically two types of audiences, younger audiences who came to the scene after the original dissolution of the band and older, more nostalgic audiences revisiting a band from their youth. Ironically, for many of these bands (most especially Black Flag and the Rimbaud/Libertine *Yes Sir* performance), the festival audiences they now enjoy far exceed even the largest of their audiences the first go round. So, even when they are performing to large numbers of dedicated fans who did see them in their original articulation, these festival sites allow for said fans from across geographic locations to coalesce.

The massive annual European festival—Rebellion—is also the site of the scene described at the outset of this chapter, and so it is perhaps of note that such enormous gatherings of punks, and their movement out of the shadowy squats, basements, and DIY venues is indicative of either a growing appeal of the radical elements within the aesthetics and politics of the various scenes in the 21st century, or alternatively that punk as commodity has been effectively domesticated and successfully marketed to a mass audience. Paradoxically, however, such festivals also seem to be wellsprings of inspiration for the formation of new acts and artistic endeavors. Rebellion, for instance, features a "New Band" stage where each year they showcase a wide variety of new, small scale, up-and-coming acts who previously

[836] Many other groups have chosen festival sites to reunite, or to give a found farewell. It should also be noted here that it is not at all unusual for a group to reform for a festival, and then decide to play additional dates after that, as is the case for several of the groups mentioned above.

have no access to such wide audience. In other words, even in this domesticated version, punk activity can inspire other, more radical, action.

Of course, there are also some within punk cultures for whom such festival spaces do not contain fidelity to the (Crass/DIY/radical) event of their understanding of punk. Any time a member of Crass performs (e.g. Steve Ignorant's Last Supper Tour in the US, Ignorant's numerous Rebellion performances, the Rimbaud/Libertine ensemble that opened this chapter, or the upcoming Ignorant "Crass Songs" performance at Punk Rock Bowling 2018) have led to both online and material criticism.[837] There have even been small-scale demonstrations organized to picket and pamphlet against this supposed defiance of what Crass "was" in their puritanical imagination. Such radical critiques of punk from within are often useful in pointing to the contradictions and hypocrisies of the culture, yet instances of these extremities demonstrate the way in which fidelity to the Crass event is insisted upon with far greater gusto by other punk adherents than it has ever been by Crass themselves.



(Bad Religion perform at Punk Rock Bowling 2013)

[837] Samples of these materials demanding fidelity to the ideals of Crass are contained in the Appendix.



(You’re going to need a bigger stage: Iggy Pop at Punk Rock Bowling 2017)



(GBH perform at Rebellion Festival 2014)



(For a sense of scale: Descendents perform in the Empress Ballroom, Rebellion 2016)



(Cock Sparrer perform a surprise second set on the outdoor stage, Rebellion 2016)

Back to Dial House

"We've maintained the open door policy…against a society that has been increasingly closing its doors."
--Penny Rimbaud[838]

Yet, for all these changes in space and scale that festivals indicate for the punk scene, Dial House remains largely apart and autonomous from such change. Murray Bookchin warns against commitment to autonomy as such, and he focuses his critique most especially on Bey. For Bookchin, the type of individualist 'anarchist' thought exemplified by Bey is the product of leftist disillusionment following the dissolving of the Soviet Union. As collectivism and communalism fell out of favor in radical leftist circles (both activist and theoretical), individualism and autonomy gained favor. Bookchin is reluctant to accept any iteration of individualism or Stirnerite egoism, as he takes these ideologies to be mere articulations of narcissism absent of action directly seeking change for all.[839] Bookchin is not interested in changes for individual lives in 'autonomous' moments and experience so much as overthrowing the system and achieving real, sustained freedom for all. Put simply, Bookchin's point is that when anarchists frame their actions and professed 'resistance' in terms of their chosen lifestyle, they have lost the political commitment of direct action and systemic revolution. Since "the bourgeoisie has nothing to fear from such lifestyle

[838] Oey, Alexander. 2006. *There is No Authority but Yourself*. Submarinechannel/Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep.
[839] Bookchin, Murray. 1995. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*. San Francisco: AK Press, pp. 10-11.

declamations," he argues that anarchism must be socialist in a very real and literal sense and it must continually seek total transformation.[840]

Interestingly, in his critique of Bey, Bookchin seems to align himself with Rancière's commitment to dissensus. Bookchin argues against consensus-based decision making in favor of democratic processes precisely because consensus precludes the rich discussion, discourse, and difference that are the product of dissensus. This dissensus is not only important politically in terms of the introduction of new ideas and a truly democratic mode of discourse from multiple voices, but it is also important creatively. He states, "dissensus—the all-important process of continual dialogue, disagreement, challenge, and counter-challenge, without which social as well as individual creativity would be impossible."[841] In other words, consensus can actually take the form of coerced conformity, while under the guise of operating democratically.

Disagreement and dissensus are necessary for discussing and addressing the complexities of social life. The struggle is hence constant, and there is no definable endpoint to resistance. This doesn't mean that there are no goals, for Bookchin is very clear about the goal of overthrowing capitalism and ending exploitation. But, because people are diverse and ever changing, the types of politics we should be striving for leading up to and following revolution should be able to account for this immense difference.

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[840] *Ibid*, p. 25.
[841] *Ibid*, p. 17.

I do not think Bey can withstand Bookchin's critique, certainly not among political radicals seeking revolution. Yet, I am not interested in choosing sides between social anarchism exemplified by Bookchin and lifestyle anarchism exemplified by Bey. Instead, I seek to reconcile this supposed "unbridgeable chasm," a chasm that I argue is actually reconcilable. Crass show the overlaps between Bookchin's socialist engagement towards macro-level change with Bey's "new music, totally insane but life-affirming, rhythmically subtle yet powerful."[842] Both are strangely interested in violence, begging the question of how can ruptures with the current capitalist system be achieved? Are there forms of contestation (i.e. forms of politics) that truly are more than war by other means, or are we left with the pessimistic choice of violent revolution if we desire change? What might be the role of art in contributing to or alleviating political violence? Crass not only openly critiques violence they witness in punk (discussed more in the next chapter), but also maintain that their refusal to be complicit with capital is also a form of their pacifist resistance.

Yet, there is a flaw in this thinking. Sure, Crass could maintain an ideological purity of sorts by refusing to market its image on t-shirts, for instance, but this has not stopped anyone else from capitalizing on it. Indeed, dozens of manufactures (of much greater scale and capitalist interest) have made and sold merchandise with the Crass name, logo, and album art, leaving the actual band in the awkward position of not

[842] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, p. 43.

merchandising themselves yet not stopping said merchandising.[843] The sole exception to this is Steve Ignorant, who eventually attained permission from other band members to sell shirts, beginning with his revival of the Crass material in his 2007-11 tours. He now rejects the supposed purity within the no-merchandising policy of previous Crass years, essentially claiming that if others are making money off of his art (especially while he struggled through the precarious existence afforded by odd jobs and dishwashing), why shouldn't he?[844]

While operating as a band, Crass sold hundreds of thousands of records yet imposed a very modest living allowance on its members, reportedly of a mere £10 per week—the equivalent of the British dole (social welfare) of the time.[845] Expenses were reimbursed, but then all revenues were turned toward other causes. Among these was the releasing of like-minded groups on their own Crass records.[846] Rimbaud explains that Crass was not out to make a profit, but rather "to share whatever gains we had made with as many people as possible."[847] This reluctance towards capitalistic gains is also indicated by the innovative "Pay No More Than__" label on all of the

[843] Rimbaud has also been clear that he doesn't care at all if others want to wear or distribute these materials. He once told me that he finds it amusing when pictures circulate online with celebrities like David Beckham and Angelina Jolie wearing Crass t-shirts.
[844] Gordon, Alastair. 2016. *Crass Reflections*. U.K.: Itchy Monkey/Punk Scholars Press/Active Distribution, p. 33. Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 293.
[845] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 176.
[846] Was this a contradiction, in that Crass assumed a position of authority as the purveyors of their own—however small—label? Rimbaud argues no, and instead frames discussion in terms of opportunity, as in, the groups they "helped" release records may not have had such a chance in the more mainstream, profit-driven realm of larger labels. Cf. Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 179-180 & Pamphlet printed in January 1980. *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, pp. 9-11. Significant punk artists who were on Crass/Southern records include, but are not limited to, Andy T, Annie Anxiety, Captain Sensible (of the Damned), Conflict, Cravats, Dirt, Flux of Pink Indians, KUKL (staring a young Björk), the Mob, Poison Girls, Rudimentary Peni, and Zounds.
[847] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 115.

records Crass released (a strategy that has since been adopted by many other groups). Invariably, this label would indicate a lower sales price than was typical for other groups/label's records (typically to the point of being around ½ of others' prices). Though this was ostensibly meant to keep purchaser's price-point low (and minimize mark-up by retailers), it is also difficult to imagine Crass gaining such a large audience without this feature. Surely the appeal of an essentially half-priced record inspired many listeners to take a risk in giving them that first listen.

Rimbaud claims, "We were able to subvert the whole commercial process of the music industry, subvert all the messages of consensual society, from passivism to vegetarianism to feminism, etc. etc."[848] Much of our investigation here is an interrogation of these claims. For instance, *have* Crass truly escaped the capitalistic economics they were so opposed to? Or did they 'sell out' at some point? If so, at what point was this—forming Crass Records? Selling records? Purchasing Dial House to avoid eviction? Steve Ignorant's 2007 shows of Crass material? The 2010-2012 remastering and re-releasing of Crass material dubbed *The Crassical Collection*? Guitarist Andy Palmer responded in a radio interview that

> Initially we started out because the energy was 'go out and do it yourself—anybody can do it.' I felt that a lot of the early bands became like preaching—Jimmy Sham [sic, Pursey of Sham 69], for example, saw himself as a reincarnation of a political leader. We *have* got something to say but that is for people to think about what they're doing—is the life that they lead actually what they want? And to prove through what we're doing that if you don't want to live your life the way you're told you should lead it, you can lead it in a different way.[849]

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[848] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 86.
[849] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, pp. 83-84. Emphasis in original.

There has clearly always been an impetus on *doing* in the Crass camp, not simply writing, talking, or singing. Though, we must question what this definition of 'doing,' contained especially in '*do* it yourself,' actually means, aside from some vaguely defined notion of action.[850] Are not writing, speaking, and singing (or performance in general) not also forms of action, of doing? Is this doing contingent on investment in certain processes, such as self-producing and self-releasing records? Or, do they mean by 'doing' what I've referred to above as the lifestyle-as-performance idea, that by living the principles they sang they added a particular credence to their message? Rimbaud echoes Nietzsche's concept of the deed's autonomy from the doer (or, more precisely, the utter absence of a doer behind the deed), by claiming, "I'm whatever I'm *doing* at a given point," rather than "taking elements of myself [i.e. in such simplistic definitions as poet, philosopher, musician, etc.] to represent a Self."[851]

> Crass's position suggests that they were able to penetrate the culture industry with subversive products, reproduced totally by autonomous production methods. Thus they were able to create a subversive space inside a sphere controlled by monopolistic, capitalist interests.[852]

This position, outlined above by Alastair Gordon, has been widely debated, and is still a contentious concept within radical circles. How autonomous can we really be? To what extent can we actually escape capitalist hegemony? Even among anarchists, answers to these questions differ wildly. The somber aesthetic of the black uniform,

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[850] For one among hundreds of bands pushing the imperative to act, see DOA, whose motto not only emblazons their records and merchandise, but also lends itself to the title for the singer/songwriter/guitarist's book. Keithley, Joe 'Shithead'. 2011. *Talk – Action = Nothing*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.

[851] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, pp. 112-113. Emphasis in original, bracket parenthetical added.

[852] Gordon, Alastair, 2016. *Crass Reflections*. UK: Itchy Monkey Press, p. 83.

or an angrier aesthetic, or the content of the lyrics and liner notes strike many observers as quite cynical, even to the point of being not only militant, but also dystopian. Others, such as George McKay, have found a paradoxical complexity in the mixture of Crass's dystopian aesthetic with their "largely utopian anarchist" politics, in which the "utopian reading is qualified, though, through a skepticism signaled by the dissonant music and dystopian visual imagery."[853]

It is important, therefore, to also turn our attention to the very aesthetics of Crass's music, for not only is the aesthetic crucial to understanding Crass's musical/cultural impact, but it is also crucial to understanding their political impact. In other words, as with a figure like William Morris, Crass does not separate their political messaging from their aesthetics. Our aesthetic analysis must hence also be conceived in political terms, and likewise the reverse. Richard Cross describes the first Crass LP in the company of original releases by the Ramones, Sex Pistols, Joy Division, and Discharge as having equal impact in the aesthetic directionality of the genre,

> When *The Feeding of the 5000* was released it sounded like no other punk record before it had—the signature drum-beat; the skitter power-buzz of the two guitars; the relentless lyric-chewing vocal, the shift without pause from one song to another; the lack of rock pretensions. More notable than the musical presentation, was its content—from the stunning, disturbing cover artwork, to the densely typed lyric sheet; to the uncompromising, compelling polemic with which the whole package bristled. It would be just these jarring juxtapositions between the content of the message and the medium of delivery that would give this new subculture [anarcho-punk] so distinctive an edge.[854]

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[853] McKay, George. 1996. *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*. London: Verso, p. 100.
[854] Cross, Richard. May 2014. "The Hippies Now Wear Black: Crass and the anarcho-punk movement, 1977-1984," *Socialist History*, 26, p. 2.

Indeed, most accounts of exposure to Crass include expressions of surprise or shock at the jarring sonic registers they utilize. Why use feedback, screams, ambient sound, and sampling techniques to achieve such an aural cacophony—to produce a collage of sound?[855] The immediacy of the shock of "depositional chords" itself is an experience that so radically engages the subject that it is "reconciled" in illusion with the object of the music, for the work of music "represents the truth of society against an individual that knows its untruth and is itself this untruth."[856] The very truths and falsities of societies and individuals are hence troubled by the discordant. The musical shock here is what "bluntly exists in itself," an existence that necessarily separates the shock from the subject, as it "cannot be integrated into the self."[857] Shock becomes the irreconcilable other *par excellence*. Shock value may indeed render an affective shock, but it is important that this shock is registered aesthetically, emotionally, or even illegibly, and not necessarily via physically violent means.

The other important feature of shock is that it must *remain* illegible, perhaps explaining Crass's different aesthetic choices from record to record. The paradox is that once shock has been recognized as shock, it is no longer shocking. As Edgar Wind warns, "the shock wears off when it becomes familiar," a feature he also sees within the broader loss of "art's sting" in a public under constant barrage of visual-

[855] Sound bites from radio and television recordings of political leaders make appearances on many Crass productions, often giving the appearance of a radio dial flipping through frequencies (sometimes as an intro or outro to a song, sometimes as a key feature of it).
[856] *Ibid*, p. 43.
[857] *Ibid*, pp. 117-118.

sonic stimuli.[858] Theodor Adorno goes even further by suggesting that aesthetic shock (his particular example is Schoenberg's music) "becomes formulaic as soon as they are even once repeated."[859] This is a critique that many shocking, or more precisely *once*-shocking, artistic moves have been unable to answer, particularly when they find their works displayed in the very galleries and museums they positioned themselves against.

Punk aesthetics are utilized by Crass not as an end unto itself, but rather as a mechanism for such engagements, questioning, and discursive resistance. Pete Wright responded in a 1984 interview, "our ability to be a popular punk band has introduced people to a whole series of things that they might not have found."[860] The medium promotes the message.[861] Members of the group consistently emphasize the lyrical message over the music. For instance, guitarist Andy Palmer argues, "it was always the words first, then the backing."[862] Yet, the band as the medium or delivery mechanism for societal critique shouldn't be reduced to a simplistic, facile lyrical analysis. As guitarist Phil Free describes the goals of Crass, "the ideas in the songs are the most important things to us, but the quality of the music must reflect what we feel and the content of the song, otherwise there's no point in trying to express our

[858] Wind, Edgar. 1985. *Art and Anarchy*. Great Britain: Northwestern University Press, pp. 8 & 88.
[859] Adorno, Theodor. 2006. *Philosophy of New Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 42.
[860] "Crass Interview 1984," *Mucilage* zine, Issue 2.
[861] The same position is heard by many other groups within punk rock. For example, see the discussion of and with Propagandhi in Colon, Shaun. 2016. *A Fat Wreck*. Open Ended Films.
[862] Callous, Rob. 1979. "Crass: Reputations in Jeopardy (Crass 521984)," *Dry Rot*, No. 1, p. 9.

ideas as a band."[863] The jarringly avant-garde punk noise of Crass must be analyzed just as deeply as the lyrical content.

Despite perceived militancy, members of Crass themselves recall a humor in their music, art, and performance that has been either ignored or glossed over in most reviews and histories of the group. Some of this humor may be lost in translation, or overshadowed by seemingly rigid political militancy. But as the above quote from McKay suggests, it is more fruitful to examine the utopian/dystopian split in Crass as a form of play, not simply in the defying of expectations but also in the tongue in cheek parody of politics itself.

As seen in the examination of their writings, art, and even activism below, we can see that Crass is almost never *either* political or funny, but takes a rather large cue from Monty Python by evoking both registers simultaneously. They have been roundly involved in parody, pranks, jokes (although sometimes these were relatively hidden, except to the members of the group).[864] For instance, it was something of an inside joke amongst the group's lyricists to see just how often they could fit "shit" and "pit" into the rhyming scheme. Sure, the context for this rhyme might be within a serious political statement, such as the commentary on authoritarianism experience in the classroom "at school they give you shit, drop you in the pit," but the critique of the education system doesn't exclude the humor. This is also a group who released a 7" single in which the chorus's refrain was "who put the turd in the custard?", though

[863] Poole, Dean. 1981. "Crass Interview," *New Systems*, No. 1, p. 12.
[864] June 15, 2014. "Interview: Steve Ignorant," *Louder Than War* Web: http://louderthanwar.com/interview-steve-ignorant-a-celebration-of-crass/ Last Accessed 05/08/17.

not all these efforts were appreciated by their sometimes humorless fan base.[865] In other words, Crass doesn't seem to take itself quite as seriously as others take them (or as their carefully crafted image might suggest).

The inordinate—and likely unprecedented—prevalence of profanity in Crass material is also a site of this humor/horror binary. Sure, it is there to shock, but it can also be there to evoke laughter. Indeed, Rimbaud has indicated that he felt that the message would only be obscured by or "lost in a few fucks" by the few people who aren't "worth bothering with" and such sensibilities largely reflected middle-class piety and snobbishness (though, Rimbaud himself is middle class, and his working class collaborator Steve Ignorant was a little less comfortable with "swearing").[866] For a group supposedly out to make tangible differences in issues of social and political justice, such a haughty attitude of dismissal seems problematic. Granted, there are some outrages that one can argue necessitate 'strong' language in condemnation, and such issues were often taken up in Crass's discourse, whose view of the world was largely that it's a "mess."[867] Yet, it seems odd that those falling prey to the shock that Crass clearly intends should be so summarily dismissed as lost causes is simplistic as best and elitist at worst. How might a working class singer respond?

> "Anarchy is not a political party, like conservative or labour, it's more of an attitude towards oneself and others. Mutual respect and trust."
> --Steve Ignorant[868]

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[865] Crass.1983. "Whodunnit". 121984. Crass Records. 7"
[866] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 122.
[867] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 127.
[868] Peter, B. 1980. "A Different Way of Thought and Vision (Alternative Reasoning from Steve Ignorant of Crass)" *Sometimes it's Worth Living*, No. 1, p. 3.

At the formation of the band in 1977, Steve Williams (who would become 'Ignorant') returned to Dial House to find Penny Rimbaud morose and alone, for this was the time in which Vaucher was living briefly in New York and Rimbaud was mourning the death of his friend Wally Hope.[869] What brought Ignorant to the house was his fond memories of visiting there as a younger lad, for his older brother was among the fellow travelers of the Dial House artists. The impact of his discovery of Dial House is clear in his repeated telling of just how much of a personal "revelation" it was to be spoken to, by adults, as an equal.[870] He also describes his encounters there as something of a realization of the falsity of social constraints based in class. Here were middle class artists welcoming all comers from all backgrounds, including himself from a solidly working class family, into their home.

Williams/Ignorant was already somewhat connected to the exploding punk culture, as he had identified with an amalgamation of skinhead, Clash, and Bowie influences. He became immediately interested in the idea of having his own band, and Rimbaud suggested that he play drums and contribute writing.[871] As with their own take on autonomous living and organic gardening, the folks of Dial House were not keen to simply follow a path within punk that others had paved. To contribute to punk culture, they would change it. As Ignorant puts it, "Playing with people's expectations, subverting them, making them question what they thought they knew,

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[869] Wally Hope is most well known as a hippie activist and free-festival organizer in the U.K.
[870] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 118.
[871] In fact, the initial articulation of Crass was comprised *only* of the duo Ignorant on vocals and Rimbaud on drums.

was something I learned from Pen."[872] These expectations were not simply subverted by punk, but through Crass, punk expectations themselves were also defied. Here was a group interested both in high-velocity, high-quality art, but more so in political efficacy, anti-system lifestyle choices and practices, and the ideals of peace rather than partying, sharing support rather than sales, and critique over commodity. And, of course, there is the experimentation in what punk can sound like.

> The music was just a part of what punk was about, not the main focus. As a punk, you were a walking artwork, and how often does that happen?...What we were part of felt like absolute revolution. You'd see another punky looking person walking down the street and you'd quietly acknowledge each other as being part of something truly powerful and exhilarating. And you have to remember the way punks looked, and the music punk was creating, provoked massively hostile and hysterical reactions in the media and among the general population.[873]

Ignorant explains here the way in which the centrality of music may be over stated in many retrospective histories of punk culture. Of course it is important, and for many people the music produced may be their only connection whatsoever to the culture. In other words, far more people purchase and consume Sex Pistols and Clash records than identify as punks.[874] To *be* punk, however, is a different endeavor than to gain voyeuristic or aesthetic pleasure by peering or listening in. The slightest hint of danger in punks' appearance, the loosely enjoyed solidarity of those embodying punk aesthetics, and the broad societal critique this mostly underground culture provides

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[872] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 124.

[873] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, pp. 133-134.

[874] This is a lesson many of us have learned through our experience with friends, family, or colleagues who describe their love on a small selection of punk culture (e.g. by referencing their ownership of a single Sex Pistols, Clash, Jam, Specials, or Buzzcocks records—for instance—or their limited experience going to shows).

are, according to Ignorant and many others, far more important than whatever sounds are produced. The record of the culture, in other words, cannot be reduced to the records of the culture.

The members of Crass also didn't set out for commercial success. In fact, the title of their first LP, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*, is named such because that was the original number of records pressed, with no expectation of ever needing additional pressings. Of course, they *did* have many additional pressings, as well as many other records (as listed in the discography that concludes this chapter), but this doesn't undermine their surprise at, and some would even say attempts at avoidance, of sales success.



(Steve Ignorant performs with Paranoid Visions, Rebellion 2013)

The all-black uniforms members wore on stage were adopted as a measure necessary to direct attention to the group as a whole, while maintaining the anonymity of its members to avoid celebrity status when it became apparent that record stores

were having trouble even keeping Crass records in stock, as they sold at a higher rate than any single alternative/independent band at the time. What perhaps began as experimentation, a utilization of punk as medium for communicating radical critiques of modern institutions ended up modifying punk itself.

An analogy can be made to the visual realm in the personage of René Magritte, when he claims that he sees his work as philosopher that uses painting as its medium, rather than viewing himself primarily as a painter.[875] Yet, his decision to utilize painting as his philosophical medium in turn *changes* painting as a field. Crass similarly sets out to use punk as a medium for radical ideas (feminism, vegetarianism, pacificism, autonomism, anarchism—although always without defining their activity or entirely bowing to any 'ism'), but ends up changing punk itself. Ignorant certainly set out to perform (although he admits to stage fright continuing into the present) and write music, but no one could have guessed or designed the effects and affects inspired by Crass within and without punk cultures. He explains, "I had no idea that *Owe Us* would become a punk classic that everyone knew the words to and would shout at me for the next thirty or so years. I had no idea that some kid would get nicked for shouting the words to "So What" in a vicar's face."[876]

He also describes his surprise with the work ethic Crass was forced to maintain to meet demand and interest. Interestingly, it seems that anti-capitalist artists still maintain aspects of a protestant work ethic, and Crass was no different.

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[875] Foucault, Michel. 1983. *This is Not a Pipe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
[876] Steve Ignorant. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster). "Owe Us" and "So What" are both references to Crass songs contained on Crass. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP. The passage quoted is from Steve Ignorant's liner notes from the reissue, 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

Inundated with requests for badges (the only merch they had available, and gave away for free), letters and correspondence, and record orders, yet maintaining a dedication to keeping the group autonomous and doing everything themselves meant long hours doing less than glamorous work. Countless hours composing, rehearsing, recording, and performing were coupled with additional hours answering letters, granting fanzine interviews, folding and packing records, and preparing shipments in addition to the everyday work of maintaining the house and garden (including daily guests).

> However—NOT such fond memories of folding those sodding covers—not only that—sticking a bloody patch in as well! Of course, lots of the ones I stuck in had to be redone because they weren't straight—I said, 'it's punks', Pen said 'it's aesthetics', I said 'it's bollocks.' So if you've got an original cover somewhere, just think of all the pain I went through, for you, with all my Love.[877]

Such comments are made mostly in good-humored jest, for clearly love is still given as the ultimate reason for this labor. No one, however, expresses a regret of having done things this way, and many who follow Crass do so in no small part because of their dedication to autonomous production. In other words, some punks respect Crass because of the inefficiency of their D.I.Y. production, not in spite of it.

We can see here a *preference* for D.I.Y. here, returning us to the way in which Richard White and Colin Williams describe diverse economies in their article "Beyond Capitalocentrism."[878] Their argument, that we can see demonstrated by

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[877] Crass. 1979. *Stations of the Crass*. 521984. Double LP Album. Crass Records. Steve Ignorant liner notes in reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.
[878] White, Richard and Williams, Colin. 2016. "Beyond Capitalocentrism: Are Non-Capitalist Work Practices 'Alternative'?" *Area* 48.3, pp. 325-311.

Crass specifically, is that often folks find non-capitalist modes of production and transactions preferable. Sure, there are those for whom D.I.Y. home repair, for instance, is a product of necessity and their financial inability to hire professional help. Yet, for many, such D.I.Y. activity is preferred over professional help, as it can be a source of pride or enjoyment. White and Williams go so far as to argue that often, rather than seeing D.I.Y. as the alternative, many people view capitalism's goods and services as the alternative to their preferred goods and services. In other words, one who may prefer to produce or repair something themselves may have to hire others because they lack the time to either gain the skill sets necessary or to do the actual work.

In other words, counter to what market fundamentalists may preach, many people prefer non-capitalist solutions to needs, and only turn to the market when all other options fail. Other institutions, such as the church, the state, and the family may be preferred over the market, as the market serves as a poor substitute for these in many instances. Similarly, Crass and others may have pursued D.I.Y. modes of production partly out of necessity (for they had trouble finding others willing to release such "obscene materials"), but it is also the case that they had a preference for these methods in the first place. The precedent Crass set, and arguably the single greatest influence they have had on punk cultures is to demonstrate that punk can produce and sustain itself without (or with minimal pollution from) capitalism. There is no necessity in capitalist complacency in the Crass camp, or those demanding fidelity to it. Sure, it might have been easier for Ignorant and company to hire

someone else to stuff record sleeves, or to farm it out to label workers, but it wouldn't have been in line with the political project they were trying to achieve.

Such decisions demonstrate again the radical potential of anachronism. In choosing D.I.Y. production and distribution, Crass defied the efficiency imperialistically demanded by ever tightening capitalist markets. Recording, releasing, and packaging your own records are not as efficient as the more technologically advanced assembly line methods of the major record labels. In other words, the human touch involved by the artists themselves harkens back to an earlier form of production, one akin to the Morrisean artisan. By not choosing the most advanced mode of production, Crass openly embraces an anachronistic mode of production. By providing an equally (or many would say, greater) appealing product at a lower price point than their supposedly more efficient mass-market competitors, Crass provides an economic critique. If efficiency pays dividends to the consumer by allowing for lower production cost, which the argument goes is then beneficial not to the worker but to the consumer who must pay less for her commodities, and here these decidedly inefficient punks come along, who take more time and work harder to produce, yet still charge less.

To many punks, Crass showed that D.I.Y. could not only be more enjoyable production for the worker in providing more creative autonomy and free decision, but could also beat capitalist production at its own game in providing quality at an even lower cost. Such D.I.Y. victories are not unique to punk, as they can be witnessed at any number of other cultural scenes, farmers' markets, artisanal operations, and

maker cultures, although price point is normally not the primary way such productions are valuated by their enthusiasts.[879] What is perhaps unique is that punk takes on the powerful culture industry, which historically has extremely high entry costs and seemingly monopolistic power over entertainment, and in most cases *still* undermines capitalist prices. If punk aesthetics appeal, Crass set the stage for punk consumption beyond capital, an economic move as radical (though arguably less essential) as any direct farm-to-table service or worker's co-op.

Since Crass, Ignorant has performed with other anarcho-punk groups that were contemporaneous, most notably Conflict.[880] He has also revived his Crass material for several performances and tours, although some other members of the original group were adamantly opposed to him doing so.[881] Even Rimbaud was originally opposed, but eventually supported his friend's right to perform these songs again. Supposedly, Pete Wright even hired a heckler to interrupt the largest of these shows.[882] Beyond these, he also formed Schwarzeneggar, the Stratford Mercenaries, and most recently, a more laid back quartet called the Slice of Life. In each, Ignorant's vocals maintain the sonic intensity of his first band, even if the other audio aesthetics and instrumentation are quite different.

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[879] Many musical cultures have similar artist and audience practices. Cf. Fans of the Grateful Dead (Deadheads), Jimmy Buffet (Parrotheads), Tech 9, and Insane Clown Posse (Juggalos). This isn't to imply any aesthetic or lifestyle similarity between these groups, but just to indicate other cultural sites in which D.I.Y. and/or autonomous cultural production is alive and well.

[880] Though, the relationship between Ignorant and Colin Conflict has soured in recent years, over the issue of an alleged theft of song copyright royalties by the latter. Narratives about this incident vary, so hopefully truth will out.

[881] Capper, Andy. July 31, 2010. "Anarchy and Peace, Litigated," *Vice*. Web: www.vice.com/en_us/article/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8 Last Accessed: 05/09/2017.

[882] Capper, Andy. July 31, 2010. "Anarchy and Peace, Litigated," *Vice*. Web: www.vice.com/en_us/article/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8 Last Accessed: 05/09/2017.

He has also recorded and performed with Irish punk band Paranoid Visions, most notably the LP entitled *When?* Here again, questions of temporality take center stage. The eponymous track repeatedly poses questions of "when?" to the global population, asking when will they finally overthrow the institutions that dictate the horror of their everyday lives to them. "It's not a matter of if" the song claims, "it's a matter of when," continuing that real change will occur only when people are educated, agitated, dedicated, and organized.

Ignorant has also moved out of Dial House, after living there for twenty years. Beyond his other musical projects mentioned above, his primary venture is in volunteering on the crew of a rescue lifeboat.[883] He originally got involved by donating money from Crass revival gigs to the Volunteer Sea Palling Service so that they could buy life jackets for rescue missions. As every gig he does is a benefit, and he donated money to this crew, they invited him to train and join them, an offer he accepted.[884] Ignorant describes this in terms that suggest it isn't a departure from Crass ethos, but rather an extension of them. He states that people continually thank him for "saving/changing [their] lives" through his music, and he sees "the lifeboat as an extension of that really," a "worthwhile" endeavor far preferable to sitting "on my

[883] Burrows, Alex. November 2, 2010. "Steve Ignorant on Crass & The Angry Young Men of 1950's British Literature," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/05211-crass-interview-steve-ignorant Last Accessed 05/08/17.
[884] Turner, Luke. November 15, 2011. "Steve Ignorant on Saving Lives With the Sea Palling Lifeboat," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/07394-steve-ignorant-interview-sea-palling-lifeboat Last Accessed 05/08/17.

arse waiting for the revolution to come."[885] This doesn't mean, however, that he hasn't experience a revolution within himself.[886]

Crass Interlude: A Punk Pilgrimage and a Glimpse of Dial House

Punk rock cultures are rife with radical potential, aesthetic shock, and a diversity of visuals, sounds, ideas, spaces, and people. As is often the case with

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[885] Ibid.

[886] To differentiate these vignettes, I have employed a type face font to title each, representative of the type-written essays and lyric sheets Crass included with each of their recordings. An earlier version of this first interlude was published in as "Sitting Targets: A Glimpse of Dial House," (March 2014) *Profane Existence*, http://profanexistence.com/2014/03/18/sitting-targets-a-glimpse-of-dial-house-by-andrew-j-wood/. (Last Accessed 05/15/2015). Each of these interludes is neither fully factual nor fully fictional. They are works of what some might call philosophical fiction. That is, it is an imagined conversation meant to invite and challenge readers not necessarily to take sides, but to self-examine, reflect, and question on the ideas herein. Dialogue has been utilized as a stylistic device of philosophy for several millennia, though its prominence has faded in recent centuries. From Plato's Socratic *dialogos* (dialogues) throughout his work (including in the most celebrated of his works, the *Republic*), to the discourses on religion put into philosophical dialogue by David Hume. From the exposes of Flaubert's characters Bouvard and Péchchet in the novel named after them to the "story truth" that is more revealing in the search for meaning in the genocides of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and all of Southeast Asia in the fiction of veteran Tim O'Brien's war novels and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (especially as described by Baudrillard in *Simulacra & Simulation*), than the "true truth" could ever hope to portray, despite the greater social capital in the "content" of this "form" (see Hayden White's oeuvre on this point on narrative). From Morris's Guest and John Ball, to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, to Thompson's Dr. Gonzo (in his entire corpus, but most especially in the *Fear & Loathing* and *Gonzo Papers* series), from Berkeley's Hylas and Philonous in their *Three Dialogues* to Voltaire's *Candide*, the historicized fiction and radically anachronistic philosophical dialogues of Tolstoy, Rousseau, and Dostoyevsky, Orwell, Kafka, and Sartre, Kerouac and Burroughs, but also the political critique central to the fictional novels of Perkins Gilman, Morrison, Huxley, Kundera, Rushdie, Murdoch, Atwood, Yalom, Zamyatin, Asturias, Kiš, Steinback, Wright, Cisneros, and García Márquez, from the plays of Fugard to the visual/aural/rhythmic poetry of Hughes, Coltrane and Picasso, Hitchcock, Neruda and Lennon, but also of Del Toro, Hikmet, Kubrick, Dead Prez, Banksy, Mike IX Williams and 2Pac Shakur, to the pedagogy of hooks and Freire, comedy of Swift and Wilde, but also that of Chaplin, Pryor, Carlin, Gilliam, Kondabolu, and Hicks, the comics of Moore and McGruder, all of whom have presented (sometimes surprisingly for elitist pedants looking down on the "hoi polloi," "rabble," "barbarians," or even the "lumpen-proletariat" or "punks" from their loftier circles of wealth, comfort, and privilege) political theories as sharp and poignant as anyone within academics, government, or dominant industrial and technological institutions. Fiction, poetics, and dialogue has been used to make salient and accessible political/philosophical points. As Dial House is a place of imagining alternatives and talking with others as equals, it seems only fitting to honor its legacy through such a dialectical-dialogical treatment. Some of what follows is clearly indebted to actual conversations I have had with my friends and interlocutors at Dial House. Other parts are completely invented by me to grapple with ideas and the art of life. I prefer to leave the 'truth' of what these people have 'really' said to other contexts, leaving legitimizing or de-legitimizing claims to authenticity, fact, and fiction ambiguous here. I invite you to join the *characters* inspired by Penny Rimbaud, Gee Vaucher, Eve Libertine and others as we sit and converse in the back garden…

interesting cultural scenes, aesthetic movements, and political ideas, punk is also rife with contradiction. One such perplexing contradiction is the incredible diversity of people and places that punk occurs in. In my participation in various punk scenes in the U.S. and U.K., I usually inhabit a plethora of the putrid, damp, overcrowded basements, abandoned, dilapidated, and repurposed warehouses, the many hidden scabies-infested squats, and the piss-covered floors of pubs usually associated with punk's underground. The aesthetics of underground spaces are, not surprisingly, often reflective of the urban decay amongst which they spring. Such spaces have now reached a sort of clichéd existence, an expected space for reclaiming and subversive expression. These underground utopias are often utopic in ideals and experimentation only, while occupying the abandoned dystopian space of industrialism.

Yet, punk exists other types of spaces as well, and Dial House is one such example. I visited Dial House in the summer of 2013 because it is one of the most central, iconic sites of the anarcho/a-punk scene in England. The group of friend who would later form Crass, a group comprised of radical artists and writers has lived in this Victorian cottage in Essex on the edge of Epping Forest for over forty years, but Dial House is undoubtedly most widely known as the headquarters and home of the anarcho-punk group Crass, which existed from 1977 until 1984, and their record label which still does. They have also maintained what they call an 'open house' policy, inviting all travelers in need of shelter and food for a night to their home. The opening of this chapter is the story of my first trip to Dial House and the reception I received there. I was welcomed and invited back. I would indeed return, and

subsequent experiences, observations, and correspondences I have had with the Dial House collective will be explored further on. I have attempted here to capture the setting and spirit of light conversation in the back garden of Dial House, as well as the pilgrimage process one must undertake to find this little utopia.[887]

I set out from London early in the morning after a breakfast of soggy toast, a banana, and some horridly stale instant coffee. By mid-morning, I had become thoroughly lost, and I thought to myself that I couldn't be in the right place. I had spent all morning trying to find this place, beginning with a walk from my hostel bed to the nearest Underground station at Bayswater, two transfers, a central line train to its northernmost stop in Epping, and a bus to the King's Head. I walked through the door of the plain white building under the wooden sign labeled "Library," a happy accident, and found myself in a dimly lit room half full of chest high bookshelves. There was someone that I couldn't see seated in an office around the rear corner and conversing with a portly middle-aged man standing in the office doorway. "Yessah? Can I help you?" he said as he noticed me walking in.

"Uh, yeah, I'm looking for Dial House. Do you know where that is?" I answered, somewhat reservedly, keeping my figurative fingers crossed.

"Right," he said, leaning back into the office with his torso to address whoever was inside, "there was another chap earlier looking for Dial House, yeah? That's back uh…" His voiced trailed off and I couldn't make out the rest. He emerged confidently a moment later, and pointing his hand said, "You go down this street

[887] By utopia, I again mean, not a statement on the way the world is, but rather one on how it should be.

here, take a right, and when the street ends there's a little path between the gardens. Then you'll get to the highway that it's on."

"Thanks," I said with a nod.

"Cheers," he responded as I left.

I walked outside and eventually found my way to an old road, comprised of a compacted dirt and gravel clearing between two tree lines, about two car widths wide. There was no one else on the road in either direction. All I could see as I walked along this hidden road were empty fields covered in meter-high beige/yellow grass underneath an ashen grey sky. Luckily it wasn't raining that morning, but in England dryness is only a temporary condition. Looking up, I saw the sky was so full of clouds that they all seemed to run together, creating one giant smear of grey across the canvas of the sky, as if the natural color of the sky were not blue at all. The occasional bird chirps added to my sense of isolation, as not a single car or other sign of people could be heard.

Up a little ahead I heard a rustle in the bushes, like a badger or a deer that I had startled. Instead, I saw another backpacker, dressed in black jeans, an old tattered hoodie, and disheveled asphalt-black, curly hair, in some places matted and pressed, and in front hanging down to just above his eyebrows. The matted, clumped hair suggested that he hadn't washed in a while. His pack looked even heavier than mine (no small feat to be sure), packed full of who-knows-what, bursting at the seams, and creating a noticeable amount of stretching tension on the shoulder straps. The rustle I

heard was his struggle to put it back on after having a rest. His aesthetic immediately messaged to me that he was an ally.

I noticed on his right forearm, just below the rolled up black jacket sleeve, what appeared to be an anarchist tattoo. I peered a bit closer and saw that it was indeed a circle "A", a peace sign, and a circle "E", the trifecta common among anarcho-punks, i.e. standing for anarchy, peace, and equality. From what I could see, his tattoos looked old and sun-faded, a sort of charcoal color of splotchy grey rather than bold black, and the colors were shaded in a more disconnected fashion than smooth black. When I looked at his face, I could see a glistening flash of metal from his nose, a thin silver ring in the left nostril. His Anglo-white skin was thoroughly tanned, like the golden brown of a well-oiled baseball glove, the color of which blended into the lines on his forehead, suggesting a lifetime in the sunlight. I called to him, "Hey, uh…are you looking for Dial House?" I was simultaneously hoping that he spoke English, and that he too was going where I was going, and perhaps even knew the way.

"Yeah, you are too?" he replied with a cough, and in an U.S. English accent, "I think it's just up that way," and gestured to his right. As it turns out, we had been spending our morning the same way, including stopping in at the same library to ask for directions, not ten minutes apart. He introduced himself to me as Tom, an anarchist punk from Baltimore, and a musician. He played bass in anarcho-punk band A.P.P.L.E. ("All Punks Please Leave Earth") a few years back. On the one hand, it may seem strange that two Americans would run into each other thousands of miles

from home, in the middle of a country road in Essex (imagine how the librarian must have felt that morning!), but here we were, fellow travelers on what you could call a punk pilgrimage.

"You been in England long?" Tom asked me, keeping his eyes ahead on the road, but glancing out of the corner of his right eye at me.

"About a month. You?"

"Just a couple of days, I was staying in a squat in London, but it got evicted."

"Shit, so you really need a place to stay, huh?"

"Yeah," Tom answered, "I got a tent, but it'd be nice to stay for a least a few nights."

"Do you know if it's still an open house? Will it be weird, us showing up?" I asked Tom, as now the stakes had been raised.

"I don't know, but I think so. Even if its not, it's kinda a bucket list thing for me, you know? Have you read The Story of Crass?" Tom asked quizzically.

"Yeah, it's really good," I said, wondering how much might have changed at Dial House since the book was written.

"Yeah, I just re-read it, sort of get ready, you know? What about Shibboleth?" he asked, referring to the autobiography of Penny Rimbaud, co-founder of Crass and Dial House.

"No, I'd really like to though. I can't find it. I think it's out of print."

"Really?" he asked with a surprised tone, a sort of verbal octave change, seeming to suggest that he had no problem finding a copy. As we walked discussing Crass, I began to wonder what Dial House would actually be like, compared to how it is

discussed, understood, and symbolized in punk cultures. Stories around their open house policy, answering all fan mail, refusal to play commercial venues, dedication to underground distribution channels for their records and maintaining low prices (i.e. they consistently listed prices on their record covers, always far lower than was typical), coupled with their espoused anarchism has lent them an air of authenticity within punk circles. Beyond the establishment of Crass's authenticity, they have also become a metric for comparison, the gold standard for how other punks' authenticity is often measured. With all this in mind, I was teeming with anticipation to see if their home and their lives matched both their ideals, their visual and sonic aesthetic, and perhaps most importantly, their reputation. Seeking some reassurance, I asked Tom, "I wonder if a lot of punks still come here. Do you know what's been going on here for the last 30 years? I haven't really kept up with their music after Crass, I don't really know much about Last Amendment."

"I bet people still come, I mean, look at us!" Tom answered confidently.

Looking beyond a vast open field, we could see a line of trees in one direction, but couldn't make out what was behind them. In the opposite direction, we could see a few buildings past a rusted brown and auburn sign that read "Private Road, No Pedestrians" in scrawled, sloppy white letters, not the most promising of signs when seeking an anarchist house. Neither direction looked inviting, and my feet throbbed with each step. Along the road we passed a tall, bald man standing next to an overgrown fence. He was easily thirty years our senior, and was more expensively dressed in clean khaki slacks and a flannel grey coat. He had a backpack

at his feet, and was carefully avoiding the snags of the fence that some vines were wrapped around to pick blackberries, tossing a few into his mouth every few seconds. I averted my eyes and lowered my voice when he paused briefly from his berry picking, in the event that he owned this land and would not be welcoming to two crusty travelers. We kept walking towards the cluster of buildings, hunched over from the weight of our packs, as if there was an invisible cord connecting our foreheads to our feet. With each step, we could not only hear the crunch underneath our boots, but also the sounds of stretching fibers in our shoulder straps.

"Which way? Does this look right to you?" Tom asked.

"I'm not sure. I don't really think it's close to any other buildings though, do you? I've only seen pictures of it from the back. I guess I always thought it was pretty isolated," I replied, as I pointed to a cluster of tall farm buildings fifty feet ahead. I had started to wonder silently if this was such a good idea to come here.

"No, I don't think that's it," he replied with a slight, dejected sigh.

Now a smell of dampened air joined the cloudy sky and increasing wind; yes, rain would be upon us shortly. And we were in the middle of nowhere. We were looking for a place neither one of us knew how to find, and I'm not even sure I could find my way back to the King's Head bus stop. We turned back the other way, followed the road back to the fork, and went the other direction past the trees. Roughly thirty minutes later we decided we had made a mistake. We stood in the middle of the road, looking at each other with blank, disappointed faces.

"What about that guy we passed earlier?" Tom asked, "Maybe he knows."

“Good call,” I replied, “worth a shot.” We turned back down the way we came, and in a few minutes, saw the older man walking towards us.

“Are you looking for the same place we are?” I inquired, somewhat reservedly.

“Probably,” replied the older man.

“Dial House?” Tom added.

The man responded with an affirmative groan, “Mmmm.”

“Us too,” said Tom, “What’s your name?”

“Bill.”

“I’m Tom.”

“Andrew,” I added.

“You’re American, yeah? Where you from?” Bill asked.

“I’m from Baltimore,” Tom said.

“California for me,” I interjected to answer Bill’s questioning gaze.

“So,” he paused his speech and slowed his stride a bit, “you don’t know each other?”

“No,” I said with a muted laugh, “we just met.”

“What about you, where are you from?” asked Tom.

“Well, I’m English, but I live in Morocco,” Bill answered.

“Have you been here before?” I asked, secretly hoping that he knew where the hell he was going.

He raised an eyebrow, gave a quick cluck of a laugh, and said, “hmmm…I’ve been coming here for forty years.”

Our luck seemed to have picked up, and we had now inadvertently found a guide to follow! He could tell we were exchanging surprised looks and Tom said, "Wow."

"I was with Gee at art school," Bill explained, referring to Gee Vaucher, a Dial House resident and co-founder.

"I'm gonna shit if it's right behind where we just were," I whispered to Tom.

"I know, right?" he replied.

As it turned out, just beyond the cluster of buildings we had turned away from, Bill led us to our destination. We arrived at an old, lop-sided and unpainted wooden gate gate adorned with what appeared to be a 19th century gear spray painted red (though with a rough and wrinkled texture underneath the recent coat of paint that suggested rust), emblazoned underneath with the cherry-red stenciled words "Dial House." We had arrived. I had seen dozens of pictures in books and zines, but always from the back garden. I suppose my affinity for Crass and my knowledge of how many people had lived here had colored my mental image of Dial House, and I'd always pictured this house as much bigger in my imagination. Bill just walked in like he owned the place and barked, "Close the gate!" to me. He walked in the door with a quizzical, "Hello?"

I couldn't hear any response, and I sure as hell wasn't going to simply barge in. I know this is an open house (or, I should say, I've read as much), but it's still not my home, and I suppose the confining categories of private property are inescapably imprinted in my mind. Perhaps this feeling was also a product of the very isolation of the house, and I began to question just how 'open' a house could be when it was so

difficult to find. I waited to be invited. While waiting for an invitation, I peaked around to the plush rear garden, full of characteristically English green shrubbery and trees, and there was also an explosion of reds, purples, whites, and yellows in the blooming flowers. At first glance, I noticed that many plants were overgrown, ascending the side of the brick building, and the grass was knee high. The more I looked, however, the more the signs of intense labor jumped out, in the cleared path between the tall grass, potted plants, neat rows of veggies and herbs, and the arrangement of a dark wooden picnic table, a reddish rusted fire pit, and various other rusty benches and chairs.

The house itself was an old yet sturdy Victorian cottage of brick construction with a shingled roof of various dark burgundy reds and browns, wood framed windows each slightly ajar for ventilation, and brick chimney with an orange clay top. The house had clearly been subject to various repairs, as none of the windows matched, and there were areas of brick that stood out as more brightly orange than the surrounding older, blood maroon wall. The house stood in jarring tension with the avant-garde and post-modern paintings and sculptures that populated the garden and the walls of the property's buildings. Nude dolls covered in mold and green moss nailed to tree stumps, painted ocean waves of turquoise and white on a side of a dilapidated shed, and a sphere made from broken tiles interrupted the otherwise bourgeois country visual of the garden. Some of these pieces were faded and rusty, while others were freshly painted. The past and the present blended into each other in these clashes.

Inside the house I could hear approaching voices, and then a woman that I instantly recognized from photos as Gee Vaucher walked to the door. She had long, flowing hair of solid, almost metallic grey, and deep-set, piercing eyes softened only by the gently protruding bags of freckled white skin underneath them. We entered through the low door after being invited in, engaged in a somewhat awkward round of introductory pleasantries in the narrow, unlit kitchen.

"Should I make some tea? Coffee? Or…" Gee asked and her voiced trailed off. The offer of tea seemed to be an automatic response to the appearance of visitors, as Gee had asked without any hesitation. There was clearly a ritual for how people were welcomed into this house.

"Tea's great for me," answered Tom.

"Yeah, I'm good with tea, thank you," I added.

"Sure," Gee answered.

We went outside to the garden and set up the seat covers on the picnic benches that Gee had indicated. The sky still threatened rain, so if we were going to enjoy the garden it would be while we had this tea. I definitely wanted to spend a bit of time in the garden, and it seemed like the place most conducive to talking. The house was laid out in such a way that if we all went inside, we might lose track of each other. Winding, twisting hallways, unlit rooms, and multiple floors and stairways sprawled out from the doorway. If we went inside for the rest of the afternoon, I worried how isolated my visit might become. In a few moments, Bill appeared in the doorway, slightly hunched over, and carrying a tray loaded down with a kettle, four mugs,

spoons, and a few small milk cartons. We all sat down, fixed our tea, and began to talk.

"What have been up to today?" Bill asked Gee.

"Oh, I've just been working in the studio. I was rather hoping no one would come today," Gee replied, "been working on a new book about knots," and she paused to place her hand softly on Bill's forearm, "I've got a few pages you can read if you'd like."

Bill nodded a reply while sipping some tea with a slight slurping sound.

I, on the other hand, gulped down a large mouthful, and felt the hot tea burn all the way down my throat. I suddenly felt invasive and uninvited (which, I suppose I totally was), so I rushed to tell Gee, "Well, I can finish this tea and move on. I certainly don't want to impose."

"Oh no, it's fine, don't worry. The house is open, so we've got to always be ready for visitors," she replied, "we have lots of empty beds, no one else is here now, though we are expecting a few people tomorrow. A workshop for kids' art. But you can stay for one night."

"Well, ok," I answered somewhat sheepishly, "do you still get visitors often?"

"Nearly everyday, yeah," Gee answered, nodding her head slightly.

"What about fan mail?" Tom asked.

"Ah…" Gee's voice grew soft, "some, yeah. I've been writing recently to this American in prison about Crass, and he just got out, so I'm going to send him some

stuff. But nothing like the old days when we'd get bags and bags. We used to have a whole day once a month when we'd all sit in the kitchen and answer it all."

"Well, I mean, that what it's all about isn't it? I mean, that showed that Crass was for real," Tom said.

"I just think it's rude not to answered a letter. It's different with email when you get loads of nonsense, but letters are different," Gee answered, sounding more pedagogical than radical.

"Does anyone mind if I smoke?" Tom asked as he removed some crinkling loose papers and a small bag of tobacco from his pack.

"Sure, as long as it's not drugs," Gee answered, "we don't allow drugs here."

"No, no, just a cigarette," Tom said as he opened the bag to display the golden tobacco inside, and began rolling a cigarette.

Gee explained further, "Yeah, we don't allow drugs here because we're really sitting targets, always have been. If we'd had drugs here during the Crass days they would've shut us down in five minutes." The imposition of rules at a proclaimed anarchist space is striking in its contradictory oddness, yet she did have a point. Crass had been the subject of state surveillance and meetings of British Parliament in the 1980s.

"Do you still have anything from the Crass years?" I asked hopefully, for this was why I'd come.

"Not much, except the paintings. I've never sought commercial success, and I can't bear to sell any of my work, so I've got it all. Would you like to see them?"

"I love the painting for the Feeding of the 5,000 album cover. It's a painting right? For years I thought it was a collage." I said, growing more eager about the chance to see the original art for the replicated images I've seen thousands of times.

"Yeah, yeah, it's a painting," Gee said, "Oh wait, I don't actually have that one right now, it's loaned to an exhibit on Crass's influence on, oh what's it called? Not punk, but another music sort that's just fast and loud, well noise really…what's it called?"

"Grindcore?" I offered.

"Grindcore!" Gee affirmed with a laugh, "Yeah, that's it. Anyway, that's where the Feeding cover is. But I've got Bloody Revolutions if you'd like to see it later."

"Of course! I'd love that." I replied.

We sat enjoying our tea and the conversation switched to mundane consumer politics as Bill, relaying his recently travel woes stated "these bastard airline companies charge you a fortune, and now they not only make you pay for bags, I heard they won't even allow bags much longer."

"No bags?! How will people travel then," I asked.

"Just carry-ons, that's what we've heard," Gee answered, getting up from her chair, "I've got to let the chickens out." She walked around to the coup, opened the door, and with a burst of youthful energy ran out into the garden, flapping her arms, and saying, "Come on girls." The chickens clucked happily as they followed her, seeking all of our attention by running underneath our legs. Again I was overwhelmed with more farm vibes than punk vibes.

"Can you watch the chickens, I'd like to go work in the studio a bit?" she asked me.

"Sure." And so I sat there, reading Dostoyevsky, occasionally looking up at the hens. What, if anything, could I comfortably call 'punk' in this setting? Was there any similarity I could draw with the punk spaces I typically inhabit? Could I even imagine the thousands of crust punks, street punks, and anarchists I had seen wearing the Crass logo on their stud jackets, jean vests, and tattooed skin in this scene? Perhaps I had unintentionally been engaged in problematic and uncomfortable essentialism, flattening out my own understanding of what punk was and could be.

"This is luxury with a capital L," Bill said as he reclined further in his lawn chair.

"Yeah, it's really nice here," said Tom, "exactly like I imagined." I didn't respond, but started to remember all that I had read of the place, the people who live here, and the politics represented. I couldn't say that what I found was entirely surprising, yet there was opulence I hadn't expected. Aside from Gee's paintings that she had dug out of crates to show me, there was no visual indication of punk. Crass seemed to be a distant memory at Dial House. Nor was there any signs of radical politics aside from the words that dripped out of the residents' mouths. I was mistaken to expect them to be wearing their politics on their sleeves.

"How do you know about this place? Just from Crass?" Bill asked.

"Yeah," Tom answered, "when I was a kid I was listening to a lot of punk stuff, but I had really bad taste in music, like the Casualties and stuff. Then some older punks started showing me some better stuff, and introduced my to Crass, Christ: The Album actually. Since then I've been a big fan of Crass."

“How old are you?” Bill asked, raising his eyebrows and leaning forward as if to tell a joke.

“25,” Tom answered.

“Well…” Bill said, but then his voice failed for a moment due to laughter, “they stopped playing in ’84, before you were born.”

“Yeah, me too,” I said, “but they’ve influence so much within punk.”

“They did so much, changed so much, I don’t think there will ever be a band that influential again,” Tom added.

We sat chatting for a while about punk, prisons, and Angela Davis, when suddenly Gee reemerged from the house, asking “Would anyone like to wash some spuds?” Tom and I washed fist size potatoes from the garden while Bill snapped green beans.

“There’s far too much bean being wasted here!” Gee exclaimed as she picked up the discarded ends, “Waste not, want not.” Bill must have been surprised at Gee’s use of this cliché.

“What?” Bill asked in a high tone.

“You don’t need to do the bottom, just the top,” Gee answered, demonstrating on a couple beans for Bill’s benefit.

“Mmmm, alright,” Bill replied in agreement, seeming more surprised than annoyed. Once the beans and spuds were prepared, Gee put these all into the oven, and lead us back outside to assemble firewood. While Bill, Tom, and I were finishing the

assembly of the fire, Gee appeared sheepishly in the doorway, “Andrew, would you like to see these paintings?”

“Aw yeah, that would be great!” I exclaimed.

She led me into a large room with a bare, exposed concrete floor. Overtaking one entire wall of the room were two large wooden desks, covered with miscellaneous sketches, papers, and open books. The rest of the room was open, with only scattered easels and a few filing cabinets. Cans of paint and brushes were scattered in disarray on the floor. There was no lighting in the room aside from the faint yellow beams of sunlight that snuck through the windows.

Gee dug for a moment in a dusty box, pulled out a framed painting, and set it on a counter for me to see. I leaned over the familiar image of Bloody Revolutions to look closely at the brush strokes, and see all of the contextual details that were cut out of the reproduction of this image on the 7” record that was released. It was a black and white painting that from a distant had the realistic quality of a photograph. Queen Elizabeth, the Pope, Lady Justice (from the Old Bailey in London) and Margaret Thatcher stood in street clothes on a graffitied street corner. The building they were leaning on had a graffiti stencil painted on it that had the Crass logo and said, “Who do they think they’re fooling, you?” This stencil was distributed in some of their earlier LPs, and the band encouraged fans to paint them over advertisement. I pictured the album art to Stations of the Crass, which was a photo from a London Underground station that had several Crass graffiti tags on it. The image in Bloody Revolutions, however, was not only political and playfully disrespectful of

institutional figureheads, but also turned a critical eye toward punk itself. The four figures are positioned and clothed in reproduction of a famous Sex Pistols band photo from the time, only with the heads changed to the political figures. The song itself was an indictment of the totalitarian left, a bold stance for punk at the time, but a stance that Crass took in conjunction with their attack on the conservative right.

"Wow, the detail…" was the most intelligent comment I could offer, and with a laugh, "I've always liked the dog here."

"Ah, the Queen's corgi?" Gee asked and joined in my laughter. "I also have this one," she continued as she pulled out her Oh, America painting. This image was a small painting, no larger than a sheet of notebook paper, and was of the famous Statue of Liberty in New York. Only, in this painting, Lady Liberty has her hands covering her face in sorrow while destruction and disarray signified by black, blue, and pink smoke and clouds surround her. It was the cover art for a Crass record that was never released, a recording of a poem imploring the U.S. to cease their warmongering and engage in actual politics of peace. I stood admiring the paintings a bit longer, and finally Gee asked, "Do you do much with art?"

"Uhh," my voice went up as I hesitated, "I play music, that's it really. As far as painting and drawing go, I mean, I've tried it, I'm just not very good at it." I had said these words through uncomfortable chuckling, and when I was finished, Gee laughed at my response. The adjustment of her eyes may have been in response to the low lighting change, though to me it seemed to suggest a kindness mixed with an anti-elitism which finds humor in my reluctance to claim art for myself.

Eventually, our dinner of beans, potatoes, and vegetarian pies was ready, and we sat in front of the fire eating. Aside from the peaceful deep, relaxing breath of the rustling of the leaves blown in the trees, the hissing and popping of the firewood, and the gentle buzzing of bees, there was an occasional sonic interruption that violently imposed itself upon our conversation. Loud bangs rang out in a short sequence, and each time they did I expected to see a bird fall into the garden, or morbidly into my lap.

"Now that it's dark, I'm not walking back to the bus stop. With all these damn hunters, I don't wanna get shot!" I said.

"Oh, they're not hunters, those are bird-scarers. When you hear one, wait just a minute more and you'll hear another. Yeah, the farmer puts them out there." Gee explained.

I breathed a sigh of relief that we weren't actually surrounded by guns. It also provided an interesting metaphor for thinking through aesthetic experience, i.e. the visual splendor of the unspoiled fields brought about in part because of the sonic violence of these devices.

"What is it you're writing, about anarchist music?" Gee asked me, to which I responded that week's version of my project, some amalgamation of Nietzsche, Foucault, Marx, aesthetics, authenticity, resistance to normative power relations, etc. She told me she didn't know Foucault, but had read some of the other writers I mention, but with some reluctance.

"I don't like just believing any writer. Not entirely anyway. Just like history, I don't believe in history," she told us. "For if you look at accepted history, it's all bollocks. Just like I don't believe in revolutions, because, well, they always go wrong don't they? They aren't about the people when it's all said and done."

"As far as I'm concerned, you have to start with your own life," I replied, "but when I read Kropotkin, I have to admit I still get excited about revolution."

"Sure, yeah, you do have to start with yourself, but then you have to look to the people," Gee answered, getting up to discard her plate on the far end of the table. Bill had fallen asleep on his chair, but jerked awake as Gee walked by.

"Oh, sorry love," Gee said, "didn't mean to wake you."

"It's alright," Bill answered, "I think I'll turn in."

"Would you like to stay in the caravan, or would you like a room inside?" Gee asked.

"I'll have a room inside thanks," Bill answered, "is my old room available?"

"Yeah, and there's some books in there if you want," Gee said.

"I do have some trouble sleeping sometimes. I usually only sleep three-four hours a night," Bill said, "but I brought some books as well. Goodnight."

"Goodnight," was the chorus that Gee, Tom, and I answered.

Bill went inside while Tom and I began to gather soiled dishes and carry them inside the house. We washed the dishes and turned in, and the rain never did come.

In a way, my visit seemed very similar to seeing old friends or distant relatives. I was welcomed, given a meal and a bed, and had some chores to do (voluntarily of course). Yet, this was not the home of people I knew, but only knew

of. I had been welcomed just as the reputation of the place had promised. I felt hopeful, if perplexed, upon leaving. It seemed like a sort of sanctuary more than a radical space. I certainly could not see any societal changes coming out of here. The residents of Dial House had certainly changed their own lifestyles, though they weren't as 'off the grid' as I had imagined. They still had utility payments, which I was made aware of when Tom asked to bathe and was told that hot water was too expensive. But, they had avoided the corporate world as much as anyone I had met. They seemed to live on their own terms, even if these terms were offensive to others or inconsistent with what more hardline anarchists might accept. I began to wonder how many countless other visitors had come here and felt similarly, and I wonder how many anonymous lives may have been changed by the simplest of country pleasures at Dial House.

Yet, as I was riding the train back into London, I also considered what a privileged space it was, for Dial House is actually owned by the residents. This was no small house, nor small tract of land. Authentic living as defined by these folks would be limited to those with access to an incredible amount of resources, support, and let's face it, money. How available would this type of lifestyle resistance be to anyone that doesn't come from a privileged, wealthier background? I sat in the Tube pondering Murray Bookchin's critique of lifestyle anarchism, and tried to figure out ways to reconcile such anarchist withdrawal with the goals of revolutionary societal change.





(Images above/below from Dial House & Garden, photos taken 2013-2016)


LOVE
IS ALL
OR
LOVE IS
NOT AT ALL


WELCOME





***Life* Style & Existential Joy**

Thus was my first encounter with Gee Vaucher and the autonomous space of Dial House. The relief of finding the space should be apparent in the narrative above, demonstrating the difficulty in traversing the transit system and locating the house. Later, in a discussion of the privilege inherent in the space of Dial House, I will return to a discussion of what this rural withdraw might mean in terms of the residents, visitors, and perceptions of both the space and the people there. As you will see in sections below, in the years that followed I returned to and resided at Dial House on multiple occasions. Throughout their existence, Crass held a reputation of 'really meaning it' when they often refer to anarchy and peace in their creative expressions,

and the positioning of the space of Dial House has no small part in the construction of this reputation. In a certain sense, one could even make the claim that Rimbaud and Vaucher (and other members to a lesser extent) have truly dedicated their lives to the functioning of this space and a lifestyle of sharing, more so than any particular endeavor easily classified as 'art,' or as Rimbaud describes it, "a sort of life *form*."[888] Every detail, down to the matching black clothes Crass members wore on stage, was a reflection of their solidarity in rejecting society. These clothes, for instance, were worn in an attempt to subvert the cult of personality thrust upon 'leaders' in many punk bands, as uniform aesthetics retained a bit of anonymity for band members, while focusing attention on the messaging rather than the 'front' person.[889] Yet, these black clothes were often criticized as presenting the group as aggressive, macho, or fascist, which they constantly battled against (eventually even adding a dove to their logo so that it's room for such misinterpretation was minimized.[890]

At the risk of sounding cliché, we could more accurately claim that life can be understood as an art, and Vaucher and Rimbaud exemplify this in their efforts at the open house, drawing no major distinction between the Dial House project and the other creative endeavors. As Vaucher describes,

> Apart from my two years in New York City, I have lived all my adult life at Dial House which, being an 'open house,' has been and continues to be an extraordinarily broadening experience. It hasn't always been easy, but I've

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[888] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 84. Emphasis added.
[889] Peter, B. 1980. "A Different Way of Thought and Vision (Alternative Reasoning from Steve Ignorant of Crass," *Sometimes it's Worth Living*, No. 1, p. 4.
[890] For examples of Crass's response, see Ian & Stuart, April 1981. "Crass Interview," *Pigs for Slaughter*, Pilot issue, p. 7. Peter, B. 1980. "A Different Way of Thought and Vision (Alternative Reasoning from Steve Ignorant of Crass," *Sometimes it's Worth Living*, No. 1, p. 3.

> certainly learned a lot about how to be with myself and other people. It's back to the psychological, philosophical, and moral dilemma that we are all faced with, but at Dial House it has always been within a very intense context. How do we live together respecting differences yet remaining ourselves? How do we take responsibility for our own actions if they conflict with another's? How can we move away from what most people seem to see as the natural human behavior of self-interest, past and future? Dial House has been a fantastic experiment in human relationships, one that I continue to contribute to and learn from.[891]

Throughout the remainder of this project, therefore, interludes returning to dialogues in this space will be an important aspect both in the explication of Crass's ideology, the mythos built around them in international punk scenes, and critique. The space of Dial House figures largely as a character in this telling as well, as it occupies not only the material space in agrarian Essex, but also the imaginative space of many punks, poets, and activists.

Ultimately, Crass can be seen as more than a band or an assemblage of likeminded artists and radicals. Instead, Crass may best be understood as an experiment in lifestyle as performance. The members of Crass created a long-form performative project demonstrating possibilities and potentialities of autonomous human life. All portions of the Crass project, from the ideologies of vegetarianism, pacifism, and anarchism, to the visual, literary, and auditory aesthetics of shock, to the organic gardening, and the open house hospitality policy contributed to an overarching narrative of an entire lifestyle that could potentially be replicated for those seeking alternative modes of existence and social relations. Whether or not this lifestyle performance piece was deliberately done is a site of contention, with

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891 Macphee, Josh and Reuland, Erik (ed.s) 2007. *Realizing the Impossible: Art Against Authority*. Oakland: AK Press, p. 75.

indications pointing to multiple interpretive possibilities; either Crass was intentionally established as an ongoing and multifaceted performance piece with each aspect carefully planned in advance, or Crass developed into such a holistic performance over time with or without intentionality, or Crass only appears as a what I am calling a lifestyle performance retroactively—that is, only through interpretive moves that impose a narrative of connective tissue that may not have been there in the moment.

What is undeniable, however, is that Crass certainly attained a *reputation* of authenticity based upon their life choices. So much of the weight that Crass has carried in punk spaces has been derived from precisely this perception; that Crass not only espoused radical beliefs, but they put them into practice. For others, the lifestyle performance was perplexing, for a variety of reasons (practicality, the relative 'strangeness' of vegetarianism in the U.K. in the 20th century, etc.). Beyond these, as Crass biographer George Berger has argued, there sometimes appears to be a contradiction between the anger of Crass aesthetics and the joy of Crass members (similar to the utopian/dystopian contradictions they present), "I could never quite reconcile the difference between the harsh Crass rhetoric and the gentle people in Crass. Frankly, you'd expect Crass to be aggressive and confrontational as people, but they were—and are—lovely. Deliberate Dada contradiction? Maybe."[892]

[892] Gallix, Andrew. September 14, 2007. "A Pint and a Molotov Cocktail: An Interview with George Berger," *3:AM Magazine*. Web: http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/a-pint-and-a-molotv-cocktail-an-interview-with-george-berger/ Last Accessed 09/08/2017.

As mentioned above, the very possibility of a free and open house, with a bed and dinner guaranteed for all comers has many possibilities. Here we truly have a Nowherian actuality, what William Morris and his mentor John Ruskin would refer to as hospitality from a bygone age, "before it was bought and sold."[893] Rather than charging rent, demanding labor or trade, or some other financial transaction, the open invitation at Dial House is actually open. Here a weary traveler can quite literally sing for their supper if they so choose. Of course, whatever craft or skill their travelers may bring with them is most welcome, and hence the occupants of Dial House have also gained, in terms of learning new recipes, gardening tips, and even construction and landscaping work. No one is forced to pitch in with their labor, however, but folks often volunteer.

Beyond the availability of such a space, what is also striking about Dial House is that there is a true effort at equality. To be welcomed and spoken to like an equal was clearly a new experience for the young Steve Ignorant, and it made such an impression that he returned as a young adult and would stay for over two decades.

> How did Dial House work? Easy. Consideration for others…Everybody pulled together, and cut each other some slack, and it all worked. I never remember anyone turning to someone else and saying *Pull your weight*—we just did. It was a shared workload, a shared lifestyle, but with no rota…but we were never a commune, we were just a bunch of mates living together in the same house. But certain press people jumped on it, and used the commune tag to dismiss us.[894]

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[893] Morris, William and Zabel, Gary (ed.) 1993. *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris*. Boston: George's Hill.
[894] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, pp. 163-164.

The invitation of Dial House is to create one's own self and one's own life.

Originating in the hippie dream of 1960s utopianism, the open house policy takes on the radical event status outlined above by inviting resistance in being. Rather than "being grateful to them [ruling elites] for the privilege of having them rules our lives" by being "slaves" of production, Dial House is a social experiment in ways to reduce the rule of others over our selves.[895] By offering a reprieve (either temporary for visitors, or more long term for residents) from the insistence upon exploited labor, taxation burden towards the war economy, and the sexual and social mores of 'normal' or 'mainstream' society, the Dial House community positions itself as somewhere "people could be somebody that society could never allow them to be: themselves."[896]

Beyond the eight years of writing, recording, and performing with Crass, Rimbaud has dedicated the entirety of his adult life to hospitality and the pursuit of philosophical insight. All too often, however, written and filmic documentaries of Rimbaud focus entirely upon his role in Crass, with little attention (if any) to the breath of his intellectual project. His founding of Dial House as a space of artistic exploration and open hospitality is often presented as an outgrowth of the anarchist principles of Crass, when in fact the kernel of Crass was an outgrowth of the lifestyle

[895] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 152.
[896] Ibid, p. 151.

experiment at Dial House. The aesthetics and thought of Rimbaud cannot be neatly separated from the space at Dial House.[897]

> I was [in the summer of 1977] working on a long poetic rant called *Christ's Reality Asylum*, an attack on everything which, according to family, church, and State, I was supposed to hold dear: that being the State, the church, and the family. I'd tried the nice approach, buying into the Beatles' 'all you need is love', but I'd found it lacking. It was something I wanted to believe, and still do, but against the stifling repressive nature of middle-English morality it was hard to see what future it might have. Increasingly I was seeing the stratification of class as nothing but State legitimized brutal-ity, a metaphoric mustard gas rolling across the green hills of Blake's *Jerusalem*…I was in the process of desperately attempting to shed the silken skin of privilege, my oh-so-nice social conditioning, fighting off the benign, wearing an ancient gas mask against the intrigue."[898]

Paradoxically, Dial House is certainly a space of performance, in as much as it is a demonstration of hospitality (indeed, Rimbaud hoped it would be viewed as an inspirational model for others to replicate across England), yet Rimbaud insists that it is a resistance to the theater of everyday life.

> How one manifests as a physical being…is a piece of theater…Part of the concept of the 'open house,' was to *do away* with as much of the theater as possible. One does that by saying, 'As far as it is possible, this is an *unconditional* situation. By saying that it's unconditional, you're not defining parameters of the theater which people would enter into upon entering the door. The moment you start creating any form of restriction, then effectively you are creating a stage, a platform, for people to behave in—in other words, with limitations, a *script*.[899]

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[897] He also told me that he is attempting to establish some sort of committee of like-minded folks to continue the open house after his death, seeming simultaneously concerned that the space wouldn't be open to others and that what he likely conceives of as the greatest part of his legacy dying with him. He has discussed this some in print. Cf. Meghan. April 11, 2013. "The Heavy Mental Interview with Penny Rimbaud of Crass," *CVLT Nation*. Web: http:www.cvltnation.com/the-heavy-mental-interview-with-penny-rimbaud/ Last Accessed 05/08/17.

[898] Crass. 1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP. Rimbaud notes in reissue 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

[899] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, pp. 75-76. Emphasis in original.

Yet, Dial House is no simple hippie commune, nor is it a site of Timothy Leary inspired hallucination. Resistant to the idea of a commune, Rimbaud is clear that such a label as 'open house' doesn't come loaded with the ideological baggage (or expectations) of a label like 'commune.' Rimbaud writes,

> The house was never somewhere where people dropped out, it was more somewhere where people could drop in and realize that, given their own space and time, they might be able to create their own lives. I wanted to offer a place where people could be somebody that society could never allow them to be: themselves…[a] vision of the world where the people took back from the State what the State had taken from the people. Squatting had its roots in our way of thought. Why should we have to pay for what was rightfully ours? Whose world was this?"[900]

He describes the formation of the band as a random assemblage, from bassist Pete Wright, who "quite simply appeared in the garden one day," to the rhythm guitarist Andy Palmer, "who over his seven years with the band resolutely avoided learning anything at all about the instrument he so effectively played, turned up with a nicked guitar and in a rather plummy way demanded to join. Who were Steve or myself to object?"[901]

The idea was to live life as autonomously as possible, almost akin to Hakim Bey's Temporary Autonomous Zone (T.A.Z.) discussed earlier, but in this removal, and focus on the individuals' lives, the larger societal problems could be resisted at the micro level. Somewhat surprisingly, Rimbaud claims that such attempts at autonomy are actually about reclaiming the simplistic, and 'easy' things in human life, "easy for most people in the western world actually means difficult. Easy is

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[900] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, pp. 151.
[901] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

making your own bread, cutting the wood, being your own doctor, being your own psychiatrist, being your own all of these things where we've given away our own power. To have your own power is a massive existential responsibility."[902]

Of course, the biggest problem with this, as with much of Rimbaud's thought, is that regardless of the fact of their lives dedicated to sharing and caring, there is an immense level of privilege inherent in such a lifestyle. But the presence of privilege doesn't necessarily negate radicalism or philosophical insight, especially when it is acknowledged. In a sense, every critique that we can level at Thoreau, questioning the sincerity and efficacy of his Walden 'resistance' can be applied to Rimbaud, Vaucher, and Dial House, yet this isn't a privilege that they deny. Rimbaud has repeatedly emphasized that he has lived his life in an attempt to negate, or share, this privilege.[903] So, we reach a point of paradox, that the group that came to represent radicalized punks in Britain were at the same time benefiting from the conservative system of class striation and white privilege. Rimbaud agrees,

> People sometimes accuse me of living a privileged life. I would agree that I have lived a privileged life. I've been privileged by the earth, and I've been privileged by doing something that's very, very rare nowadays for Western humankind. I've lived on the same piece of earth for nearly half a century…One attempts to share his or her knowledge because in sharing that knowledge one possibly creates the political atmosphere that is necessary to make any of those large-scale adaptations if they're going to be made.[904]

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[902] Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 152.
[903] BBC TV Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3-vdvt0mLE&index=5&list=RDUb5cY8XgOVc "Crass Interview 1984," *Mucilage* zine, Issue 2. Cf. April 2014. RBMA Radio Interview, "Crass' Penny Rimbaud on graffiti, jazz, and John Lennon," Red Bull Music Academy Daily. Web: http://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2014/04/crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17.
[904] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, pp. 83-84.

Our challenge is to think with and through such thinkers and artists, acknowledging their complexities and paradoxes, while resisting the impulse to ascribe authoritarian weight to their words and ideas.

Rimbaud undoes much of the academic pursuit of philosophy by denigrating the hierarchical and elitist habits of academic citation and superficial validation of ideas based upon bookish conservatism. He challenges not only our conclusions, but also the typical (and exclusionary) methodologies by which we arrive at them, combining often contradictory principles from existentialism, Zen, jazz improvisation, anarchy, libertinism, and libertarianism. His influences, he describes, range from poets like Allan Ginsberg, Arthur Rimbaud, Wilfred Owen, and Charles Baudelaire to Zen sutras, to novelists Gary Snyder and Ernest Hemingway, to thinkers such as Lou Salomé, Francoise Sagan, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and others.[905]

The first thing taking his writing seriously does is to open up an exploration of his work not merely as the premier philosopher of punk culture, but as an original and complex thinker of art, love, and existence. But beyond this, engaging Penny Rimbaud pushes us beyond any expectation of a holistic philosophical system, and instead makes its most important claims through tension, contradiction, paradox, and play, as he says in his autobiography *Shibboleth*, "Ideas exist to be contradicted. He is no more tied down to a label as a thinker than he is as a musician or beatnik, hippie,

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[905] April 2014. RBMA Radio Interview, "Crass' Penny Rimbaud on graffiti, jazz, and John Lennon," Red Bull Music Academy Daily. Web: http://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2014/04/crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17. Cf. Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*.

or punk. Answers exist to be questioned," and ultimately challenges us by stating "if life is a game, then let's play it."

> I do not accept the Buddhist ideas of rebirth or the essentially moralistic view that we are on some kind of life test which, if we're good, we'll come back next time one degree better, or if we're bad we'll suffer for it in the next round. It all stinks a little to me of the Christian heaven and hell syndrome. Neither do I accept the Buddhist view that life is suffering: the Christian reflection of this is the notion of inherited guilt. I do, however, believe that we get from life what we give to life, which is a form of karmic law within the one lifetime we have.[906]

In *The Last of the Hippies* (republished in the liner notes of *Christ: The Album*) and *Shibboleth*, Rimbaud offers insight into post-war youth cultures and the structures they came up against. A large portion of the *Last of the Hippies* text is dedicated to telling the story of Rimbaud's close friend Phil Russell, aka Wally Hope, whose death at the hands of British mental health professionals and cultural legacy was a primary motivator (along with their perception of the dis-ingenuousness of the Pistols and the Clash) for the establishment of Crass. The death of Wally Hope also demonstrated to Rimbaud that hegemonic power relations and state apparatuses would not respect the dream he had of autonomy and decency. This revelation inspired a change in course, and in tactic, "it was a dream, but reality was based on thousands of dreams of the past; was it so silly for me to want to add mine to the future?"[907]

Beyond this case evidence, however, are some crucial insights into Rimbaud's goals with Crass, aesthetically and politically.

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[906] Meghan. April 11, 2013. "The Heavy Mental Interview with Penny Rimbaud of Crass," *CVLT Nation*. Web: http:www.cvltnation.com/the-heavy-mental-interview-with-penny-rimbaud/ Last Accessed 05/08/17.

[907] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 61.

> Despite what the followers of Oi or Marx might say, rock'n'roll cannot be pigeonholed to fit into any specific political ideology. It is the collective voice of the people, all the people, not just a platform for working class mythology, left, right, or centre. Rock'n'roll is about freedom, not slavery. It's about revolution of the heart and soul, not convolution of the mind. To say that punk is or should be 'working class' is to falsely remove it from the classless roots of the 'rock revolution' from which it grew. Punk is a voice of dissent, an all out attack on the whole System. It as much despises working class stereotypes as it does middle class one.[908]

Rimbaud's central claims regarding political ontology can be summed up in the final phrase of *Yes Sir, I Will*, as well as the banner that adorned many a Crass performance, that is, "There is no Authority but Yourself." In essence, this claim reverses that typical radical focus on the ways and means of resisting the institutions of the state and capitalism, and instead positions these very institutions as resistant forces.

> Nearly all major advances in society have been made by people who are criticized, ridiculed, and often punished in their own time, only to be celebrated as great thinkers years after their deaths…we [have] come ever closer to a world of hacked about and chemically possessed Mr. and Mrs. Normals whose only purpose in life will be to mindlessly serve the System. From then on, cultural progress will cease and the mind-fuckers will finally have won their battle against the human spirit.[909]

In other words, Rimbaud inspires us to ask what it would mean for us politically if instead of asking how we can resist the state and capital, we begin to recognize that in a fundamental sense, it is rather the state and capital that resists us. He writes in *Shibboleth*, "Why look to the State to solve our problems?...Forget them. Forget us.

[908] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Last of the Hippies: An Hysterical Romance*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 27.
[909] Ibid, p. 63.

Look to yourself; all else is social connivance."[910] More recently, he built upon this radical individualism, claiming, "quite regardless of our singular philosophies, freedom simply is. It cannot be created because it already exists absolute, and thus cannot be recreated. Equally, it cannot be found because it was never lost, If we choose not to see it, then, in an act of denial, we have chosen not to see it."[911]

This can also be seen in the pre-Crass *The Diamond Signature*. *The Diamond Signature* interweaves elements of existential philosophy, travel dialogue, poetic exploration, and desperate erotica. The reality of *The Diamond Signature* is mutable, variously over-determined and undetermined, and at times even indecipherable. Rimbaud had undertaken a cross-continental journey across the U.S., following the spirits of his two literary heroes Kerouac and Whitman. In his multiple erotic encounters, he begins to unravel the systemic searching for order out of what he describes as "fabulous chaos." Though he believes this order is built upon falsity, he is envious of it. He inadvertently echoes Lacan-via-Žižek by arguing that he knows very well the utter depravity and vacuous construction of order, yet he still acts as if there were some peace to be found in stability.

Ultimately, he outlines what he calls his "Savage Utopia," which seems to be part Sade, part Nietzsche, and part Freud (with a dash of Sartre for good measure).

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[910] Rimbaud, Penny. Ratter, J. J. 1999. *The Diamond Signature & the Death of Imagination*. San Francisco: AK Press, p. 298. One afternoon at tea, after I brought up some passage in *The Diamond Sutra,* Rimbaud told me that he got his title in part from that Zen text, and the 'signature' part from a legend of Frank Sinatra's table made of hashish in which his guests would get their hash to smoke by carving their names into the table.

[911] Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press. Penny Rimbaud's L'Académie Des Vanités. 2016. *Yes Sir, The Truth of Revolution*. CD.

This savage utopia, however, is no construction, not simply a Blochian critique of the present, but is instead the present itself. He writes,

> Savage Utopia. Such perfect harmony. Such idyllic peace. Such profound unity. All the forces of opposition have been neatly destroyed…Tomorrow belongs to me. Today. Savage Utopia. The names are now numbers, all forgotten in the executioner's smile…There is no need to educate, the agreements have already been made, the answers found. The institutions confirm…Savage Utopia. And there is no doubting of self. Doubt has been outlawed. In any case, there is no self but oneself: one self. Savage Utopia. And there is no voice of dissent. 'But' is a concept that never existed. 'No' is a heresy against the New Order. Savage Utopia. Mine, all mine…But this is no dream, friend, no idle fantasy. Look now, it is already surrounding you.[912]

We see the utopian aspirations of fascism in this description, for all of the emphasis is on harmony, peace, and consensus, and who would dare argue against such lofty ideals. The problem, as Rimbaud outlines it here, and as we saw above, has been more systematically described by Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Murray Bookchin, and others, is that consensus-based politicking precludes opposition. Instead, perhaps, we should emphasize difference, disagreement, and dis-sensus, rather than erasing the possibilities of them through a falsely formed fascistic fantasy of all-encompassing order. But, we needn't despair, for even as dismal as this contemporary savage utopia may be, given its disingenuous nature as well as the reality of chaotic change, this present will not be permanent. Nietzsche 'creative destruction' can be heard in Rimbaud's poem "Timorous as First Day," in the declaration that "creation and apocalypse are one."[913] What will be created and destroyed in Rimbaud's 'savage utopia' are nothing less than that which is also

[912] Rimbaud, *Diamond Signature*, pp. 174-5.
[913] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Universal Other (of which I am one and a part): A Collection of Poems*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 255.

shattered by Zarathustra's laughter—contemporary mores and limitations inherited by moderns from Christian morality.[914] "My destruction of moral sensibility defies your crass sentimentality, yet I raise no banner."[915]

Dial House and its art are an attempt to shift the tide, to move away from the reclusive removal from the violent system, and towards an engagement with it, yet importantly not to "raise" such an ideological "banner" as one typically expects such spaces to have. Rimbaud once told me that in response to what he calls the savage system, or their "historical hysteria", he had established Dial House as a sort of hippie utopia, where, "there was nothing to do but tend the apple tree and write beautiful poetry. But of course, there was more to do." In *Shibboleth*, Rimbaud describes this effort to do more, "Our creativity was our greatest weapon, and I believed that we should use that creativity to prepare for a new world. Wasn't it time to start creating our own future?"[916] This question he poses right before delving into the creation of Crass.

But at a deeper level, Rimbaud's foray into existential epistemology leads to a radical skepticism that only Zen offers him a reprieve from. "There is no authority but ourselves, from the nothing of pre-consciousness we create the something which is also the everything."[917] "Conjuncture is the only acceptable reality. All else is

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[914] Rimbaud, Penny. 2012. *America, and how! Tales from the New World 1973-2012*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 76. Cf. *Shibboleth,* p. 283-4.
[915] Rimbaud, Penny. 2007. *And Now it Rains: A Series of Poems 2005-2007*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 87.
[916] Rimbaud, *Diamond Signature*, P. 244
[917] Rimbaud, Penny. 2010. *This Crippled Flesh: A Book of Philosophy and Filth*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 299.

fact."[918] "The world around us was defined and limited by one thing alone; our own imagination. All else was pure speculation. How could we positively know anything at all prior to our experience of it?"[919] Imagination is positioned as a central *institution* in consciousness, life, and politics.

In the novels and poems, Rimbaud's internal rage and struggle with existence seems to only find satiation in the release of unbridled eroticism, in both love and lust. He embraces, though doesn't always cite, the Dionysian spirit so celebrated by Nietzsche. The Dionysian spirit that flows through Rimbaud shares more with the erotic excesses of Georges Bataille than the bald laughter of Nietzsche, but absent the joyful violence of either. Yet, there is also an underlying theme of kindness in these writings, as a sort of not-fully-fleshed-out acknowledgement of the "external world as set of attitudes…the world is simply what we bring to it," and that if this set of attitudes could somehow be less abstract, less manipulated by the perversions of power, than a natural goodness could come to the fore.

> I think that people are inherently good and I don't mean that in the value sense, they're inherently kind and I do believe that. I've never met anyone who isn't, even if I detest their political views or their social behavior, it doesn't remove their essential kindness. I mean, Jack the Ripper thought he was being kind by killing whores. That's not my line, but it's part of the same point. [920]

There are obvious problems and difficulties with this flattening of human action and belief in a human nature of sorts. Violence is seemingly excusable (or at least

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[918] Ibid, p. 116.
[919] Ibid, p. 263.
[920] Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 156.

explainable), if it is done according to some sense of kindness? Surely not, and Rimbaud's continued dedication to pacifist non-violence suggests his own long-standing skepticism towards the use of violence. Yet, this belief in the essential and universal goodness of humanity contributes not just an optimistic gloss on pacifism, but also a problematic shift into false equivalency. This false equivalency is also ironically thwarted by Crass's own activities, for why else decry corporate profiteering and state violence if their intentions are all excusably kind? "Between left and right there is a universe."[921]

Crass hence became a vehicle for Penny's existential experimentation, as well as Steve Ignorant's stand "against what he felt was wrong with this land," Gee Vaucher's stunning visuals immolating iconoclastic collage, and Eve Libertine's desperate feminist scream, among others. They saw punk as something that could be used for wider exposure of their ideas and their lifestyle choices.[922] This seeking for authenticity, which Rimbaud never claims punk succeeded in, he views as connected to any number of attempts before or after punk, such as beatnik, hippie, or rave. Yet, despite these efforts, punk too fails all too often. I will return to Rimbaud's particular critiques of punk in a moment, but remember this is no new thing, for even back in 1977, Crass was already singing that "punk is dead, it's just another cheap product for the consumer's head."[923]

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[921] Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 162.
[922] "Surely, punk wasn't just music, it was a way of thought? Surely, it wasn't a fad, it was a way of being?...Punk was a statement of authenticity that couldn't be adopted as the flavor of the month," (*Shibboleth*, pp. 71-73).
[923] Crass, *Feeding of the 5,000*.

"Suddenly we were declared leaders of the anarchist movement and we didn't know fuck all about anarchism. That's not why we put a big A on there, it was about how we were living our lives at the time."[924] Here again, we mustn't take him at his word, for Crass's records clearly and consistently declared a desire for anarchy and peace. Indeed, they seem to do everything within their ability in their songs to take seriously the calls for anarchy that they saw as empty and vapid in the Sex Pistols's rock n' roll. Yet, what is importantly contained in Penny's and Gee's consistent denial of the anarchist label is that they both retained discomfort at the idea of being leaders—i.e. they maintained non-hierarchical sympathies—which we must ask if this leadership dilemma is actually an indication of good anarchist tendencies. But beyond this discomfort, what is crucially contained within the denial of being anarchist leaders is a denial of anarchism as a set ideological position. As Penny also told me, "Anarchism is just another institution."

Instead of institutions, Rimbaud pushes us to think about our inner lives, for him particular to meditation, rather than what he cites as the materialist deception of existentialism and anarchism. Perhaps the best example of the swirling ontology of Rimbaud was his rewrite of the Crass album *Yes Sir, I Will* for performance at the 2014 Rebellion festival (described at the opening of this chapter). The performance consisted of a poetic script, and improvisational instrumentation.

[924] This sentiment is echoed by Rimbaud and Vaucher in many works. Cf. Crassical Collection (CD Remasters) liner notes. Oey, Alexander. 2006. *There is No Authority but Yourself*. Submarinechannel, Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep.

> I thought focusing on the word 'love' would be as radical this time as *Yes Sir* was said to be at the time. [that is, love instead of anger] I think the problem is ourselves. I've gone beyond the blame game. But I only accomplished about ¾ of the re-write that I wanted to, re-inject something new about love into the movement that has become quite static. But there was a lot of us vs. them type stuff in the original that if I took it all out, it wouldn't be anything resembling the first one…This time I tried instead of passion and anger to do it with compassion and love. At Rebellion, which is a sort of massive, very traditionalist event, the most radical thing to do would be to inject love. I've found that if instead of saying, 'you fucking bastard,' you say well, you're a person. It actually makes a stronger argument…["whereas passion is the love of force, compassion is the force of love"]…But we'll see, it hasn't rippled yet. I haven't yet been attacked as a traitor to the cause."[925]

This shift also represents the cooperative element held in productive tension with Rimbaud's individualism, echoing the Hegelian dialectics of recognition. "We're mirrors to each other, only seeing in each other what we can see in ourselves."[926]

And though he clearly cares about how his work is received, his connection to the 'cause' of punk rock, at this point is contested at best. Think, for instance, of the fact that although the performance did include Crass staples such as the "Fight War, Not Wars" chant and the "Five Knuckle Shuffle," the instrumentation was owed much more to Rimbaud's first musical love, jazz, than it did to punk. In other words, not even his sonic register is sensible to a strictly punk palate.

Such instrumentation also points to another consistent theme in Rimbaud's life and works, the concept of beauty. Listen to the emphasis on pastoral and poetic beauty in something he once claimed, that

> I've *always* put 'Aesthetic Before Practicality,' which is almost exactly the same phrase. I've always done that. I think it's more important to have a beautiful table with nothing on it (in other words, no food), than food and an

[925] In conversation with author, August 2014.
[926] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 131.

> ugly table, because *I* can't eat in ugliness, whereas I *can* sit and feel joyful in beauty.[927]

In "What Kindly Fairies," he sounds eerily like William Morris at his most romantic, writing, "it is repugnant to me that ugliness might prevail against beauty."[928] Dial House is the living legacy of this mindset, as a great deal of effort is put in there beyond the creative arts its residents produce to the production of floral beauty in the extensive one-acre plot. There is scarcely a wall, piece of furniture, or even planting pot that hasn't been beautified through creative labor. Indeed, an entire book could be written thinking through the house and its garden as the *greatest* collaborative artistic work of the Vaucher-Rimbaud couplet.

For all of these expansive aesthetic endeavors, one of course stands out. Rimbaud has also consistently expressed frustration at his being pigeonholed with and by Crass, despite how prolific he is. This relationship with the legacy of Crass is also a motivating factor in Rimbaud's continued ruminations on the constructed nature of time.[929] Within these musings, Rimbaud embraces a universal chaos far beyond the pop-culture character of anarchy-as-chaos. Indeed, Rimbaud's chaos is defined by uncertainty and flux, and is much more akin to ideas of chaotic quantum physics than any political ideology, or even anarchist orthodoxy. "Permanence is a dogma. Dogma is blindness. There are no constant values because there is no

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[927] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 147.
[928] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Universal Other (of which I am one and a part): A Collection of Poems*. Rochdale: Bracketpress & London: Exitstencil Press, p. 145.
[929] Though this frustration is sometimes hard to reconcile with his continued involvement and participation in Crass related events and interviews. Clearly other members of Crass have decided against continuing their public involvement (or in some cases *any* involvement) in Crass related events and productions.

constancy. All is flux."[930] In Rimbaud's play *The Death of Imagination*, the character Maybe (who shares the stage with only two others—Yes and No) deals with the collision between self and time, "This is a document of self. The silence of self it is me. The sorrow of it is me. The hope is me, the future time, past time, present time, no time is me. Every time, me."[931]

Rimbaud has told me repeatedly of his frustration at punk sentimentality. He has said,

> I do feel a little bit of nostalgia for the punks who are sort of stuck back then and they know it, the Mohicans start to droop. I kind of feel at home with the pissed punk in the doorway because that's who we were working with. But in terms of political relevance, it strikes me as completely cold. The sort of 'I still hate Thatcher' thinking is really useless.

He often feels constrained by punk rock, for the expectation is that his work should continue in this vein. As he describes it, "having to stick to what's written in the bloody script. It gets really tedious." Returning to the reworking of *Yes Sir*, we can hear Rimbaud's exasperation,

> But yes, even our dreams can become institutionalized,
> Becoming a poor parody of themselves, contained by themselves.
> There's no point in just mouthing the words:
> The token tantrums just aren't enough,
> And nor is speed or weed or acting tough.
> We don't need exclusive little tribes and their back-slapping,
> Nor their stand-off vibes all a' bull-crapping.
> Punk spawned another rock'n'roll elite,
> Another bunch of hypocrites out to knock us off our feet,
> Mouthing platitudes just like X factor trash,
> Talking revolution whilst pocketing the cash.
> Just another cheap product for the consumers' head;
> Is it any wonder I once wrote 'Punk is Dead'?

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[930] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 130.
[931] Rimbaud, *Diamond Signature*, p. 235.

As the most consistent critic of punk rock cultures from within, Rimbaud forces upon us the difficult questions we must deal with within our cultural scenes. What has happened to commodify punk? Is punk a commoditized fashion after all? What are we doing besides his so-called "token tantrums" and tough poses? And if, as I hope, we still maintain our radical dreams for punk, how do we stay—or should I say, become once more—politically relevant? How do we avoid letting our political and aesthetic dreams of egalitarianism, autonomy, and yes indeed, anarchy through punk become just another institution, a "poor parody of themselves" or an "exclusive little tribe" that does little more than navel gaze?

Interestingly, Rimbaud decries punk nostalgia and sentimentality, he doesn't go so far as to dismiss all anachronistic aesthetic forms. In fact, he seems to suggest that oppositional aesthetics in the present can be found in the pre-punk avant-garde, and even romanticism,

> The only *real* cultural opposition that can be given to rampant post-modernism is romanticism, which is a form of psychopathy and increasingly regarded as a form of psychopathy. The whole idea of the romantic passions is regarded as being so distasteful in post-modern society, so out of place as to be psychopathic.[932]

This out-of-placeness, I would argue, is again an articulation of something out of time more so than out of place. That is, the cultural opposition Rimbaud sees in romanticism is fundamentally oppositional because of how anachronistic it is. Ultimately, however, this life-as-performance ethic may have led to the

[932] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 65. Emphasis in original.

unsustainability of the Crass band project. The Crass project—though importantly *not* the broader Dial House project of which it was a part—was ultimately unsustainable because it adopted a systematic approach to both critique and cultural production, whereas thinkers like Rimbaud want precisely to *not* be systematic, or even less so dogmatic. After the group had disbanded, they wrote, "We'd lost ourselves and become CRASS."[933] It is understandable that performing every moment of life can become exhausting. As Ignorant explains,

> For fear of selling out, though—or being accused of selling out—I think we took the first steps down a long road where even our best would never be enough. Our motives were great, but we were so focused on *not-being-a-rockstar* that in the end it jumped up and bit us in the arse, because in the end we couldn't move. In the end, we were trying to be so perfect for so many people for so long it became impossible to breathe.[934]

It shouldn't come as much of a surprise that most of the Crass members have left Dial House. Yet, they didn't move away all at once. Andy Palmer, for instance, left even before the band dissolved, while Steve Ignorant stayed another couple decades, and Vaucher and Rimbaud remain. It is also important to indicate yet again that Dial House is inseparably linked to the politico-aesthetic projects of Crass and its members, not only Rimbaud but also Vaucher.

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[933] Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." Contain in the liner notes to Crass. 1986. *Best Before…* (Singles Collection). Crass Records. LP/CD.

[934] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, pp. 169-170. Cf. Gallix, Andrew. September 14, 2007. "A Pint and a Molotov Cocktail: An Interview with George Berger," *3:AM Magazine*. Web: http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/a-pint-and-a-molotv-cocktail-an-interview-with-george-berger/ Last Accessed 09/08/2017.

Gee Vaucher's Beautiful *Monsters*

"The only limitation is our imagination," Penny Rimbaud.[935]



Great Scott (Vaucher in collaboration with pseudonym Banksy)

In her painting *Great Scott*, Gee Vaucher presents us with an idyllic landscape that rests under a hazy grey sky. There is the urban skyline of some indeterminable city in background, standing in looming contrast to the openness of the river basin in the forefront. Is this an imaginary version of the open flatness of the fields adjacent to Dial House, and London in the distance? Wheel tracks in the grassy mud scar the landscape, implying the presence of a large vehicle, perhaps a truck or a tractor. Upon first glance, there appears to be nothing spectacular going on here, just a simple flock of geese flying in an overcast mist. Yet, upon closer examination, we can see fighter

[935] Rimbaud, Penny. 2015. *The Last of the Hippies: An Hysterical Romance*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 86.

jet planes dropping bombs, whose distance makes them appear to be among the geese. Once these jets are seen, the figures in the field that may first appear to be playing now appear to be fleeing violence. This clashing interplay between seemingly ideal space occupied with the worst form of institutionalized violence is a consistent—and often strikingly original—feature of the works of Gee Vaucher.

As a co-founder of the Dial House open house, Gee Vaucher has lived now there for over half a century.[936] Vaucher is an artist not just of media, but also of hospitality, as the house she has shared for so long with Penny Rimbaud is open to all comers—announced and unannounced—and visitors are always welcomed with a cup of tea, a hearty vegetarian dinner, and if available, a bed to stay over in. Somehow finding the time between offering such hospitality, teaching permaculture and organic gardening workshops, holding arts workshops for children, teaching Tai Chi, and various other community activities, she has also thrived as a creative artist in the more conventional sense, exploring a great variety of media and projects during this time, including poetics, prose writing, film, sculpture, and printing/publishing.[937] None of these projects, however, has gained her the notoriety of her painting, most especially those works adorning Crass records. All her work utilizes playfulness with time and context, as she professes, her great love of "mixing in the old with the new" and toying with the familiar to make strange profundities, absurdities, and forms of

[936] Minus a brief stint in New York, that is, and various other travels. Her home has remained Dial House.
[937] Burrows, Alex. December 2, 2012. "Something from Nothing: The Crass Art of Gee Vaucher," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/10865-gee-vaucher-crass-art-interview Last Accessed 05/09/17.

violence and depravation simply ignored or complacently accepted by capitalistic societies.[938]

Vaucher can be viewed as the visual director of Crass, for her work the adorned the covers of six LPs, a compilation LP, and nearly a dozen 7" singles. In this capacity, Gee was as much a member of Crass as any of the musicians, in her words, a "non-playing member of the band…we all had our jobs to do…in the truest sense of the word, we shared the overall experience, and there was no separation."[939] There is an unmistakable quality to these often imitated and widely influential punk paintings, which typically feature a glaringly unusual assembly of figures, often engaged in or revealing the horrors of violence (especially and most often *state* violence), done primarily in a black/white/grey palate. Not only did Crass themselves utilize the same stenciling in many of their own label's releases of other artists, but the white stencil lettering encasing the album art seen on the band's own records has become so proliferated that it is a commonly used indication that the band adopting it is signifying either their anarcho/a politics, or an affinity for Crass specifically. She is also responsible for a film of Crass related material, and the politically relevant and visually visceral footage used as a backdrop for the band during live performances.

The album covers for Crass show a paradoxical consistency *and* break within Vaucher's oeuvre. One the one hand, these images continue the collage styling and the themes Vaucher had already addressed in earlier illustrations (commissioned or

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[938] Vaucher, Gee. 2016. *Introspective*. Essex: Firstsite, p. 80.

[939] Macphee, Josh and Reuland, Erik (ed.s) 2007. *Realizing the Impossible: Art Against Authority*. Oakland: AK Press, p. 71.

otherwise), as well as her work in the subsequent decades since Crass.[940] The first LP released by Crass was adorned with a Vaucher image that swiftly became not only one of the most recognizable visuals within punk, but indeed as an influential rethinking of the importance of so-called 'album art.' Yet, Vaucher by no means invented intricate album art, as this was seen extensively and well documented throughout the 60s and 70s (most especially in psychedelia, prog rock, and heavy metal). She takes this already well-established medium and transforms it from within by repositioning the role in the visual in relationship to the music. Her visuals on record sleeves are not merely compliments to the music contained within the sleeves installed at sale point, but instead a crucial and inseparable part of the overall effect. The visual, the musical auditory, and the written lyrics and poems were all interconnected parts of the piece, and really must be understood in conjunction. The cover art to *Feeding of the 5,000* demonstrates this nicely. Painted in a black and white palate, this original painting makes use of familiar tropes in order to both give the appearance of collage as well as make the familiar strange.

Multiple figures (one of which is Penny Rimbaud, whose face is positioned immediately under the Crass flag) huddle around an open flame for warmth. Women's treatment and representation at the hands of a misogynist society is parodied here, as the feminized subjects depicted are seen as a playful girl, a badly burned mannequin, a dotting mother, and a sexualized bikini-clad admirer clinging to

[940] Such use of collage also indicates one of the primary influences of Dada on Vaucher's work. See Robin Blyn's quotation of "the Dada artist Richard Huelsenbeck suggests, 'simultaneity, bruitism (noise music), and collage are the three stylistic principles to which 'the real Dadaist movement owed its existence.'" Blyn, Robin. 2013. *The Freak-Garde: Extraordinary Bodies and Revolutionary Art in America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 143.

the leg of a uniformed official. The buildings in the background have clearly been subject to either decay, destruction, or both, and though a figure on the far right appears to be working at repairs, the condition of the largest home—missing a portion of its roof—implies that this worker is hopelessly behind, and is perhaps endeavoring at the futile. Did a bomb go off here, implying the consequence of the modern military industrial complex, or are the impoverished people seen here simply subjected to the inevitable inequality and poverty of "rampant capitalism?"[941]



Source: Cover for Crass, *Feeding of the 5,000* (1978)[942]

Images such as this above, most especially those produced for Crass, have the appearance of collage. These images are, in fact, original paintings done to the level

[941] The phrase "rampant capitalism" used here is borrowed from Penny Rimbaud, who explains in the documentary *There is No Authority but Yourself* that Crass took a stand of what would later be dubbed 'globalization,' but lacking this terminology, the band positioned itself against the same phenomenon, but under the banner of resisting "rampant capitalism."

[942] Vaucher, Gee. 2014. *Crass Art & Other Pre Postmodernist Monsters* (2nd Ed.). Epping: Exitstencil Press, p. 34.

of detail expected of photo-realism, and hence embrace the aesthetic of collage through the medium of gauche. Vaucher does occasionally utilize literal cut-up methods of collage, but also produces similar effects by repositioning familiar sites in unfamiliar ways, collaging her way to a new narrative or a new set of questions by transporting these 'ready-mades' into original works, utilizing collage in radical anachronistic fashion.

> Enthused by our apparent successes, she travelled back to join the band as our visual coordinator, designing covers and, later, producing films for show at our performances. The Small Wonder album sleeve for *Feeding* was her first Crass project, created in what was then considered dangerously progressive black and white (in those days the predictably bland products of the music business were as gaudily sleeved as possible, thus creating a sugar-coating for the insipid content within).[943]



Inside illustration for *Penis Envy* (1981)

[943] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

In another of Vaucher's collage pieces, Patricia Allmer and John Sears have pointed to the similarities between the inner poster for *Penis Envy* above and William Blake's *Satan in His Original Glory 'Thou Was Perfect till Iniquity Was Found in Thee*, similarities so pointed that they claim Vaucher has deliberately re-worked Blake here.[944] The allusion to Blake, as with the use of ready made images and collage indicate Vaucher's playfulness with invention, reinvention, and reallocation.

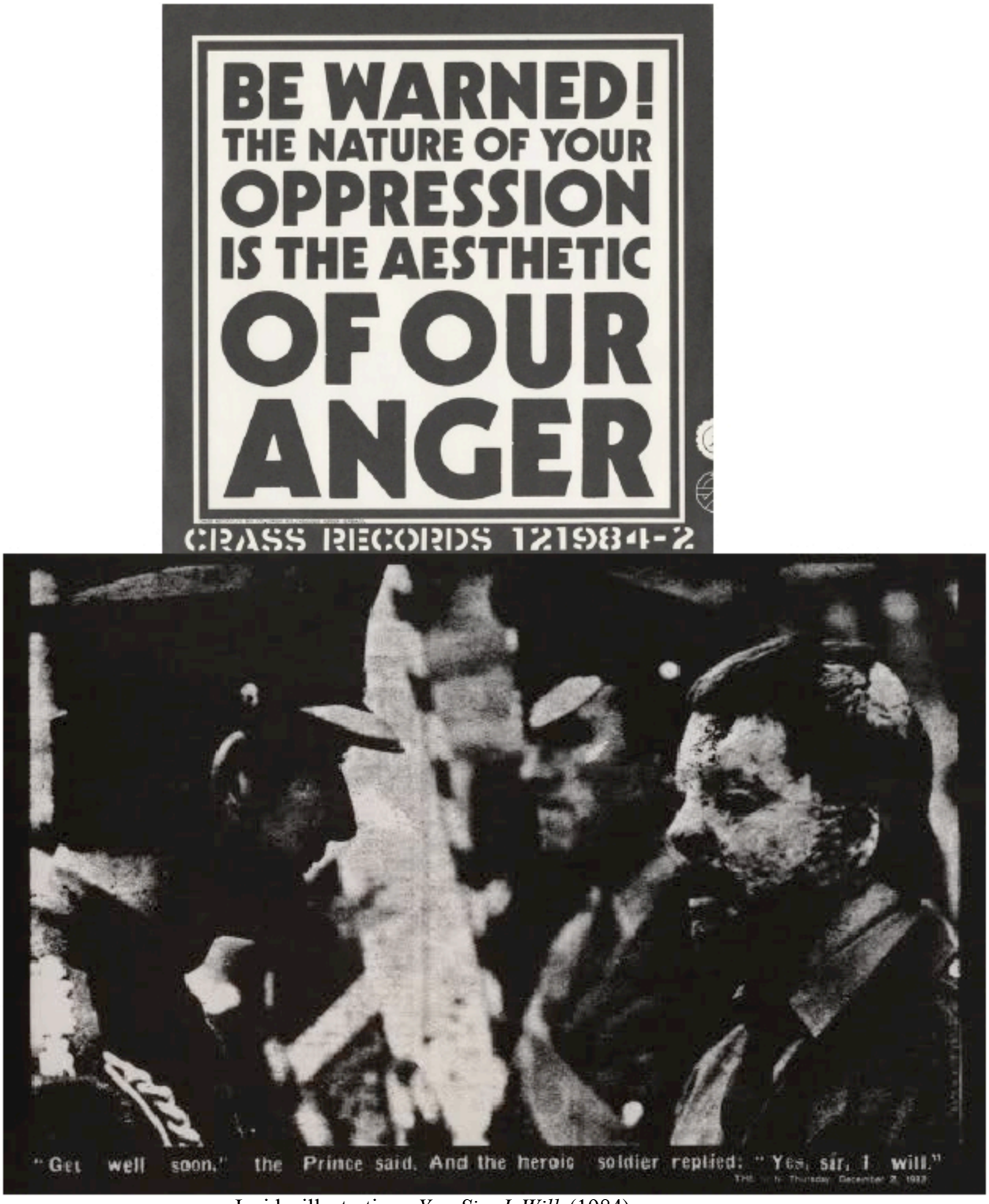
Crass's conceptual album, *Yes Sir, I Will* is focused around issues of violence in warfare, and hence the imagery of death and mutilation that Vaucher designed. The front cover for the album presents a Christ-figure in a crucified position. Depending on which edition and printing of the album one looks at, this figure is presented in the direct center of the sleeve, either in the middle of a sea of white or black. Despite only taking up a small portion of the album sleeve, the figure is so starkly rendered that the eye immediately zeroes in on it. The Christ figure is nailed to a tree and a board in front of what appears to be a large brick building, either a church, a factory, or a train station most likely. The body of the crucified Christ figure, however, has two notable changes from the Christian canon. The first is the face that is replaced by a soldier's face, badly injured from an unnamed incident. The facial dismemberment we see here could have been caused by a bullet, chemical weapons, an explosion, or even a fire. The face is missing a significant amount of flesh, exposing teeth and skull bone. Vaucher bases this injury on real WWI damage. This second bit of evidence that the crucified figure here is a soldier is the medal pinned to his chest, which we

[944] Vaucher, *Introspective*, p. 119.

may assume is the commendation he traded his face for. He is simultaneously being honored and sacrificed here, for he wears his medal on the cross. Why might he be crucified? Several Crass lyrics point to the millions of "Christs" killed by war, and here Vaucher seems to be specifically alerting us to the hypocrisy of a society that worships a crucified figure while also sacrificing its own young men in equally, or even more, horrific ways.



Yes Sir, I Will (1984). Above: Front Cover Below: Back Cover



Inside illustration: *Yes Sir, I Will* (1984)

The inside fold-out illustration shows Prince Charles addressing a Falklands war veteran (Simon Weston) horrifically debilitated with severe burns who apparently answered the prince's insensitive imperative to "get well soon" with the phrase taken for the album's name, "yes sir, I will." The soldier will continue to follow orders, despite his obvious injuries.

Yet, like Rimbaud, Crass is by no means the exclusive outlet for Vaucher. From November 11, 2016 until February 19, 2017, Gee Vaucher held the largest public exhibition of her artistic career. Titled *Introspective*, (rather than the more traditional "Retrospective" typically expected and assigned to such career-spanning shows), the exhibit presented works from over fifty years of artistic production, ranging from paintings, sculpture, film, photography, and collage. Other exhibits have displayed this work with Crass, in the context of punk 'graphics' or 'iconography', and Vaucher's influence on these areas of punk spheres is undeniable.[945] Her most famous work accompanied the sonic onslaught of Crass, but to limit a discussion of Vaucher to this small subset of her work is not only shortsighted, but would also neglect to round out understandings of the Crass pieces as well. As is the case with Penny Rimbaud, Vaucher understands Crass as but one outgrowth of the Dial House project, and so her (and others') broader work has a continuing connection to Crass (even if only as one chapter, one event of expression). Indeed, Vaucher and the

[945] Binns, Rebecca. 2016. "Exhibition Review: *Gee Vaucher: Introspective, Firstsite, Colchester*," *Punk and Post-Punk*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 329.

curators linked these works with others, "linking together bodies of work so that there was a thematic coherence throughout."[946]

So, the Crass paintings and films were displayed in Colchester, but only as one small facet. Instead, the exhibit as a whole brought an impressively wide range of works from the artist, who has never sold any of her works, and hence was able to display decades' worth. In the past, Vaucher has made no secret of her dislike and distain for the traditionalist, conservative world of commercialized art and mainstream galleries. Though displaying, really for the first time, in an established mainstream gallery, Vaucher still maintains a critical distance and an attachment to working only with such institutions if she accepts them as ethical. One of the curators of the exhibition, Stevphen Shukaitis explains, "Gee doesn't like institutions. She hasn't pursued them. People have approached her with the space. It's the right time; not just for her, but for all the ideas, practices, and histories that run through her."[947]

The *Introspective* exhibition also included representations of her work (in collaboration with Christian Brett) in response to the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. and the subsequent imperialistic crusade of the U.S. military industrial complex entitled *The Sound of Stones in the Glasshouse*. One reviewer of the exhibit describes *The Sound of Stones* work as

> The glasshouse is fitted with greenhouse panes, each one etched with the name of an invaded country. On the walls surrounding the house are wall hangings, each comprised of statements made by U.S. presidents historically, with the list of countries they invaded underneath. A small bowl containing a sprig of herbs underneath each wall hanging gives the appearance of a peace

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946 Ibid, p. 330.
947 Ibid.

> offering. The denouncement of violence caused by the power of government, the state, corporations, prevailing societal groups or dominant individuals is a prevailing feature of Vaucher's critique, while Crass's philosophical outlook is commonly referred to as anarcho-pacifism.[948]

The *Glass House* piece also includes wall hangings with the not only names of each U.S. president and the wars he either initiated or partook of while in office, "personal quotations" and accounts of the "collateral damage" of these conflicts, but also the somber effect of plain black typeface on stoic white backgrounds, literally putting this horrific violence into understated banal black and white.[949] Not only the materials employed share the aesthetic of collage in this imagery, for Vaucher also creates images rife with seemingly out-of-place elements (most often people). *Glass House* also included a small patch of earth, as it was a literal greenhouse, and grass seeds were planted by attendees. In grand temporary-yet-ongoing fashion, at the conclusion of the exhibit, attendees were invited to take a patch of grass with them to replant somewhere beyond the gallery. This grass, like Crass, could potentially have taken root and grown well beyond its initial seedling in the art performance.

She writes, "From the start, I was seen as a 'political' artist," but doesn't consider this to be the full extent of what she explores.[950] This start was formal training at the South East Essex School of art, which Vaucher has since described (as with all art schools) as a place to go to get free materials, and the "space and time" to

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[948] Binns, Rebecca. 2016. "Exhibition Review: *Gee Vaucher: Introspective, Firstsite, Colchester*," *Punk and Post-Punk*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 333.
[949] *Introspective*, pp. 42-43.
[950] Vaucher, p. 24.

explore and grow, not so much artistic direction.[951] She describes the time period of the 1960s in which she was emerging as an artist, as a "very radical time for the arts…everything seemed to be up for questioning…as students we were looking for a new way of life and the arts schools in particular became centers for the new consciousness that later, in the seventies, became known as youth culture."[952] It was also in these formative years that Vaucher became interested and influenced by the work of *Secret Knowledge* author and painter David Hockney, an affinity for whose work she continues to hold dear.[953]

Vaucher produces an arresting visual style, whatever the media or the context of production, and as she keeps all of the original works, reproduction. As Peter Kennard writes in the forward to one collection of her visual works, *Crass Art and Other Pre Postmodernist Monsters 1961-1997*,

> Gee's work lives beyond the time it was made and its specific references. It is beautifully constructed whether in gouache, collage, pastel or any other medium. The exquisite technical perfection of the gouache work gives a hyper-reality to their searing critique of everyday life in the West. The anger that fuels the work has become more 'inward' as time progresses. It is as if her work is now trying to reach inside bodies to find a social truth from the interior of our physical being. Her art tears through the lies that are now the official discourse of a different reality. Through connection and dislocation she makes a plea for us to look again at the flood of images with which we are constantly bombarded, and to fight our way through them to other possible worlds.[954]

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[951] Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 188. Macphee, Josh and Reuland, Erik (ed.s) 2007. *Realizing the Impossible: Art Against Authority*. Oakland: AK Press, p. 69.
[952] Ibid, p. 69.
[953] Hockney, David. 2006. *Secret Knowledge* (New and Expanded Edition). London: Avery.
[954] Vaucher, Gee. 2014. *Crass Art & Other Pre Postmodernist Monsters* (2nd Ed.). Epping: Exitstencil Press, p. 1.

She writes, "as I grew, I inherited from them [her parents] a deep sense of the conflict that existed between the beauty and ugliness of life."[955] Though the Crass art most often emphasizes this latter, Vaucher should by no means be understood as operating exclusively in this manner, for many of her other works do capture much more of the beautiful, the serene, and a certain childlike innocence. This conflict (or the overarching duality of beauty and horror) appears in many of Vaucher's visuals that juxtapose the opulence of wealthy societies with the oppression and death of the countries said societies exploit through colonialism and war, in a way anticipating and resonating with the lyric, "in all our decadence people die."[956]



Source: *International Anthem 3* (1980)[957]

[955] Vaucher 2014, p. 2.
[956] 1979. "Reality Asylum"/"Shaved Women". Crass Records. 7"
[957] Vaucher, p. 49.

In her collage-esque paintings, Vaucher often mixes familiar imagery from multiple, often conflicting conflicts. For example, in the piece above, the plush upper class dining experience is coupled with a waiter offering not wine for their approval, but instead a starving child. She writes that as early as her time in art school, her method could be summarized as "chasing shadows" and writes that Picasso's quote, "painting isn't an aesthetic operation, it's a form of magic, designed as a mediation between this strange, hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires" so closely resembles her own method, outlook, and artistic goals that the quote "just about sums it up for me."[958] Many of these images are original paintings where collage is utilized either as a method or an affect. Familiar images are utilized sometimes through cut-and-paste use of ready-mades Vaucher finds, and in other cases she paints the original image to get the impression that it was cut up.[959]

Though addressing decidedly political issues in her works, from the horrors of war and domestic violence, to the greed and materialism of modernity, to animal-human and gendered power relations, Vaucher defies neat categorization. As her creative partner Penny Rimbaud explains, "anyone attempting to tie her down to this or that 'ism' will get more than a short shrift; 'Feminist? Anarchist? I'm not an ist'."[960]

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[958] Vaucher, p. 3.
[959] I have also seen Vaucher procure art and gardening materials from a 'boot sale', enabling her to gain tools that can also be 'cut-and-paste', i.e. repurpose.
[960] *Introspective*, pp. 34-35.

Crass Interlude: Politics & Philosophy in the Garden[961]

I awoke on an August morning, like every morning I have spent at Dial House, to the sound of muted yet audible conversation in the garden. As the bedroom I was staying in had a window facing the garden, I peered out to see who was awake. Beyond the gently swaying tree branch of tiny, flowering, chalk-pastel green leaves on the windowsill, I saw the familiar sight of Gee and Penny sipping tea, discussing their goals for the work of the day, and exchanging gentle glances of Platonic love.

I walked down the stairs, which creaked like a rusty hinge with each step, attempting to be quiet enough to not wake the other residents. Once downstairs, I freshened up a bit, made a French-press cup of coffee, and made my way to the garden. After exchanging pleasantries, Gee informed me of the work she had picked out for me that day, the trimming and pruning of the various hedges and trees in the garden (a task I found myself doing joyfully each year that I visited the house), and if there was time, the digging up of more potatoes to add to yesterday's haul. As per usual, however, before the labor of the day commenced, we enjoyed a few cups of caffeine, garnished with light philosophical discussion. The following is a small part of this conversation, which I will reproduce only in part, so that we may focus on the sympathies and paradoxes of Crass and its members.

[961] Portions of the following dialogue were previously published within a fictionalized essay called "Gifts of the Garden" in the edited volume *Some of Us Scream, Some of Us Shout: Myths, Folklore, and Epic Tales of the Anarcho* (Itchy Monkey Press).

After discussing the escalation of Israeli bombardment of Gaza, following a pregnant pause, Penny interjected, “I wonder, though, if life events ever occur to those within them as anything more than just what happens.”

Gee Vaucher gave something of a cough/chuckle and responded, “What do you mean? Do you mean that we can’t always make sense of what’s going on?”

Penny Rimbaud: Think, for instance, of those poor slaves in America. Now we look at that as horrible, one of the worst crimes ever. But, I wonder if those that were in it had thoughts like that, or if you’re born into something awful it just presents itself to you as just what happens.

G: Just what happens? Are you fucking mad? It’s not just what happens when someone is doing it to you.

P: I don’t mean it wasn’t bad, I’m just wondering if it seemed especially bad to those that were in it, or if we look back on it differently than they experienced. If you’re born into something, it doesn’t present itself as unusual does it?

G: But can’t things be recognizable as horrific, even if they are considered usual? Look at all the institutions we don’t like that we want to change. I think sometimes the painfully normal stuff is completely what we do want to change. You don’t need to change the abnormal now, do you?

P: But is the change sought really a change, or do we just tell ourselves it is? We imagine changes, you’re right, but maybe changes are only appearances. I’m just wondering how things persist, for so long, if they’re seen as worse than regular occurrences.

Andrew J. Wood: Well, it’s not like historic crimes are universally recognized as such. Some bystanders might not even have been aware of the horrors until they were over. Those who were perpetuated the system had serious economic interests in creating and maintaining such exploitation. That doesn’t mean that people exploited and abused within weren’t aware that it wasn’t right, but when the owners and the capitalists are getting rich off the system and they have all the guns, it’s awfully hard to escape. Not that there weren’t successful cases of escape, which are the most interesting to me.

P: That’s a really materialist response, especially to a psychological question.

G: But we’re talking about people within context, and their suffering was physical and mental.

A: Right. But, I'm pointing to the complexity of existences that we want to eliminate in facile ways. For instance, when the government wants to eliminate an enemy, they declare them as 'insane,' rather than have to deal with the actual logic that they follow, especially when it is similar to their own. So, we look at past atrocities and dismiss them in an effort to distance ourselves from it.

G: That's true, but Pen's talking about people within these systems and institutions. They certainly don't have distance from their own suffering.

P: That's my point, to them it was just what happens.

G: I think in some circumstances, that's simplifying, and perhaps assuming an ignorance that might not be there.

A: I think I see what you mean, that only in later contexts can we narrativize something, seeing the context. We have a tendency to put things into a narrative so that we can describe and attempt to understand them, but events don't happen in a narrative form, or in a nice, neat sequence of events. Like, perhaps, at the time in the '80s, you weren't thinking so much about being seen as leaders of something called punk, but in retrospect that makes sense to say.

P: That's right. We weren't anarchist leaders, we were just on about how we wanted to live our lives. Suddenly, we were declared leaders of the anarchist movement and we didn't know fuck all about anarchism. That's not why we put a big A on there, it was about how we were living our lives at the time.

G: That's right, we didn't choose the label 'anarchist.' But, once we accepted it, it did allow us to do things and maneuver without the left and the right trying to get us on a particular party line. Using the term 'anarchist' gave us a bit more space, a bit more breathing room.

A: For one, the concept of anarchist leaders seems a bit like an oxymoron.

P: Of course it does. We wanted freedom for freedom, not just freedom to follow a set of rules or institutions. We weren't interested in being anarchists per se, but just in living our lives freely.

A: Doesn't that make you the best sort of anarchists then? You certainly want freedom for all, you've done things to help people struggling to survive, you share what you have, you live relatively autonomously, and you don't dictate anything to others. From what I understand, these are the best that anarchy-as-freedom can offer. Perhaps we are simply talking at crossroads, for I am thinking of anarchy as philosophy, much in the way you look at existentialism or zen. But you seem to view

anarchy as anarchism, in a sort of codified sense. I'm more interested in ideas surrounding freedom and anarchy, not an ideology or programmatic stance.

G: Then why call it anarchy at all?

A: That's a good question, Gee, and one I'm not sure I have an answer to. Perhaps because we don't have another word, perhaps because there are a lot of anarchist ideas about non-governance and critiques of the state and capital that I am invested in.

P: I see what you mean, but how can you avoid all of the rotten business that anarchists have been up to for years, telling people what they can and can't do? For instance, all that rubbish about underground labels. Look, we put out our own records because no one else wanted to and no one else would have. But, I think all this about underground labels as superior is really just nonsense. When I met with Sony, they were polite, on time, and seemed fair.

A: What of these corporations' connections to the military and prison industrial complexes?

G: Good point. Doing things yourself is always more free. That's part of why I have such a love for self-publishing.

P: Well, we're all connected to those institutions in a way, there's no escaping it.

A: But, are there not some avenues of escape or resistance? Must we be resigned to complicity, or can we also say there are instances in which we can actually, or at least attempt, to separate ourselves from what we oppose? There is still a political importance in D.I.Y.

P: Maybe idealistically, but you can only change yourself not the ways in which these companies operate. Look, if the others had been for it, I would have considered Sony.

G: Well, I would have been against it.

P: Eh?

G: Look, I haven't sought great fame or commercial success because I don't really care about it. I never really seek other people's money. Pen, come on, you know that was a big goal of ours. We've never wanted other people's money, despite how polite Sony may have been. I don't want it. We've done extraordinary things with nothing, and if we can't do it ourselves, I don't want to do it.

A: That's why I think Crass's influence on D.I.Y. culture has been so powerful. But, if I can play devil's advocate, what might we be overlooking about the embedded privilege in a lot of what's called D.I.Y.?

P: What do you mean?

A: Well, there are many people in the world whose daily struggle is just an attempt to survive.

P: They aren't trying to survive, they are surviving.

G: Well, some do, and some don't. Some are destroyed.

A: If you are struggling to survive, the idea of D.I.Y. can seem a bit insensitive. Look, I think that historically we can show that more generations of people have produced things themselves than any other form of production. However, once capitalism became the hegemonic mode of organizing production and consumption, in many ways D.I.Y. became to domain of those at the extremes, the very poor and the very privileged. Many, at least in punk, tell ourselves that D.I.Y. is a tactic of political autonomy as well as something forced upon us when other channels may be closed. I don't want to negate this argument, for at times I think it holds. However, there are other times when D.I.Y. or self-sufficiency is present for someone or some group through the exercise of privilege.

G: What do you mean?

A: Dial House, for instance.

G: Wait a minute. We've worked our fingers to the bone making this place what it is. Do you think that house was always so put together? Do you think the veggie patch planted itself? Do you think the garden maintains itself? We love our life here because we made it what it is, we chose it for ourselves.

A: That's not at all what I mean. Of course you have put forth tremendous labour to create these lovely surroundings, and any of the grateful passers-through over the last four decades can attest to that. You've also certainly led a life of sharing, and having an open house is clearly no small task. But, I'm making a deeper argument. I'm claiming that the ability, or perhaps what I mean is the freedom to work for one's self, to eat of the fruits of one's own labor, is already a privilege.

G: I agree. Well, I should say that I recognize the privilege that you're on about.

A: And to many people in the world, this is a privilege that will never be available to them.

P: Well, I'm not sure about that.

A: You think just anyone, anywhere could own such a piece of land, and a cottage, and afford to live life as they choose? Take people who are enslaved, people who are imprisoned or tortured to death, people whose race, gender, class, or whatever is oppressed?

P: Of course there's suffering in the world, and of course some people are oppressed such that they can't do just anything that they like. But look, my parent's aspiration in life was to move from being middle class to being upper middle class, and they achieved this with a fair amount of success. I, however, had no interest in such a life. I don't really know why, I just know that it hasn't ever had an appeal to me. But I have often wondered why couldn't I just have been a happy bank manager or something. But the point is, I chose something else. No one gave us permission to make an open house, to write books, paint, or put out records. We wanted it, so we did it. Does that make us privileged? Maybe, but it's not the typical 'privilege' of a criticism, but more of a zen openness. Zen is available to anyone, and it is a type of freedom that doesn't care about all that race, gender, class rubbish. Here [points with his index finger to his forehead] is the only space of freedom any of us can ever really have. I'm just not willing to think strictly in materialist terms when we talk of freedom or privilege. The greatest privilege that I've experienced has been through meditation, as well as the greatest freedom.

G: That's individual freedom though, what about those who are denied freedom in the world? I think something like Occupy Wall Street did a wonderful job of showing our connections to each other. I mean, when you think about it, how can we sit and enjoy our own freedom when we know others can't share it.

A: Well, of course I would agree, and I think that the most exciting recent development in both punk rock and activism in the U.S. has been Occupy (both as a participant at the time and as a commentator in retrospect).

P: Well, what would you say it really accomplished? I mean, Wall Street is still doing their thing, right?

G: But they did something, and that's important.

A: In terms of massive policy changes and changing the system as a whole, no you're right, not much changed. But, I think there are important ramifications of Occupy. For one, the lack of the typical list of demands that the media made so much out of was not a weakness, it was a strength of the movement.

P: How so?

A: If there was a set list of demands one problem is that once you start dictating goals or tactics, you begin to exclude people from within and from without the movement.

G: That was the most impressive thing about Occupy Wall Street, is that it crossed all the divides of age, class, race, gender, you know?

A: That's right, well, to an extent. We can definitely say that there was an attempt to be inclusive.

P: But what did it accomplish? It seems there was a lot of noise made, but what did it change?

G: Well, that's one thing they've said about Obama and healthcare reform too, but sometimes it's admirable to stick to your guns to get something accomplished, even if it isn't everything that you might want.

P: Hmm, I see. So, it was similar to what I've been writing and saying for years, that it's truly about changing ourselves. You see, the problem isn't really the government or the bankers or the soldiers, but ourselves. We have to get beyond the blaming thing. You know, when you point at someone else, you have more fingers pointing back at yourself. The biggest blame is always right here. [Penny then points to himself, essentially in the middle of his chest, as if to punctuate the sentence with a definitive period].

A: But I think there are people who are deserving blame. I'm not claiming that the system doesn't need to be changed, that if we just change ourselves everything will be better. I'm saying that I think systematic change and individual change are interconnected.

G: That's an interesting thought, change ourselves to change each other.

P: It's the death throws of the Cartesian point, the Enlightenment way of thinking, which we must overcome. Stop being so materialist, even in anger, and start to recognize ourselves and the importance of compassion. The anger is also fed by the same phenomenon as ridiculous governance. They know they are in the last throws of the Enlightenment, that they've essentially lost control, so they pass things to seem like they are still in control. The appearance of control is all they have left. Well, if you stop thinking that they can control you, you start to think of ways that we put up obstacles for ourselves. Anger is just one of these controlling mechanisms we put upon ourselves. I spent many years saying, "oh you motherfuckers, you're such bastards" and shouting about what was wrong in the world. But I find now that if you say, "oh, well, you're a person, let's start from that" and start evaluating yourself more so than them, letting go of pure materialism, and thinking through compassion

and love, it actually makes for a stronger argument. I thought in my re-write of "Yes Sir" that the insertion of love and compassion would be just as radical as the anger was in the original.

Further Critiques and Controversies of the Crassical

"I think it [anarchy] means destroying barriers. Anarchy is freedom, movement."
--Penny Rimbaud[962]

"The definition [of anarchy] is 'to destroy systems,' but really it should mean rethinking, changing systems."
--Andy Palmer[963]

Of course, Crass is not for everyone, and even plenty of their 'fans' assert an affixation to portions of their sonic, visual, and lyrical content without avowing it all. For example, it is not uncommon to hear and read expressions of sympathetic solidarity towards Crass productions coupled with significantly less enthusiasm for their aesthetic. The reverse is also sometimes true, in which their sonic aesthetics are appreciated by a wider punk audience than may be sympathetic to their ideas and messages (as they are often accused of being too 'militant' or 'preachy'). For many exposed to Crass's aesthetic, whether intentionally or not, their ideas and their productions are interpreted as abhorrent and offensive.

As Vaucher herself describes the happening of a Crass performance, "it was an hour-long onslaught really, visually troubling and confrontational," yet the conclusion of these performances also involved the group members walking down from the stage (rather than retreating to a dressing room), in order to answer any questions audience members may have (and in her recalling of these events, she

[962] Callous, Rob. 1979. "Crass: Reputations in Jeopardy (Crass 521984)," *Dry Rot*, No. 1, p. 10.
[963] Ibid.

remembers there "always being a lot of people wanting to ask questions afterward"), to extend the dialogue beyond the performance itself.[964] Yet, it is questionable how effective this may be as a strategy of political messaging or resistance if the audience didn't linger after the show, or indeed, stay for the entirety of it. As Rimbaud puts it, "we became good at emptying halls."[965]

The importance of Crass to the maturation and diversification (or perhaps de-domestication) of punk aesthetics is so extensive that in many contexts, within many divergent scenes, one's taste or distaste for the group has been and in some cases still is interpreted as a sort of litmus test for how 'authentic' of a punk one is, or more likely, what 'type' of punk one is.[966] Indeed, other contemporaneous artists and figures with the scene (most famously the Exploited, the Special Duties, and Gary Bushell) all openly clashed with and critiqued Crass. Often, these barbs were directed at Crass due to their internal critique of punk itself, as they had declared the death of punk as early as 1978's *Feeding of the 5,000*, it's just another cheap product for the consumer's head" and declaring the radical potential of punk to have dissipated into becoming "a fashion, like hippie used to be."[967]

> For all the chaos it was immense fun, no one bitched about leather boots or moaned about milk in tea, no one wanted to know how anarchy and peace could be reconciled, no one bored our arses off with protracted monologues on Bakunin, who at the time we probably would have thought was a brand of vodka. Ideas were open, we were creating our own lives together. These were

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[964] Ryde, Robin. 2014. *The Truth of Revolution, Brother: An Exploration of Punk Philosophy*. London: Situation Press, p. 190.

[965] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

[966] Right wing skinheads, for instance, were always a source of anxiety for the band members, and—wary of violent outbursts—Crass were often on the lookout for them at shows.

[967] "Punk is Dead" on Crass, *Feeding of the 5,000*. Yet, in producing punk themselves, perhaps Crass exists in-between Lacan's two deaths.

> the glorious years before the free alternatives that we were creating became just another set of bigoted rules, before what we were defining as real punk became yet another squalid ghetto. We even played a Rock Against Racism gig, the only gig that we'd ever been paid for. When we told the man to keep the money for the cause, he informed us that 'this was the cause'. We never played for RAR again.[968]

This critique of Rock Against Racism provided the basis for much of Crass's critique of the political left in Britain. The relationship between Crass and the organized left continued to strain in the aftermath of the realization that, in some cases like RAR, charity truly does begin at home. In other words, for all of the posturing about fighting racism, the funds raised by the concerts were dispersed similarly to dispersal at a music festival with no political agenda. To quote the Clash (one of Crass's favorite targets, and a consistent RAR performer), was this not just "turning rebellion into money?"[969] Some bands certainly played for more monetary reasons, as reflected by Nick Knox (Vibrators), who responded to a question about RAR by stating "actually what most people don't realize is that bands do get paid for it. We did it because it was a gig to do."[970] Undoubtedly, there were also groups, like the Specials, the Clash (and Crass for that matter) who agreed to play RAR events because they were sincere in wanting to critique and resist racism. But even beyond the music, RAR also provided anti-racist (and socialist) literature and a space for political discussions. Colin Fancy, a RAR organizer, argues that "what the audience were

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[968] Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." Contain in the liner notes to *Best Before…1984*. Cf. Rimbaud has also elaborated on this surprising revelation and disappointment with the payments at RAR in conversations with me. Kennedy, Will. June 2011. "Interview: Steve Ignorant, Crass," *Unbelievably Bad*. Web: https://unbelievablybadmag.com/2016/01/15/crass-politics/ Last Accessed: 05/08/2017.

[969] "White Man in Hammersmith Palais" on The Clash. 1977. *The Clash*. CBS Records.

[970] Sabin, Roger. 1999. "I Won't Let that Dago By: Rethinking Punk and Racism," contained in Sabin, Roger (ed.). 1999. *Punk Rock, So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. New York: Routledge, p. 206.

saying and thinking" and the "friendly" atmosphere of RAR is more important than what any particular performer may be saying.[971] Surely it's better to play a concert event decrying racism than not address racism at all?

What is most productive and nuanced is their critique here of the RAR's lack of diversity and the prevalence of back-patting among white activists who feel vindicated after attending an afternoon's entertainment or purchasing merchandise. Their argument is that despite the borders of political allegiances drawn by groups like R.A.R. and the declarative mechanisms of their badges for expressing political legitimacy and alliance, very little was done to actually assist communities harmed by structural racism. For all the celebratory moves of grandiose Rock Against Racism concerts, "the black community still had to deal with social repression, lousy housing, etc. etc. etc. plus the revitalized hatred of the right."[972] In other words, despite the claim that RAR drew "connections between their aesthetic and political convictions," critics (including Crass) have pointed out that more substantive work should be done than an entertaining afternoon of "reggae expressing the Afro-American working class; punk the white working class."[973] Crass did not necessarily initiate this critique, for many others note that activists from other groups, e.g. the Indian Workers' Party, the Asian Youth Movement, and various other Afro-Caribbean and Asian groups, were largely ignored or misunderstood" by both R.A.R. and the socialist organization

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[971] Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 116.

[972] Crass. Late 1979. "Following the 8/9/79 Conway Hall Agro," *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 7.

[973] Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 36 & 64-65. See also Sabin, Roger. 1999. "I Won't Let that Dago By: Rethinking Punk and Racism," contained in Sabin, Roger (ed.). 1999. *Punk Rock, So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. New York: Routledge, pp. 199-215.

behind them.[974] Roger Sabin is especially critical in pointing out the white/black presentation of race by RAR and the Anti-Nazi League, largely ignoring Britain's Asian population.[975] In Sabin's estimation, this exclusion could be attributed to ignorance or because, lacking the connection to reggae, the plight of British Asians wasn't seen as "hip" enough. Simon Frith goes even further, and suggests that RAR tactics and actions were actually "off-putting for Asian youth."[976]

Though uncritical of many other articulations of punk—and celebratory of efforts like Rock Against Racism—the music industry's press outlets were consistently critical of Crass. This critical response is not entirely surprising given the cacophonous and avant-garde aspects of their sound and the vitriolic confrontation of their lyrics.[977] For instance, Steve Sutherland writes (in an opening line that the band would eventually borrow to utilize as an ironic and humorous reclamation of this criticism)

> Crass by name, even worse by nature, like it or not, they just won't go away. That their sound was uniformly abysmal, that they played (at times, excruciatingly) badly, even that individual functions within the fluctuating line-up were often blurred in chaos and doubt, are totally irrelevant. What mattered was that Crass played, the crowd saw Crass play and, most importantly, the crowd were seen to see Crass play. In other words, Crass are a phenomenon; the trendy cult to catch, our very own perfect little

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[974] Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 30. See also Frith, Simon. 1989. "Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music,' contained in Garofalo, R. (ed.) 1989. *Rockin' The Boat*. Boston: South End Press. & Widgery, David. 1986. *Beating Time*. London: Pluto Press.
[975] Sabin, Roger. 1999. "I Won't Let that Dago By: Rethinking Punk and Racism," contained in Sabin, Roger (ed.). 1999. *Punk Rock, So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. New York: Routledge, p. 203.
[976] Frith, Simon. 1989. "Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music,' contained in Garofalo, R. (ed.) 1989. *Rockin' The Boat*. Boston: South End Press, p. 69.
[977] The "symbiotic relationship" between Rock Against Racism and "music reporters and the companies they worked for" can also explain Crass's skepticism towards both groups. Cf. Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 28.

> institutionalized anti-institution - a success beyond most straight bands' wildest dreams solely on the strength of their image and attitude, and nothing to do with the erratic quality or quantity of their output. The best thing, indeed the only thing, to be said in their favour is that what Crass do, they do it their way…Crass are the distempered dog-end of rock'n'roll's once bright and vibrant rebellion. That they're so unattractive, unoriginal and badly unbalanced in an uncompromising and humourless way, simply adds to the diseased attraction of the naively black and white world where words are a series of shock slogans and mindless token tantrums to tout around your tribe and toss passers by. Good old Crass, our make believe secret society, our let's pretend passport to perversity. They're nothing but a caricature and a joke.[978]

The British music magazine *Sounds* also ran a long-standing feud with Crass, most famously between the band and *Sounds* writer Gary Bushell (the compiler of the original Oi! compilations, manager of the Cockney Rejects, and most vocal supporter and promoter of the street punk subgenre Oi!, discussed in the next chapter). Even when *Sounds* published a more sympathetic review, such as Winston Smith's take on *Christ: the Album*, praise was hedged with uncertainty and skepticism,

> Is the enchanting Crass vision of an ungoverned world, united by mutual love and respect, a serious possibility? Or is it just the unrealistic dream of a bunch of loonies that carry a dripping stencil under one arm, and a selection of fresh vegetables under the other? I really would like to know.[979]

But, of course, Crass wasn't about to take such criticism lightly, and responded to their critics in kind. They respond in lyrics,

> You whimper and whine from the pages of the press,
> Ridicule and criticise those who want to change this mess.
> There's people our there who are trying to live,
> People who care, now, what do you give?
> So many parasites living off our sweat,

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[978] Sutherland, Steve. June 20, 1981. "Keep off the Crass," *Melody Maker*, p. 30. This passage is also quoted at length by Penny Rimbaud, though incorrectly attributed there to Tony Parsons (who held the ire of the group as well, to be sure). Liner notes, *Stations of the Crass* (Crassical Collection Remaster). It is also note worthy that Crass re-appropriated the "shock slogans and mindless token tantrums" criticism here, ironically embracing this assertion by titling a publication of theirs with that as the title.
[979] Smith, Winston. 1982. "CRASS: Christ the Album Review," *Sounds*.

> So many fuckers in for what they can get,
> Punk ain't about your standards and your rules,
> It ain't another product for the suckers and the fools.[980]

And they also respond in pamphlets and zine interviews, preferring to reach their audience in person or in the pages of D.I.Y. publications. Pete Wright explains, "you're [zines] not out to make money, whereas they [mainstream music press] are, that's their main aim. The don't care for the buyer, all they're interested in is the profits."[981] On a different occasion, Phil Free expresses support for fanzines, as he sees their eschewing of the profit motive as something that "genuinely tries to bring people closer together."[982] Steve Ignorant further explains the dismissal of Crass as a 'commune' or 'middle-class hippies,'

> Not everybody liked Crass. Some people really fucking hated us. For a lot of young punks—who listened to our lyrics, or read our leaflets, or came to our gigs, or visited Dial House—Crass was an inspiration. To others, we were a threat. And if there was one line the music press loved to push, one stick they repeatedly beat us over the head with, it was the idea we were spoilt, privileged people mouthing off, and so could be ignored, or laughed at. It saved them from having to think. Or listen.[983]

Special Duties, for instance, released (and continues to perform) a single called "Bullshit Crass," which not only begins with a parody of Crass's "Fight War, Not Wars" with "Fight Crass, Not Punk," but also goes on to accuse them of being hypocrites who were not singing "for freedom, it's just for cash/they don't mean what

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[980] "Hurry Up Gary" from Crass. 1979. *Stations of the Crass*.. Note that the title of the song is a parody of the Sham 69 song 'Hurry Up Harry', and that the journalist Gary Bushell incurring Crass's wrath in these lyrics was closely associated with Sham 69. I know that Rimbaud for one, actually quite likes Sham 69's music, however.
[981] John, 1982. "Crass Interview," *A System Partly Revealed*, p. 6.
[982] Poole, Dean. 1981. "Crass Interview," *New Systems*, No. 1, p. 12.
[983] Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 175.

they say/what they preach there is no way," but simultaneously calling them "commune hippies [who've] got no money." Of these examples given, only the Exploited did so in a joking way without any "animosity between the bands" but rather "just to be controversial."[984] Joe Strummer of the Clash once argued that Crass was isolationist and self-defeating, joking that they should call their record *Storm in a Teacup*.

Such disdain for Crass and their ideas has also been extended to their fans, as an affinity for (or at minimum knowledge of) Crass has been used as a determining factor (as I mentioned above, a sort of Crass litmus test) in many punk spaces for who is 'really' punk and who isn't. Again, the authenticity question rears its ugly yet persistent head. Those punks looking for an apolitical space for fun—or a desire to 'escape' politics—may have felt the burden of this perceived ideological purity on the part of fans. Additionally, such fans of anarchist music may or may not identify as anarchists themselves, or indeed even be fully aware or familiar with the intellectual and artistic underpinnings of anarchy. In other words, it would be quite erroneous to overstate the influence of Crass, implying that they did actually convert legions of punk youth to some ill-defined 'cause' of anarchy, and that all who are or were their fans fully support or agree with all of their positions and actions.

On such grounds, manager of Canadian band D.O.A. (who themselves have espoused anarchist beliefs and politics) claims, fans of Crass and similar groups, "often wear anarchy symbols and emblems as talismans to indicate a moral

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[984] Glasper, Ian. 2006. *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984. London: Cherry Red Books*, pp. 22 & 23.

superiority and distinctness from the unenlightened rabble. Unfortunately, the symbols do not translate into fresh or creative ideas."[985] Ross Lomas of GBH explains the feeling of separation that grew up around Crass, and the supposed divide between 'political' and 'non-political' bands,

> When Crass had arrived on the scene I went and bought their first album, and I'd never heard anything like it, either musically (who had?) or lyrically, with all the politics. But I was intrigued, so I went and saw them when they played the Festival Suite in Brum [sic]. And it was more like a production than a gig, with the film show and everything. But I was left feeling there were rules and regulations that went with it all, a prescribed way of life, and that put me right off. I remember thinking *What do these people do for fun? Do they have fun?* Don't get me wrong, it didn't stop me from liking them, but I wasn't a fan of the rules. At that stage, though, you could still bridge the divide. As time went on, positions hardened.[986]

Even others who may indeed be sympathetic to some of the same political ideas as Crass have also expressed exasperation or frustration with the group. As Dennis Lyzen (of the Refused and the International Noise Conspiracy, both of which are known for their radical, revolutionary messages) differentiates his bands from Crass, "instead of being Crass, or something like that with boring political finger-pointing, we want that feeling of looking in the 1970s and the black power movement and the bands that played the sexiest, funkiest music."[987]

Other political critiques, from anarchists and socialists, are primarily based on questioning the validity and efficacy of their tactics. Where some see corporate exposure as a useful asset, a sort of 'using the master's tools against him, others

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[985] Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, p. 79.
[986] Lomas, Ross with Steve Pottinger. 2013. *City Baby: From Highgate to Hawaii…Life, and GBH*. UK: Ignite Books, p. 83.
[987] Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, pp. 13-14.

agreed with Crass that such collusion would be a perversion of their ideals, and harmful to their efforts. Some see this choice as commendable idealism in many Crass strategies, while others see a hopeless, unproductive naiveté. To take an example, Crass refused to appear on BBC's hit music showcase *Top of the Pops* (though it is highly questionable that they would have ever been invited, due to their political leanings—and more so their lyrical profanity), and when asked by a fanzine (*Tongue in Cheek*) if they would ever consider doing so, the group answered, "[If] we could talk uninterrupted on any subject of our choice for the length of time that the record that got us there took to play."[988] As Cross explains, "such uncompromising statements of independence were, of course, criticized for being willfully counter-productive, by those arguing that the most effective acts of subversion were undertaken from within the industry."[989]

Yet, it is also telling that critiques of Crass—both as a group and in regards to its legacy—have also come from within. As Eve Libertine writes, "Sometimes it was a bit 'banners and slogans' for my taste. They made a good show, but it seemed a bit easy."[990] The internal critique often revolves around issues of profitability and financial gain from the group's creative productions.

> Because we felt it unreasonable to expose Pete [Sennett] to the risk of further raids by the forces of law and order, porn or no, we decided it only fair to make it [*Stations of the Crass* LP] our second release on Crass Records. At the same time we negotiated to move *Feeding* from his label to ours. Through no fault of our own we were in business. 'Doesn't that just make us capitalists?'

[988] Cross, Richard. May 2014. "The Hippies Now Wear Black: Crass and the anarcho-punk movement, 1977-1984," *Socialist History*, Vol. 26., p. 5.
[989] Ibid, p. 5.
[990] Eve Libertine. 2010. Liner notes, *Penis Envy.*

> asked Phil. 'Erm…,' I mumbled, avoiding the issue. 'Mmmm…,' mumbled Steve.[991]
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> From the very start we'd wanted to ensure that people were always placed before profit, and that if profit was made it would, in turn, be in some way given back to the people. Over time, we were able to satisfy this need by using profits from our records to finance recordings of like-thinking bands and artists, thereby expanding the initial remit of our label and taking on what became almost a corporate identity. 'Mmm, Crass the Empire?' mused Phil, 'doesn't seem very punk, does it?' To which there was no reasonable reply.[992]

Indeed, Crass Records released records from over one hundred groups of various sounds, from the morose drone of the Mob, to the schizophrenic brilliance of Rudimentary Peni, the militant vegetarian cry from Flux of Pink Indians, to the jubilant day-glo of Rubella Ballet.[993]

There has also been a consistent questioning of just how equal the various parties comprising Crass and the Dial House communities actually were/are, and what power dynamics may actually rule the roost. Ignorant has repeatedly expressed frustration at not feeling equal in all respects, be it from reading selections spared the annual book purge, or the no alcohol policy, "the recent 'agreement' of no alcohol before a performance (I don't remember agreeing to that)."[994] Bassist Pete Wright has also argued that there was a "dysfunction of the band" and that anything that argues

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[991] Penny Rimbaud. 2010. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand.*
[992] Penny Rimbaud. 2010. Liner notes, *Stations of the Crass.*
[993] The members of Crass have offered many comments on the groups that they helped, played with, and put out records by. Some of these still remain friends. For instance, during one of my trips to Dial House, Sid and Zillah from the group Rubella Ballet came to enjoy an afternoon in the garden sipping tea and discussing current artistic projects with Gee and Penny. Cf. Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." Contain in the liner notes to *Best Before…1984*.
[994] Steve Ignorant. 2010. Liner notes. *Stations of the Crass.*

otherwise is a falsity.[995] He consistently critiques what he refers to as the "Crass legacy team," (presumably Rimbaud, Vaucher, and Ignorant) which he argues offer nothing short of abuse towards band members they don't see eye-to-eye with.[996] One can not help but also see his critiques of Crass in his writings ostensibly on other subjects, such as when he writes "an individual in a dysfunctional family may manage to get away and stay away, excising it from their life."[997]

In response to Steve Ignorant's performances of Crass material in the 21st century, Wright publically condemned the singer as betraying all that Crass had once stood for. Ignorant has since said that he was "completely unprepared for the hornet's nest…spite and personal attacks" that even the mere announcement of the shows produced.[998] Fans have also been inconsistent in this regard, for while Ignorant's shows sold out to capacity (in which we can assume that Crass fans were the purchasers of these tickets), others wrote web-posts, articles, pamphlets, etc. against these shows, and some even staged small protests outside the venues.[999] Wright has also written and spoken against the re-mastering and re-releasing of Crass's recorded catalogue. For instance, from his Crass unofficial website, Wright claims,

> Some of the band have settled down to using a series of 'Crass' projects as their private source of income. The same with various Crass franchises—t-

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995 Wright, Pete. August 2013. "Who are we? Crass." *Crass Unofficial*. Web: http://crassunofficial.com/ Last Accessed: 09/03/17.

996 Ibid.

997 Ibid.

998 Ignorant, Steve (with Steve Pottinger). 2010. *The Rest is Propaganda*. London: Southern Records, p. 292.

999 Gordon, Alastair. 2016. *Crass Reflections*. U.K.: Itchy Monkey/Punk Scholars Press/Active Distribution, p. 178. Cf. Meghan. April 11, 2013. "The Heavy Mental Interview with Penny Rimbaud of Crass," *CVLT Nation*. Web: http:www.cvltnation.com/the-heavy-mental-interview-with-penny-rimbaud/ Last Accessed 05/08/17. Also see anti-Crass reunion comic and pamphlet in appendix.

> shirts to ersatz Crass gigs. Necessity breeds a sense of entitlement. Southern Studios will use the company's capital to crush any attempt by other band members to challenge the annexation of Crass, of our catalogue and the uses to which it is punt: 'there is no authority but yourself'—the bullies' charter and capitalism at work.[1000]

There is clearly something admirable in the effort towards ideological purity here, of not wanting Crass to be complicit with capital in any way. But there are also clear drawbacks as well. Such a position against putting out new editions of the Crass music ignores the fact that for many younger fans, or people new to punk, the group's material wasn't all that easy to find. As an indication, the only official Crass record to not be re-released is the long out-of-print singles collection *Best Before*, which fetches outrageous prices on online (commercial) resale sites. The re-mastered editions are demonstrably easier to find, access, and afford. It is also the position of the Rimbaud 'camp' in these arguments that since the proceeds are evenly split between all former Crass members, and the checks are always cashed, such critiques are largely vacuous.[1001] Rimbaud also attributes these critiques to unresolved differences between Wright and himself, primarily "certain social and political issues" going back to when both lived together at Dial House.[1002] It is difficult to get to anything resembling a resolution, or even a complete picture of this argument, for

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[1000] Wright, Pete. August 2013. "Who are we? Crass." *Crass Unofficial*. Web: http://crassunofficial.com/ Last Accessed: 09/03/17.
[1001] Capper, Andy. July 31, 2010. "Anarchy and Peace, Litigated," *Vice*. Web: www.vice.com/en_us/article/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8 Last Accessed: 05/09/2017. See also Gentile, John. May 1, 2013. "Interviews: The Story of the Crassical Collection," *Punk News.org* Web: www.punknews.org/article/50808/interviews-the-story-of-the-crassical-collection Last Accessed: 09/05/2017.
[1002] Gentile, John. May 1, 2013. "Interviews: The Story of the Crassical Collection," *Punk News.org* Web: www.punknews.org/article/50808/interviews-the-story-of-the-crassical-collection Last Accessed: 09/05/2017.

the accounts provided publically have been left largely unresolved, though heavily weighted towards Rimbaud who has been more forthcoming about his position.[1003]

Ignorant has also responded, saying, "and so to the new release. I had no idea what a hoo-hah it would cause between us ex-Crassers; the tears, the tantrums. I know we'll get a slating for it, but so what? Ain't that why we started in the first place, to cause a fuss?"[1004] Ignorant's recent performances, as well as the 2014 Rebellion performance of *Yes Sir* both raise issues of what I term the second life of punk, a conception of punk's (un)dead continuance—which elides critics' dismissal of punk cultures as irrelevant and (pejoratively) anachronistic. I agree that such contemporary instances may be anachronistic, but rather than this being a critique or a liability causing political or cultural irrelevance, I argue that it is *precisely* the radically anachronistic features of such spaces and performances than gives punk in the 21st century its particular salience.

Punk is Dead, Long Live Punk: Contradictions of Nostalgia and Hierarchy

> "Besides the obvious main reason (a simple love for the music), I would have to say that the breakdown between artist and fan was for me the most appealing. Going to gigs and socializing with the bands was something that almost every other genre of music did not adhere to. There were no rock stars in the punk rock community, in fact bands were often shunned if they chose not to engage and interact with their fans at the merch [sic] table, or the bar!"
> --Eric Mueller[1005]

At virtually the same time in which punk music and culture was initially introduced to a wide national and international audience, initiates and detractors

[1003] In addition to the other sources cited regarding this debate, also see the discussion on http://streetcarnage.com/blog/crass-week-the-crass-conundrum-part-1/ Last Accessed 09/07/17.
[1004] Steve Ignorant. 2010. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand.*
[1005] Interview with author, 10/17/2016.

began claiming that it was dead. What are the implications of this declaration? Why is the life or death of a cultural form or series of scenes such a crucial component to the constitution and understanding of its form (both internally and externally)? Does it matter if punk is alive or dead? My argument, as stated in Chapter 1 is that aesthetic forms can actually diversify and become more vibrant once they turn underground, that is, once mainstream cultural industries and commenters have turned away, ignored, or decried the irrelevance of a "dead" form.[1006] In other words, a cultural scene, form, aesthetic, or movement may actually find its most enduring characteristics and broader contributions after it is no longer the "next big thing," i.e. these can be more alive in death.

Punk music and aesthetics have drifted in and out of fashion over the first four decades of its existence. Despite enduring influence in the realms of music, D.I.Y. ethos, fashion, etc. we can identify and describe two primary catalyst moments that propelled punk beyond the underground and into the mainstream, if only for an abbreviated time. The first of these I will label the Sex Pistols moment of 1976/77, and the second as the Nirvana/Green Day moment of the early 1990s. These labels are not meant to present these particular groups or years as the singular moments or causes of punk's proliferation, but merely to simply our categorization around the actors that both album sales and media attention centered around (as well as then branching off to include a multiplicity of seemingly—or supposedly—similar groups,

[1006] I borrow the language of "next big thing" from the music press as presented and discussed in Laing, Dave. 2015. (2nd Ed.) *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock.* Oakland: PM Press.

sounds, and actors). Of course, in both of these instances, what would be labeled the punk scene had been building around many groups and individuals, usually in more than one geographical location, and for several years. These labels that I am putting forth are meant simply as analytical benchmarks for easier reference.

In the early nineties, the music industry exploded with an especial attention to the underground rock/punk scene centered in Seattle, Washington. The most infamous of these groups is, of course, Nirvana. With their melodic vocals laid upon hardcore riffs and rhythms, the simplistic and minimalist visual aesthetic, and their enigmatic leader Kurt Cobain, Nirvana was the perfect fit for the music industry media to swarm around. Following their 1991 smash single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," Nirvana was poised to gain millions of sales, major label contracts, and be presented as not only the biggest band in the world, not merely iconic, but the definitive pinnacle of groups at the time, the cliché 'voice of their generation.'[1007]

Nirvana may have set the stage, but others were soon to cash in on their popularity. Not simply other Seattle bands with similar—although distinct—sounds and aesthetics (e.g. Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Mudhoney) would be signed to major label contracts, furthering the popularity of what the industry and mainstream press had labeled 'grunge,' but a large plethora of fast, hard-hitting, and melodic punk bands also began receiving unprecedented attention and popularity. Heavy hitting power-chord rock was back.

[1007] Nirvana. 1991. *Nevermind*. Sub Pop/DGC. LP/CD.

A major problem in the declaration of punk's death, however, comes not from the music press, mainstream media, etc., but rather from within punk scenes themselves. Often, such claims are part of an exclusionary discourse that calls into question the authenticity of those who "weren't there" the first go round.[1008] It seems that the cultural capital gained by long-term initiates can be used to intimidate or exclude younger generations of fans or adherents to the lifestyle choices of punk cultures. Through the next sections, this claim of the death of punk and my counter that death can yield further life to a culture we be our framing concept.

One way in which punk most obviously lives on, beyond a particular scene or cultural aesthetic, is in the influence that it has had as initiates, fans, writers, musicians, and other folks connected to punk have gone on to other activist endeavors. Union organizer Tad Keyes argues that punks often get involved in activism and leftist organizing because they see a parallel with their punk ideals and experiences,

> Plenty of punks end up working for unions and it makes sense: you get paid to be a bit of a troublemaker. Everyday I put the skills learned from years of DIY punk into action—I feel like I am just doing another version of what I did for all those years of putting on shows, making flyers, writing zines, and forming bands. For me, punk was most interesting at the fulcrum of intellectual ideas and working class ideas.[1009]

Steve Lake (of Zounds, one of the many bands Crass release records by on their label) describes Crass's music as secondary, writing that it was "just a vehicle to get their message across. They were an ideological propaganda machine who used music and

[1008] Robb, John. 2012. *Punk Rock: An Oral History*. Oakland: PM Press.
[1009] Tad Keyes, quoted in Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, p. 55.

art as a medium to propagate their ideas."[1010] Most—if not all—members of Crass would likely agree, though they may not agree on the effectiveness of this tactic. Even Penny Rimbaud, arguable the most consistently vocal both within the group and on the subject of their legacy, has questioned the effects of Crass as a platform for political and social messaging,

> Possibly Crass as a band made some mistakes in creating a sense of fear. Unwittingly and unintentionally but I think there are occasions in our work where we created fear and that's a negative feeling. People should be aware, people should be informed…but if they live in *fear* of that then they live limited lives. We have to find that balance…It's having the reverse effect of the one it wants. So inadvertently and unintentionally it's serving the interests of the state. When creativity is in opposition to destruction, inevitably destruction prevails. To a very small degree, that was one of the things that we initially didn't realize. The moment creativity falls into the trap of being in opposition, it's becoming defined—the whole purpose of creativity is that it's channeling and describing undefined areas—it's bringing form from formlessness. The moment the form is defined (by the authorities, by the state, by the schools, by parents, by the church) then we're no longer in a creative situation.[1011]

There is a defeatist element that has arisen among Crass members since the dissolving of the band. Rimbaud explains, "It's having the reverse effect of the one it wants. So inadvertently and unintentionally it's serving the interests of the state. When creativity is in opposition to destruction, inevitably destruction prevails."[1012] This skepticism finds echoes in many other long-standing punk perspectives as well.

> There's a section within the anarchist punk 'scene' (the fact that there still is one says it all) who seem to see their role to be that of policing others. It was they who shouted 'sell out'…I get bored shitless by those punks with their holier

[1010] Lake, Steve. 2013. *Zounds Demystified: Lyrics and Notes*. Active Distribution/Bev Records, p. 33.
[1011] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 266.
[1012] Ibid.

> than thou attitudes, those who seem to imagine that they have the right to take whatever they want for themselves without giving anything back.[1013]

The next chapter turns expressly to some of these tensions, most especially the question of violence within punk cultures (and activism more broadly). By turning to fascist political group's attempts to infiltrate punk spaces for recruitment purposes, we can see the twin culmination of this activity in both a violent turn in macho boneheads, but also in the creation, organization, and continuance of Anti-Racist Action, the Anti-Nazi League, and Antifa. As within the small membership of Crass, the question of violence and direct action has long been debated among punks, with no simple solution yet in sight. How do punks view, experience, or even define violence? What are the tensions between passive politics and militant self-defense within this culture? Are there overlaps between discourse and action on these grounds? What might the issue of violence within punk reveal about broader questions of violence in social movements, protests, and community based self-defense? These questions and related examination are explored next.

[1013] Meghan. April 11, 2013. "The Heavy Mental Interview with Penny Rimbaud of Crass," *CVLT Nation*. Web: http:www.cvltnation.com/the-heavy-mental-interview-with-penny-rimbaud/ Last Accessed 05/08/17.

Crass Interlude: Time's Pen

Penny once told me that time is a tricky subject, for "it's there but isn't there."
One never knows how Pen uses his pen
to explain,
ascertain, or entertain,
strain or complain—
about a brain that's constrained?
This rhyming is tedious, but fun to perform.
More often it seems, the freedom
of form
drip
p
i
n
g
down his pages perplex and amuse, cause laughter
and confuse
the reader and the read.
Would you like some fresh bread?
What a relief I didn't force the cadence by mentioning
grain.
Have I over-explained?
Back to the task at hand, a muse upon time.
What is it?
Depends on what your definition of 'is' is, I suppose.
Cycling back;
one never knows
for what Pen uses
his pen
What
Use
Is
~~Time~~ Space
without
~~Space~~ Time?
…
…
Am I just wasting yours?

One never knows.
The extra?
That share is expended
when
pen uses his Pen.

Crass Discography[1014]

LPs

1978. *The Feeding of the 5,000*. Small Wonder Records. LP. Reissued 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

1979. *Stations of the Crass*. 521984. Double Album. Crass Records. Reissued 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

1981. *Penis Envy*. 321984. Crass Records. Reissued 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

1982. *Christ- the Album*. BOLLOX 2U2. Double Album. Crass Records. Reissued 2011 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

1983. *Yes Sir, I Will*. 121984. Crass Records. Reissued 2011 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

1984. *Acts of Love-Fifty Songs to my Other Self*. Existencil Press.

1986. *Ten Notes on a Summer's Day*. Crass Records. Reissued 2010 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

1986. *Best Before…* (Singles Collection). Crass Records. LP/CD

7" Singles

1979. "Reality Asylum"/"Shaved Women". Crass Records.

1980. "Bloody Revolutions/Poison Girls, "Persons Unknown". 421984. Crass Records.

1980. "Rival Tribal Rebel Revel." 421984. Flexi single for *Toxic Graffity* fanzine.

1981. "Nagasaki Nightmare/"Big A Little A". 421984. Crass Records.

1981. "Our Wedding". 321984. Flexi single by ***C***reative ***R***ecording ***a***nd ***S***ound ***S***ervices
(emphasis added) for prank distribution in teenage and bridal magazine *Loving*
1981. "Merry Crassmas". CT.

[1014] That is, the discography of the group, not the label.

1982. “Sheep Farming in the Falklands”/“Gotcha”. 121984. Crass Records.
Originally flexi disc single, later released as official 7”.
1983. “How Does It Feel (to be the Mother of 1000 Dead)?”/“The Immortal Death”. 221984. Crass Records.
1983. “Whodunnit”. 121984. Crass Records.
1984. “You’re Already Dead”/“Nagasaki is Yesterday’s Dog-End”/“Don’t Get Caught”. Crass Records.

Crass Chapter 8

Collisions and Contradictions: Crass Activism & The Question of Violence

"The punk scene that I found was accepting, and even welcoming, to all kinds of people, no matter how tough or 'punk' you looked. Punk rock was only scary in the nervous excitement sense. Later, I lost my naiveté and learned that there were plenty of people in the punk scene that you should be afraid of, but by that time I also had friends to stick with at the shows and I've never really felt unsafe."
--Paul Curran[1015]

"When our enemies expect us to respond to provocation with violence, we must react calmly and peacefully; just as they anticipate our passivity, we must throw a grenade."
--Kwame Ture[1016]

In August 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump surprised many allies and opponents alike by repeating refusing to unequivocally condemn white supremacist violence. Instead, he waffled between broad declarations of blame on 'many sides' and insistence that some 'alt-right' folks and white supremacists are 'very fine people.' In the weeks following the murderous activities of these racists in Charlottesville, Trump went on to openly condemn violence by Antifa activists, and continued to frame a false equivalency between fascists and anti-fascists.[1017] Trump's 'alt-fact' criticism of these 'bad dudes' has been echoed by his supporters[1018], and also by ostensibly left-leaning commentators ranging from Stephen Colbert, Trevor

[1015] Duncan, Chris (ed.) 2007. My First Time: A Collection of First Punk Show Stories. Oakland: AK Press, pp. 112-113.
[1016] (aka. Stokely Carmichael). November 24, 1985. Speech at the Auraria Campus Student Center. Denver, CO. Quoted in Churchill, Ward. 2017. *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America* (3rd Edition). Oakland: PM Press, p. 104.
[1017] This, despite the fact that we have plenty of documented cases of neo-Nazis and other white supremacists killing those they hate, and there is not a single documented case of someone affiliated with Antifa having committed murder.
[1018] The ultra-conservative and red-baiting John Birch Society, unsurprisingly, even went so far as to decry Antifa (along with Black Lives Matter and "radical, lesbian feminism") as the American equivalent of the Maoist Cultural Revolution. Jasper, William F. September 18, 2017. "America's Cultural Revolution. *The New American*. pp. 10-17.

Noah, Cenk Uyger, virtually all Democratic party leaders, ditto corporate media, and many academics, including Noam Chomsky and Todd Gitlin, all of whom have criticized violence on "both sides."[1019] This equivalency has been made despite the fact that Antifa assault victims are more likely to be arrested than Nazi assault victimizers.[1020] Cornel West, ministers, activists, and students who were there in Charlottesville, and others, have recognized the absurdity in this false-equivalency, and have taken a more sympathetic position regarding Antifa, even going so far as to call them "life-savers."[1021]

The question of violence as a revolutionary tactic is once again central to political discourse. So, what violence should we focus on? Which tense situation might cause massive suffering on a planetary scale? The crumbling financial and labor markets? The war-ravaged and poverty stricken genocidal killing fields of capitalism? The raising carbon and eroding ozone? The genetic-engineering of seeds and crops to keep more than half the planet starving so a few can gorge—some of us more than others—on non-ethically traded goods? What about the threat of nuclear

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[1019] Gitlin, Todd. August 28th, 2017. "Who's afraid of Antifa?" *The New York Times*. Section A, Column 0, p. 17.

[1020] Recorded violence from Traditional Workers Party and Aryan organizations committed by Matthew Heimbach, Doug McCormack, and Derik Punneo (not to mention the discursive violence of Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos). Yet, when Yvette Felarca was stabbed and beaten in Berkeley, and DeAndre Harris was severely beaten in Charlottesville, *they* faced arrest and prosecution (though charges were later dropped). In another case, almost entirely ignored in corporate media, was the threat of Trump supporter in Berkeley to burn down a bookstore and "run the Antifa pieces of shit out of Berkeley." It was covered by left liberal news outlet *The Young Turks* (among others), which showed the recorded confrontation in full and can be seen here: Uygur, Cenk & Kasparian, Ana. March 8th, 2018. "MAGA Snowflakes Threaten to Burn Down Bookstore," *The Young Turks Network*. Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQaZdvmUPts Last Accessed 03/24/2018.

[1021] Leach, Brittany. "Deliberation and Embodied Confrontation in Charlottesville: Contesting White Supremacy in Local Public Forums and the Streets." Paper Presentation, Western Political Science Association Annual Conference. San Francisco.

war surrounding often viciously unstable heads of state (in the case of Kim Jong-Un and Donald Trump, with each having their Twitter-Button at their backs)? The violence when students are shot in class by a military weapon of war because it's easier to get a gun than health insurance in the United States?[1022] Nope: Antifa. ANTIFA is the biggest, gravest threat facing this country and this planet, according to the president, FBI, and the state more broadly—so we must run a media circus discrediting this group, and play to racist police's preference to work with white supremacist terror cells instead of those standing between the Nazis and their victims. State police target Antifa and the FBI have confirmed their special task force against anti-Nazis.

My argument here is two-fold: that Antifa's use of violence must be understood in the contexts both of the long-standing ideological debate surrounding diversity (or lack thereof) of radical tactics, as well as the specific history of neo-Nazism in punk rock cultures that saw the emergence of many groups now assembled under the Antifa label and banner (and hence discussions, debates, and disagreements regarding violence within punk are relevant to examining the ongoing crises of fascist street gangs). Of course, as long as there has been fascism, there has been—often

[1022] Is this what the 60s were like? When the place the country is isn't where exactly where we *thought*, in terms of state sponsored segregation, economic apartheid imposed by the elites, enforced with warfare abroad (Vietnam/Endless War on Terror), and at home (police brutality generally, and to shockingly racist concentrated targeting of vulnerable people—based on their race, or where they were bone, or what they think life is about—and whether they base that on scientific fact *or* faith *or* frustrating skepticism, what their bodies ''conform' to.), people seeking radical change in the streets, organizing demonstrations, creating art and music to express the un-expressible in the fury of hope. No, not the hope you can pretend to buy at the election booth, but the hope that we can build a world in which the targeted among us should never be targeted, cooperation is better and more equitable than competition, and we can achieve many more incredible things when we put differences aside and work, rather than war, with each other.

armed—resistance against it. The diversity of tactics employed by Antifa takes historical lessons from a century of fighting fascism around the world, and of undermining systematic oppression in discourse and debate, but also in the streets.[1023] They also live in the shadow of 19th century debates about actions described as the "propaganda of the deed" advocated by Bakunin, Berkman, Goldman, and others, but critiqued by Tolstoy and ambiguously supported in some instances—but not necessarily endorsed—by anarcho-socialists like Kropotkin and Morris.[1024]

Antifa not only has roots in anarchism and socialism, but also in punk rock, necessitating a turn to these cultures in debating current tactics, and Crass again can give us a window in to some of the debates surrounding anti-fascist strategy. Primarily in the U.S. and U.K., but also in punk spaces in France, Germany, Spain, and elsewhere—far-right and outright fascist groups began attempts to recruit a youthful fighting vanguard from the stereotypically angry white male thought to

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[1023] While always confrontational, Antifa doesn't always employ 'violence.' Of course, 'violence' is a state centric category used to discredit struggles by individual actors and groups beyond the state (as Max Weber correctly identified the state's ability to define and monopolize the category of legitimized violence). So, debates about what tactics are violent are ongoing and unresolved. Nonetheless, Antifa has also utilized tactics that hardly anyone would consider violent, such as making uproarious noise to literally drown out the hate speech of fascist speakers.

[1024] Berkman, Alexander. 1999 (1912). *Prison memoirs of an Anarchist*. New York: New York Review Books.
Goldman, Emma. 1969 (1917). *Anarchism and Other Essays*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
Bakunin, Mikhail. "Letter to a Frenchmen on the present crisis." The militant example of the Parisian communards (both in their actions and in their execution) also served to inspire William Morris, who wrote in his *News from Nowhere* that systemic change could never be attained without significant bloodshed and sacrifice. Slowly and reluctantly, Morris began to recognize that the capitalist system would not go quietly or easily into that good night. Ultimately, he began to push for a continuance of the socialist cause, even if it contributed briefly to violence, rather than maintaining what he thought was an unsustainable and cowardly position of pacifism. Morris always keeps a critical tone, however, when dealing with "indiscriminate" violence, for only violent acts such as the seizure of the modes of production in a quick and tactical strike were of a type that Morris could fully support. See Chapters 3-4 for more. Morris, May. 2012. *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, Vol. 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 222. MacCarthy, Fiona. 1995. *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Arnold Knopf, p. 490 & 545.

predominate in these countries' punk scenes (also exploiting the right-wing imagery that was used ironically and for simple shock value during punk's early days). Specifically, the British Movement, the National Front, the White Aryan Resistance, and other groups began using the hyper-masculine pose of many punk rockers as a recruitment site. Many skinhead bands that wanted to associate with extreme right wing causes, neo-Nazism, fascism, and racism began to sing about 'white power' rather than the working class. None of these bands is more notorious than British group Skrewdriver (explored in more detail below).[1025] The influence of Skrewdriver and its leader Ian Stuart continues in the far-right today, years after Stuart's death in 1993, and can be seen for instance in the 2015 BBC production *KKK: The Fight for White Supremacy*, which shows a Klan organizer at home in front of a Skrewdriver banner hanging on the wall, and wearing a "S.H.A.R.P. Shooter" t-shirt, with the Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (an Antifa aligned group) logo in crosshairs.[1026]

Many punks, who have militantly anti-racist and anti-fascist beliefs central to their cultural stance against the stifling mainstream consumerist culture of capitalism, were not exactly wont to see such despicable actors infiltrate and attempt to transform their cultural spaces. Some punks promoted direct action, but only when done non-violently. So, even if they agreed with anti-racism and anti-fascism as an end, they

[1025] Skrewdriver is so notorious that over a decade after Stuart's death, the band continues to be referenced in fictional films on the subject of racist skinheads in both the U.K. and the U.S. For an English example, see the 2006 film *This is England*, which tells the story of the non-racist/racist split among skinheads in the early 1980s in England. During one scene, there is visible graffiti spelling 'Skrewdriver' on the wall of a skinhead hangout. In the 1998 American film *American History X*, a racist skinhead character can be seen wearing a Skrewdriver t-shirt while attending a racist skinhead concert/party.

[1026] Murdoch, Dan. 2015. *KKK: The Fight for White Supremacy*. BBC Productions.

could never find themselves (nor could Crass) capable of supporting these ends if achieved through means they considered to be violent, a critique that contains the kernel of contemporary arguments maintaining the supposed ideological and moral purity of non-violence. Sometimes, anti-fascist organizers are asked by show promoters to provide security, physical if need be, from fascists at a performance. As with Antifa currently, punks have been (and in many locales still are) the targets of police harassment, intimidation, and assault, and therefore the police were not sought out for protection from neo-Nazi boneheads in punk spaces. Even so, nonviolent punks are almost entirely in solidarity with Antifa, even if they disagree with their tactics, in the fight against neo-Nazis. In other words, many people may be against Nazism, but unwilling to either risk bodily harm upon themselves or risk inflicting it on others in the fight against it.

Other punks and anti-racist skinheads took their self-defense, and the safety of their spaces, into their own hands, by interceding and stopping Nazi attacks on punks of color and women punks, effectively expelling neo-Nazis from many scenes (and attempting to do so in many others), and marginalizing them in many others, in contestations over cultural space. Initially, these punks responded with the creation of groups like the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism in the U.K. and Anti-Racist Action in the U.S. In a similar vein, the punk sub-scene of Riot Grrrl certainly pushed the issues of empowerment, not retreating from a cultural space, and physical self-defense—especially among women—in combating the machismo of men (punk or otherwise). Usually, a visible Antifa group at a show is enough to dissuade fascists

from attempting to participate or attack, showing again some of the defensive strategies utilized, but sometimes Nazis don't take the hint, or do not leave when asked politely (nor does state power).

In our broader context, and given that far-right wing, white supremacist, and fascist groups are not only committing violent acts against those they deem inferior, but are also openly collaborating with police, how are struggling communities they target meant to defend themselves?[1027] We are told to venerate the liberal right of "free speech" for the likes of Milo Yiannopoulos, and to condemn the "violence" of his exclusion from Berkeley's campus, as if those entitled to speak also have a right to be heard—not the same as speech—in a consequence free environment.[1028] We are decidedly not told of the violence contained in Yiannopoulos's speech, including, for example, his declared intention to out undocumented, trans, and other vulnerable students (which he has a history of doing at previous speaking engagements).[1029] We are told that despite the continual violence of groups like the far-right Oath Keepers, white supremacist Identity Europa, Neo-fascists, Neo-Nazis, and the Ku Klux Klan, and despite whatever immense costs to schools, communities, and state spending, such limited resources must be spent on providing these hate-mongers an even larger

[1027] Levin, Sam. February 9, 2018. "California Police worked to pursue 'anti-racist' activists, documents show," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/09/california-police-white-supremacists-counter-protest. Last Accessed 03/18/18.

[1028] Of course, speech, like every 'right' afforded by the state has significant limitations on it already. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes infamously declared, one cannot shout "fire" in a crowded theatre. It seems like an impossible standard of speech absolutism to suggest that Nazis—who in many cases want to *literally* fire upon or set fire to their opponents—should be able to put their rights of speech over the physical safety of their targets.

[1029] Yiannopoulos had announced his intention to out undocumented students in Berkeley, similar to the way he had previously verbally attacked a trans student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Cf. *Antifa*, p. 105.

platform than they already have. Fascists, it seems, have gotten good at presenting themselves as victims rather than victimizers. Speech trumps all, we are told, and opposing hate speech with oppositional speech is somehow a priori less important than the initial speech. This is often also presented in the capitalist ideal of an imagined free market, but in this case, the 'free market of ideas.' If the Nazis want to march in Skokie, the Supreme Court has validated their right to do so, but why should this invalidate our right to meet them there? Does anyone really believe that fascists, white supremacists, and Nazis are actually in support of free speech for anyone but themselves?

At the same time, the police throughout much of the U.S. has chosen to side with the Nazis, not only protecting them from the populations they are threatening or abusing, but in some cases openly collaborating with them for intel or comrades in arms, harkening back to the indisputably racist and labor-busting origins of the very institution of modern day policing.[1030] In other words, it is no coincidence that the overwhelming majority of arrests made in street brawls between fascists and anti-fascists are of the latter, for the institutional violence of the state embodied by the police is decidedly in favor of the former. Not only have police used lethal and 'less lethal' weapons and vehicles against anti-fascists, while providing free (i.e. state-and therefore tax-funded) security for fascists, but they have also initiated violence through mass arrests (though usually not mass convictions) and brutality.

[1030] Williams, Kristian. 2015. *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (3rd Edition). San Francisco: AK Press.

Conservative legislators in several states have even introduced bills to legalize people's ability to plow into protestors in the street.[1031]

Matthew Heimbach (of the Traditionalist Workers Party), whose image attacking Antifa protestors on the campus of Michigan State University went viral online, faced no charges for this violence. But, he *was* recently arrested for domestic violence on March 13th, 2018 (although he was released on bail the same day). White supremacist organizer Doug McCormack (also of TWP) organized a rally in June 2016 in Sacramento, came armed with a knife, and surrounded himself with other neo-Nazis armed primarily with 2x4's. Even so, court documents have since been released detailing the police's protection and collaboration with McCormack's group to identify and prosecute Antifa activists, including Berkeley teacher Yvette Felarca, despite the fact that she was a victim of stabbing and beating at the event.[1032] Another TWP organizer, Derik Punneo, collaborated with police while jailed for a domestic violence charge, during which time (now released audio recordings reveal) officers told him that they were "going after" the Antifa activists and looking at the Nazis—even those armed like Punneo himself—as "victims."[1033]

It wasn't until March 16, 2018 that DeAndre Harris was cleared of assault charges stemming from his self defense while being viciously attacked by a group of

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[1031] At the time of this writing, such laws are under consideration in Tennessee, Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and North Dakota. Bray, p. 251, nt. 324. Ardone, Dakin. August 19th, 2017. "These states have introduced bills to protect drivers who run over protestors," *CNN*. Web: https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/18/us/legislation-protects-drivers-injure-protesters/index.html. Last Accessed 03/19/2018.

[1032] Levin, Sam. February 9, 2018. "California Police worked to pursue 'anti-racist' activists, documents show," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/09/california-police-white-supremacists-counter-protest. Last Accessed 03/18/18.

[1033] Ibid.

white supremacists (none of whom were arrested) in a parking garage on August 12, 2017 in Charlottesville, the same weekend that witnessed the vehicular murder of anti-fascist protester Heather Heyer and saw scores more injured. Clearly, the state has sided with violent Nazis over their victims, or those trying to stem their victimizing behavior. In another case, almost entirely ignored in corporate media, was the threat of Trump supporter in Berkeley to burn down a bookstore and "run the Antifa pieces of shit out of Berkeley."[1034] These threats also led to no official charges, or any involvement by the state whatsoever.

Sure, many people tell us that they are opposed to fascism, but the best way to combat it is to write letters, sign petitions, declare their opposition, post something to social media, or at most attend a march. These tactics are surely important. Anything riskier, especially direct confrontation with real, material fascists (and not just those untouchable fascists in the abstract) is often condemned out of hand, with shockingly little engagement as to why.[1035] So, while these folks are happy to "sympathize" with Antifa, they are not willing to defend its ideals or participants. Anti-fascism far predates the specific loose coalition of Antifa, but it seems that the romanticized view of anti-fascists fighters in the mid-20th century in Spain, Greece, Germany, France, the U.K. (as well as in post-colonial Latin America and Africa) pushed so heavily in the media's image of a "stop Nazism by any means necessary" is yet another example

[1034] However, this story was covered by left liberal news outlet *The Young Turks* (among others), which showed the recorded confrontation in full and can be seen here: Uygur, Cenk & Kasparian, Ana. March 8th, 2018. "MAGA Snowflakes Threaten to Burn Down Bookstore," *The Young Turks Network*. Web: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQaZdvmUPts Last Accessed 03/24/2018.

[1035] Gelderloos makes a related point that "pacifists have always been more comfortable" and we could add, more complacent "with the violence of the oppressor than with the violence of the oppressed," p. 224.

of neo-liberalism's nostalgic back-patting coupled with an assumption that we are either somehow immune to such institutionalized fascism in power (i.e. the fascists are only occupying space at the 'margins', not in the halls of state power), or that we have come so far with the supposed growth of inclusive identity politics as to make historical lessons of pedagogical or entertainment, but not political, purposes only. Antifa doesn't necessarily advocate violence, nor does it argue against the utilization of non-violent tactics when appropriate, but rather, Antifa participants typically argue that these cannot be the extent of everything we can use against fascists—official or otherwise. But, as Mark Bray has written, when it comes to fascists, Antifa is entirely unwilling to be tolerant, "it will not agree to disagree."[1036]

The corporate media is no different than the state in their sympathies against militant opposition to fascism, as absurdist claims comparing Antifa to the very authoritarian state and fascist fighters they oppose have featured in stories in the *New York Times, L.A. Times, Atlantic*, *Rolling Stone* and many more, not to mention every major U.S. televised news outlet.[1037] Additional coverage of far-right groups including neo-Nazis, which often includes either kid gloved, overly gentle coverage, normalizing and humanizing presentation of racist and fascist figures and movements in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Mother Jones*, the *Guardian*, and

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[1036] Bray, p. 205.
[1037] For a prototypical example, see Beinart, Peter. September 2017. "The Rise of the Violent Left," *The Atlantic*. pp. 13-15. St. John, Paige and Queally, James. August 25th, 2017. "Antifa violence decried: Berkeley fracas spurs soul-searching on the left," *Los Angeles Times*. Metro Desk: Part A, p. 1.

more.[1038] It seems that the media, like the state, thinks that the best way to handle Nazis is to appease them, to let them speak, publish, and rally.

Antifa categorically rejects these claims that we must allow Nazis to speak, or that Nazis deserve a respectful forum, and instead emphasize community self defense. Sometimes defense requires arms, and in the case of Antifa, the thinking is that holding a vigil or signing a petition is not sufficient to protect vulnerable communities targeted by today's neo-fascists. Huey P. Newton, Malcolm X, and others wrote in very similar terms, describing the need for arms among communities of color in the U.S. for the purposes of self-defense against racists, in and out of uniform. Sometimes defense requires arms, and in the case of Antifa, the thinking is that holding a vigil or signing a petition is not sufficient to protect vulnerable communities targeted by today's neo-fascists. Despite the non-violent liberalism taught in U.S. schools, it is now an increasingly accepted view of the Civil Rights movement that only through the arming of groups like the Black Panthers, and the more confrontational stance of Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, Fred Hampton, Assata Shakur, and Angela Davis, the U.S. government would have been far less willing to engage what they perceived to be the lesser threat from Martin Luther King.[1039] Huey P. Newton sums this up well, writing, "the oppressor prefers to deal

[1038] In a related set of issues, we are also typically not given media or political discourse that provides any context whatsoever, rather than blanket declarations or condemnations, especially on the issue of violence when it includes firearms. From the reprehensible right, we typically get a whitewashed scapegoating of the mentally ill, and from the spineless parts of the left we get an all-encompassing call for disarming, a rejection of guns—if you'll forgive a cheap pun, lock stock and barrel—well that is, disarming for the citizenry, not the structurally repressive state apparatuses.

[1039] Cobb, Charles E. 2016. *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible*. Durham: Duke University Press. Umoja, Akinyele Omowale. 2013. *We Will Shoot*

with the less radical, i.e., the less dangerous, spokesmen for his subjects."[1040] Of course, the fates of all those listed also reveals how violent state response to radical change can be. On a related note, Peter Gelderloos argues, "nonviolence works best when complemented by other actions or methods." It is also worth noting that even Mahatma Gandhi promoted training in arms, adding "non-violence presupposes the ability to strike."[1041] Non-violence, that is, seems as a tactic to rest upon a credible threat towards escalation. Only after the peaceful actions and the riots following the police murder of Oscar Grant in the Bay Area, for instance, did the state prosecutors bring felonious charges against the police officer who killed him.

In his masterful essay "On Violence", Fanon argues that as colonialism is "naked violence", it will only be overcome through confrontation with "greater violence."[1042] I don't want to flatten the differences between colonialism and fascism, but even so, both rely on similar racist (il)logic. Therefore, can't we apply Fanon's critique of the "naked violence" of colonialism to fascists—perhaps the greatest and most open celebrators of violence, past and present, as well as the state's alignment with neo-Nazis? Peter Gelderloos calls us to consider a "diversity of tactics," which includes going beyond what Ward Churchill calls the "politics of the comfort zone," as it is a form of privilege to *even have* a comfort zone.[1043] Gelderloos goes even further, suggesting that violence is a humanly constructed

Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement. New York: New York University Press.

[1040] Newton, Huey P. 2002. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. Oakland: Seven Stories Press, p. 139.

[1041] Kripalani, Krishna (ed.). 1960. *All Men Are Brothers: Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi as Told in His Own Words*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.

[1042] Fanon, Frantz. 2004. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, p. 23.

[1043] Churchill, p. 73.

(specifically by state power) social category, meant more for social control than critical reflection, and a construct that precludes various people to "choose their [own] form of participation [in the struggle" because "a unitary struggle is almost impossible."[1044] Echoing Morris and Bookchin, Churchill also seems to find violence abhorrent, but necessary in terms of both self-defense and revolutionary change.[1045]

Antifa's participants respond to such incidents typically by stating that we did not initiate this fight, but nor will we go gently into that good night of their fascist fantasies. In his ethnographic study of contemporary anti-fascism in the U.S., criminologist Stanislav Vysotsky concludes that Antifa in fact serves as an example of self-policing and direct democracy, especially among radical community members and others who cannot seek out protection from state institutions, effecting efforts at the safety and order of their community's spaces.[1046] In other words, Antifa is not (in the punk scene) to start fights, but rather to ensure that (punk) spaces remain safe from Nazi infiltration, recruitment, ideological influence, intimidation, and indeed violence. Although I'm largely in agreement Slavoj Žižek's insistence that "sometimes the greatest violence is to do nothing," as this can maintain the systemic violence inherent in capitalism, I disagree with his prescription that we simply retreat

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[1044] Gelderloos, pp. 20, 259, & 261. He also makes a salient point, especially in the context of pacifist collaboration with police to arrest 'violent' protestors by arguing that "exposing someone to prison time is much more violent than a punch in the face," p. 284.

[1045] Riggenbach, Jeff. October 1979. "Interview with Murray Bookchin," *Reason*. Web: http://reason.com/archives/1979/10/01/interview-with-murray-bookchin/ Last Accessed 03/15/2018.

[1046] Vysotsky, Stanislav. January 28, 2015. "The Anarchy Police: Militant Anti-Fascism as Alternative Policing Practice," *Critical Criminology*. Web. See also his discussion of threat analysis and the diversity of Antifa tactics in Vyotsky, Stanislav. November 2013. "The Influence of Threat on Tactical Choices of Militant Anti-Fascists," *Interface: A Journal For and About Social Movements*. Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 263-294.

from the world to "learn, learn, learn" while bodies are being beaten and bloodied in our streets.[1047] When the authoritarian capitalists disingenuously tell us that their military industrial complex must intervene to protect the sovereignty of another nation or to end human suffering there, we are broadly told that violent interventionism is the last, though often the first employed, resort. When we decide to defend ourselves against such interventions (by the militarized police, as well as fascist thugs and militias) in the domestic sphere, we are told that violence is always morally reprehensible. Jeremy Christian was protected by the police at a Trump rally where he is free to sieg heil, but three men on a train in Portland were willing to sacrifice their own lives in defense of two teenage girls of color from Christian's threats and initiation of violence. The lesson we can learn from Antifa within punk is that Nazis can be made to feel unwelcome, but this effort sometimes involves physical clashes. Antifa works to ensure that (punk) spaces remain safe from Nazi infiltration, recruitment, ideological influence, intimidation, and indeed violence. Our vigilance must be for the preservation of the lives, bodies, and communities that Nazis and their state collaborators want to harm, surely a higher priority than free speech absolutism.

At least in U.S. politics, calls for ideological and absolute non-violence seem to only ever get directed at those seeking change, especially those already marginalized by structural racism, colonialism, and gender based discrimination. As Malcolm X responded in a 1965 interview, in which he declares his desire to seek

[1047] Žižek, Slavoj. 2008. Violence: Six Sideways Reflections. New York: Picador.

peaceable means for "recognition and respect," yet he also recognizes that more is likely necessary, especially given that "the only people in this country who are asked to be nonviolent are the oppressed…[who should instead] protect ourselves by any mean necessary when attacked by racists."[1048] It is literally the case that victims of far-right racist and fascist attacks have been arrested and prosecuted for the attacks carried out on their bodies, in a perverse and far too little discussed version of victim blaming. Richard Spencer is punched in Washington D.C. and the liberal left has to wring its hands over the reasons why this may have been inappropriate, while at the same event persons of color and women were being assaulted, in some cases so brutally as to require hospitalization. Antifa rejects the legitimacy of fascist speech and the violence it directly causes, and its demonstrable success in pushing Nazi boneheads almost completely out of punk culture can serve as an example for how we may eradicate Nazism in other contexts. Following the implementation of some Antifa strategies across the U.S., Spencer has recently announced that he might cancel his current speaking tour because white supremacist rallies "aren't fun anymore."[1049]

Thomas Bennett (Strike Anywhere) argues in a way indicative of Antifa's (and their sympathizers') response, "Of course, I don't believe in the false equivalence (between Antifa and the alt-right). I think anti-fascists' pre-emptive street

[1048] Malcolm X. 1965. *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*. New York: Pathfinder Press, p. 4.
[1049] Walters, Joanna. March 14, 2018. "Prominent U.S. neo-Nazi arrested on domestic violence charge," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/14/matthew-heimbach-neo-nazi-white-nationalism-arrest-domestic-violence. Last Accessed 03/18/18.

violence against Nazis is righteous and important."[1050] Others in punk circles, including several members of Crass, hold to non-violence as a principle, and hence cannot fully offer support to Antifa. Rimbaud, for instance, questions the demonization of working class youths, whom he claims were not explicitly political in their attacks, but simply rowdy, drunken youth who gained political relevance once they were labeled Nazis. In his narrative, which has been echoed by so many interviews that I and others have conducted, in the so-called early days, punks, skinheads, mods, rude boys, etc. were circulating in the same scene, only to later be pitted against each other. Rimbaud has also been quite vocal recently in his criticism of Antifa—which, like the corporate media and state police forces, he compares to the very fascists they fight. Other punks hold on to non-violence as a principle, and hence cannot fully offer support to Antifa, or have hedged their responses by allowing a space for self-defense, yet still largely condemning violence.

Other punks have hedged their responses by allowing a space for self-defense, yet still largely condemning violence. Jello Biafra of Dead Kennedys/Alternative Tentacles/GITMO School of Medicine fame has responded to recent events in line with this skepticism towards Antifa violence, stating, "I'm not down with confronting (the extreme right's) provocations of violence with actual violence. I mean, self-defense is one thing, but going to a Trumpist rally with the express purpose of beating

[1050] Thomson, Jaime. 9 September 2017. "'No Fascist USA!': how hardcore punk fuels the Antifa movement," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/sep/09/no-fascist-usa-how-hardcore-punk-fuels-the-antifa-movement. Last Accessed 09/09/17. Bennett's band, Strike Anywhere, also adopts the three arrowed circle logo (originally developed for the Iron Front, an anti-fascist group in Germany during the Weimar years, in order to easily cover Nazi swastikas in public places), as their band's logo—revealing their Antifa sympathies in yet another way.

up fascists—what does that accomplish? Who's the fascist now? It plays right into their hands."[1051] Antifa rejects this false equivalency *in order to* delegitimize fascist speech and the violence it directly causes, and its demonstrable success in pushing Nazi boneheads almost completely out of punk culture can serve as an example for how we may eradicate Nazism in other contexts.

Even so, neo-Nazis are not the only group that clashes with radical punks. Their domestic terrorism, in other words, causes far less destruction to marginalized communities than police brutality, legacies of colonialism, and gentrification.[1052] The danger of neo-Nazis, in other words, pales in comparison to these structural elements, yet weighs disproportionately upon the public imagination. To be clear, we should not consider punks and skinheads to be unique in this scapegoating, for many other art forms and their fans have also been stereotyped in similar moves of displacement. For example, similar rhetorical moves have been made to distance the state from structural injustices through the stereotyping of hip-hop fans as misogynist gangsters, as well as heavy metal and horror film fans as violent, satanic fiends.[1053] Yet, these other examples have been proliferated into the mainstream in a way that skinhead culture never has, providing more opportunities to counter these stereotypes. So, even though individuals in genres like hip-hop, metal, and horror may still be roundly

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[1051] Thomson, Jaime. 9 September 2017. "'No Fascist USA!': how hardcore punk fuels the Antifa movement," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/sep/09/no-fascist-usa-how-hardcore-punk-fuels-the-antifa-movement. Last Accessed 09/09/17.

[1052] *Ibid*, p. 136.

[1053] The infamous case of the West Memphis Three, convicted of the murders of children based upon no evidence other than their tastes in metal and horror shows a disturbing example of how these stereotypes of aesthetic tastes can have horrendous effects. Leveritt, Mara. 2002. *Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three*. New York: Atria Books. Echols, Damien. 2012. *Life After Death*. New York: Blue Rider Press/Penguin.

blamed for social ills, we see in skinhead stereotyping an example that is more consistently negative than even those aforementioned, for each of these others has been co-opted, even if the co-optation is of the most sanitized version of these. Pacifism has long been debated in radical leftist organizations, and the legitimacy of the use of violence in anti-capitalist and anti-statist struggles is far from reaching consensus. Additionally, many observers have noted that the relative isolation of anarcho-punk spaces made alliance building with other like-minded or sympathetic political activists exceedingly difficult.[1054] This debate about Antifa is relevant to our study of punk and other radical politico-aesthetic cultures not only because of Antifa's roots within punk cultures specifically, but also because of the broader debate about radical tactics and the question of violence.

The Fascism Fetish and Anti-Fascist Resistance

Within punk, these confrontations, with fascist groups as well as state power have been occurring for decades.[1055] Many skinhead bands that wanted to associate with extreme right wing causes, neo-Nazism, fascism, and racism began to sing about 'white power' rather than the working class. Growing increasingly uncomfortable with the leftist and radical leanings in much of punk, a number of bands using the stylistic sound associated with punk rock began to write, record, and perform music with extremist right wing lyrics. This is not to say, however, that racist skinheads are

[1054] Cross, p. 13.
[1055] In a particularly striking example, three accused saboteurs of the superhighway in Bolivia, who were arrested by the government of Evo Morales were previously members of punk bands. See Gelderloos, p. 205.

the product of punk rock scenes. Instead, the relationship between the two is much more complicated. It is certainly true that many racist skinheads were affiliated with punk scenes prior to the creation of racist skinhead organizations. Violence (in-it-of-itself) was certainly appealing to some participants in the skinhead subculture, and part of the appeal of joining a skinhead crew was the masculine 'tough' status that it offered. Granted, this is not a broad based study on violence as radical tactic, nor an ideological debate about how violence is defined. Yet, no study of punk cultures would be complete without a considered examination of violence, both lyrical and literal, in the scene. Dancing in punk cultures is one of the most obvious instances of physical collision, as bodies are literally thrown into each other in a variety of ways.

Punk dancing is most often experienced in two broad patterns, the pogo and the pit. The first of these, the 'pogo', is most often attributed to an early Sex Pistols show in which Sid Vicious, prior to his joining the band, was so enthused by their performance that he began jumping up and down in place.[1056] Pogoing as a dance form also became influential in the sanitized, safer offshoot of punk dubbed "new wave" by the music industry. The second major dance form, the pit, is simply a broad category that encapsulates a variety of movements known as skanking (most associated with ska and ska-punk), the circle pit in which participants move quickly together in a circle to the frantic pace of the music, or the catch-all media term 'slam-dancing' for the most chaotic, formless collisions experienced on the punk dance

[1056] Laing, p. 112.

floor. As Robin Sylvan describes such a chaotic scene, "audience members bang against each other in a kind of Dionysian frenzy."[1057]

Part of these dance forms arise out of the shear energy of punk performances, as well as the fact that much of punk music does not easily translate into the time signatures of tempos that are easily danced to. Also important to punk dancing is the similarly democratic move as is made by the musicians themselves, that anyone can do this, and in fact in some gig spaces, everyone *must* move, or else risk injury and/or isolation. It is quite rare for individual dancers to carve out spaces of autonomy at punk performances, as usually dancing involves a group of people moving somewhat as one mass. Another frequent occurrence is the participation of the performer in the dancing, as another part of what has been demonstrated as the breaking down of the normative performer-audience split. Although some may become quite adept at pogoing, skanking, or moshing, these are generally de-skilled dance forms. Also important in such physical explosions is the fact that, for the most part, punks look after one another to avoid injury. As Greg Graffin explains in perhaps to single best description of the support and solidarity often experienced in the pit,

> In the best concerts, there is no barrier between a performer and the audience. Emotions flow both ways, as if the musicians and the listeners were locked in an intense conversation…When a singer at a punk rock concert throws himself on top of the outstretched hands of an ecstatic audience, the act symbolizes the bond of not only trust but common feeling that has been established between them…There are many unspoken rules in a slam pit to keep people from getting hurt. The most important is that punk fans are obliged to look out for one another. If someone falls, the nearby people in the pit are required to stop slamming and help that person get up. When girls enter

[1057] Sylvan, Robin. *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music*. New York, NYU Press, pp. 73 & 258, nt. 30.

> the pit, they are not to be groped or assaulted. Kicking and punching are not cool, though the flailing of arms and legs sometimes can resemble kicking and punching. Punk culture has always been defiant and aggressive. But it also has been cooperative and egalitarian, at its best. Sometimes the rules of the pit are violated by jerks, drunks, and assholes. But almost everyone is aware of the rules. They emerged spontaneously from the culture of punk and from the social networks functioning in front of the stage. They are meant to establish social cohesion even as they allow individuals to express themselves as independent and autonomous agents.[1058]

This brief explanation of punk dance forms is not meant to be a primary focus in itself, but rather the demonstration of one way in which the space for simulated or actual violence gets carved out in the culture, and how such 'violence' may have attracted *actual* malicious types to the culture. Iggy Pop, Stiv Bators, and Darby Crash had a penchant for self-mutilation with glass on stage, even inspiring the latter's band name of the Germs, since "we make people sick."[1059] Obviously violence is present in punk culture, though often it is self-inflicted or simulated violence. Sure, the pit can get out of hand sometimes, and there are often drug and drink fueled altercations. But more than these occasional troublesome bouts, anyone spending more than a few passing hours at punk shows can attest to witnessing thousands of instances of support (physical as well as political/social) including hands outreached to the fallen followed by the literal lifting up of peers, collective elevation of crowd-surfing, and closely watched self-policing to avoid injury both to the self and to those around one's self. Media's hyperbolic focus on violence in punk can also

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[1058] Graffin, Greg & Olson, Steve. 2010. *Anarchy Evolution: Faith, Science, and Bad Religion in a World Without God*. New York: It Books/Harper Collins, p. 183.
[1059] Spheeris, Penelope. 1981. *The Decline of Western Civilization*. Spheeris Films, Inc.
Cf. DJ Rodney Bingenheimer. 11/30/1979. "Interview with the Germs," *Rodney on the Rock*. KROQ. Los Angeles Radio Station.

be useful in explaining how violence indeed *grew* after such discourse emerged.[1060] Craig O'Hara argues, "portraying punks as violent attracted people who were really violent to the scene."[1061]

What racist organizations sought to do was channel this violence towards their end goals. This is a large part of the infamous Frank Meeink story, which shows how the violence and teenage angst is manipulated by the white power movement, as well as shedding light on how music specifically is utilized as a recruitment tool.[1062] For others, it was simply a way of identifying their crew vis-à-vis other gangs.[1063] The origins of racist beliefs for individuals is difficult to discern, and is not the subject of this chapter. Those individuals who became racist skinheads may have inherited racist views from their colonial histories, their parents, their teachers, their peers, their communities, or indeed, even their culture and music. The Nazis adopted some of the fashion signifiers of skinheads, though surprisingly, not nearly enough to be viewed as the same cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, there may be complicated cognitive dissonance between cultural movements that embrace subaltern sites—and particularly—sounds, yet don't politically align with them. In other words, aesthetic tastes can be utilized both as a justification of performed anti-racism, i.e. 'I'm not

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[1060] Of course, many other musical and cultural scenes have been discredited following violence, but the more mainstream the artist (and those associated with them) are, the more such occurrences are framed as incidental rather than indicative of patterns of behavior among the fans, the artists, or both. Compare, for instance, the narrative following the stabbing murder at the Rolling Stones' 1969 concert at Altamont versus the *simulated* violence on the Alice Cooper Band's stage in the time period shortly thereafter.

[1061] O'Hara, Craig. 1999. The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise. San Francisco: AK Press, p. 45.

[1062] Meeink, Frank and Roy, Jody. 2009. *Autobiography of a Recovering Skinhead: The Frank Meeink Story as Told to Jody M. Roy, Ph.D*. Portland: Hawthorne Books.

[1063] This is notoriously the case within the context of racialized gangs in the U.S. prison industrial complex.

racist, I listen to reggae' or a performed denial of racism, i.e. 'I just like the sound.' Many skinhead bands that wanted to associate with extreme right wing causes, neo-Nazism, fascism, and racism began to sing about 'white power' rather than the working class.

One of the most infamous examples of pronounced punk rock violence came at a 1981 show by the 4-Skins, the Business, and other punk/Oi! groups in the predominately Asian-immigrant area of Southall, London.[1064] These groups did not espouse fascist or racist ideologies, and indeed released statements condemning the infiltration of these influences in punk, skinhead, and youth cultures more broadly (in fact, most often such groups broadly condemned 'politics' in the scene, indicating a distrust of all forms of extremism then circulating in political parties, movements, and literatures). Even so, the intentionality of the artists did not undo the fact that some of their fan-base was involved in National Front fascist politics.

As this particular concert (of 4 July 1981) was in many ways seen as an affront to their cultural identity, the population of Southall did not open the welcome mat for these punks and skinheads with unseemly reputations. Violence ensued on a scale not yet witnessed in punk culture, as over a hundred punks, skinheads, and immigrant youth clashed in the street outside tavern where the event was held. Both the violence of the event and the media coverage of it helped to cement a negative stereotype of skinheads and Oi! music as racist, forever staining punk cultures with fascist overtones. Though this stereotype is, as with all stereotypes, unfairly one-

[1064] Laing, p. 156.

sided and flat, we must be careful to not dismiss the very real concerns and problems within punk scenes that led to its solidification. The section below attempts to unpack the tensions surrounding identity, and race in particular, in the punk/skinhead scene, opening up problems in both sides of the argument surrounding the stereotype of white, male, Nazi thugs within punk cultures. The rival groups and factions of punk that more often battled internally than spilled into their neighbors street are described by Crass in their song "Rival Tribal Rebel Revel", including the following (chorus) lyrics,

> Tribal wars are raging
> There's a battlefield in the street
> There's games to play and hell to pay
> When the rival tribal rebels meet…
>
> Tribal wars are raging
> No one's safe out on their own
> The gangs are about and they scream and shout
> So you'd better not be caught alone…
>
> Tribal wars are raging
> Everyone's just acting out bad parts
> Hey there, big man, take a look at yourself
> It's in the mirror that the real war starts[1065]

Although violence seeps into so many cultural scenes—within and beyond punk—the genre/scene of punk most often associated with problematic outbursts of violence is the stripped down, working-class version of punk and skinhead cultures termed 'Oi!'. Of the many 20th century youth cultures written about in sociological, cultural, and pop studies, there appears to be none as polarizing as skinheads. For years, focus on skinhead culture has taken shape as either a condemnation due to

[1065] Crass. 1982. *Christ- the Album*. BOLLOX 2U2. Double LP Album.

racist associations of some few or a sympathetic rendering that erases or negates the influence of the National Front and fascistic imagery in skinhead cultures. In contemporary essays, one-sided presentation of skinheads is increasingly waning, as academics and journalists alike seem to be slowly recognizing the diverse lineage of this culture. Yet, even in these ostensibly more holistic explorations, there is a tendency to either ascribe purely positive or negative definitions of what this culture was and is. I propose that it is important in exploring skinheads, and punk cultures more broadly, that we maintain a productive ambiguity about the subject matter and the subjects themselves who are participants in it. For a better understanding of skinheads, I argue that we shouldn't replace a one-sided demonizing account of the culture with an equally one-side apologia, but rather see skinheads as a culture in the broadest possible sense, that is as diverse and fluid rather than monolithic and static.

I want to open up a window into the histories, iconography, and aesthetics of Oi! to interrogate and critique the image of skinheads as a homogenous and inherently far-right and violent group, as well as understand how skinheads fit into larger punk cultures. Skinheads were originally working class youths involved in the blue beat and ska scene in 1960s Britain (most associated with the Trojan record label). These skinheads were primarily, though not entirely white, as most working-class Brits at the time identified as white, though the music originated and was further derived from West Indian labels and immigrants to the UK. Dick Hebdige suggests identity formation of English skinheads as having "ostensibly incompatible sources:

the cultures of the West Indian immigrants and the white working class."[1066] Jamaican 'rude boys,' for instance, shared both their music and their neat fashion with the English skinheads. The commonality between black immigrant and white worker in this context was an acknowledged solidarity of the working class, though at best this was a fraught and complex relationship.

We should be careful not to suggest that there was pure racial harmony in this early skinhead scene, as there most certainly may have been racists in the first wave of skinheads. One can enjoy the music of a racial or ethnic group while still have racist opinions about them, for even Archie Bunker of *All in the Family* welcomed Sammy Davis, Jr. into his home.[1067] There are many reasons for the eroticizing of 'the other,' and the negation/re-articulation of racism through personal tastes and desires, including not only an othering move, but also one of negative distancing.[1068] We should therefore not confuse the celebration of ska and reggae as an acceptance of racial equality. The lived experience of race may indeed commodify these black artists in ways that solidify stereotypes that ardent racists may still enjoy.[1069] Celebrating a performer does not mean viewing them as your equal.

The fashion of these original rude boys and skinheads utilized symbols of working class identity, but with an exaggerated twist. Within skinhead culture, 'working class' has been a label of pride related to economic position and the borough or neighborhood that groups are from, but rarely as a political label. Workers

[1066] Hebdige, p. 55.
[1067] Or for a more recent example—*not* from fiction—we could look at Trump's hosting of Kanye West.
[1068] Fanon, pp. 17 & 203.
[1069] Fanon, p. 78.

on docks and in factories were required to have shortly cropped hair, so skinheads shave theirs. Boots were needed for manual labor, so skinheads wear their Doc Martens big, bold, and polished. Braces and denim jeans were similarly appropriated. In other words, unlike the middle-class fashions of the hippie movement and the androgyny of glam, the skinhead and suede-head cultures coopted traditional working class attire rather than creating 'new' fashions. This attire has largely remained stable in the scene, as certain brands of polo shirts, Harrington jackets, etc. such as Fred Perry, Ben Sherman, and the aforementioned Doc Marten boots have become typical signifiers of skinhead identity. Part of this is the idea of an anti-fashion fashion, for with the affinity for limited brand loyalties, skinheads claim that they have no need to follow the fashion world, full of fickle trends and changes.

With the emergence of punk, many skins found a new home, since the dissolution of most ska labels (e.g. Trojan had dissolved into bankrupt obscurity by then, though Trojan remains an important part of traditional skinhead culture, cf. 'Skinhead from the Burbs,' Rust which includes an homage to Symarip's 'Skinhead Moonstomp') had left them in a musical lull. Yet, much of the so-called first wave of punk was middle class in origin, message, and audience. Skinheads were there, attracted for the same reasons as punks, but soon also developed their own takes on punk and the emerging sound of Oi!. Aside from ska, the most popular music in the so-called skinhead resurgence of the 1970s was eventually to be called Oi!, which

sonically resembles a stripped-down version of early punk rock.[1070] The name is derived from a cockney slang term meaning "hello" or "hey," in either case a hailing or greeting. "Oi!" was the label attributed to this stripped-down, working class punk, due in no small part to a series of compilation records, beginning with *Oi! the Album*, released by Gary Bushell and *Sounds* magazine.[1071] Several Oi! bands existed prior to any skinhead association with right wing and racist organizations. Themes of early Oi! include working class life, friendship, solidarity, pride, as well as football, drinking, and the occasional brawls that could accompany them.

Due to a limited but vocal association with the British Movement, the National Front, and the American white supremacy movement, as well as media representations, and police profiling, skinheads and Oi! music as a whole have largely been stereotyped both institutionally and within popular imagination as thuggish, racist, homophobic, Neo-Nazis. At the height of skinhead recruitment in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were close to 3,500 active and affiliated racist skinheads in the U.S.[1072] My point here is not to discount the violence and organization of these racist and neo-fascist groups, but rather to demonstrate the disproportionate fear and perceived threat of such a small number of people. In a nation of 300 million, why

[1070] Eventually, racist skinheads moved completely away from ska, and even denied its influence of skinhead identity. These racist skinheads began claiming Oi! as 'pure white music,' and completely disregarded the African-Caribbean influence on rock music. See, for example, an article from the racist skinhead magazine *Skinned Alive* called "Rock 'N' Roll: White or Black" reprinted in (Duncombe & Tremblay 2011, 142-146. Paul Gilroy has also discussed the absurdity of denying black influence on "even the whitest" versions of rock music (Gilroy 1987, 122).
[1071] There are many excellent discussions of Bushell and the Oi! compilations. One of the most recent and encyclopedic is Worley 2014: 5-20.
[1072] Moore 1993, p. 156.

were 3,500 considered so threatening? Why, we may ask, is there not such a moral panic about the 'alt-right' fascists as the Nazi punks in the 80s?

The aforementioned British group Skrewdriver, lead by singer Ian Stuart, is the most iconic of the Nazi bands, taking on a similar 'litmus test' signifying function for racist punks as Crass is for anarchist punks.[1073] It is important to note, however, that Stuart was not always involved in the skinhead scene, nor did he always claim a skinhead identity. He was right wing and racist first, and then became a skinhead.[1074] This is an important point, that many whose image was used to further stereotypes of racist skinheads were racist long before adopting skinhead stylings. Skrewdriver lyrics are blunt, violent, and racially charged, but are also typically very simplistic (as was the blend of punk, metal, and Oi! music that accompanied them), and thus were easily chanted and repeated. Racists are never portrayed as violent hooligans in Skrewdriver lyrics, but instead are consistently cast as heroes fighting the good fight.

Stuart was also directly involved in and received funding from the extreme right-wing National Front party in England, ultimately using Skrewdriver's music was one of their most effective recruitment tools, in an attempt to provided propagandized fun to youth (perhaps modeled on the success of Rock Against

[1073] Skrewdriver is so notorious that over a decade after Stuart's death, the band continues to be referenced in fictional films on the subject of racist skinheads in both the U.K. and the U.S. For an English example, see the 2006 film *This is England*, which tells the story of the non-racist/racist split among skinheads in the early 1980s in England. During one scene, there is visible graffiti spelling 'Skrewdriver' on the wall of a skinhead hangout. In the 1998 American film *American History X*, a racist skinhead character can be seen wearing a Skrewdriver t-shirt while attending a racist skinhead concert/party.

[1074] Duncombe & Tremblay 2011, pp. 130-1.

Racism).[1075] Once this political movement took off, the BBC incorrectly began labeling all Oi! bands as either extreme right or full-on Nazis. In the U.S., organizations such as the notorious White Aryan Resistance of Tom Metzger began recruiting and training skinheads in Nazism. Interviews with American punks and skins support the claim that punk and skinhead identities were not originally racist there either.[1076] The point of this elaboration is not to pretend to blame Skrewdriver for bonehead racism, nor to excuse it, but rather to recognize the political and social manipulation of working class youths through their identities and aesthetic tastes.

Nazi punk/Oi/metal continues until today, and there is a largely autonomous white power scene that has basically splintered off from the larger punk culture when these fascists were met with violence and exclusion. Yet, many of the festivals and spaces described especially in the last chapter still see Nazis show up, usually eagerly seeking physical confrontation. For instance, each year in Blackpool there is a neo-Nazi gathering coinciding with Rebellion festival that dubs itself "the *true* Rebellion" in which white power bands perform. Beyond these performances, not within the festival but elsewhere in Blackpool, these Nazis often roam the streets outside the Winter Gardens (where Rebellion is held) at the conclusion of each day's festivities,

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[1075] Another racist skinhead record label (this one in the U.S.) that accrued a notable following during this time was R.A.C. (i.e. Rock Against Communism), which was also funded by racist organizations. At the height of the 1980s Reagan/Thatcher era Cold War remilitarization, the name "Rock Against Communism" is hardly a surprising label for a right wing music company. However, communism was rarely the real target of the music produced by the R.A.C. bands. Instead, most of the lyrics of R.A.C. produced bands and records attack African-Americans, immigrants, Jews, and 'lefties.'

[1076] "Everyone was really into Sham 69, pre-Nazi skinhead-era bands…We were trying to emulate British skins. We had Fred Perrys, 501s, suspenders, Doc Martens, laced sideways. Bomber jackets. We could look very dashing on some days. But nobody had any racist leanings until somebody got ahold of the Skrewdriver album. It had a dramatic effect," Jason Lockwood (Co-Founder, Bay Area Skinheads [BASH]) Interviews recorded in Boulware & Tudor 2009: 142-152.

hoping for a scuffle with folks leaving the venue. Beatings, robberies, and arrests are not uncommon.

The small Nazi contingency doesn't seem to dissuade many from attending Rebellion (as the festival always seems to sell out tickets each year), however, it is just an accepted risk that when such a large gathering of punks and skins occurs, rival factions may clash. Dick Lucas of the Subhumans gave a typical warning at Rebellion in 2014, stating, "there are about twenty Nazis right outside, so be careful, don't go out alone, don't make it any easier for these arseholes." Many other groups and audience members give similar warnings when Nazis have made their presence known, cautioning folks in avoidance and safety strategies. Others, such as Steve Ignorant performing with Paranoid Visions on the same evening challenged the Nazis to a stand off, again warning audience members to be alert and pursue safety in numbers, but concluding by saying, "I say bring 'em here. You've been warned, bring the Nazis here!" strongly implying a physical confrontation, and this was met with the sound of positive support and affirmation by the audience.

Yet, there are also plenty of anti-Nazi Oi! groups as well. These include the Angelic Upstarts, Oi Polloi, and the Oppressed, who have embraced leftist political positions and protest actions. The first of these were official, card-carrying members of the Socialist Party in the U.K. Another group, Los Fastidios from Italy, wrote a pro-Antifa anthem called "Antifa Hooligans," which is strongly in Oi's sonic realm. Yet, the very existence of communist, anarchist, and other radical skinheads has not received media or cultural attention. Where is the anarchist or socialist *American*

History X? Where are the news stories and episodes of *Geraldo* with SHARPS? Where is the spotlight for skinhead members of the Anti-Nazi League? These other punk rock and skinhead legacies seem to have dropped out of the narrative and history, even though they are the more numerous and by far the most prolific. Perhaps this is because those skinheads working for positive social change are either less likely to inspire moral panic, or perhaps more radically, are *more* likely to do so in their insistence that racism be unapologetically eradicated.

What has also seemed to drop out is the recognition of racism and fascism in other more culturally accepted, bourgeois genres. Rock Against Racism and Cable Street Beat (of which skinheads comprised a large number of the participants in) were directed against the likes of Eric Clapton, David Bowie and Paul Simon, just as much, if not more so, as towards Skrewdriver.[1077] Yet, the more bourgeois suited music mentioned has received something of a free pass, as their racist leanings of the 70s and 80s have been all but glossed over in music history, while skinheads are still forced into an encounter with their unsavory associations. Neo-Nazis also continue to face physical confrontation with Antifa punks, who like Morris always keep a critical tone, not glorifying but also not *a priori* discrediting or dismissing direct tactics. However, while Morris could only fully support violent acts such as the seizure of the modes of production in a quick and tactical strike, Antifa typically has both a macro-

[1077] Goodyer 2009.

level goal of eradicating fascism, but also the much more micro-level (and more common) protection of communities of individual fascists (or their groups).[1078]

Most skinheads, however, not only see this stereotype as misrepresenting their identities and culture, but also feel betrayed by those far-right elements the Nazi stereotype is derived from. Skinheads and other punks have labeled Nazis as 'boneheads,' in an attempt to distance themselves from the racist and fascist elements in the scene, and traditional skinheads present themselves as crucified to express their frustration at this stereotype and to symbolize working class oppression. This distinction is also understood and respected by many groups that monitor and work against racist skinhead activities, for they often make clear that they are opposing *racist* skinheads, not skinheads more generally. The Anti-Defamation League, who keeps watchdog tabs on racist skinhead activity in the U.S., has this caveat on their website, "The skinhead subculture was not originally racist —and, in fact, today around the world there remain many non-racist or explicitly anti-racist skinheads (often called SHARPs, for "skinheads against racial prejudice")."[1079] In addition, Anti-Racist Action, was founded by a Minneapolis skinhead crew called the Baldies. For such anti-racist skinheads, the idea of their identity being synonymous with racism is not only offensive, but represents a fundamental misunderstanding of skinhead identity and tradition. These anti-racist skinheads often have alliances with anti-fascist groups as well (e.g. Anti-Nazi League, Anti-Fascist Action, Antifa).

[1078] Ibid, p. 545.
[1079] Anti-Defamation League. Web: https://www.adl.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgIm4_enj2gIVDdbACh1TEQMAEAAYASAAEgIMtvD_BwE

"Nazi punks, fuck off!"
--Dead Kennedys

"Smash the fash isn't a macho thing. It means that if we stand together, then we are strong. Fight fascism however you can. Maybe you can't be in the streets, but maybe you're a good graphic designer, or a good organizer, and anyone can write letters of support to anti-fascist political prisoners through the Anarchist Black Cross or otherwise."
--Degzoi[1080]

In addition, many acts that had achieved punk notoriety, such as Sham 69 and the Cockney Rejects, had to deal with accusations that they (or their fans) were associated with the British Movement/National Front. In the recent documentary focused on the Rejects, members of the band describe their horror at such an association, and their repeated attempts to, sometimes physically, counter Nazi elements within the punk scene.[1081] Despite their speaking to the contrary, television specials on which they appeared in good faith painted them as having far right sympathies. These representations raise several important questions, including how such a relatively small group, and a tiny minority of skinheads or punk-affiliated identities, could have created such a solidified image in the imagination of the American and English publics?

Skinheads were wrapped up in the media frenzy of the 1970s-early 1990s regarding disaffected youth and the proposed solutions for handling rebellious kids. As the inheritors of football hooliganism, skinheads were readily identified as rowdy, violent youth. When those skins with far-right sympathies did begin to associate with

[1080] Oi Polloi performance at the Oakland Metro, 04/21/14, author in attendance. The reference to the Anarchist Black Cross wasn't simply in passing. As with all Oi Polloi tours, the revenue was to fundraise for the band's chosen cause, and this tour was to raise revenue for ABC.
[1081] England, Richard. 2012. *East End Babylon: The Story of the Cockney Rejects*. Cadiz Music, Inc. Film.

the National Front and other such organizations, they were positioned ideally to bare the weight of their nations' anxieties over issues such as structural racism, immigration, and white privilege. In identifying this fringe as a frightening, threatening, and racist group, organizations such as the British and American governments were able to distance themselves from their own centuries-long construction and maintenance of systematic structures of racism. In other words, in many ways skinheads provided a target for the state and state-run media to identify as anti-social enemies. By labeling skinheads as violent racists, they were by contrast implying that they were not. For example, Thatcher's crusade in the Falklands and Reagan's in Nicaragua demonstrate imperialist and racist policies (as well as internationally illegal). On the domestic front, both of these neo-liberal administrations were also pursuing drastic cuts in social services and welfare doles, cuts which disproportionately affected people of color. The presentation of a social enemy, i.e. the very embodiment of a counter narrative in punk or an undesirable working class pride in skinheads, allowed these administrations an out. Why distrust the state when you have to worry about your children's friends and associations?

Thatcher and Reagan pursued material far-right policy making while blanketing their rhetoric in traditionalism. It seems that identifying a particular group as backward, racist, and/or violent in rhetoric, appearance, or action, somehow affects the public imagination more than when their own governments pursue openly violent and racist actions. Skinheads who became Nazi boneheads therefore did the state a favor by providing a spectacle, in Guy Debord's sense, a distraction from the realities

of structural racism.[1082] For example, Paul Gilroy contrasts the "marginal antics" of neo-fascists to the police brutality of the Brixton riots and Nato Thompson discusses the structural racism of policing in the present and the activist response of the current 'Black Lives Matter' movement in the U.S.[1083]

Nothing in the latter 20th century held such widespread distain than Nazism, so the presentation and condemnation of this 'threat' could gain politicians political points by demonstrating their performed compassion.[1084] While it is crucial that we not discount the horror dealt by neo-Nazis, we should also keep in mind that even the most deplorable of these extremists who actually did commit heinous acts, were and are essentially powerless when compared to the governments that openly condemn them, while covertly even endorsing them.[1085] In light of recent white supremacist events and attacks, not only fascist but also anti-fascists have been reignited, and discourse on this topic has shifted. Once again, anti-fascists are being met with charges of violence and hooliganism, and the American right (and significant sections of the left) has taken a cue from President Trump's claim that the violence in Charlottesville came from "many sides" (ostensibly of equal culpability), including Antifa.[1086]

[1082] Debord 2000.
[1083] Gilroy, Paul. 1987. *'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 123 & Thompson, p. 144.
[1084] Sadly, it must be mentioned that among Trump administration officials and supporters, disdain for Nazis cannot be so universally assumed.
[1085] Gilroy, p. 121.
[1086] I want to point out here my skepticism regarding the left-right binary of U.S. politics, as this appears to be yet another liberal façade in broad support of conservative capitalist policies under the guise of 'choice' amongst candidates and parties. Yet, this binary is useful in discussing politics in the U.S. precisely because it is such a familiar framework and as such it informs the way many people view political organizations. For just a *very* few examples of press coverage regarding Trump's

Why has the imagined *societal* 'threat' of skinheads been so roundly internalized? Even the typically critical Joel Olson capitalized on the anti-Nazi/anti-skinhead sentiment in the decision to title his vegan cookbook *Soy Not Oi!*, demonstrating the idea that all Oi! is to be resisted. Why have skinhead activities on the left not received the attention and recognition their far-right counterparts have? There are also skinheads who may be non-racist, without being actively involved in anti-racist causes. However, this begs the question, if you are so concerned with not being labeled 'racist,' why be a skinhead at all? The answer (or lack thereof) often returns us back to love of Oi! and/or ska music, affiliation with a group of friends, aesthetic preference in the style of skinheads, or a variety of interpretations of what it means to be a non-racist or anti-racist 'true skinhead.' Skins have also pushed back in non-institutional ways, such as decrying Nazism in their lyrics and stage banter.[1087] I

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equivocation and the response it received, see: Thrush, Glenn and Haberman, Maggie. August 12, 2017. "Trump is Criticized for Not Calling Out White Supremacists," The New York Times. Web: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/trump-charlottesville-protest-nationalist-riot.html?mcubz=1 Last Accessed: 09/09/17. Johnson, Jenna and Wagner, John. August 12, 2017. "Trump condemns Charlottesville violence but doesn't single out white nationalists," *The Washington Post*. Web: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-condemns-charlottesville-violence-but-doesnt-single-out-white-nationalists/2017/08/12/933a86d6-7fa3-11e7-9d08-b79f191668ed_story.html?utm_term=.60f376ac32f7. Last Accessed: 09/09/17. Jacobs, Ben and Murray, Warren. 13 August 2017. "Donald Trump under fie after failing to denounce Virginia white supremacists," *The Guardian*. Web: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/12/charlottesville-protest-trump-condemns-violence-many-sides. Last Accessed: 09/09/17. Bender, Michael C. and Nicholas, Peter. August 15, 2017. "Trump Says 'Both Sides' to Blame in Charlottesville Violence," *The Wall Street Journal*. Web: https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-says-both-sides-to-blame-in-charlottesville-violence-reversing-mondays-stance-1502830785. Last Accessed: 09/09/17. Merica, Dan. August 16, 2017. "Trump says both sides to blame amid Charlottesville backlash. CNN. Web: http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/15/politics/trump-charlottesville-delay/index.html Last Accessed 09/09/17.

[1087] For example, in October 2011, Mike Erickson (singer of the skinhead Oi! band Pressure Point) said at a performance, "I'd like to address something that seems popular among some skinheads today. 'Cause let me tell you something, I don't care what your politics are because being a Nazi isn't about being on the right or the left, it's about right and wrong. And that's wrong." Show attended by author

think we should be sympathetic, yet not uncritical, of these claims. True, most skinheads, like most punks more generally, are not part of the white supremacy movement or belief structure. Yet, also like punk more broadly, there are problems within the skinhead scene with violence and discrimination. We should look at the ways in which skinhead and punk culture have opened themselves ups to such stereotyping accusations, to gain some understanding of how these particular cultures make such convenient scapegoats for the evils of broader society.

Importantly, skinheads have been largely unable to account for what it was about their culture that opened the door to both stereotyping and actual violence. What racial and class dynamics within skinhead culture did the National Front find attractive? How can we critique the hyper-masculine macho and racist aspects of punk without resorting to labels of Nazism? These questions are particularly important for understanding skinhead history, as well as the recent Oi! resurgence we are currently witnessing on both sides of the Atlantic. What about Oi! so often leads to these questions being raised? The easiest example encapsulating explanation of these various issues is that the infamous *Strength Through Oi!* featured a cover photo of a white supremacist with fisticuffs raised. Yet, this photo has been endlessly debated, and Bushell has denied NF associations, but whether this imagery was intentionally fascist or not, the image of the violent skinhead was certainly not helped by this art choice.

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on October 8, 2011 at the Blank Club in San Jose, CA. Among several others, an additional contemporary Bay Area Oi! band Harrington Saints has also consistently decried racism in the scene, and encouraged fans from the stage to be anti-racist and pro-working class.

We should also listen to the emphasis in much of skinhead culture and Oi! music on pride. This pride is often emphasizing working class pride, or pride in skinhead culture itself. For example, the Cockney Rejects declare that "we all know, we're gonna (sic) fucking win."[1088] There is a consistent appeal to community in these songs (e.g. "If the Kids are United," Sham 69), and although community can be an inclusionary appeal for initiates, it can also be exclusionary to outsiders.[1089] These articulations of pride continue in contemporary Oi! as well, for we can hear Bishops Green singing in "Rat Race" that even when the woes of the world weigh heavily upon them "at least I have my fucking pride, subculture dignity." In these more contemporary songs, we also often hear a certain pride in not giving in to societal pressure to conform, i.e. a pride in remaining skinhead. Argy Bargy, for instance, has multiple songs about 'staying true' and 'loyal' to skinhead roots and the punk scene at large, especially in those years when punk seems to simmer down.[1090] Another common theme in current Oi! is the claiming of skinhead identity counter to social stereotype as fascist and racist, and so 'keeping the faith' comes at a certain social cost. This is expressed for instance, in lyrics like, "Why do all the media look down on you and me?...We always hear the same old shit, they're violent and their bad, and the media makes shitty films to paint all skins as mad," ('He's a Skinhead,' Control). These themes of skinhead discrimination are increasingly common in Oi! music, as is the iconography of the skinhead nailed to the cross.

[1088] "Oi! Oi! Oi!" Cockney Rejects contained on 1980. *Oi! The Album*. EMI. LP. & Cockney Rejects. 1980. *Greatest Hits, Vol. 1*. EMI. LP

[1089] Clarke 1991.

[1090] Argy Bargy, "Looking for Glory" and "No Regrets" on Argy Bargy. 2012. *Hopes, Dreams, Lies, and Schemes*. Randale Records.

We seem to be stuck in a double bind of either recognizing racist elements and running the risk of all skinheads being erroneously labeled as such, or denying that skinheads have ever been racist, which is not only inaccurate but could open the door to excuse making or a back-door legitimation or apologia of these extremist views and violence. The skinhead owners of London's Oi! Oi! the Shop told me, "you can't ignore the Nazi shit that was around in the 80s. It was there, it was part of the scene, and we can't deny it, or else history might repeat itself. We just have to be clear that there's no room for that shit in our scene now." How might we avoid this?

While some Oi! bands are explicitly leftist/socialist in their message, many of the most successful Oi! bands, such as the Last Resort, Stomper 98, Evil Conduct, and Gimp Fist have openly negated their own politics, preferring the labels of "No mess, no fuss, no politics." Politics in general are presented here as troubling, corrupted, and divisive, and these groups tend to prefer to maintain working class skepticism towards political institutions that are "full of shit."[1091] The Business, for instance, sings of wanting "justice not politics," and 45 Adapters claim "both political parties are the rich man's tools."[1092] Over and over again, we can hear skinheads' skepticism for politics and government in general, yet this skepticism is usually accompanied by a nationalistic love for home.

Cock Sparrer, for instance, proudly proclaims ownership over the "dirty water of the rivers," even though they've encountered a conservatism that tells them "they

[1091] Menace. 1978. "G.L.C." Small Wonder Records. 7"
[1092] "Justice not Politics," The Business. 1997. *The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth*. Burning Heart Records & "Patriots Not Fools," 45 Adaptors. 2014. *Patriots Not Fools*. Contra/Longshot/Pirates.

ain't good enough" ('England Belongs to Me,' Cock Sparrer).[1093] The insistence is usually one for solidarity among the working class and a refusal to be manipulated by politicians. Yet, at the same time, the band claims ownership of England for the "boys" (presumably the working class), and that they will "fight all the way for the red, white, and blue." So, on the one hand, this song expresses punk feelings of rejection from society, yet on the other claims the country for the working youth. Such a song expresses a feeling that the country is slipping away from the working class. In 'England Belongs to Me,' the culprit behind this slippage is the bourgeoisie and the established order of institution. But England slipping away would become a theme of racist Oi! music as well, and with a whole new list of available culprits and a perceived equation between British-ness and whiteness. The group has openly condemned racist and nationalist mis-interpretations of the song, even publically declaring on numerous occasions that it is about "inclusion not exclusion," for the "me" in the song applies to everyone.[1094] Yet, even though Cock Sparrer doesn't have a racist message or intent, we can hear how some of their lyrics, as well as their tough aesthetic, could be adopted by the very groups they personally oppose.

Of course, punk cultures are also riddled with the question of prevalent whiteness, and there *have* been neo-Nazis that have infiltrated the culture. This issue is not only due to the demographic of the scene, but also due to many of the symbols utilized within it. In a performance of parody, many punks have wor symbols of

[1093] At Punk Rock Bowling 2017, Cock Sparrer made it clear that this song is about all the lower classes—and their solidarity—and should not be misunderstood as somehow racist, nationalist, or exclusionary.
[1094] Heard, for instance, at the Cock SParrer secret club show on May 28th, 2017, attended by the author.

fascism, not necessarily to espouse fascist ideologies, but rather to mock them or to suggest continuity between fascism and current politics, mocking the hippie counter culture and new sensitivities of political correctness (or, in other cases, young kids may not even be aware of what the symbols they wear actually mean). In fact, it was both an expression of a certain "politics of boredom" and an expression against the "fascism" of mass movements and political correctness that some punks saw as nothing more than the imposition of "more rules."[1095] Mainstream society was to be mocked and offended, and nothing was more offensive than a Nazi symbol. Many musicians (e.g. Darby Crash of the Germs, Cheetah Chrome of the Dead Boys, and Lemmy Kilmister from Motörhead) have adorned themselves with other Nazi symbols, most consistently the iron cross, for a variety of shock-inducing political or aesthetic effects. One of the most infamous photos of the Sex Pistol Sid Vicious shows him wearing a bold swastika on his t-shirt. Yet, these instances have not come close to creating a stereotype of their fans as Nazis or Nazi sympathizers on any noticeable scale.

It is certainly possible that some who wore Nazi symbols *did* understand the symbolism, and did in fact harbor racist and fascist beliefs. The open display of such symbols, whether this was the desired result or not, could have made racists feel comfortable within various punk scenes. It cannot be seen as a total surprise, then, when some skinheads began declaring their racist identity claims within the punk scenes. Many joined various neo-Nazi groups for the very reasons that lead so many

[1095] McNeil, Legs & McCain, Gillian. 2006. (1996). *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*. New York: Grove Press. pp. 190-191, 275.

to join gangs, such as combating rising frustration by seeking belonging, community, and fun. This is because Nazi crews were largely street gangs, and need to be understood as such. So how did aesthetics play into this? Why might Nazi crews adopt the stylings and sounds of broader skinhead culture?

The aggressive sounds and violent imagery of street life and punk rock and the energy/mayhem and sometimes violence of punk shows were to be co-opted and utilized by racist groups beginning in the 1980s.[1096] Of course, many of the songs feature violent lyrics either because of artists' experiences of living in poverty, being brutalized by police, etc., or are meant as deliberately over-the-top and tongue-in-cheek performances of violence through song that the artists' may never pursue or even desire to pursue in reality.[1097] Similar explanations are also sometimes offered for the hyper-aggressive atmosphere of many punk spaces, but these explanations are not at all immune from internal critique among punks. Sara Marcus describes the ways in which such mayhem has not only been violent, but often disproportionately affects women.

[1096] e.g. For just a small sampling, in roughly chronological order: "Beat on the Brat," the Ramones, "White Riot," the Clash, "Smash it up," the Damned, "Violence in our minds," the Last Resort, "Bullet," Misfits, "Razors in the night," Blitz, "Victim in Pain," Agnostic Front, "Street Justice," Cro-Mags, "Bloodstains," Agent Orange, "Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked In," Murphy's Law, "Nazi Killer," INFEST, "Die for the Government," Anti-flag, "Call to Arms," Sick of it All, "Murder the Government," NOFX, "That's When the Boots Fly In," Runnin' Riot, and "Doc Marten Dental Plan," Old Firm Casuals—or even such tongue-in-cheek satirical songs like Dead Kennedys' "Kill the Poor."

[1097] Of course, there have been punks who are guilty of horrific crimes. Sid Vicious may have been unconscious when Nancy Spungen was murdered, but he achieved tremendous (additional) notoriety after being charged with her murder. Whether or not Sid was guilty, many other punk artists (not to mention other scene participants) have been convicted of violent crimes, including but not limited to Sammytown (of Fang) who murdered his girlfriend, Duane Peters (U.S. Bombs) who has served time for domestic violence. Some bands (e.g. Terror, G.B.H. or Great Bodily Harm, Capitalist Casualties, Dillinger Four, Sharp Objects, U.S. Bombs, U.K. Subs, Warzone, Naked Aggression, Agression, the Casualties, MDC, DOA, Hatebreed, Choking Victim), have even put violence not only into their lyrics but also their very names after band members' brushes with the law.

> Objectification and sexual assault went unaddressed [in the D.C. scene]. The mosh pit was a perfect figure for what was wrong with the scene: Boys about to dive into the surging sea of testosterone would strip off their black bomber jackets and hand them to female friends—*Here, hold this*—leaving a strip of girls-as-coatracks along the wall, literally sidelined. Punk wasn't really the point [of critique], though. The problems with the scene burned girls up precisely because it echoed the way the world at large treated them.[1098]

There is much to unpack in Marcus's statement. Of course gendered violence is always horrific, and this horror is underscored by the lack of attention (not to mention remedies) given to such sexualized assaults and objectifying misogyny. The gendered ways in which the space is organized, reducing women to "coatracks" push to the margins offers an interesting metaphor for the way in which women are pushed to the margins in other, non-physical ways in the scene.

Many women in punk have pursued confrontational approaches to deal with this gendered violence, including discursive critics orally and in zine publications, call outs, exclusions and expulsions of aggressive men from performance spaces, and physical self defense.[1099] These gendered issues, and punk women's responses to them are taken up largely in the next chapter of this text. But here we can also link Marcus's description to the larger culture of violence (or simulated violence) in punk writ large. It is not necessarily that the "surging sea of testosterone" was created by punk, or represents any sort of inevitable outcome of punk's sonic aesthetics. Rather, this aggression can be interpreted as a *continuance* of violence in the broader social worlds punks inhabit. Repeatedly in texts and film, punks describe the rush of

[1098] Marcus, Sara. 2010. *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*. New York: Harper Perennial, p. 92.
[1099] Crabb, Cindy. 2018. *Things That Help: Healing Our Lives Through Feminism, Anarchism, Punk, & Adventure*. Portland: Microcosm Publishing, pp. 197, 277. Marcus. 2010, pp. 139-140, 153, & 299. Brownstein, Carrie. 2015. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*. New York: Riverhead, p. 99.

(alternatively) agency or agency-less-ness they feel in the "release" of the pit, a supposedly safe safety valve for aggression to be let out.[1100]

The emotional affect of this outlet is often described in displacing terms. That is, the true target for one's anger may indeed be traditional authority structures like the state, the church, bosses, and parents, or if the anger stems from more abstract sources, such as the "system" (whatever that be—it is important to note here that despite it's decidedly anti-capitalist stance in many places, punks also rage against non-capitalist, socialist, and post-socialist locations as well), racism, sexism, homophobia, gentrification, or even a particular notion of the self. These true sources of frustration and anger are of often seen as untouchable in their hegemony, or at least only touchable in wildly dangerous or morally suspect methods that come with severe consequences. Left with no outlet for the release of this righteous anger (and/or angst), such dancing spaces that provide (typically simulated) violence or fighting like dancing in circle/mosh pits can allow for forbidden enjoyment of these aggressive desires.

Even so, as Marcus indicates, these punk spaces can in fact reproduce the structures of oppression and inequality in these outlets, as in her discussion with the marginalization of women on the "edges" of the dance floor. Another crucial point here is that the insularity of punk cultures can make these storms, which to the outside world may appear to take place within a teacup, seem like a torrential downpour. To

[1100] e.g. Duncun, Chris (ed.). 2007. *My First Time: A Collection of First Punk Show Stories*. Oakland: AK Press, Spheeris, Penelope. 1981. *The Decline of Western Civilization*. Spheeris Films, Inc., Small, Adam. Stuart, Peter. 1984. Another State of Mind. Time Bomb Recordings, Boatwright, Angela. 2016. *Los Punks: We Are All We Have*. Agi Orsi Productions.

the many marginalized folks, youth and adults, who find some form of comfort in punk cultures, violence and discrimination within the scene can be so emotionally trying as to inspire something akin to an existential crisis. What this also means, however, is that systemic change is often pursued first in the context of punk itself, as if ideals such as freedom and equality is achieved in punk spaces, then the greater outside world will also be affected. This is especially true for those adherents for whom the punk scene *is* their entire world.[1101] It should be no surprise, therefore, that many punks with radical leftist political leanings try to build their utopias within punk spaces, sometimes to the alienation of other fans and artists that may have different political leanings. These political and identity differences have led to the formation of spaces, zines, sub-genres, divisions and sub-divisions, hyper-specific niches, and of course, physical conflict.[1102]

Additionally, it is also demonstrably true that for as much violent imagery and lyrical content there is within punk cultures, the overwhelming majority of this content is a radical *critique* of violence, especially on the part of the state. Records like the Damned *Machine Gun Etiquette*, the Minutemen's *What makes a man start fires*, Fearless Iranians from Hell's *Die for Allah*, Dr. Know's *Killing for Christ*, Propagandhi's *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes*, Bad Religion's *The Empire Strikes First* and the Suicide Machines' *War Profiteering is Killing Us All*, each provide examples of this pattern of critique in the very titles of these productions, as

[1101] Marcus, Sara. 2010, p. 126.
[1102] Brownstein, Carrie. 2015. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*. New York: Riverhead Books, pp. 62, 96, 99, 103, & 132-133. Goodyer, Ian. 2009. *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

well as the lyrical content critique state violence within (not to mention many of these bands' names).[1103] More often than not, however, the violent imagery of punk music is in description or representation of state sources of violence, in critique not advocacy. The most common of these forms of state violence is the critique of police brutality and the imagery of atomic apocalypse.[1104]

At a certain point, scenes become concentrated with like-minded people, diversity becomes increasingly relevant and important across punk scenes in many ways more than within them. In other words, when we put up sign-posts delineating lines of demarcation, inclusion, and exclusion, these very borders are what can be so quickly, easily, and efficiently manipulated by political and economic interests. We should hence be wary of those seeking to police the borders of our scenes and spaces, so that we can decrease the possibility for racist, sexist, and perhaps most prominent now, homophobic persons and beliefs from gaining a foothold in our ostensibly accepting scenes. We mustn't ignore the lessons of non-racist skinheads, who found their scene changed, by believing ourselves immune from such infiltration. And we also mustn't ignore the social institutions, including the U.S. military—that most white supremacist of institutions—that support their extremist actions, and interrogate their interests in doing so.[1105]

[1103] See also Sick of it All, *Death to Tyrants*, Stiff Little Fingers' *Inflammable Material*, Discharge's *Why?* and *Hear Nothing, See Nothing, Say Nothing*, Doom's *Police Bastard*, D.O.A.'s *War on 45*, Dead Kennedys' *Plastic Surgery Disasters,* Aus Rotten's *The System Works for Them*, Eyehategod's *In the Name of Suffering*, Anti-Flag's *Die for the Government*, Suicidal Tendencies, *Suicidal Tendencies*, Antidote, *Thou Shall Not Kill*, and many more.

[1104] The Weirdos. 1978. "We've Got the Neutron Bomb." Dangerhouse. 7"

[1105] For example, the shooter at the Oak Creek Sikh massacre, Wade Michael Page, was recruited and trained by the U.S. military, never hiding nor feeling he had to hide his neo-Nazi sympathies with the

What was Crass doing in regards to violence within punk? We have already addressed some of their critiques of institutionalized violence, so were they silent on this more localized version? Far from it, Crass weren't making excuses for violence in the scene, nor were they anything close to apologists for it. In fact, Crass consistently tows the most militantly pacifist line available to them. Crass pulled no punches in critiquing the political system of the U.S./U.K. hegemony of the late 20th century. Unlike most of their predecessors and contemporaries, however, Crass did not ascribe to a particular platform, party, or political program. When groups like the Clash and the Angelic Upstarts were blatantly clamoring for the liberal left, the Oi! movement decidedly chanted for the working class, and mainstream acts like David Bowie and Eric Clapton openly supported the British Movement, Crass has criticisms to levy at all. This is not to suggest, however, that Crass sold a cynical nihilism to its audience, but rather a shrewd recognition of the performative qualities of electoral politics that masks very real oppression through the illusion of choice.

On the subject of neo-fascism, Crass is characteristically critical not just of the violence, but also of the broad range of responses to it. Crass took the view that Rock Against Racism (RAR) could actually do harm, becoming a form of *performed* change, but little else, and this could actually end up reinforcing material and political conservatism. In other words, folks who may otherwise attempt to help communities of color in more substantive ways may not, if they feel they have 'contributed' by

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Army. Such institutional complacency or even culpability needs much more study beyond what I have given here. Even so, prior to further study we may still interpret such events as suspicious, given the state's performed concern with racist organizations.

paying money to attend a RAR concert or buy RAR merchandise. One lyrical response to the artists and organizers of RAR was in the track "White Punks on Hope," from Crass's second LP, *Stations of the Crass*, which is well worth quoting at length:

> They said that we were trash,
> Well the name is Crass, not Clash.
> They can stuff their punk credentials
> Cause it's them that take the cash.
> They won't change nothing with their fashionable talk,
> All their RAR badges and their protest walk,
> Thousands of white men standing in a park,
> Objecting to racism's like a candle in the dark.
> Black man's got his problems and his way to deal with it,
> So don't fool yourself you're helping with your white liberal shit.
> If you care to take a closer look at the way things really stand,
> You'd see we're all just niggers to the rulers of this land.
>
> Punk was once an answer to years of crap,
> A way of saying no where we'd always said yep.
> But the moment we saw a way to be free,
> They invented a dividing line, street credibility.
> The qualifying factors are politics and class,
> Left wing macho street fighters willing to kick arse.
> They said because of racism they'd come out on the street.
> It was just a form of fascism for the socialist elite.
> Bigotry and blindness, a Marxist con,
> Another clever trick to keep us all in line.
> Neat little labels to keep us all apart,
> To keep us all divided when the troubles start.
>
> Pogo on a Nazi, spit upon a Jew,
> Vicious mindless violence that offers nothing new.
> Left wing violence, right wing violence, all seems much the same,
> Bully boys out fighting, it's just the same old game.
> Boring fucking politics that'll get us all shot,
> Left wing, right wing, you can stuff the lot.
> Keep your petty prejudice, I don't see the point,
> ANARCHY AND FREEDOM IS WHAT I WANT.[1106]

[1106] Crass. 1979. *Stations of the Crass*. 521984. Double LP Album. Emphasis in original.

The critique of violence in the lyric above is not so much addressed to RAR, as it is to the rise of the Anti-Nazi League, whom Crass had witnessed instigating violence at one of their gigs towards skinheads they perceived to be fascist.[1107] Additionally, Crass released a benefit 7" split with Poison Girls (to aid an Anarchist Centre for the group Persons Unknown, who among other causes supported in the raising of legal fees in the defense of Irish defendants arrested for possessing such deadly weaponry as weed killer, fertilizer, and sugar). The Crass side of the benefit record is the song "Bloody Revolutions," written in part as a reaction against Maoist militants' violence against skinhead fans of Crass at an earlier benefit gig.[1108] This attack is particularly perplexing for Crass, for skinheads in the audience primarily identified as working class, but were being abused in the name of 'the workers' by the Socialist Workers' Party boot brigade.[1109] Beyond this exact instance, the song is a scathing indictment of militant *leftist* ideology, most especially the use of violent and exclusionary tactics. They write,

> So now R.A.R. are moving in for the kill. They are recommending the 'vetting' of audiences at gigs, claiming the right to throw out those that don't conform to their idea of how it ought to be, attempting to predetermine the political atmosphere in which gigs take place, and advocating a ban on views with which they don't agree…So much for anti-fascism.[1110]

[1107] This critique, and the false equivalence between Neo-Nazis and their opponents has ironically been taken by conservative politicians, pundits, and other apologists for white supremacy in the U.S. in contemporary debates about Antifa in the U.S.
[1108] Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, p. 78. Cf. Crass. Late 1979. "Following the 8/9/79 Conway Hall Agro," *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 7. & Pamphlet printed in January 1980. *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, pp. 9-11.
[1109] Crass. Late 1979. "Following the 8/9/79 Conway Hall Agro," *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 8.
[1110] Crass. Late 1979. "Following the 8/9/79 Conway Hall Agro," *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 7.

Crass critique Rock Against Racism on the similar lines of their other social critiques, based in the idea that it is always preferable to position one's self (group, movement) *for* something rather than *against* something. But surely, this is a more nuanced and therefore difficult position. But the against position they critique with R.A.R. is specifically in dealing with the rise of British Nazis (from both the British Movement and the National Front—both of whom recruited right wing youth through the right-wing record label Rock Against Communism). According to Crass, the opposition of R.A.R. did nothing but embolden and strengthen, and add credibility to the recruitment efforts of "otherwise laughable British Fascist Movement" by providing them with a "real enemy to fight" at gigs and on the streets.[1111] The reluctance towards some direct action tactics is framed by Crass as "foolhardy unless we simply want to end up as martyrs" if these tactics are not both non-violent, and relatively sure to succeed.[1112]

Contained within this broad criticism of all forms of violence is a disturbingly reductive analysis that draws a false equivalency between fascists and anti-fascists, racists and anti-racists. To be sure, there has long been violence within both punk and activist circles, as discussed in the preceding chapter. An equation such as "is a Marxist murderer any better than a Nazi one" can be understood from a radically pacifist standpoint.[1113] But to equate marchers against racism, surely many of whom were not violent nor advocated violence, with the racists they are against whenever

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[1111] Ibid, p. 7.

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[1113] Crass. Late 1979. "Following the 8/9/79 Conway Hall Agro," *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 7.
Spring 1983. "Shock Slogans and Token Tantrums," *Open Road*. p. 7.

things come to blows is an overly simplistic flattening of motive, tactics, and goals. These sweeping condemnations have been the subject of debate among anarchists especially, some even publically calling upon Crass to rethink their militantly pacifist view. The *Bloody Revolutions* 7" single was one avenue for Crass's response, for the lyrics opening critique the romanticism of violence within revolutionary agendas. It is true that RAR had ties to the Socialist Workers' Party, and sometimes took a problematically reductive Marxist approach in coopting punk culture, but surely they were not analogous to Nazis. Perhaps without realizing it, anarchist punks' criticism of RAR reproduced 19th century squabbles between Marxists and anarchists. This universal critique of violence as such also ignores the very real need for self defense present in some communities (including certain groups of punks in particular times and/or places), and therefore drawing the line of what is and isn't acceptable as self defense becomes much more complex than blank condemnatory statements imply.

> "If you wanna be punk, you had to learn certain things. Like, you better learn to fight because you're gonna have to. Learn that you're gonna have to fight in some unusual places, like coming out of the 7-11, two guys will get out of their car and say 'what's up' and then it's on."
> --Henry Rollins[1114]

Part of this pacifist sympathy was a firm belief that political polarization (of nearly any kind) has the tendency to result in horrific (and violent) outcomes, and instead a move towards trust and equality. But, this pacifism is also a reflection of the

[1114] Mills, Jonathan W.C. 2012. *Clockwork Orange County*. Endurance Pictures.

privilege Crass has in living in a nice, relatively isolated country farmhouse—and s
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are less likely to meet hostility or violent attack for their appearance as other less fortunate punks. Even if members of Crass have sympathy for factions such as Class War, they don't support their form of direct action.[1115] As Rimbaud responds to the violence supposedly encouraged by Rock Against Racism,

> If the RAR/SWP [Rock Against Racism/Socialist Workers' Party] or the NF/BM [National Front/British Movement] want to use our gigs as testing grounds for their bigotry and blindness, let them go ahead because, ultimately, we believe that ~~our~~ message of creative trust will outweigh theirs of blind hatred. We are all victims of an oppressing and unthinking state, slaves to a stagnant and corrupt system. If all we can do to deal with that is to involve ourselves in political in-fighting, what hope is there? The people of this country, be they right, left, black, white, man, woman, etc. etc. are all oppressed ~~by~~ the same things: rulers, ~~bosses~~, clergy, police, army, etc. etc…and not each other. The sooner we all get to realize that, the sooner some sort of creative solution can be found. It's time we stopped blaming each other for the ~~problems that oppress~~ us all and started pointing the finger in the right direction…the system.[1116]

The attractiveness in such a statement of Crass policy and belief is in the fundamental faith in the goodness and universal solidarity of humankind. The emphasis on the 'all' component underscores this universalism. Where this critique of identity politics and issues of incredible complexity are flattened problematically is in the unique ways in which different aspects of the same national community are exploited and oppressed by this 'system.' One way that Crass sought to avoid such violence, and hence keep their pacifism (and their claims to authenticity) pure, was to not advertise shows

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[1115] 1985. "Crass-Volume II," *Terminal Boredom*, Issue 6.

[1116] Rimbaud, Penny. Late 1979. "Following the 8/9/79 Conway Hall Agro," *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 8. Emphasis in original.

except by word of mouth. The next gig at Conway Hall, where the previous events in question occurred, witnessed no violence.[1117]

> "Walking down the street, people would threaten me, there were face offs…[it was like] a cultural tariff."
> --Chuck Dukowski[1118]

Activists, and some band members, have also questioned and critiqued this affixation on pacifism. Zine contributor Makho Buenaventura nicely demonstrates the gist of many of these critiques, writing "when it comes to violence at gigs, I think Crass should encourage people to at least try and defend themselves."[1119] Buenaventura additionally argues that there is a "contradiction" between anarchism and pacifism, for in his estimation, in order to be anarchist, one must be dedicated to engagement in class war.[1120] In 1980, Crass responded that the notion of 'self defense' is also flawed, for many people are unable to actually do so, and the call to 'fight back' ultimately causes more violence and/or danger.[1121] On the subject of violence and self defense, Steve Ignorant has moved away from the strictly pacifist line of Crass and now argues,

> I've always said that pacifism, as an ideal, is really nice, but in reality, we had to face up to a bit of violence, I just think that it is inevitable. If you go on a protest march, you um, you've got a group of people and it's fine, but if

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[1117] M.V.D., Late 1979. Editorial Comment, *Toxic Graffity*, No. 4., p. 30.
[1118] *Clockwork Orange County*. See also the many similar statements from Henry Rollins regarding the need for self-defense among punks. Rollins, Henry. 1998. *The Portable Henry Rollins*. New York: Villard.
[1119] Buenaventura, Makho. January 1980. "Peaceful Pro-"Crass"-tination," *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, p. 12.
[1120] Ibid.
[1121] Simon D. Summer 1980. "How Much Space Do you Give?" *Rapid Eye Movement*, Standard Issue 3, p. 28.

> you've got two cockheads trying to beat you with a stick, you gotta actually hit back.[1122]

Phil Free sums up the group's pacifist stance by arguing, "changes always occur as a result of peace. War and violence has never solved anything and never will."[1123] Pete Wright has become more in favor of direct action than pacifism, and his position on violence is not always entirely clear. For instance, he doesn't publically support socialist regimes, though he does have more militant socialist tendencies. It is speculated by biographers of the band that the pacifism/violence debate was one of the primary contentions that led to the breakup of Crass. Others have taken a similar but distinct line of critique, arguing that violence is not preferable, self-defense is necessary. This is especially true in many anarcho-punk zines that discuss British Movement violence towards Crass fans adorned with their logo.[1124] After much discussion, the band did, at least in a couple documented cases "hire security to protect the audience from outside attack."[1125]

The debate surrounding anti-fascist causes and violence is not resolved, either in punk cultures or broader society. For instance, at a 2014 performance benefiting the Anarchist Black Cross organization, Oi Polloi argued, "Smash the fash [i.e. a slogan against fascism] isn't a macho thing. It means that if we stand together big and strong, then we're strong. Fight fascism however you can. Maybe you can't be in the

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[1122] Kennedy, Will. June 2011. "Interview: Steve Ignorant, Crass," *Unbelievably Bad.* Web: https://unbelievablybadmag.com/2016/01/15/crass-politics/ Last Accessed: 05/08/2017.
[1123] John, 1982. "Crass Interview," *A System Partly Revealed*, p. 6.
[1124] Tony D. January 1980. "Another Direct Hit By Crass?" *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, p. 3.
[1125] This text taken from a Crass/Poison Girls pamphlet reprinted in January 1980. *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, pp. 9-11. Ward Churchill goes so far as to call pacifism a form of pathology, and a detrimental idea and practice for those seeking revolutionary change, and his work cited at the opening of this chapter informs many possible critiques of Crass's militant pacifism.

streets, but maybe you're a good graphic designer, or a good organizer, and anyone can letters of support to anti-fascist political prisoners."[1126] Some groups, such as the aforementioned Oi Polloi (U.K.), define their bands specifically as anti-fascist.[1127] Many more have songs specifically decrying Nazis and Fascists.[1128]

They were not satisfied to simply pick sides in an election, nor choose the lesser of several evils. Instead, they critiqued the system as such, that is, the structures, powers, outlets, and *participation allowed* within the system of late capitalism. Perhaps the single best lyric expressing this skepticism towards leftist ideologies is the single "Bloody Revolutions." Eve Libertine screams, "Romanticize your heroes, quote your Marx and Mao. Their ideas of freedom are just oppression now."[1129] Though they never claimed to be leaders seeking attention or producing a political program, "Crass had evolved into what, despite the obvious contradictions, many saw as anarchist leaders. It was an imposed status which none of us wanted, and indeed, which we thoroughly resented: we dearly wanted to be a part of something rather than apart from it."[1130] Hence, the Crass event belongs just as much to the history social justice activism as it does to punk cultures and music.

[1126] Performance on 04/21/2014. Author in attendance.
[1127] e.g. Oppressed (U.K.), Red Skins (U.K.) Pinochet Boys (Chile), Choking Victim/Leftover Crack (U.S.), Los Crudos (U.S.) Strike Anywhere (U.S.), Infest (U.S.), the Press (U.S.) and MDC (U.S.) just to name a few.
[1128] e.g. Dead Kennedys' "Nazi Punks Fuck Off," Aus Rotten's "Fuck Nazi Sympathy," Angelic Upstarts' "Anti-Nazi," Leftover Crack's "Nazi White Trash," Rear Gunners' "We Don't Want No Nazi Skins," and Propagandhi's "The Only Good Fascist is a Very Dead Fascist"
[1129] Crass/Poison Girls. 1980. "Bloody Revolutions"/"Persons Unknown". 421984. Crass Records. 7"
[1130] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Ten Notes on a Summer's Day*

The New World Order was about to rise like a tsunami to drown us all. Up until then we'd been riding our own wave. We'd managed to revitalize the Peace Movement, to redefine anarchism and make it into a true cultural force, to help found the beginnings of what is now referred to as DIY culture, to inspire hundreds if not thousands of young people to start creating their own lives and, on top of that, to produce some pretty mean rock'n'roll. But, as the Iron Lady increasingly flexed her muscle, so we would become increasingly embroiled in oppositional politics, increasingly hard-edged and increasingly desperate.
--Penny Rimbaud[1131]

The most consistent target for Crass critique is war and its accompanying horrors. The dual horrors of World War II, the Holocaust and the nuclear attacks at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, have been lifelong obsessions of Penny Rimbaud, who often recalls his earliest memory from childhood as stumbling upon a book of photographs from these scenes of death in his parent's study.[1132] In "They've Got a Bomb," the space between the notes is a particularly striking aesthetic critique of nuclear weapons. At live performances, they would also stop the music for a ten second interval, which they argued forced audience members to baldly face the war wreckage being shown on the background film.[1133] Similarly, the visuals contained within Crass records also pointed out the horrors of warfare destruction.

The members of Crass also took their critique beyond the performance spaces typically assigned to punk expression, and pursued—among other things—an anti-sexist advertising campaign, described below.

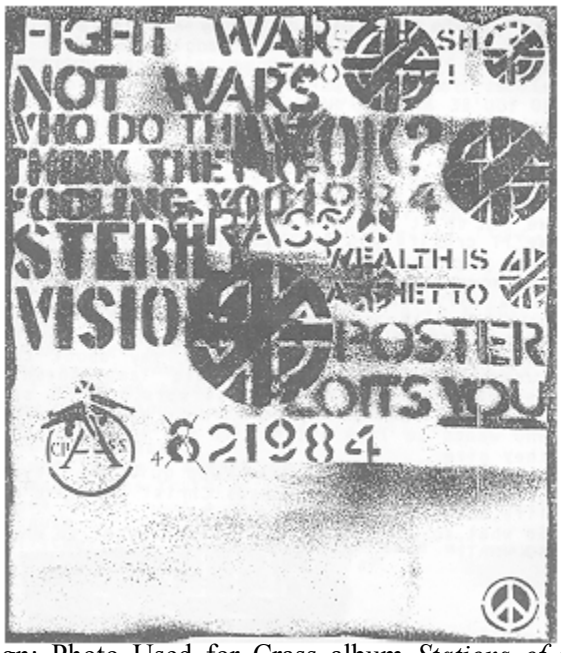
[1131] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Stations of the Crass*
[1132] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*
[1133] Simon D. Summer 1980. "How Much Space Do you Give?" *Rapid Eye Movement*, Standard Issue 3, p. 27.



Source: Inside poster from *Feeding of the 5,000* (1978)[1134]

> From the start of 1977, the year of the Silver Jubilee wherein the common herd was expected to celebrate the gross excesses of their tyrant leaders, Eve Libertine and myself had been carrying out a graffiti campaign in the middle section of London Underground's Central Line. Each Saturday evening we would travel between Liverpool Street in the east to Notting Hill Gate in the west, alighting at all stations to spray our carefully prepared stenciled messages onto posters and billboards promoting the cynically contrived poisons of capitalism: 'American Distress? You know it makes sense.' We worked together with military precision, moving quickly from target to target. Leaving behind our comments, 'Sexist Shit', 'Fight War Not Wars', 'Sterile Vision', 'Left Wing, Right Wing, You Can Stuff the Lot', plus the tell-tale stench of cellulose. Amazingly, we were only once caught at it…we decided to use for the cover photo [for the *Stations of the Crass* album] a photo of a hitherto blank wall in Bond Street Station onto which we had often sprayed our messages, and which had become a kind of notice-board for comments from our readers. Typical of these was 'fuck off, Crass, there's no war but class war', a sentiment with which, had the writer but known it, I thoroughly agreed.[1135]

[1134] Vaucher, p. 39. Photo credit: Ghislain Bellorget, Vietnam, 1968.
[1135] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Stations of the Crass* (Crassical Collection Remaster).



Crass Graffiti Campaign: Photo Used for Crass album *Stations of the Crass* (denoting both the obvious reference the Christian Passion play and the fact that the group deliberately targeted advertising at London Underground stations to cover with such graffiti).

Crass also often takes on the language of the 'many' who are standing up to the 'few' governing bodies or the 'System.'[1136] Rimbaud writes, "millions of lives of grey slavery simply so that those few can enjoy the privileges that are the birth right of us all." In the same text, Crass promotes the theory of basic humanity's, goodness, free schools, pacifism, peaceful cooperation, and an end to nuclear weapons, the 'dominant male', state control, and greed, all of which they argue direct action both within and without the state/capital system can subvert.[1137] The liberating idea mobilized here is that the institutions that destroy the planet and its people *can* be subverted, and *we* can initiate this change *now*. Vaucher describes these efforts both

[1136] System is always capitalized in their works.
[1137] Rimbaud, *Last of the Hippies*, pp. 75-85. Also described in *Shibboleth*, pp. 186, 202.

in terms of political messaging and in terms of the practicality, ease, and low cost of stenciling (particularly in a pre-photocopying, pre-computer age),

> We would make stencils to spray on offensive advertising on the streets and especially on the London underground. Every month, we would decide who was going to spray what underground line and head out in pairs to graffiti on all the sexist and violent advertising with a very neatly placed message. The stencil sprays always looked very neat and acceptable even if what they were saying didn't. Again, it was free and easy and did a great job.[1138]

1981 saw the production of the fourth Crass album in as many years (although it wouldn't be finished and released until the following year), amidst the turmoil of the U.K.'s war provocation in the Falklands islands of Argentina and the intensification of the neo-liberal market fundamentalism of the Thatcher-Reagan political and economic machine. But this year also saw a flourishing of radical action in the U.K., of which Crass played no small part.

> Anarchy had been rescued from the dusty libraries of academia and the equally dusty dreams of barstool bullshitters to become the catchword for a whole new generation of streetwise activists…Freedom was no longer 'just another word for nothing left to lose', but had become a shining beacon to those looking beyond servitude to a brighter future…A new trilogy had been scribed: anarchy, peace and freedom, words which were being enthusiastically translated into action.[1139]

In a similar mode, Crass also consistently critiques what they refer to as "armchair" and "weekend" anarchists, who are usually either seen as too lazy and indifferent or too militant and violent.[1140] The fourth Crass album, titled *Christ*, also contained a booklet containing not only further systematic critiques, but also useful tips to

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[1138] Macphee, Josh and Reuland, Erik (ed.s) 2007. *Realizing the Impossible: Art Against Authority*. Oakland: AK Press, p. 73.
[1139] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Christ—the Album* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1140] Pamphlet printed in January 1980. *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, pp. 9-11.

"promote positive forms of action from graffiti and lock gluing to bread making and food co-ops, from paint bombing and fence cutting to lovemaking and housing co-ops."[1141] To fully underline the hope for radical change through organizing, the album concludes with a recording of a portion of a 1980 E.P. Thompson speech to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), concluding on the optimistic note of "looking at you, I know one thing: we can win, we can win!"[1142] Crass were consistently involved in such CND (and other radical) actions.[1143]

Among the Crass handouts and slogans were anti-war and pacifist ideas, appeals to vegetarianism, feminist critique, and discussion of squatters rights and property rights in the context of the, now very commonly critiqued, 1% of the population.[1144] Activist Mark Anderson has described the impression that Crass gave during their years active as a group, and the influence that this impression had.

> Crass was very much about getting up and making things happen…One of their slogans at the end was 'It's not time to be fucking nice, it's time to act.' [Again we see the imperative to *do* here—AJW] We knew they were involved with the Stop the City demonstrations, the creative, disruptive blockages that were intended to disrupt the financial district of London. It was very clear that while you might think that certain bands, even if they were interested in the right things, were more interested in doing something more than just talking. Certainly that was the sense with Crass and everything they did. It was essential to *act*. Words were worse than nothing, basically, because they disillusion people.[1145]

Anderson continues by describing the immense influence that Crass had on the foundation and actions of his own D.C.-based activist group Positive Force and other

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[1141] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Christ—the Album* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1142] Crass. 1982. *Christ—the Album*. Crass Records.
[1143] *No Class Fanzine*. Web: http://www.noclass.co.uk/crassinterview.html Last Accessed 05/08/17.
[1144] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 221.
[1145] Ensminger, David. A. 2016. *The Politics of Punk: Protest and Revolt from the Streets*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, p. 79.

autonomous groups he has interacted with in the U.S. Several flyers promoting Crass gigs and activist demonstrations are attached in the appendices here. Notice that the flyer advertising the "Bash the Rich" march, including Crass among the performers, also recommends the same type of mask—Balaclavas—that would later be famously worn by Pussy Riot. Indeed, the Balaclava became a symbol of Pussy Riot, far beyond the merely practical choice in masking identity for safety reasons, and the activists showing solidarity with the group also consistently donned them at demonstrations. The Pussy Riot case and resulting phenomenon is explored in much more depth in the next chapter, but it is worth noting the long-standing punk influence that Crass and others have in more contemporary politics.

Additionally resonating with later movements like Occupy, Rimbaud describes the Stop the City action as "half carnivals, half riots in London's financial center."[1146] Stop the City's atmosphere of carnival can best be understood through its connections to earlier English traditions of masquerade (as explored in the studies by Mikhail Bakhtin and Terry Castle, for instance).[1147] There is a certain playfulness that is hence an important aspect of Crass activism, however militant it may seem (and shares this with the aforementioned humor in their art). As with so many other organizers, Crass also became more and more concerned with the potential for violence at marches and demonstrations, and even cancelled some due to these

[1146] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Christ—the Album* (Crassical Collection Remaster). See also, *Shibboleth*, pp. 248-249.
[1147] Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Castle, Terry. 1986. *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

concerns.[1148] These continuing efforts by Crass to disrupt and oppose Thatcher's state were taken increasingly seriously by state authorities, despite this fact. By the early 1980s, not only the police, but also MI5 were conducting surveillance of the group's productions, performances, and home life. "Our phone was being tapped and our mail opened with such clumsy crudity that it was clearly a policy, a form of transparency designed to intimidate."[1149] Thatcher was even asked her opinion of Crass's "How Does it Feel (To Be the Mother of 1,000 Dead)?" in Parliament, to which she responded that she hadn't heard the record, despite the fact that members of her own party were pushing to have the band prosecuted for obscenity.

> The Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, has been asked by the Conservative MP for Enfield North, Mr. Tim Eggar, to prosecute an Anti-Falklands war record under the Obscene Publications Act…Mr. Eggar said: "This is the most vicious, scurrilous and obscene record that has ever been produced. It goes beyond the acceptable bounds of freedom of speech. It is an insult not only to the Prime Minister, the country and all the armed forces, but also, sadly, to the families of those who died and were wounded in the Falklands." A member of Crass, Andy Palmer, said that he did not accept that the record was obscene. Mr. Eggar was objecting because he did not agree with the political sentiment expressed. "It was a considered attack on the Government. We are criticising the mentality that can send young boys to war. The mentality of war is far more obscene than we could possibly be."[1150]

Backing up his brother Tim, who was the conservative member of British Parliament most keen to see Crass prosecuted, Robin Eggar also took to the press, writing in the *Daily Mirror*,

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[1148] April 2014. RBMA Radio Interview, "Crass' Penny Rimbaud on graffiti, jazz, and John Lennon," Red Bull Music Academy Daily. Web: http://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2014/04/crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17.

[1149] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Christ—the Album* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

[1150] McHardy, Anne. October 21st, 1982. "Prosecute Falklands record, says MP," *The Guardian*, Page 2.

> However distasteful the Sex Pistols appeared to be in 1977, their songs were a chilling warning of the coming recession. But anarchist band Crass have gone too far. They released last week the most revolting and unnecessary record I have ever heard. "How Does It Feel To Be The Mother of 1,000 Dead?" is a vicious and obscene attack on Margaret Thatcher's motives for engaging in the Falklands war. It bears little relation to reality. Retailing at only 75p it has already sold more than 28,000 copies.[1151]

As with many other attempts at censoring punk, this case for prosecution went nowhere save the bank. That isn't to say that surveillance of the group wasn't intensified, but the case for violation of the Obscene Publications Act was led more towards monetary insolvency rather than imprisonment. However, the "faceless" apparatus of the state did tie up members of Crass in the court system, where they were effectively drained of considerable financial resources.[1152]

Pranks also made their way into Crass's political festivities. Bassist Pete Wright also used recorded clips of Reagan and Thatcher to create an infamous tape copied/cut/pasted (dare we say a sonic collage?) to create a dialog of the two figures admitting to war crimes and deception. The tape, later revealed for the hoax that it was, caused nothing less than a media sensation blaming the KGB for its production and dissemination. Ultimately, autonomous radical groups and the KGB themselves attempted to make contact with and/or recruit the group.[1153] In a move predating Wikileaks by over twenty years, Crass also released classified information given to them by, for instance, soldiers revealing dubious plots in the Falklands war. Ignorant elaborates, "we saw ourselves as an information bureau where people would be able

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[1151] Eggar, Robin. October 19, 1982. "Feeling So Nasty: Shock Single with a Sick Message," *Daily Mirror*. Page 19.
[1152] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Ten Notes on a Summer's Day* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1153] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Yes Sir, I Will* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

to pick up on it and find out what stuff was about, like anarchism, recycling, vegetarianism or whatever, and we were learning about it too."[1154]

Given these activities, political proclamations (both lyrical and otherwise), and their sloganeering, it is difficult to completely believe the members of Crass that they weren't at all conversant in anarchist theorists in the band's active years. The claim that "in those days had anyone mentioned Bakunin, we would probably assumed it was some kind of vodka. But no-one ever did."[1155] Both parts of this claim are perplexing. For one, the latter part of the statement that no one ever mentioned Bakunin (or, by implication, other 'canonical' anarchist thinkers) to the group seems incredulous, especially given that not only did the group hold Q & A sessions after gigs, and hosted many anarchists and punks who showed up to Dial House, but were also interviewed by several anarchist zines. Are we to believe that this group, thrust to the forefront of anarcho-punk (however much it may have been against their will), was never questioned about the origins of their ideas, or the relationship between them and previous anarchists?

As for the first part of the claim, are we really to believe that the circle-A symbol and the lyrical demands for anarchy were not informed by *any* understanding of these thinkers and texts, but rather grew out of an exasperation with the 'hard' left and right in the U.K.? Are we really to believe that the extremely well read middle-class art school graduates heavily involved in the hippie radicalism of the 60s who

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[1154] Clarke, Patrick. November 28, 2016. "People Need to Fucking Wake up, Moby & Steve Ignorant in Conversation," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/21383-moby-steve-ignorant-crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17.
[1155] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 100.

made up the backbone of Crass were completely ignorant of Bakunin? We can believe Ignorant, I think, who chose his pseudonym to denote how he felt about politics—most especially in theoretical terms, at least when he joined the group as an 18-year-old among 30-somethings. But was Rimbaud equally ignorant?

There seems to instead be something disingenuous about this feigned ignorance that is more akin to a distancing move than an honest engagement with either the ideas or the past. It is undoubtedly true that many 'anarchist' punks, and many fans of Crass specifically, are in fact unaware of anarchist writings either from the 19th or 20th centuries. Theory is less important to many in these scenes than feelings, affect, and even just the appeal of the music itself. One certainly does not have to agree with the political positions or ideologies of the artists in order to enjoy, or be entertained by, the art. Additionally, many punks (even anarcho punks) have very little patience for the lofty pretensions of 'radical' theorists, whom they perceive to all too often be talking down to them from their plush ivory tower. Yet, the claims to lifestyle above all else, simultaneously made with broad declarations for anarchy do more to celebrate individualism than to seriously engage in intellectual debate.

One question that has possibly never been put to Crass in a serious way, but one that arises out of our engagement here; is there an anti-intellectualism at work in Crass? Put another way, is the lack of rigorous engagement with the texts and ideas (both supporting and opposition) Crass engages a product of their broad critique of all elites—including those in the academic industrial complex? Or, did they sidestep leadership roles and such intellectual engagement because they sought to be cultural

producers above political actors? These questions are especially troubling to punk audiences who often viewed Crass as *too* intellectual (including Ignorant himself), and so the idea that they may have purposely been messaging through anti-intellectual means raises additional—perhaps troubling—implications of how seriously they took their insistence that they weren't telling anyone what to think or how to feel.

Perhaps as a way of addressing these concerns and their own troubled relationship with the spotlight, towards the end of their performing years, Crass settled upon the slogan of "There is No Authority but Yourself," including it not only in lyrics but also on banners hung behind the band's performances. "The album *Yes Sir I Will* was our first 'tactical response' [to Thatcher and her party], it was an impassioned scream directed towards the wielders of power and those who passively accept them as an authority. The message in *Yes Sir* was loud and clear, 'There is no authority but yourself.'"[1156] They attempted through *Acts of Love* to

> [D]emonstrate that the source of our anger was love rather than hate and that our idea of self was not that of an egocentric social bigot, but of an internal sense of one's own being. The ambiguity of our attitudes was beginning to disturb us. Was it really possible to have a bloodless revolution? Were we being truly realistic? Were we being destroyed by our own paradoxes?[1157]

Similarly, we can note, the consistent claims that Crass were mostly "mucking about [with] no ambition" also seems absurdly misleading.[1158] Their records, for instance, always contain a numeric countdown to the date of 1984 (e.g. 421984 for "4 years to 1984), indicating an intentionality behind the scope and length of the band.

[1156] Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own."
[1157] Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own."
[1158] Capper, Andy. July 31, 2010. "Anarchy and Peace, Litigated," *Vice*. Web: www.vice.com/en_us/article/anarchy-and-peace-litigated-490-v17n8 Last Accessed: 05/09/2017.



(Rimbaud holds the Crass "There is No Authority But Yourself" banner at the conclusion of the "Yes Sir" Performance, Vaucher's film *Angel* is seen in the background, Rebellion 2014)

Many, many other bands in various punk cultures consistently express anti-fascist and anti-Nazi (or more broadly, anti-racist) sympathies without having specific songs addressing this issue. The next chapter turns to another reaction to the violence within punk scenes, that of the feminist movement/initiative known as Riot Grrrl. Before that, however, a turn towards a closer analysis of the works of Crass and Dial House co-founder Penny Rimbaud can perhaps suggest possibilities for—however maddeningly contradictory—answers to the concerns raised in this chapter. Thirty years after the cessation of Crass, in the summer of 2014, I was able to discuss *some* of Vaucher, Libertine, and Rimbaud's thoughts regarding systems of politics. The following is a fictionalized excerpt of this conversation (see footnote # in chapter # for an explanation of this method). An important thing to note is that such conversations are not exceptional, but indeed occur frequently at Dial House. So

while I have taken minimal creative license in reproducing one brief tea talk here, the same themes and ideas recur in many other conversations of late.

Crass Interlude: "Left Wing, Right Wing, You Can Stuff the Lot"

Penny Rimbaud: The left is worse than the right, for at least the right is honest. You see, the left is very disingenuous, in taking this position that they say is for the people. But it's not for the people, is it? If it were, the people would be on board. That's the problem with Marxism, and what it shares with fascism, is positioning itself in a place of power to tell the people what is best for them. Why not let the people decide for themselves? What the leftist institution actually does is give the system precisely what it needs to sustain and perpetuate itself, which is opposition. All systems are based on opposition.

Andrew J. Wood: Isn't that what anarchists have been saying for more than a century?

P: I don't think so. Anarchism became an ideology and a set of rules just like everything else. For many reasons, I feel more connection with right libertarianism than I do with left anarchism. I know it has negative connotations in America [sic, U.S.], but still I wonder, why not look to libertarianism. Anarchism has become just another institution.

A: So has libertarianism.

P: Has it? I don't think as much so in this country.

A: But libertarianism is typically associated with the conservative right because it is never concerned with tearing down or overthrowing the system. Instead, libertarianism wants to work entirely within the system to the advantage of the libertarians. But, I suppose there are some leftist libertarians as well.

Gee: I don't much go in for these debates about these labels.

P: Well, look, I for one love the concept of a meritocracy. I think it's absolutely right.

A: But not in such a context in which money itself is seen as a merit. When power is itself seen as a merit. Those in power have always justified their positions of domination by appealing to their merit, whether they claim that merit comes from divine right, industry and work ethic, racist ideology, etc.

P: That's the problem isn't it? It's not with meritocracy, but the fact that, of course, what we've seen is that meritocracy is caught up and tied into the systems of racism, sexism, classism.

A: And you think that a merit-based system could be established that is not based on such discrimination?

P: I'm not sure about that possibility. Just do the best that you can, that's what we're doing, and that's really all we can do.

A: Is that related to punk?

P: Well, maybe at the time. But I don't much go in nostalgia. I like it, when I see these guys in their punk clothes, still trying to fight the good fight, but it's all so anachronistic at this point. But you know, I'm submitting this essay I've been working on for Robin's [Ryde] book on the philosophy of punk because in some ways I was a progenitor of punk philosophizing. But that was a time when it was truly radical. Radical thought doesn't have anything to do with punk, but maybe punk had something to do with radical thought. The first radical thinking I ever did was through Zen when I was a teenager, then, and I'm not sure if I really was a hippie, the 60s really opened things up. And punk followed that, it was an outlet to experiment, and an outlet of fun. But, I'm largely on to other things, not just this nostalgia. They want you to keep to the script.

A: What do you mean?

P: Well, look, there is an expectation that what you do now must line up with what you did then.

A: That reminds me a little bit of Scorcese's documentary about Bob Dylan [No Direction Home].

P: Ah, I've been wanting to see that, is it any good?

A: It's really interesting. I thought of it because a lot of the film focuses on the time in which Dylan was transitioning from folk singing to electric music, and all the fall out from that. You don't necessarily come out of the film liking him more, but with a better understanding for sure. My favorite part is when the audience boos and he asks, "why do they keep buying tickets?"

P: Yes! You see, when you don't follow the script people cry, "foul." In a much, much lighter kind of way, that's what we've had to deal with. People want us to stick to the script of Crass, rather than ever change an idea or focus on something else. After Crass, I did nothing but write for a while, but it never received much attention.

We've all kept doing things, but no one seems interested in allowing us to move beyond the script.

A: It sounds like you have moved on though.

E: I have.

P: Yes, but I mean that you can't just move on and expect the same audience to follow.

Chapter 9

Punk Out of Space: the Feminist Prayer and Play of Pussy Riot

"As anarchist feminists, we felt better in a punk, hardcore, and anti-fascist environment where we got support."
--Jenni Ramme[1159]

"Punk is not a media fashion, it's a way of life…Punk's the people's music, let's keep it that way…Van Gogh was a punk, Beethoven was a punk, Mozart was a punk."
--Penny Rimbaud[1160]

"Nadya: Is feminist a swear word?
Witness: It is if it's said in church."[1161]
--Pussy Riot Trial Transcript

Given these types of sweeping statements, are all iconoclasts punk in some sense? Flipping this around, are all punks in fact iconoclasts? Surely the obvious answer to both of these question is 'no,' but perhaps there are some important caveats to complicate this answer. In the remainder of this chapter, I will primarily be engaging the thought of Bertolt Brect, Roland Barthes, Hakim Bey, and Jacques Ranciére, in order to elaborate on the variety of ideas on disrupting the banality of conformity through aesthetic tactics. After having briefly examined these, we will turn to a few examples to witness events of such disruption (or, we should perhaps leave this ambiguous, and claim these examples as demonstrations of *attempts* at disruption). The specific disruptions here are the explosive feminist performances in

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[1159] Kuhn, Gabriel (ed.) 2010. *Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 218.
[1160] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, pp. 167 & 266.
[1161] Scholder, Amy et al. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, p. 50.

the punk context, from Crass to Riot Grrrl, to ultimately frame our turn to contemporaneous Russian dissidents Pussy Riot.

> "Anti-aesthetics emerged within us, defining what punk was by identifying what punk was not."
> --Rebecca Miller[1162]

Ordinarily in musicological studies, deep analysis of form relies on considerations of the technique, skill, training, and tradition of the artist, and the visual or sonic qualities of the art that can be easily narrativized. However, there is also an important move in much aesthetic theory to not simply be limited to examining art on its own formalistic terms, but rather to see and hear it through cultural lenses, to analyze art in its context. Within this latter type of engagement with art, we can come to recognize another crucial aspect of form that comprises the darker shadow of formalist concerns. Rather than the illuminated art itself that typically earns critique or celebration through analysis, we can learn significantly from the shadows of *experience* of form. In other words, we can see the mobilization of concepts that explain not simply the formal aesthetics, but rather the experience of the encounter between the subject and the art object. This experience can be mundane and banal, or in the experience of the new, can be shocking and unsettling. On this latter register, we can move further away from the Kantian the sublime, and further towards the *punctum* and uncanny effects in order to better understand the subjective bases of aesthetic experience, and more importantly, the aesthetic bases of

[1162] Duncan, Chris (ed.) 2007. *My First Time: A Collection of First Punk Show Stories*. Oakland: AK Press, p. 121.

our very interpolation as subjects. It is through the experiences, effects, and affects of the concepts in this trifecta that we witness the limits of our human perception, imagination, and subjectivity. Through these experiences, we can find ourselves radically troubled by the otherness of the art object. This seems a bold claim, so let's begin by unpacking each of these in their original conceptions, and then look and listen to a particular case read through these, showing their theoretical value and the possibility of such an overarching claim. In a way, what I am attempting to show is that modern subjectivities can be problematized in much the way that modernity itself may be, that is, undermining the "belief that 'modern life' [insert subjectivity] comprises a coherent whole."[1163] This disruption is perhaps best understood through feminist interventions that pierce through hetero-normative misogyny, not only in our particular cultural scene of punk, but also in a broader social sense.

There are several features that comprise and connect these different conceptions. The first is the aspect of surprise or the unexpected. Often this surprise takes the form of the new, in that the experience of new and unheard, unseen aesthetics can elicit shock effects. As strange as it may seem, prior to punk (and indeed, following into punk itself), the role of women prescribed by the cultural industry was not so much as an aesthetic innovator as straightforward entertainer (i.e. commodity). Of course, there are many important women artists who *did* innovate and change the aesthetic expectations of their cultures, such as Bessie Smith, Nina Simone, Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday, Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Grace Jones, Sheila

[1163] Berman, Marshall. 1982. *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Group, p. 88.

E., Beyoncé, and others and this continued contemporaneously with punk in women's and queer folk's prominence in disco.[1164] Yet, the cultural *industry* (including music) of commodified aesthetic productions continues to be lead by an exclusionary boys' club. Feminist cultural interventions (like so many feminist interventions in other domains)—which now are also being articulated in terms of the Time's Up movement outing Hollywood male executive's predatory behavior—are hence important in both shifting and defining what cultural scenes can—or indeed *should*—be.

One thing that connects the sublime experience of beauty, the horror of the uncanny, and the wounding of the *punctum* are that the e/affects could not be produced by merely exposing the perceiving subject to what she already expected. Instead, the de-subjectivizing characteristic of each of these three relies upon expectations being defied and troubled, hence revealing to the perceiving subject the limits to her own perceptions. However, there can also be the defiance of expectations that don't rely upon the creation of the new, but rather the performance or exposure in different and shifting contexts. For example, many art objects or performances that have long-standing traditions can be surprising in spatial and temporal contexts beyond their expected norms (more on this below). Related to this surprising troubling of expectations is the aspect of the sublime, the uncanny, and the *punctum* that radically affects subjectivity and subject formation. Even William Morris himself offers a call to radical artists—the only artists worthy of the title for

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[1164] Davis, Angela. 1999. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York: Vintage. Gamson, Joshua. 2006. *The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, The Music, The Seventies in San Francisco*. New York: Picador.

him—to work towards something anticipating Barthes's *punctum*, claiming "it has become the duty of all true artists…to strive to pierce that defence (sic) and sting the world, cultivated and uncultivated, into discontent and struggle."[1165] For Hakim Bey, instances of aesthetic shock are by definition non-sensible, confronting the sensing subject with something they cannot understand. The confusion, similar to the unexpectedness of the *punctum*'s piercing, ostensibly holds the potential to open new modes of thought in the sensing subject.

We begin with the concept that I pose as the key concept in conversation with (as well as being variously related *and* counter) each of these, though in different ways. This concept is Kant's notion of the sublime, for even in their departures from the sublime, both Freud and Barthes are informed by this concept in the development of their own. Kant deliberately uses divine language in describing this experience, for there is a theological component to the power experienced in his sublime. The sublime, for Kant, is only truly experienced in the overwhelming aspects of nature (e.g. in the literally breath-taking experience of the vastness of the ocean, the humbling heights of Redwoods, etc.) as a demonstration of the creative power of the Christian God. Yet, we can remove some of the theological overtones (as Hegel, for one, does) for aesthetics can contain aspects of closeness to the sublime, i.e. and beautiful art is the closest man-made creation can get towards reaching the sublime. Importantly, even within aesthetic experience and judgment that interacts with this less-than-sublime phenomenon, "what is understood in the judgment is not the

[1165] Morris, *Collected Works, Vol. 22*, p. 122.

determination of the object but of the subject and its feeling."[1166] This is because sensation and perception are always of an object external and other to the subject, "the merely subjective aspect of our representations of things outside us."[1167] Aesthetic judgment is therefore of note for Kant because it can get us close to the sublime, but also because it undermines subjectivity through the demonstration of subjective judgments. In other words, as taste is always understood as subjective with no possibility for objective judgment this forces the subject to grapple with the possibility that there is also no objective basis for their *own* subjectivity. This radical undermining of subjectivity is what connects Kant's sublime to Freud's uncanny in surprising ways. The beautiful and the horrifying may indeed prove to have similar effects on the subject position of the surprised audience member. As we will see, Pussy Riot masterfully achieves this blending of shock and beauty.

On the issue of beauty, in conversation with the other concepts mobilized here, we must reconsider Kant's dedication to sublime beauty, and think of other aesthetic articulations that can also have deeply subjectivizing features. Slavoj Žižek nicely summarizes the troubling aspect of the sublime, in that it is "paradoxically pleasurable in the dis-pleasurable" rupture of subjectivity, i.e. because "sublimity excites and agitates."[1168] This *dis*pleasure in the sublime ties us nicely to the shock of the uncanny and the piercing of the *punctum* in its surprising confrontation of the subject with its self. The self cannot be conceived of as unitary when confronted with

[1166] Kant, Immanuel. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 25.
[1167] Ibid, p. 75.
[1168] Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Brooklyn: Verso, pp. 228-9.

radical surprise, as defied expectations reveal the tenuous ground upon which subjectivity itself is built. Therefore the paradox of pleasure/displeasure can also create a paradox of similar and related experiences of undermining subjectivity in beauty and horror. Hence we can connect the discomfort of the sublime with that of the uncanny.

Let's look backward, and return briefly to our examination of Freud from chapter one. Freud's uncanny is understood as the inexplicable collision between the imaginary and the real. This collision is often experienced as not only utterly surprising, but also often as horrifying. He writes,

> [A]n uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes.[1169]

Let's unpack this complex definition in order to understand the moment of the uncanny, in both its collision of the seemingly distinct realms of imaginary and real, its radically disturbing undermining of expectations, and its potential for expanding the realm of the possible and introducing openness. The first feature of this definition to notice is that the uncanny is always and only understood as an *effect*. In other words, we can only understand the uncanny in its effects on human affect and psychology, and the uncanny is therefore not a pre-existing phenomenon in the world. This would perhaps imply that the uncanny is a human categorization bearing no relation to the real, but rather a mere recognition of realness, however surprising,

[1169] Freud, Sigmund. 1997. *Writings on Art and Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

when it occurs. There is nothing that is *naturally* uncanny, in other words, for the uncanny only exists in our interpretive assigning of this category.

The uncanny should therefore always be referred to as the uncanny *effect*. Freud continues by explaining that these effects are "often and easily produced," undermining any argument that such effects are rare or insignificant. In other words, uncanny effects are a continually occurring event that has consistent effects on human experiences of reality. Different from the sublime, however, is that uncanny effects are surprisingly comprehensible (that is, once time and reflection have transpired). We must ask how, in uncanny effects, we come to question our perceptions through those very perceptions. Here again we can see the usefulness of Kant's sublime, for in our experience of the sublime we recognize our lack of recognition and come to realize the limits to our perception an experience. Yet Freud seems to focus on the coincidences, circumstances, and madness that we *can* perceive. I would argue here that we can see the possibility of a striking dialectic between the sublime and the uncanny in instances of unimaginable horror. That is, perhaps what is truly horrifying is the very fact that we can't perceive, interpret, and understand real phenomena, and what explicit horror demonstrates to us is precisely this lack. The truly horrific fact is that we can't comprehend horror, and this incomprehensibility perhaps explains some of the violent reactions punk/feminist interventions have faced.

For Freud, aesthetics offers a particularly good set of tools for understanding the uncanny. However, aesthetics can also present an interpretive problem in muddying further the line between fact and fiction. For one, it is through fiction that

we can experience uncanny effects to a much more frequent extent. This doesn't mean that the uncanny effects of fiction are more powerful, but simply that they are often the most readily available examples for the simple reason that imaginative writings and performances can attempt to insert such effects through the guise of horror or disgust (i.e. and as the intention of the creative artist). Freud is very clear that these effects are distinct from the uncanny effects actually experienced by subjects in the world.[1170] It is the latter of these that Freud is primarily interested in, though he cannot depart aesthetics completely, as his reliance of Hoffman's "The Sandman" demonstrates. Even he cannot make sweeping arguments on uncanny effects, for there is something radically individualistic in the concept. This is because in the modernist understanding of the individual as monad, uncanny effects are radically troubling of the individual subjectivity rather than community subjectivities (which would be more related to something along the lines of Jung's archetypes in the collective unconscious, or Foucault's identities and communities of perceived resistance, both of which conclude by claiming that these reinforce rather than disrupt existing power relations).

The other important feature of fiction or imaginative writing is the power it gives to the author. Freud indeed recognizes the power that we give to authors, the authority of which we cede in order to either enjoy, be entertained, learn, or perhaps even be challenged with questions about ourselves as readers. We hence yield to the possibility of uncanny effects when we engage fiction (can we expect the unexpected,

[1170] Freud, p. 224.

or as the cliché goes, 'suspend our belief?'). Similarly, Friedrich Kittler sees the tremendous power that authors possess, but not strictly in terms of power over their readers. Instead, he focuses on their power to create, and the freedom this implies, for according to him "only as an author is man free from the constraint of being also that which he is not; as author he fully and completely assumes his essence."[1171] Yet, for Kittler this freedom is not unlimited, for "no discourse, not even the freest possible translation, can manage without authorized controls. In no culture is the dice throw of discourse not steered and curbed, checked and organized."[1172]

So we are left with the cycling dialectic of freedom and control in written—expanded for us to *all* aesthetic—work. Part of the limitation to artistic freedom is that "imagination defines all the arts" and hence the ways in which imagination is limited is inherently a limit to the expressions possible within art.[1173] The authority of the author that Freud concedes is precisely such an imaginative limitation, for if the author is invested with total power or a monopoly on meaning then we have already limited our possibilities of interpretation. Is there a way in which we can engage literature and philosophy, art and music in ways that leave us open to the experience of uncanny effects but is not limited by the authority of the author? Can we find a way out of the paradox that seems to occur when to experience uncanny effects in fiction we must invest the author with imaginative power, yet in order to have true imaginative freedom we must maintain some sense of autonomy and an

[1171] Kittler, Friedrich. 1990. *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 64.
[1172] Kittler, p. 16.
[1173] Kittler, p. 113.

understanding of the limitations of authorship? Roland Barthes offers a potential answer to this.

Barthes opens the interpretive possibilities of texts by declaring the 'death' of the author. He maintains an element of surprise and the possibility of shock within aesthetic experience, thus keeping some aspects of Kant's sublime in (at least immediate) incomprehensibility. Yet, he also wants to de-divine concepts like Kant's, writing the theological out of aesthetics. Through Barthes, we could say that there is nothing magical about aesthetics, but rather aesthetics possess the appearance of the supernatural by troubling the bases on which we judge the natural. He claims that in the modern moment, we have a different relationship to texts (a point we could expand to aesthetics more generally) than may have previously existed. For, "we know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning…but a multiple dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."[1174] In other words, we can limit the authority of the author (and hence negate the limits of the author's imagination) by understanding that there is no "final signified" within a given work.[1175] Instead, there are multiple, complex, and competing possibilities for meanings. Instead of looking for authorial intent, therefore, Barthes is able to be open to unintended effects. It is only after this openness is established that the possibility of linking uncanny effects with theories of subjectivity and subject formation can come into play, that is, in the piercing, wounding quality of the *punctum*.

[1174] Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Image—Music—Text*. New York: Hill & Wang, p. 146.
[1175] Ibid, p. 147.

Barthes's concept of the *punctum* does related but distinct work in analyzing aesthetic surprise and/or shock. Specifically, embedded within the *punctum* is an aspect of pain, in it is particularly defined by its piercing, wounding quality. Shock can be seen as an amalgamation of Lacan's mirror and Barthes's *punctum*, for shock forces the subject to question their subject position through the painful experience of encountering the unexpected wounding detail. Barthes presents *punctum* as the specific detail in the photograph that "pierces" or "wounds" the viewer.[1176] This wound inspires reflection on the photograph itself and also on the viewers' own subject positions that they bring to their viewing experience. This affect is not only of horror, but also of uncertainty, for only the unnamable truly shocks or surprises, for "what I can name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance."[1177] Where does this disturbance happen? For Barthes, *punctum* is a unique feature of the photograph. The inexplicable detail of the photograph that draws the viewing subject in, surprises them, wounds them, and then ultimately changes their perceptions and self-understandings. However, I think the concept of a piercing detail can be usefully applied to other cultural productions.

For Barthes, an important aspect of the *punctum* is that it is an unplanned, unintended detail that attracts especial attention from the viewing subject. This effect can be produced by unexpected beauty, ugliness, or simply the narrative used to explain the photo (as he gives in several examples of photographs that could be

[1176] Barthes, Roland. 1980. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 32, 45, 51, 59, 96.
[1177] Ibid, p. 51.

analyzed aesthetically, but the direction of this analysis would shift drastically once it is known that the person pictured was born a slave, an assassin, or a relative of Napoleon Bonaparte). He has completely taken away the theological (or supernatural) aspect of the sublime by showing instances of ugliness that can produce such effects, not simply the breath-taking beauty that so fascinated Kant, nor is the *punctum* entirely incomprehensible. Yet, the *punctum* created by narrative seems to cede some imaginative authority not to the photographer (or we could say the 'author' of the photo) per se, but rather to the story of its production. The picture of his mother is unsettling *because* it is his mother. The eyes of Napoleon's brother are wounding *because* they are the eyes of Napoleon's brother. The beauty of the assassin is piercing *because* he is an assassin. So, it seems, a deeper level of engagement is necessary for the *punctum* to have power. The viewing subject must have some contextual, social, cultural, or historical knowledge of what they are viewing so that they might have a more powerful experience. In this we can see a conceptual similarity between the *punctum* and Freud's uncanny, for both the effects of each rely upon the pre-existing knowledge of the perceiving subject, and both play off of how the expectations based upon this knowledge are defied.

Due to the surprising power of unexpected detail in the photograph, these effects of the *punctum* may radically undermine the viewing subject's subject position. This unique feature of the photograph cannot be experience in other art forms for Barthes. Beyond this, he even goes so far as to pose other artistic forms as important to subject *constitution* rather than unsettling. He claims, for instance, that

"there is an imaginary in music whose function is to reassure, the constitute the subject hearing it."[1178] Music hence interpolates us, while photographs trouble us. Yet, this split in Barthes thinking reveals more of his aesthetic prejudices than irrefutable evidence that this is so. In fact, we may see similar aspects of *punctum* in the (uncanny?) effects of musical performance. Music may therefore be the paradoxical site of subject creation and deconstruction.[1179]

Now that we've unpacked some of the nuance in these critical concepts of form and affect, let's turn to particular examples to see how these concepts may be mobilized. To examine the most wide-ranging aesthetics, let's look specifically at the spaces in which art is produced, consumed, and performed. Rather than looking to a strictly visual or sonic example, therefore, we can apply the concepts of sublime, *punctum*, and uncanny effects to both when we look at spaces in ways that would be much more limited were we to merely examine a particular art object. For our example here, let's look at the importance of spatial context for the production of shock effects, in the cultural scenes of punk rock, examples that is, of a *punk punctum*. All of these concepts on the political valence of shock are exemplified within punk in the aesthetic choices and actions of feminist militancy ranging from Crass themselves, to the 1990s explosion of female-led, women/womyn positive artists known as Riot Grrrl, to the contemporaneous politico-aesthetic performances of Russian group Pussy Riot.

[1178] Barthes, *IMT*, p. 179.
[1179] Could we, for instance, consider music as one of the Ideological State Apparatuses that Althusser shows interpolating subjects (e.g. the church, the school, etc.)?

Setting the Stage: Crass Feminism & Riot Grrl

"All art is plagiarism and that's what's so exciting and wonderful about it. You take something and push it up a different avenue and you make it say some more."
--Gee Vaucher

In combination with her use of collage aesthetics, there are also occasional Crass productions of Gee Vaucher's that includes elements of William Burroughs's so-called 'cut-up' method. For instance, in the image below (figure 1), which was used as the interior poster for the Crass album *Penis Envy*, one of her pieces explored in the preceding chapter, we are met with a central headless figure comprised of a various—and differently gendered—body parts.



(Figure 1)

Framing this figure are cut-up newsprint containing phrases such as "all out," "you have to start," "place in the present," and the even more removed from context

singular words "mother" and "die." She views her works on gender as decided feminine, yet not quite feminist, writing,

> Despite my involvement in feminist actions like Greenham Common Peace Camp, I have never regarded myself as a 'member' of the feminist movement. I have always been unable to conceive of a way of coping with sexism that does not incorporate the views of both sides; the blame and accusations work both ways. Having shared time with many women who have suffered the effects of sexism, I understand many of the causes of feminist's anger, but I have never felt that my gender or anyone else's was an obstacle to my own endeavors.[1180]

Yet, despite this claim, her work on gender is certainly meant to challenge hegemonic misogynistic ideas, often in ways that mirror or even resemble other feminist works, a kinship in confrontation she seems to acknowledge. That is, her illustrations, such as the eventually abandoned book project *PENT-UP* (a sort of anti-pin-up magazine troubling the objectification inherent in the male gaze—figure 2) operate "by offering a woman's view, would confront male preconceptions."[1181] She has also done a series of paintings of non-gender-specific children's faces, in which she expresses the innocence of childhood with the horror of "seeing too much to soon."[1182]

[1180] Vaucher, p. 18.
[1181] Ibid.
[1182] Shukaitis, Stevphen. Novemebr 26, 2016. "Undermine the Whole System: Gee Vaucher in Conversation," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/21394-gee-vaucher-crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17. Cf. Burrows, Alex. December 2, 2012. "Something from Nothing: The Crass Art of Gee Vaucher," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/10865-gee-vaucher-crass-art-interview Last Accessed 05/09/17.



(Figure 2)

Crass, including Vaucher, pull no punches in their anti-war stance, embracing a non-violent ethos and condemning all acts of state violence. Vaucher once told Radio Free France that, "If you're going to rant and rave or be angry about anything, one does it because you have a vision of the opposite."[1183] Her vision of this opposite is the local lifestyle based in Essex. She argues that following the dissolution of the band in 1984, "I wanted to focus on things that I could possibly have an effect on locally, because I didn't feel I could say anything more about the global situation."[1184] These "tiny things don't make the news but make a profound effect on the area you

[1183] Berger, George. 2008. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 245.
[1184] Shukaitis, Stevphen. November 26, 2016. "Undermine the Whole System: Gee Vaucher in Conversation," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/21394-gee-vaucher-crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17.

live in."[1185] She also reaffirms the tautological thesis at the center of this project, th at "all art is political, all aesthetic is political" and all politics are aesthetic.[1186]

But Vaucher, the visual director of the group, wasn't the only woman in Crass, for there were also two additional women who also wrote lyrics and sang from the front of the band. Rimbaud explains, "we were a group of people living together who realized that an awful lot of feminist ideology was important to incorporate into our everyday activities."[1187] Other women, including Vi Subversa and Annie Anxiety collaborated with the band on various musical, artistic, and political projects (Joy de Vivre notably *joined* the band).[1188] The entire third full length Crass album, *Penis Envy,* is written from a woman's perspective, and deliberately excludes the male vocalists Crass fans previously expected to hear on their records. Obviously named for the most famous of Freud's sexist ideas about women (and the causes of their 'hysteria'), feminist themes of objectification (the front cover of the album is the face of a sex doll, mouth as agape and inviting as any fantasy of sexual availability), sexual and familial mores introduced earlier throughout Crass's first records. Members of the band hold that feminism and feminist perspectives are consistent

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[1185] Shukaitis, Stevphen. November 26, 2016. "Undermine the Whole System: Gee Vaucher in Conversation," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/21394-gee-vaucher-crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17.

[1186] Burrows, Alex. December 2, 2012. "Something from Nothing: The Crass Art of Gee Vaucher," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/10865-gee-vaucher-crass-art-interview Last Accessed 05/09/17.

[1187] Rimbaud, Penny. 2014. *Interviews by V. Vale*. San Francisco: Re/search Publications, p. 86.

[1188] "Joy de Vivre, who alongside the rest of the band was by then living at Dial House, had written a ferocious rant ["Women"] giving a woman's perspective on the issues confronted in our more 'boyish' material." Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

themes throughout the group's oeuvre, though by the time of *Penis Envy*, it was brought to the forefront of their socio-political critique.[1189]

> 'How about an album using only women's voices,' mused Eve. 'It could break Crass' boot boy image and open up a whole other dimension. It might even offset some of the damage Thatcher's doing to feminism.' It was a great idea…An exclusively feminist album would be a challenge both to us and to our predominately male audience…the women in Crass (Eve, Joy, and Gee) were perfectly equipped for the job ahead, all having been involved in the rise of radical feminism.[1190]

The *Penis Envy* album is conceptualized as a long-form feminist critique of society writ large, and its sexism, which is reproduced even within ostensibly oppositional punk cultures. Though the entire album could be unpacked as a feminist masterpiece, a few songs will suffice here to indicate the broad strokes of the critiques therein.[1191] Themes of conformity, exploitation and mutilation of women's bodies, violence (in domestic, state, and sexual forms), and hetero-sexism are all addressed aesthetically in the sonic assault of angry women's voices. For instance, each of these themes can be heard in lyrical content such as in the song "Bata Motel," when Eve Libertine sings,

> I've got a red pair of high heels on
> Tumble me over, it doesn't take much
> Tumble me over, tumble me, push
> In my red high heels I've no control
> The ritual of repression are so old
> You can do what you like, there'll be no reprisal
> I'm your, yes I'm your, it's my means of survival

[1189] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Penis Envy*, cf. *Christ—the Album* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1190] Penny Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Penis Envy* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1191] This same logic informs my decisions for inclusion of lyrics throughout the entire project. My hope is that since I can't hope but to fail in putting into words the impact of these records (for music—the entire experience of the sonic register that is—is not reducible to language), the few songs described will encourage readers to experience these records for themselves.

Come on my love, I know you're strong
Push me hard, make me stagger
The pain in my back just doesn't matter
You force hold me above the ground
I can't get away, my feet are bound

Well today I look so good
Just like I know I should
My breasts to tempt inside my bra
My face is painted like a movie star
I've studied my flaws in your reflection
And put them to rights with savage correction
I've turned my statuesque perfection
And shone it over in your direction

So come on darling, make me yours
Tease me, tease me, make me stay
In my red high heels I can't get away
I'm trussed and bound like an over ready bird
Since I bleed without dying and won't say a word
Slice my flesh and I'll ride the scar
Put me into gear like your lady car
Drive me fast and crash me crazy
I'll rise from the wreckage as fresh as a daisy
These wounds leave furrows as they heal
I've travels them, they're red and real
I know them well, they're part of me
My birth, my sex, my history
They grew with me, my closest friend
My pain's my own, my pain's my end
Clip my wings so you know where I am
I can't get lost while you're my man
Tame me so I know your call
I've stabbed my heels so I am tall
I've bound my twisted falling fall
Beautiful mute against the wall
Beautifully mutilated as I fall
Use me don't lose me

Male violence towards women, from the banal world of fashion through to the extremity of bodily exploitation and mutilation are hence attacked here, the rage coming through not only in the lyrics themselves, nor in the voice expressing them,

but also in the sonic register in which layers of collaged distortion frame this critique. Normative gender roles are critiqued throughout *Penis Envy*, including a recurring critique of and skepticism of the institution of marriage and the confines we are told to accept therein. For instance, in "Berketex Bride," Crass sings,

> The object unsoiled is packed ready and waiting,
> For the moment of truth in this spiritual mating.
> The object unsoiled is packed ready and waiting,
> To be owned, to be cherished, to be fucked for the naming.
> The public are shocked by the state of society,
> But as for you, you're a breath of purity.
> Well don't give me your morals, they're filth in my eyes,
> You can pack them away with the rest of your lies.
> Your painted mask of ugly perfection,
> The ring on your finger, the sign of protection,
> Is the rape on page 3, it the soldiers obsession,
> How well you've been taught to support your oppression.
> One god. One church. One husband. One wife.
>
> Sordid sequences in brilliant life,
> Supports and props and punctuation
> To our flowing realities and realisations.
> We're talking with words that have been used before
> To describe us as goddesses, mother and whores,
> To describe us as women, describe us as men,
> To set out the rules of this ludicrous game,
> And it's played very carefully, a delicate balance,
> A masculine/feminine perfect alliance.
> Does the winner take all? What love in your grasping?
> What vision is left and is anyone asking?
> What vision is left and is anyone asking?
> She's a Berkertex bribe... Bribe. Bribe...

Taking the name Berkertex from the major retailer of bridal and formal wear, Crass simply change the 'bride' in their name to 'bribe.' Many argue that the album was also crucial to the punk scene internally, for issues of aggression, sexual discrimination, violence, and frankly and out of control masculine impulse seeped

into the societal microcosm of punk rock as well. Richard Cross goes so far as to argue that *Penis Envy* was "directed as much at the group's predominantly male fan base as to the world beyond."[1192] So, as we will see with both Riot Grrrl and Pussy Riot, there is a critical attention not only towards macro level issues of sexism, misogyny, and violence, but also a particular focus on these issues *within* punk—perhaps most especially directed towards those punks who somehow think that by their association with this radical culture they are somehow immune from guilt or complacency with these problematic behavioral patterns.

It would be reductive, however, to imagine a feminist critique that stops at issues of gender, and so *Penis Envy* also serves as a platform for the same anti-war, anti-state, and environmentalist stance present on all Crass productions. Even on *Penis Envy*, critique doesn't revolve entirely around what is assumed to be strictly so-called 'gender issues.' The song "Where Next, Columbus?" tackles dogmatism, specifically in the form of hero worship (including easy targets like Mussolini and Jesus, but also Sartre, Einstein, and Jung). The lyric asks us "Who is your leader? Which is your flock? Who do you watch?," implying that we re-examine our neo-tribalism so that we don't become sheep in our (as mentioned last chapter in our exploration of violence) "Rival Rebel Tribal Revel." The song "Systematic Death" also refutes gender roles taught to "little girls" and "little boys," which are critiqued not only in themselves, but also in terms of the educational and ideological apparatus of capitalism. The crux of the song seems to actually be on the ways in which men

[1192] Cross, Richard. May 2014. "The Hippies Now Wear Black: Crass and the anarcho-punk movement, 1977-1984," *Socialist History*, Vol. 26.

and women are similarly exploited within the working classes, despite their separation and different classification. As Joy de Vivre argues, "All issues are interconnected, you can't really separate them."[1193] For example, part of this feminist statement album is the song "What the Fuck?" that focuses on dystopian realities and futures, which contains the following lyric,

> What now? Now you would destroy the earth,
> Dry the river beds.
> What now? Now in your control, birth and death,
> Dry the bodies, incandescent in the heat.
>
> Your fire is melting both soil and soul,
> In plan maybe, is that not enough?
> Your war and raving of it is so total,
> You're consumed by it as you'd consumed us.
> Would you see the fire from your sanctuary of death?
> What terrible pain you need to hide,
> In your hatred you'd seek to destroy the earth,
> What is it that you have been denied?
> Your mind and its rantings are so barren,
> What the fuck are you thinking? What the fuck?
> Your eyes and their vision, empty, staring,
> What the fuck are you seeing? What the fuck?[1194]

The bio-political control of reproduction and population are nicely coupled here with both human and environmental warfare and destruction.

> Marriage is one the increase, and so is divorce, that 'special' day in a girl's life…yawn. Depression amongst women is on the increase…oh really? We can be pubescent pole dancers and proud, porn star goddesses taking control of…and I'm bored already. Feminism? What happened? What always happens to ideas, to movements, to every act, the unpredictability of the never-ending outcome. You light the fire and the sparks shoot every which way.[1195]

[1193] 1985. "Crass-Volume II," *Terminal Boredom*, Issue 7.
[1194] Crass. 1981. *Penis Envy*. 321984. Crass Records. LP.
[1195] Crass. 1982. *Christ- the Album*. BOLLOX 2U2. Double LP Album. Crass Records. Eve Libertine liner notes in reissue. 2011 by Crass/Southern Records, Double CD.

During the recording sessions for *Penis Envy*, Crass also produced a single entitled "Our Wedding," which was a tongue-firmly planted-in-cheek track satirizing the institution of patriarchal marriage sung by Joy de Vivre. The lyrics ironically 'supporting' hetero-normative power relations and gender roles was distributed by the teenage-geared magazine *Loving*, whom the band had (for however briefly) convinced of the track's earnestness. They also, as with other flexi singles the band produced, slipped them into the slipcovers of other artists' records on retail shelves, thereby sneaking this critique of possessiveness within monogamy to audiences consuming other (most especially macho) artists' more misogynistic message. The very idea of a fan of, say, Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, Tom Jones, or Ted Nugent receiving a surprise feminist single along with their mainstream purchase is among the most amusing of Crass's radical pranking methods—perhaps derived from earlier, anachronistic methods of free distribution of radical pamphleteers—and much in line with their publically minded strategy of graffiti.

For whatever efficacy the lyrical critique and the sonic aesthetic of the women's voices on *Penis Envy* may or may not have produced, what the album undoubtedly did was give voice to the tremendous participation of women in the punk worlds. Rather than conforming to the all too common hyper-masculinity of rock cultures, the album embraced feminist politics in as straightforward a way as any contemporaneous musical act had (i.e. including Crass's compatriots and label-mates Poison Girls, who had produced several directly feminist records).

> From then on there were noticeably more women showing up at our gigs and, on a broader scale, it was evident that there was renewed interest in feminist issues, feminist solutions and feminist actions to which, I believe, we can in part lay fair claim to having inspired. Certainly within the Punk Movement the effects were immediate. Overnight, anarcho(sic)-feminism became a force to be reckoned with, women-only gigs and gatherings became commonplace, and new feminist literature, particularly in the form of fanzines, became readily available. Through an act of faith (coupled with feminist insistence from within the band), we had managed to deflect the predominately male focus of rock'n'roll (and more importantly, radical politics) to one which included women not as decorative objects, but as powerful voices.[1196]
>
> *Penis Envy* was political but it was about *personal* politics, because I actually believe that is the only way change can happen. I don't believe in (party) political change. You can't just tell everyone what to do—it has to come from each individual person seeing that possibility within themselves beyond their idea of who they are.[1197]

It is an understatement to write that *Penis Envy* is the strongest feminist statement Crass put forth. Yet, it is wholly inaccurate to conceptualize it as exceptional or an anomaly within their oeuvre. Indeed, feminist critiques and affirmations occur throughout their productions, from the very first single *Reality Asylum* to the swansong *Ten Notes on a Summer's Day*. Rimbaud describes their decision to have Libertine recite the poem of the former of these, explaining, "it was unwittingly a feminist tract. It was about the male arrogance and ethos and sexual fear. I thought it would be much more powerful performed by a woman. I think it added a profundity."[1198] The track "Shaved Women," for instance, from the second Crass LP, the *Stations of the Crass* album, accuses complacent women as being "collaborators" in their own oppression. The starkness of this critique is underscored by the ambient

[1196] Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Penis Envy* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1197] Berger, George. 2009. *The Story of Crass*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 255. Emphasis in original.
[1198] Burrows, Alex. November 10, 2010. "Penny Rimbaud on Crass & the Poets of Transcendentalism & Modernism," *The Quietus*. Web: http://thequietus.com/articles/05258-penny-rimbaud-crass-interview. Last Accessed 05/08/17.

train-on-a-track sounds, at the fore for the opening and closing of the track, but also subtly within the background throughout. These train recordings, coupled with the lyrical critique of collaborators, produce a haunting—if understated—reference, which Rimbaud describes as "the essential, if grim reference to the Nazi transportation."[1199] Indeed, the Crass event writ large is more profound with the inclusion of feminist voices than it ever could have been if it remained in its earliest incarnation of Ignorant and Rimbaud, "the true effect of our work is not to be found within the confines of rock'n'roll, but in the radicalized minds of thousands of people throughout the world."[1200]

> Now that we were attracting fairly large audiences, we were put under increasing pressure to clarify our political affinities. The 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. Whilst happy enough that both camps appeared to like what we were doing, we decided to disassociate ourselves from either by including an anarchist banner in our stage performances…[which] cleared the air, and both camps appeared satisfied that we weren't helping the 'opposition.'[1201]

On the Sex Pistols' song 'Anarchy in the U.K.,' Rimbaud writes, "although we felt that the Pistols probably didn't mean it, to us it was a battle cry."[1202] The anarchy of Crass wasn't strictly in line with any particular anarchist ideologue or canonical text or theory, but is basically summed up as, "Thinking for yourself, not letting other people tell you who or what you are meant to be, but realizing that your life is yours

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[1199] Rimbaud. Liner notes, *Stations of the Crass* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1200] Crass. "In Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own."
[1201] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 99.
[1202] Rimbaud, *Shibboleth*, p. 196. *Last of the Hippies*, pp. 1-3.

and no one has the right to fuck you about and that YOU RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE IN THE SAME MANNER" and that "politics is a load of shit."[1203]

The first Crass single, "Reality Asylum," though initially refused by the pressing plant workers, led to the creation of their own record label. It is important to note that "Reality Asylum" was initially a long form poem of Rimbaud's, and this poem was also the inspiration Steve Ignorant works with in the lyrics to "So What," which would appear on Crass's debut LP. In addition to state surveillance, and police threats of obscenity charges, there were other forms of fallout from their first records.

> The pressing plant refused to touch the record because of the blasphemous nature of *Asylum*, and, for the same reason, no printer could be found to produce the cover. 'Drop it,' was Pete Stennett's [the producer] advice, and after a good deal of argument that's what we did. However, taking a leaf out of John Cage's songbook, I insisted that we replace it with four minutes silence and entitle it *The Sound of Free Speech*. Easy listening? You ain't heard nothing yet. So, the first ever multi-track twelve-inch single hit the marketplace like a incendiary device, although minus what I consider to be its most searing fire. By way of recompense, the sleeve notes offered free copies of *Asylum* to anyone forwarding a blank cassette and stamped addressed envelop to Small Wonder [records]. Over the next few months, a great deal of what little spare time we had was spent knocking out copies for hundreds of eager applicants. Unwittingly, we had just bought into, if not initiated, what many years later would become known as the DIY movement. 'Bloody hell,' complained Steve, 'we'll be folding our own fucking covers next,' Which, of course, was precisely what we were doing one year later. Thousands of them.[1204]

This *Reality Asylum* single led to a case being prepared for prosecution for "criminal blasphemy," and this was the beginning of legal authorities' harassment and

[1203] Pamphlet printed in January 1980. *Kill Your Pet Puppy*. Issue 1, p. 9. Emphasis in original.
[1204] Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).

attempted silencing of Crass.[1205] These encounters included charges of the aforementioned blasphemy, obscenity, and theft of classified government materials, and attempts by the British state to prosecute ranging Crass's material from songs on Christianity, Margaret Thatcher, the Falklands war, and even a critique of Chinese foot-binding.

> Because we didn't want to implicate Small Wonder in any possible prosecution, we decided to go it alone, creating Crass Records for that sole purpose.[1206] For some bizarre reason, and regardless of manufacturing costs, we decided that once produced it should sell for the grand sum of 45p. 'You've got to be joking,' protested John, who had been appointed to help us on matters financial, 'it'll cost you a penny on every sale.' 'Highly appropriate,' mused Andy. So, having found a pressing plant willing to manufacture the offending article (on condition that they remained strictly incognito), and having decided to print the sleeves ourselves, we re-recorded the track with the added bonus of a much more extensive backing track. As a final touch we renamed it *Reality Asylum*. Hence it was released. Hence it immediately shot to number one in the alternative charts. Hence we lost a penny on every sale. Hence we had our first brush with the law. 'They're on the way round to your place,' warned Pete Stennett down the phone. 'Who are?' 'The Vice Squad.' At first it seemed as if he was talking about another punk band with just another rather predictable name like UK Snot, System Smasha or Twisted Tit, but soon it was clear he wasn't.[1207] 'They turned the shop upside down looking for seditious material. They're the Scotland Yard crew who usually bust porn shops.' 'Did they find your vinyl dolly?' 'Fuck off.' By the time they turned up three hours later, we had installed a lawyer for legal advice and a hidden microphone for illegal eavesdropping. We showed them into the front room and left them awhile to their own devices, and ours. 'I don't know, sergeant, they seem like a rather nice bunch. What are we doing here anyway?' It all turned out to be rather tame. I think both they and us were disappointed. Nonetheless, on leaving they informed us that the matter was going to be placed in the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions (the very same DPP who later got done for kerb-crawling). Marion Boyar's predictions seemed to be coming true. All the same, we eventually received a letter from the authorities informing us that this time

[1205] Unterberger, Richie. "Penny Rimbaud Interview," Perfect Sound Forever Online Music Magazine, www.furious.com/perfect/pennyrimbaud.html Last Accessed: 05/08/2017.
[1206] Funded by a small inheritance gained by Andy Palmer from his grandmother, cf. Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1207] Interestingly, there was a UK-based band named Vice Squad that formed in Bristol in 1978.

> round no action was going to be taken against us, but warning us that we'd better not do it again, which, of course, was like a red rag to a bull. On one thing we were very clear, in bringing a prosecution for Criminal Blasphemy against us the authorities would have been giving us the kind of publicity which overnight would have made us a household name. They were aware of this, and so were we. It was a situation that allowed us carte blanche to say pretty much whatever we wanted without any real fear of incrimination, a situation which over the next seven years we exploited to the hilt.[1208]

However innovative Crass may have been in its decidedly feminist messaging described here, they were not the inventors or sole producers of such punk music. Indeed, women have been in high level, highly visible, and highly creative positions within punk since the culture coalesced around the label 'punk.' Poly Styrene of the X-Ray Spex compared traditional gender roles to bondage/slavery for centuries of women, and loudly sang, "oh bondage, up yours!" in the earliest U.K. punk scene.[1209] The Slits (named for female assigned genitalia in response to the masculine names of the Sex Pistols and the Buzzcocks), also exploded in popularity, not only though their feminist critiques disputing the existence of the norms expected of "boys" and "girls" in their songs "Typical Girls", "Love und Romance," but also in their masterful performance of Marvin Gaye's "Heard it Through the Grapevine," reversing normative relational possession to the woman possessing the man.[1210] Beki Bondage continues to perform in her (1978 formed) band Vice Squad, critiquing the state in "Last Rockers" and "Propaganda," in addition to exploring sexuality and familial structure in numbers like "Latex Love" and "Ordinary, Decent…?"[1211] Dozens of

[1208] Rimbaud. Liner notes, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Crassical Collection Remaster).
[1209] X-Ray Spex. 1977. "Oh Bondage, Up Yours!" Virgin. 7"
[1210] Slits. 1979. *Cut*. Island Records.
[1211] Vice Squad. 1981. *No Cause for Concern*. Zonophone/EMI. LP.

other groups throughout the history of punk culture have also had women innovators, but perhaps none of these had as radical a feminist message as Crass, and even Crass doesn't present as strong a feminist critique as the riotous 'Grrrls' that exploded forth in the 1990s.[1212]

Revolution Girl Style Now[1213]

"Coming of age as a punk, you are well versed in a lot of feminist thought and theory and lyrics, and a lot of ideas that many girls don't learn about until they take women's studies in college. I know a lot of young women who are like 22 before they become aware of the reality of discrimination. All that kind of shit is old hat to the punks."
--Anna Brown[1214]

In the late 80s and early 90s, women in punk scenes across the U.S. (and later expanding into several additional countries), were fed up with sexism, patriarchy, and misogyny in society writ large, but also within punks scenes themselves. These women were writers, artists, healthcare workers, crisis center volunteers, students, musicians, poets, organizers, sex workers, activists, and survivors who shared a militant feminist perspective. Yet, despite the long standing participation and creative production in punk since its inception, many women still felt alienated, or worse, violated, by men in the culture. This critique not only attempts to push abusive men out of the scene in order to make a safe(r) space for women, trans, and queer folks in punk performance spaces. The catalyst for the formation of a quasi-autonomous punk

[1212] Just a few others include the Adverts, Against Me, Alice and the Bags, Black Flag, Blatz, Blondie, the Breeders, the Cramps, Distillers, the Insaints, Germs, the Gits, Naked Aggression, the Patti Smith Band, the Plasmatics, Poison Girls, the Runaways, Siouxie and the Banshees, Sonic Youth, Talking Heads, Tilt, and X.
[1213] One of the battle-cries of Riot Grrrl, this can be heard on Bikini Kill. 1991. *Revolution Girl Style Now*. Self Released.
[1214] Boulware, Jack and Tudor, Silke. 2009. *Gimme Something Better: The Profound, Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk from Dead Kennedys to Green Day*. New York: Penguin Group, p. 299.

scene for these feminists and their allies was the collation of folks in the Pacific Northwest region.[1215] The reluctant leader/initiator of this scene, which was to become known as (or more accurately, labeled by the media as) Riot Grrrl, is Kathleen Hanna.

Hanna, who has recently been profiled in a biographical documentary titled *The Punk Singer*, was a young poet encouraged to form a band by another author (Kathy Acker) who told her that more people see bands than spoken word.[1216] Music, specifically punk, was/is thought to be a medium better suited for getting her voice heard and her radical message across. But what is this voice, and what does it articulate? First and foremost, Hanna articulates a frustration of many young feminine people (patronizingly labeled as the 'slacker' generation or 'generation x' by the media), not only with structures of patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, but also with what they viewed as a stifled and sanitized feminist movement. This movement, they were told, was over, and Riot Grrrls largely began organizing because they neither excepted the conclusion that feminism was no longer relevant, or that academia and elected office were the only two paths for change.[1217]

Biographically, Hanna worked at safe spaces for women, including rape crisis hotlines, women's shelters, and a variety of women's health (mental, physical, and reproductive) centers. She also made ends meet for a while as an erotic dancer, a

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[1215] This scene has received very little credit for its central role in the formation, support, and inspiration for what was a little known, obscure hardcore band at the time—Nirvana.

[1216] This suggestion to perform music (for the express purpose of appealing to a broader audience than poetry/spoken word attracts in the U.S.) is eerily reminiscent of William Burroughs's mentorship of a young Patti Smith in New York.

[1217] Marcus, Sara. 2010. *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*. New York: Perennial, p. 26.

move that she understood for herself as one of empowerment and claiming the right to her own sexuality and physicality.[1218] This, she insists, is a choice that she made freely, in no small part because to her it was less degrading than working in food service.[1219] One could maintain a critical stance toward the objectification of women, even specifically within sex work in the all too common cases in which women are forced and trapped in this vocation (or worse, in the even more exploitative version of sex work, outright slavery), yet at the same time choose freely to engage in sex work if the conditions and pay met one's own expectations.

Contemporaneous with much of Riot Grrrl in the 1990s was another scene—centered primarily in the Bay Area—that projected Marian Anderson of the Insaints (not just her first band the Insaints, but also later projects she was involved in, suck as the Thrill Killers based in Los Angeles) into punk notoriety (though a bit more extreme, perhaps explaining the lack of media blitz the likes of which Riot Grrrl attracted). Anderson echoes Hanna's performative autonomy within the sex industry. With the Insaints, she often performed topless, nude, or even committed sex acts with her coworkers from the S&M dungeon where she worked during the band's performance. Following an arrest and prosecution (charges from which were later dropped after Anderson received legal help from the ACLU), and the impetus this

[1218] In a decided move away from the sometimes puritanical dictates of second wave feminism, many Riot Grrrls (and other women-identifying punks, cf. Marian Anderson) engaged in sex work, but were adamant in their claim to be empowered by this move. In *Girls to the Front*, Sara Marcus recounts a speaking event by Andrea Dworkin that Hanna attended, only to live in tears when Dworkin strongly disagreed with Hanna's professional decisions.
[1219] Marcus, Sara. p. 41.

gave the city of Berkeley to attempt a shutdown of Gilman street where the offending acts took place, Anderson states,

> It's really an extreme way of taking control of what I'm doing and what's happening to me. I do it because I allow it to go on, and because it's something I like…
>
> I don't expect anyone to understand it; I just expect the right to do it.[1220]

Notice the empowerment expressed here, in her performance not only of her own sexuality in a public space, but also in the control she claims to feel while engaged in such acts. This since of empowerment only *grew* following police intervention and her arrest. In a classic blending of the personal and the political in terms of the statement she hoped such performances would make, stating,

> A lot of it started out as a personal statement and it turned into a political thing. That wasn't my intention when I started out, but it something I believe in and I'm going to stick by it. Even if that means I have to go to jail, I'm not going to stop doing what I do because I feel so strongly about it. If they want to take away my right to personal expression, what else have I got? I haven't got shit.[1221]

Free expression of the body politic through her *body*'s politics is here equated with life itself. Her disaffection with not having 'shit' but this right to expression is, of course, echoed not only by many punks, but all manner of marginalized folks the world over. Indeed, Anderson seems to—in decidedly punk terms—be asking

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[1220] Ayers, Lilly Scourtis. *Last Fast Ride: The Life, Love, and Death of a Punk Goddess*. Virgil Films. As part of their court statements, Anderson's ACLU legal team composed an interesting description of punk rock, claiming, "More than being simply entertainment, punk rock is an important form of social and political commentary. Often its very purpose is to challenge conventional mores about sexuality, political authority, and more mainstream corporate-produced rock music."
[1221] Ibid.

whether or not the subaltern (in this case, a punk rocker/abuse surviving/sex worker/mentally ill woman) can speak.[1222]

Additionally, Hanna and many other Riot Grrrls engaged in sex work often commented that the male gaze constantly objectifies their young bodies in the hyper-misogynist world of the U.S., and so at least this way they could capitalize on that very objectification. Hit them in their wallets to take the power back. Both of these areas of work proved to be formative for Hanna and other women in punk, and her experiences there drove not only her own artistic outlets, but also scores of other Riot Grrrls that she influenced, empowered, consoled, or spurred on. Prior to the formation of her band, she not only had these work experiences, but was also quite active artistically. As mentioned above, she was writing poetry and performing spoken word, but she was also actively studying and producing art as part of her studies at Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. After her anti-rape visual art was censored and removed from public display by the college, she founded a collective art project called Reko Muse. One of the early projects of Reko Muse was a feminist fashion show held at the college library when Hanna was still a teenage student. Interestingly, in the video footage of this fashion show, we can hear the influence of Crass, as their song "Shaved Women" (perhaps apropos given the tongue-in-cheek quality of this anti-fashion show coupled with a song declaring some women to be 'collaborators' in their own oppression) plays in the background to provide sonic

[1222] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Contained in Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds.). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, pp. 271-313.

backing for the fashion display, connecting their feminist material directly to what would soon emerge as Riot Grrrl.[1223]

Carrie Brownstein describes her first encounter with Bikini Kill as feeling like, "it was the first time someone put into words my sense of alienation, the feeling that all these institutions and stories we'd been taught to hold as sacred often had very little to do with my lived experiences."[1224] Kathleen Hanna's voice is particularly striking, alternatively shouting to pump up and energize the crowd as she "double dares" them to "be who they will," singing melodic hooks, affecting a youthful, girlish voice, or providing a jarring juxtaposition between multiple of these. For instance, in the song "Liar," (a song with themes of domestic and sexualized violence) the chorus from John Lennon and Yoko Ono's "give Peace a Chance" is sung softly while a bloodcurdling scream drowns it out.[1225] Hanna's voice—despite her best efforts to avoid this fate—became something of a model for the powerful and penetrating melodic vocal style of many Riot Grrrl groups that formed after Bikini Kill.

Like punk overall, Riot Grrrl has never been considered by its creators and initiates as one, singular thing, but can best be understood as a loose assemblage rather than a strict definition.[1226] Riot Grrrls want feminist revolution, beginning in punk and expanding far beyond. Indeed, as with Crass and Pussy Riot, punk for Riot Grrrl seems to be the vehicle for a larger political project. The ideas put forward by

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[1223] This footage is shown in part in *The Punk Singer*.
[1224] Brownstein, Carrie. 2015. *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*. New York: Riverhead, p. 55.
[1225] Bikini Kill. 1991. *Revolution Girl Style Now*. Self Released.
[1226] Marcus, Sara. pp. 198, 223. Brownstein, pp. 60-61, 99 & 104. Cf. *The Punk Singer*

the loose assemblage of Riot Grrrls did consistently critique what we now often refer to as 'toxic masculinity', most especially the macho pose prevalent in many rock n' roll spaces. One strategy for achieving this has been to respond to the violence (simulated or actualized) within pits/slamming (common among punk across genre, but is especially prevalent in hardcore) with calls for girls to occupy the front area of the stage. Rather than feeling excluded from the entirety of the dance floor, or unsafe in any way, radical women began declaring their right to dance, party, and *perform* with, for, and by themselves. Kathleen Hanna of the group Bikini Kill began declaring all "girls to the front" for their performances, and would refuse to play until the crowd complied (similarly stopping shows when men became aggressive or objectified the women on stage or in the crowd). Later, after hate mail poured into Hanna's residence threating violence and bodily harm against her due to her "man hating" or other such nonsense, these girls were also a comforting buffer zone protecting not only girls in the audience, but also Hanna herself.

Riot Grrrl has also taken to zine production with greater consistency and dedication than any other area of punk culture. Like punk itself, the term for 'riot grrrl' originates with a zine of the same title, with other notable Riot Grrrl zines including but not limited to *Jigsaw*, *I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, *Chainsaw*, *Girl Germs*, *White Girls, We Need to Tal*k, *Bikini Kill*, and dozens (if not hundreds) more. Far more #TimesUp than #MeToo (but decidedly more autonomous than either), the term "Riot Grrrl" was also originally one of these zine titles, an abbreviation of

"Revolution Girl Style Now" and a growling sound, perhaps in sly reference to the now cliché "I am woman, here me roar" trope.

Riot Grrrl contributes both a critique of what had become normative in punk scenes' sexist tropes and behaviors, but also injected an important revitalizing energy into these cultures. Alliances between Riot Grrrl artists, audiences, and organizers formed not only in the incubator of Olympia, but also with other radical punk groups, such as the Positive Force House (a D.C. locale most associated with anarcho activism and Dischord records). Many contemporaneous feminist scholars, activists, and artists have also viewed Riot Grrrl as an important contributor(s) to third wave feminism. This is not coincidental, not only for the cultural productions of Riot Grrrls, but also in the very theoretical foundations upon which they based their politico-aesthetic movement. Tobi Vail (Bikini Kill), for instance, openly cites Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Judith Butler as major influences.[1227]

Various solidarity groups have organically grown in reaction to, and resistance of, the frequency of violence in punk, most especially in performance spaces. This is not to claim that prior to or post Riot Grrrl, women have been unseen or unheard in punk scenes. In actuality, women have been a crucially important presence, participating and creating, within punk cultures during the entire life of punk cultures. However present they may be or have been, many women still feel marginalized by the (often masculinized) performances of punk toughness. Many punks, consider themselves feminists (or feminist allies), whether or not they adopted

[1227] Marcus, Sara. p. 46.

the Riot Grrrl label. For many participants, feminism naturally connected to the anti-racist/anti-capitalist oppositional ethos of punk, exemplified in the sentiment expressed here by Jenni Ramme, "As a feminist punk, I'm mostly interested in forming a counterculture that can avoid integration into the mainstream. Something that remains an oppositional force."[1228]

Performance spaces (be they clubs, pubs, squats, basements, punk houses, garages, festivals, parks, etc.) are important, but not the only attempt at autonomy within punk cultures. There are also many examples of punking spaces, i.e. the transformation of spaces not immediately recognizable as punk spaces into punk spaces. One of the most infamous examples of this transformation in recent years is Pussy Riot's "punk prayer" performed within a Russian Orthodox church. Their carnival-esque performance achieved notoriety and global human rights attention when they were arrested and imprisoned. Much of Riot Grrrl seems replicated, or at least differently mobilized in Pussy Riot's performances. For example, the universalizing rhetoric the latter employs by claiming that "we are all Pussy Riot" certainly echoes perhaps the most infamous image from Riot Grrrl, the photo featuring a nude Angela Seguel with the text "every girl is a riot grrrl" written across her torso.[1229] This lineage is not ambiguous or unclear, for Katya Samutsevich also describes Pussy Riot's direct connection to Riot Grrrl specifically in terms of not only aesthetics, but also in terms of feminist politics,

[1228] Kuhn, Gabriel (ed.) 2010. *Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics*. Oakland: PM Press, p. 224.
[1229] Marcus, Sara. p. 239.

> We were inspired by the Riot Grrrl movement. We called ourselves Pussy Riot, because the first word invokes a sexist attitude towards women: soft, passive creatures. And our "riot" is a response to that attitude. We rose up against gender inequality. We wanted to create the image of an anti-fascist superhero, so we needed to wear masks.[1230]

This isn't to imply that there is a straightforward line of continuity between Crass, Riot Grrrl, and Pussy Riot, but there are certainly influences, intersections, and cross-pollinations. The *RIOT* in Riot Grrrl is also, arguably, the inspiration for the Pussy Riot's name, as well as the aforementioned slogan insisted upon by both Pussy Riot and previous Riot Grrrl artists, including Kathleen Hanna and Tobi Vail.[1231] This latter riot was sparked in a festive dance against Putin.

Punk Prayers

> The true artistic genius, who will not cater to accepted notions, who exercises originality, and strives to be true to life, leads an obscure and wretched existence."
> --Emma Goldman[1232]

> "Pussy Riot are anti-cynicism embodied. Their message is: IDEAS MATTER. They are conceptual artists in the noblest sense of the word: artists who embody and idea. This is why they wear balaclavas: masks of de-individualization, of liberating anonymity. The message of their balaclavas is that it doesn't matter which of them got arrested—they're not individuals, they're an idea."[1233]
> --Slavoj Žižek

[1230] Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 105. Other scholars have also analyzed this connection. Cf. Wiedlack, Katharina. 2015. "Pussy Riot and the Western Gaze: Punk Music, Solidarity, and the Production of Similarity and Difference." *Popular Music and Society*. pp. 1-13.

[1231] Pelly, Jen. August 15, 2012. "We Are All Pussy Riot: Kathleen Hanna Speaks on the Jailed Feminist Punk Group," *Pitchfork*. Web < https://pitchfork.com/news/47516-we-are-all-pussy-riot-kathleen-hanna-speaks-on-the-jailed-feminist-punk-group/> Last Accessed 02/22/2018. Vail, Tobi. "Punk as Protest: Join the Party" contained in Scholder, Amy et al. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, pp. 13-14.

[1232] Goldman, Emma. 1969. *Anarchism and Other Essays*. New York: Dover, p. 72.

[1233] Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 12. & Žižek, Slavoj. August 7, 2012. "The True Blasphemy: On the Pussy Riot Sentencing" included in 2014. *Comradely Greetings: The Prison Letters of Nadya and Slavoj*. London: Verso, p. 12.

"This is the kind of thing that makes people afraid to make art."[1234]
--Kathleen Hanna on Pussy Riot's Arrest

On 'Fat Tuesday' of 2012 (a day associated with Mardi Gras and Carnival celebrations of excess in multiple locations all over the world), members of Pussy Riot performed a "punk prayer" (with lyrics such as "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, banish Putin," "the Church's praise for rotten dictators," encouraging Mary to become feminist) at the seat of power of the Russian Orthodox Church, Christ Saviour Cathedral in Moscow. This particular band is known for their decidedly anti-Putin, pro-human rights, pro-feminist, pro-LGBTQIA+ message, and they are known to have performed in other iconic Russian locations (e.g. they performed a song titled "Putin Has Pissed Himself" earlier in the Red Square, performances in the Moscow subway, etc.).[1235] Neither the veracity of their lyrics, their visual or sonic aesthetics, nor their message changed on this spring morning in 2012, but merely the location of their performance. This site was chosen to "impress the imagination" because they "dreamed of a different history" and to open the door to not only engage Putin, but also to directly engage his longtime clerical support, most specifically embodied by Patriarch Kirill.[1236]

Nadya Tolokonnikova explained during their trial that Pussy Riot "believe that art should be accessible to the public, and for this reason we perform in a variety

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[1234] Ibid.
[1235] Of course, their critique of Putin is even more salient in the U.S. now, given the documented election meddling the Russian state carried out in the 2016 U.S. election, as well as the open collusion and mutual respect clearly shared between Putin and Trump regimes.
[1236] Gessen, Masha. 2014. *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. New York: Riverhead, p. 102.

of venues."[1237] The members of the Pussy Riot collective also conceived of their "punk prayer" as part of the widespread protests (referred to as the Snow Revolution) following the re-'election' of Putin in 2011.[1238] Yet, the fact of their location, the fact that this particular performance took place in a church (specifically in the altar area where women are expressly not allowed) is at the very core of their prosecution.[1239] The Russian state now had a pretext for arresting these women, for they could be arrested under the charge of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred or hostility."[1240] As Alyokhina writes, the state prosecuted Pussy Riot because, especially in the context of the Snow Revolution which immediately preceded the punk prayer, because "they were afraid that others would behave the same way as us."[1241] Ironically, the state would learn that this prosecution would only inspire *more* radical political action rather than less.

No one in the Cathedral was hurt or injured, excluding the members of Pussy Riot themselves, who were roughly handled by security removing them from the cathedral. The women went into hiding, and Maria Alyokina, Nadezhda

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[1237] Gessen, p. 159.

[1238] This point is made not only in scholarly source (e.g. one not only the widespread protests, but also on the conspiracy theory that Pussy Riot were in fact government plants used to discredit these protests—and how this conspiracy theory has been used to marginalize the women and discredit their message, see Yablokov, Ilya. 2014. "Pussy Riot as Agent Provocateur: Conspiracy Theories and the Media Construction of Nation in Putin's Russia." *Nationalities Papers*. Vol. 42, No 4. pp. 622-636), but also by Pussy Riot themselves. Pussy Riot in Conversation, 02/10/2016. The Warfield, San Francisco. Author in Attendance.

[1239] Alyokhina explains, "women are only allowed to stand on the green walkway before the gates—the soleas—if they are cleaning women. Or brides. In Russia, there are no women priests. In Russia, there is pussy Riot." Cf. Alyokhina, p. 26.

[1240] http://rt.com/news/pussy-riot-trial-moscow-409/

[1241] Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 63.

Tolokonnikova, and Ekaterina Samutsevich found and arrested shortly thereafter.[1242] Once identified, all three women, as well as their families and even their defense attorneys began receiving a flood of threats of physical harm, including death threats.[1243] As with the show of support for the Indonesian punks arrested and forcibly re-educated by the Indonesian state just three months before, punks all over the world voiced their solidarity with the women of Pussy Riot, organizing protest actions and fundraising shows/records in support of their legal defense.[1244] And then the story blew up. An edited video of the performance, complete with a soundtrack of the song they attempted to perform, was uploaded and subsequently received millions of views on YouTube. International media couldn't seem to get enough of the story, spinning it in multiple, sometimes contradictory, directions.[1245] Amnesty International issued a public statement condemning the Russian state's actions against Pussy Riot, as well as an international call to action.[1246] In the first of these statements, Amnesty cites the European Court of Human Rights policy of protections for free expression, including those forms of expression and performance that, "offend, shock, or disturb

[1242] Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova on March 4th, Samutsevich on March 15th.

[1243] Amnesty International. April 30th, 2012. *Urgent Action: Alleged Feminist Punk Singers Detained*. These threats are also detailed in Lerner, Mike and Pozdorovkin. 2013. *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*. Roast Beef Productions. Film. Fissiak, Natasha. 2013. *Pussy Riot: The Movement*. Golden World Films.

[1244] I personally heard such statements of support at several performances by Jello Biafra, D.O.A., Youth Brigade, and others in California.

[1245] The same could also be said of many world political leaders, who used the incident to either condemn Putin, position their own nations as 'more free' or 'less repressive' than this, or some combination thereof. Republican U.S. senator John McCain, for instance, was among these. For more on the media coverage, and indeed the media's centrality to the entire Pussy Riot saga, see Kananovich, Volha. 2016. "Progressive Artists, Political Martyrs, or Blasphemous Hussies? A Content Analysis of the Russian Media Coverage of the Pussy Riot Affair." *Popular Music and Society*. Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 396-409.

[1246] This call was specifically to write letters of appeal to Russian state officials, though also acknowledged the street actions in support of Pussy Riot that were already ongoing.

the State or any sector of the population."[1247] The global media, most especially in the U.S. and Western Europe, began earnestly covering the story in sensationalized detail. This coverage has been criticized as unduly celebratory of Pussy Riot, hypocritically in its Euro-centric criticism of Putin's response while so many of the nations voicing solidarity with Pussy Riot have hundreds—if not thousands—of political prisoners of their own (the U.S. being a prime example).

Suddenly, celebrities ranging from Patti Smith, Paul McCartney, Bono, Siava, Peaches, Yoko Ono, Bruce Springsteen, Sting, Bono, and Adele cared about Putin's oppressive regime, signing open letters demanding Pussy Riot's release, and performing at protests in support of the group. Madonna, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and other American musicians voiced support for Pussy Riot from the stage, the former by writing the group's name on her body and the later by donning t-shirts emblazoned with the group's name, during performances in Moscow. Björk invited members of Pussy Riot to share her spotlight and perform on the stage with her during a Moscow concert, as did the metal band Faith No More.[1248] Several Russian artists and celebrities also entered the fray by vocalizing their support.[1249] If the regime's goal was to remove these critics, they failed miserably. If, however, the Putin regime's true goal was to make an example of Pussy Riot in order to demonstrate what happens to their critics, then one could argue that this case was a resounding success. Similarly, the judgment of Pussy Riot's 'success' is complicated,

[1247] Amnesty International. April 3, 2012. *Amnesty International Public Statement. Russia: Release Punk Singers Held After Performance in Church*.
[1248] In another direct connection to Crass, it is worth noting that before her mainstream success, Björk began in the punk scene. Her early band, Kukl, released their debut on Crass records.
[1249] E.g. Nikita Dzhigurda, Viktor Shenderovich, and Yuri Shevchuk.

for if they wanted to undermine or depose Putin, clearly they did not achieve this, as—at least at the time of this writing—Putin remains in the seat of Russian power. If, however, Pussy Riot wished to raise awareness for the repressive measures of Putin's government and were willing to risk imprisonment to make this point, they certainly achieved this. The repressive apparatuses of the Russian state were on full display here. The women arrested became a symbol of sorts, standing in as a very visible reminder of the abuses of Putin's autocratic regime.

As one of Pussy Riot's defense attorneys, Nikolay Polozov, described this media sensation in his closing arguments, "thanks to television, thanks to the aid of mass media, thanks to the efforts of the government above all else, their activities became known to the entire world. There's probably not a corner of the world that doesn't know what the group Pussy Riot is."[1250] Indeed, the names of the three arrested, patronizingly reduced to their first names (Nadya, Maria, and Kat) by the media became both media figures and international rallying cries.[1251] The image of these women engaged in glass at trial, as well as of Tolokonnikova raising a defiant

[1250] Scholder, Amy et al. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, p. 77.

[1251] This reduction to the first name (or even nickname) basis has often been used to dismiss cultural critics (e.g. Che), as well as to differentiate those so identified from people with more "legitimate" standing. In explanation, none of these reports that referred to women (sometimes entirely) by their first name did not refer to "Putin" as "Vladimir." An interesting example of this use of first names was also seen in the 2016 U.S. election, in which campaign materials for the Democratic frontrunners utilized first names ("Hillary" and "Bernie"), whereas Republican frontrunners, perhaps in a bid to appear more 'serious', used surnames ("Trump", "Cruz", and "Rubio").

fist while being shuffled into a police transport, wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the revolutionary slogan "No Pasaran" slogan from the Spanish Civil War.[1252]

Media and academic discourse has largely centered around the political and legal repression that these women endured, the audacity and swiftness of the Russian state's silencing of dissent, the mistreatment of Pussy Riot by authorities, and the inhumanity of their harsh sentences to two years in Siberian forced labor camps, and these are important questions to consider. The issues and accusations of blasphemy are also relevant to this case.[1253] There are those, for instance, who charge that Pussy Riot made a poor decision to be "audacious" or demonstrate in the manner they did (rather than in a "better", "less confrontational" or "more respectful" way—although little has been offered up as to what these alternative avenues for expression and critique might be), or that they are not "serious."[1254] The song performed was not meant to play on traditional conceptions of beauty, and in particular raised a simultaneously joyful and angry tone. But the spiraling attention the women attracted from the international press, especially after their arrest and during their trial proceedings (the cage Russian defendants must sit in to witness their own trials providing a particularly poignant photo op) caused what started as "a small and

[1252] This slogan roughly translates into "they shall not pass," and was used by Republican forces fighting Franco's fascist military forces during the Spanish Civil War and subsequent resistance. Tolokonnikova also wore this shirt in court.
[1253] For instance, for a discussion of the 'profane' and 'blasphemous' elements, as viewed through the lens of Giorgio Agamben's work, see Prozorov, Sergei. 2014. "Pussy Riot and the Politics of Profanation: Parody, Performativity, Veridiction." *Political Studies*. Vol. 62, pp. 766-783.
[1254] See, for instance, Robert Service quoted in: http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/19/pussy-riot-power-of-punk?intcmp=239 On additional issues of blasphemy, cf. Neu, Jerome. 2008. *Words that Wound: The Philosophy of Insults*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 200.

somewhat absurd act" continued to "snowball into an enormous catastrophe."[1255] Following these words, which were part of Mariya Alyokhina's closing courtroom statement, she continues by claiming, "this would obviously not happen in a healthy society. Russia, as a state, has long resembled an organism that is sick to the core." The full lyrics, translated to English, of the song they attempted (as they were interrupted and stopped after roughly thirty seconds) to perform are below:

> Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away
> Put Putin away, put Putin away!
>
> Black robes, golden epaulettes
> All parishioners crawl to bow
> The phantom of liberty is in heaven
> Gay pride sent to Siberia in chains
>
> The head of the KGB, their chief saint
> Leads protestors to prison under escort
> In order not to offend His Holiness
> Women must give birth and love
>
> Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!
> Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!
>
> Virgin Mary, Mother of God, become a feminist
> Become a feminist, become a feminist
>
> The church's praise of rotten dictators
> The cross-bearer procession of black limousines
> A teacher-preacher will meet you at school
> Go to class—bring him money!
>
> Patriarch Gundyaev believes in Putin
> Bitch, better believe in God instead!
> The belt of the Virgin can't replace mass meetings
> Mary, Mother of God, is with us in protest!

[1255] 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, pp. 104.

> Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away
> Put Putin away, put Putin away![1256]

The effort was to bring the profane into the site of the sacred. Yet, there was nothing 'uncanny' per se in their performance, for they were not positioning themselves as extra-human or unnaturally strange.[1257] The two most vocal members of this collective (which is significantly larger than those identified and arrest, or who even participated in the "Punk Prayer") are Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, aka Nadya and Mariya Alyokhina, aka Masha. Central to this, and all Pussy Riot performances, is the universalizing claim that Pussy Riot is not simply these specific women, the "three girls in prison," but any allies sympathetic to their cause, i.e. "anyone can be pussy riot."[1258]

But is this punk? Again we can witness, begrudgingly, much debate over whether we can take a group's claim to be punk seriously. To suggest that Pussy Riot's declaration of their punk-ness is disingenuous is to be unduly dismissive to their critique first and foremost, but also works in media discourse to minimize the harsh realities of the Putin regime they critique. Yet, it is worth considering the parts

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[1256] Scholder, Amy et al. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, pp. 13-14.

[1257] Although, perhaps I had personally experienced an uncanny effect in their punk prayer, as the day prior to this I had been confronted with an occasion to explain why punk rock was politically relevant to an academic interlocutor. Then, obviously, punk was immediately in the news again, swirling around questions of rights, speech, and regime/state oppression. The uncanny experience of having a thought 'where is punk that I can explain to academics as politically important' to shortly thereafter having this questioned answered in the media. My horror was then when political and social-cultural-religious opponents of punk rock (e.g. John McCain) then attempted to align themselves with Pussy Riot in order to criticize the Putin regime and postulate the U.S. as the 'greatest nation' in the world and further their own interventionist policies and imperialist ambitions.

[1258] Alyokhina especially strives to make this point consistently, including in (first quote given here from) the appearance at the Warfield Theatre, San Francisco, February 10, 2016 (author in attendance). Second quote provided from Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 4.

of punk Pussy Riot utilizes, perhaps in a mobilization of punk *beyond* punk. For instance, as we have seen, punk artists are usually connected to and rooted in a (hyper) localized scene. As with much of the world that punk has grown up in, punk initially sprouted in Russia in the late 1970s, despite or perhaps precisely because of the Soviet regime's strong distaste to this culture. Bands like Avtomaticheskie Udovletvoriteli, Deh Kah, Zvuki Mu ("Sounds of Mu"), Egor i Opizdenevshie ("Egor and the Fucked Ups"), Anarkhiia ("Anarchy"), Armiia Vlasova ("Vlasov's Army"), and most famously Grazhdanskaia Oborona ("Civil Defence") have long been recording and performing punk music in several corners of Russian and the post-Soviet bloc.[1259] As Ivan Gololobov and Yngvar Steinholt point out in "Elephant in the Room," Pussy Riot did not grow out of this well-established Russian punk culture, which incidentally includes apologists for—and outright believers in—the Russian Orthodox church itself. They write,

> Pussy Riot is not part of the Russian punk or music scenes as such. Whilst the band calls itself 'punk' and its actions take the form of flash gigs in public places; this form of punk rock is a vehicle for actions of social protest following the demands of a political-artistic agenda.[1260]

While I agree with their historical argument that Pussy Riot *directly* didn't grow out of the Russian punk scene (at least in a traditional sense), but rather as an offshoot of sorts coming out of the radical art collective Voina (of which several Pussy Riot artists are also members), and that they use punk as a tactic or "vehicle", I disagree

[1259] Gololobov, Ivan. 2012. "There are no atheists in trenches under fire: Orthodox Christianity in Russian Punk," *Punk & Post-Punk*. Vol. 1: Number 3, pp. 305-321.
[1260] Gololobov, Ivan & Steinholt, Yngvar B. 2012. "The elephant in the room? 'Post-Socialist punk' and the Pussy Riot phenomenon," *Punk & Post-Punk*. Vol. 1: Number 3, p. 249.

with their conclusion that these facts somehow disqualify Pussy Riot as punk. This exclusion is also somewhat similar to the out-of-hand dismissal of Pussy Riot by both elitist punk purists and political opponents of the group, who claim that they shouldn't be taken seriously because of their aesthetic or "lo-fi" quality of their musicianship.[1261] To dismiss Pussy Riot because their music is not to one's taste is akin to those dismissing them simply because they found their actions to be "distasteful" (even to the point of disserving punishment)—a charge nearly identical to the official state case brought against them.[1262]

I would also like to add a question about their use of space, for examining the site of Pussy Riot's performance will get us closer to finding an identifiable *punctum* in their case. Would any of the political mobilizations that occurred surrounding the Pussy Riot case have come about if they had performed in one of those spaces most often associated with punk, i.e. a basement, a nightclub, a warehouse, a squat, etc.? I would venture to argue that it would not, so their choice of venue is perhaps as important, or perhaps even *more* important, as their choice of lyrical content. The choice of this *particular* space provided direct political contestation, demonstrating the important of spatial considerations to punks' political engagement. Yet, are spaces

[1261] See, for instance, Warde-Aldam, Digby. February 25th, 2014. "Is Pussy Riot's music actually any good?" *The Spectator*. Web: https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2014/02/pussy-riot-music-any-good/. Last Accessed 03/11/2018.

[1262] Nikitin, Vadim. August 20, 2012. "The Wrong Reasons to Back Pussy Riot." *The New York Times*. Web: www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/opinion/the-wrong-reasons-to-back-pussy-riot.html. Last Accessed 3/10/2018. See also Sewell, Dennis. August 11, 2012. "Pussy Riot were wrong," *The Spectator*. Web: https://www.spectator.co.uk/2012/08/pussy-riot-were-wrong/. Last Accessed 03/11/2018.

of performance the only political engagement that punks participate in? If this were the case, punk would be all too easy to ignore.

Beyond these performance spaces, it is important to recognize that punk is articulated in a wide variety of politically engaged lifestyle choices. Reporting on his interviewing of anarchist punks, Kevin Dunn reiterates the point that "rather than debate revolutionary theory, anarcho-punks are primarily interested in actions that, to them, will make a difference in daily life."[1263] In other words, what the Pussy Riot case demonstrates well is the confrontation of contemporary norms and mores through direct action in banal spaces. The shocking quality of their aesthetic was not in its content or form. Indeed, 'obscene' lyrics have long been a part of popular music, including past productions of Pussy Riot's that were not censored or prosecutable offenses. The sonic qualities of the 'punk prayer' were also not new or shocking within punk contexts, for it followed nicely along the lines of chainsaw-guitar and fast paced rhythm that has defined punk rock for over forty years. No, instead of the particular aesthetic qualities of their performance, what made the 'punk prayer' shocking was the site at which it was performed. The exact aesthetics that would be seen and heard as nothing extraordinary in some contexts were experienced as shocking in this space. Perhaps this means that *how* we perform (or produce) aesthetic works, and *how* they are experienced (read Freud's uncanny effects on the importance of experience here) may indeed be of greater political importance than *what* the particular aesthetics are.

[1263] Dunn, Kevin. 2012. "Anarcho-punk and Resistance in Everyday Life," *Punk and Post-Punk.* Vol. 1, Number 2, p. 207.

Pussy Riot's decision to perform in the cathedral's altar also highlights the history of punk's complex relationship to organized religion. Certain localized scenes have thrived around spiritual communities within punk throughout its trajectory. For instance, many hardcore artists and audiences in New York during the 1980s adhered to the teachings and belief structures of the Krishna sect of Hinduism—often in connection to vegetarian and straight-edge sobriety tenants within and beyond the hardcore scene, with some even earning the nickname of "Krishna-core".[1264] U.S. based punk bands like Death, MxPx, Underoath, Undercover, and Flatfoot 56 all express Christian beliefs, sometimes in interviews and sometimes in explicitly spiritual lyrics. Other punks have published novels based on punks' struggle with their anti-authority politics and spiritual belief systems. Sean Murphy's graphic novel *Punk Rock Jesus* imagines what might happen if the clone (derived from the infamous shroud of Turin) of Jesus rebelled against his theocratic role and instead became the (ultimately martyred) singer in a punk band.[1265] Michael Muhammad Knight's *The*

[1264] Probably the most famous of these so-called "Krishna-core" groups is the Cro-Mags (though not all members of the band ascribe this belief set). Chapter 8 in Flanagan, Harley. 2016. *Hardcore: Life of My Own*. Port Townsend: Feral House. See also the fictional telling of this scene that demonstrates some of these Krishna beliefs within the NYHC scene in Henderson, Eleanor. 2011. *Ten Thousand Saints*. New York: Ecco Publishing. This novel has also been adapted into a 2015 film of the same name.

[1265] Murphy, Sean. 2013. *Punk Rock Jesus*. New York: Vertigo/DC Comics. On the theme of martyrdom in punk rock, most studies of punk point obsessively towards the figure of Sid Vicious. However, even at the initial "march" in his memory, punks honored him by not honoring him. In other words, as Tony Drayton wrote in the second issue of his zine Kill Your Pet Puppy, "a ten strong 'puppy collective' marching for Sid Vicious? No, ten people marching for their right not to care. Ten people, along with other groups of tens, fours, threes, other individuals who care enough to march for their right not to care—their right to live fast, their right to be ABLE to live fast IF THEY WANT TO…Not because some poxy junkie died trying to live up to someone else's myth, but because we want that chance of creating our own myth, our own future." Reproduced in Cabut, Richard & Gallix, Andrew. 2017. *Punk is Dead: Modernity Killed Every Night*. Winchester: Zero Books, p. 204. There are many songs in tribute to punks who have passed—sometimes using the language of martydom, including Vicious, but none surpasses the Quincy Punx' "Darby was a Martyr."

Taqwacores imagines a punk house and small scene of impoverished and embattled Muslim students and punk rockers.[1266] Knight later made a documentary of the same name, inspired by the Muslim punks who contacted him after reading the novel, and following the performances of many actual Muslim punk bands.[1267] Beyond these, several folks involved with punk culture have been attracted to the non-hierarchical and anti-authority aspects of Buddhism. Noah Levine and Brad Warner have elaborated on the radical skepticism of Zen, drawing a connection between punk rock and this spiritual tradition in the fundamental imperative that "everything must be questioned," most especially structures of authority, coupled with a foundation of optimism that "things can be other than they are."[1268] Of course, the attraction that these punks' have had to Zen is surely, at least in part, attributable to Penny Rimbaud's influence.[1269]

Ivan Gololobov has highlighted the role of Russian Orthodox believers in much of the Russian punk scene, perhaps explaining Pussy Riot's somewhat

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[1266] Knight, Michael Muhammad. 2004. *The Taqwacores*. Brooklyn: Soft Skull.

[1267] In one scene, the "Taqwacore" band the Kominas are set to perform a show in Pakistan, and they come to learn that unlike the Massachusetts scene they came up in, working class and poor kids in the neighborhood they perform in do not—generally—listen to rock n' roll music. In this context, much to the band's (and Knight's) surprise, "western" music—including all forms of (punk) rock are considered bourgeois, and the domain of wealthy kids, while poorer communities are particular to more traditional genres of music. The Kominas' free show occurs without much of a hitch, however, though it didn't quite have the turn out they had hoped for.

[1268] Warner, Brad. 2003. *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies, and the Truth About Reality*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, pp. 1, 25-30, & 75. Cf. Levine, Noah. 2004. *Dharma Punx*. New York: Harper One.

[1269] Though not a practicing Buddhist, Rimbaud is not only influenced massively by Zen texts and ideas, but also by his daily meditation. The single most common item of décor at Dial House and in the garden (aside from the foliage itself that is) are an assortment of Buddha statues, which seem to be peering from behind every corner.

ambiguous relationship to established punk there.[1270] It is also worth considering that the Orthodox position of many Russian punks can also be understood as a form of dissent originating in the anti-Soviet punks of the 70s and 80s, as well as the Christian conversions of many of these artists later on in the 90s and 2000s.

Yet, for all of these examples of spirituality and religion in punk, far more overwhelming are the critiques of religion and espousal of skepticism, agnosticism, and atheism within punk cultures.[1271] In some cases, there is a nearly ideological militancy expressed in punk atheism, not just in Crass, but also seen famously in the lyrical content of groups as stylistically diverse as A Global Threat, Antisect, the Damned, Dead Kennedys, Disrupt, Dr. Know, Dwarves, Feederz, Leftover Crack, Meatmen, NOFX, Propagandhi, Subhumans, and Zounds.[1272] To demonstrate typical anti-religious punk lyrics, let's look to just two examples; Propagandhi's declarative "fuck religion" at the end of a long litany of ills (including Zionism, militarism, and nationalism) in the song "Haillie Sellasse, Up Your Ass," and the Subhumans' song "No", which opens with the lines, "No, I don't believe in Jesus Christ, my mother died of cancer when I was five. No, I don't believe in religion, I was forced to go to

[1270] Gololobov, Ivan. 2012. "There are no atheists in trenches under fire: Orthodox Christianity in Russian Punk," *Punk & Post-Punk*. Vol. 1: Number 3, pp. 305-321.

[1271] A parallel can also be drawn to metal, in that there are some Christian metal bands (most famously Stryper, but it is also noteworthy that Alice Cooper—thought by many to be an important predecessor of metal—is also Christian, though unlike Stryper this is not the theme of his lyrical content), but the overwhelming majority are critical of religion—or in the case of "black metal" and "death metal" (e.g. Venom, Pentagram, Mercyful Fate, Goatwhore, or thrash/black metal crossovers Slayer) prescribe the religion of Satanism (often highlighting its anti-social, rather than spiritual, aspects). Cf. Sylvan, Robin. *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music*. New York, NYU Press, p. 162.

[1272] This is, of course, but a small sampling of the groups with lyrics critical of religion, or openly hostile towards it.

church, I wasn't told why."[1273] Another case in point is the "cross buster" logo (not to

mention the lyrics and the band's very name) of Bad Religion, striking—and hence ostensibly forbidding, as this is stylistically formatted similar to anti-smoking and anti-littering signage—out the Christian symbol. The singer of Bad Religion, Greg Graffin, is not only a successful musician, but also an evolutionary zoologist.[1274] Beyond Bad Religion, he teaches zoology courses at such college campuses as UCLA and Cornell. Clearly, there is diversity of opinion and belief regarding religion, spirituality, and divinity among punks, providing decades worth of contextualization for Pussy Riot's critical performance.

Pussy Riot's 'punk prayer' was certainly shocking to many people, as was their imprisonment for their performance. The didn't shout 'fire' in a crowded theatre, but they did sing and dance where they weren't supposed to. Punks out of place, carnival out of time. Alyokhina has explained that the hatred inspired by their performance came as a surprise to the members of Pussy Riot, who meant to target Putin and his lackeys, not all Orthodox believers (which she also believes herself to be).[1275] Individually in trial and in writings since release, Alyokhina has expressed her confusion, as she is herself an Orthodox believer—and openly identifies as such—who was attempting an internal critique of the church to which she belongs. Was there anything sublime and/or wounding in this performance? What, if any, were the uncanny effects of their performance? Clearly, some folks were shocked or

[1273] Subhumans. 1982. *The Day the Country Died*. Spiderleg Records. LP & Propagandhi. 1993. *How to Clean Everything*. Fat Wreck Chords. LP/CD.
[1274] Graffin, Greg and Olson, Steve. 2010. *Anarchy Evolution: Faith, Science, and Bad Religion in a World Without God*. New York: Harper Collins.
[1275] Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 37.

surprised by the performance, and some Christians were wounded (i.e. affectively *pierced*) by the choice to perform a political critique within the space of a church. As I mentioned above, this choice of space probably transformed the performance into the important political *event* that it is now known as. As described above, Barthes's *punctum* may in fact be the best way to describe Pussy Riot, what we may position as the **punk** *punctum* in their performed prayer.

Of all the possible forms of politico-aesthetic protest, why choose a punk performance? In her statement to the court closing their trial procedures, Tolokonnikova read a prepared statement that explains this choice,[1276]

> Pussy Riot's performances can either be called dissident art, or political action that engages art forms. Either way, our performances are a kind of civic activity amidst the repressions of a corporate political system that directs its power against basic human rights, and civil and political liberties. The young people who have been flayed by the systematic eradication of freedoms perpetuated during the aughts have now risen against the state. We were searching for real sincerity and simplicity, and we found these qualities in the *yurodstvo* [the holy foolishness] of punk.[1277]

The aesthetic choices, both visual and sonic, of Pussy Riot are not only clearly influenced by punk cultures, but they have even recorded cover versions of songs by canonical bands like Iggy Pop ("Search and Destroy" and "the Passenger") the Clash ("White (Pussy) Riot" and "Complete Control"), the Ramones ("Blitzkrieg Bop"), X-Ray Spex ("Oh Bondage, Up Yours!"), and Nirvana ("Smells Like Teen Spirit").[1278]

[1276] This slogan, translated as "you shall not pass," was utilized widely by Republican forces fighting fascists during the Spanish Civil War.

[1277] Reproduced in English translation in Scholder, Amy et al. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, pp. 91-92. Cf. Gessen, Masha. 2014. *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. New York: Riverhead, p. 196.

[1278] In 2015, Pussy Riot released (on the name-your-own-price Bandcamp platform) *Won't Get Fooled Again* (named after the Who's song that they also cover) also contains covers of songs by Neil Young

"We are not criminals. We are punk performers, activists, artists, and citizens…Punk's not dead."[1279] Pussy Riot has also sampled the music of socialist punk/Oi! band Angelic Upstarts' song "Police Oppression" in their "Освободи брусчатку" and the Cockney Rejects' song "I'm Not a Fool" in their "Kill the Sexist."[1280] Clearly, messaging directly to punks (or those with knowledge of punk history) is an important strategy in Pussy Riot's music. Punk spaces continue to see signifiers of solidarity with Pussy Riot,

The most convincing candidate for the singular symbol of Pussy Riot's politics, performance, and persecution is the knit mask known as the balaclava that they wore in various bright colors during the 'punk prayer.' These masks have the practical use of hiding the identities of the members of the Pussy Riot art collective. Of course, the masks were unsuccessful in hiding their identities as the three most prominent members were identified and tried. As the quote from Žižek that opens this section discusses, even if the masks didn't ultimately provide anonymity, they did indeed *message* the prioritization of anonymity over celebrity, and gestures towards the universalization and inclusion of their movement. Nadezhda (Nadya) Tolokonnikova responds in agreement in one of her letters to Žižek, writing

> Pussy Riot is a mask: a simplifying, modernizing mask. Prison, confinement, these are also masks, different masks, ones that help people of our generation to shake off cynicism and irony. When you put on a mask, *you leave your own*

("Rockin' in the Free World"), David Bowie ("Rebel Rebel"), and the Beatles ("Helter Skelter") among others.

[1279] Gessen, Masha. 2014. *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. New York: Riverhead/Penguin, pp. 144-145.

[1280] "Police Oppression" by Angelic Upstarts was also covered by Defiance on their album *No Future, No Hope*. Though Pussy Riot samples the original Upstarts' recording, we do not know whose version introduced them to the song.

> *time*, you abandon the world in which any sincerity will be mocked, you move into the world of cartoon heroes, where Sailor Moon and Spiderman, those consummate modern role models, can be found…Pussy Riot has proved so effective that its promise—simple to the point of impossibility, minimalist to the point of indecency—rings loud and clear. The masks that members of Pussy Riot wear hold, if any, a therapeutic function: yes, we belong to a generation raised on irony, but we also put on masks to reduce that impotent irony. We go out on the streets and speak plainly, without varnish, about the things that matter most.[1281]

The italicized portion I have emphasized indicates Tolokonnikova's inter-temporal experience both while incarcerated, but also when performing in Pussy Riot. This correspondence itself is also remarkable, given that Pussy Riot had previously performed songs citing Žižek as one of their influences, and Tolokonnikova was imprisoned in a forced labor camp in Siberia when they began writing letters back and forth. The balaclavas they wore in February 2012 had a piercing quality that not all masks share. For one, these balaclavas are brightly colored in fluorescent-neon shades. The overstated quality of these colors specifically highlights the act of wearing a mask. Pussy Riot could have very easily worn less conspicuous masks, but in choosing such audaciously colored balaclavas, they furthered their critique of the Putin regime by demonstrating the very need to mask their identities.

The eye is immediately drawn to the masks, and this visual registers in ways different from their sonic attack. Badiou writes of Brechtian theatre, that it has "the capacity to unmask the real, precisely because theatre is above all the art of the mask, the art of semblance."[1282] These balaclavas also bare a striking resemblance to the

[1281] Letter of March 11, 2014. *Comradely Greetings*, p. 90. Emphasis Added.
[1282] Badiou, *The Century*, p. 47. Brecht, Bertolt & Willett, John (ed). 1964. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development on Aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang.

pink mask worn by Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill when granting an interview to discuss Riot Grrrl during the time in which both her band and the broader movement were attempting to separate themselves and their celebrity identities as leaders and spokeswomen of the movement by instituting a media blackout. The members of Pussy Riot have not openly cited Hanna's choice to appear only while masked as an influence on their own decision to perform in brightly colored balaclavas (which were also then picked up by various activists, wearing said balaclavas in a show of solidarity), but it is difficult to believe that the it is merely coincidence or serendipity.[1283] Other groups, such as the feminist Guerilla Girls and black bloc anarchists, have also long employed masks hiding identity for safety reasons and the avoid legal and/or employment issues that could result from the faces being seen.[1284]

All of these examples, including Pussy Riot, obscure the individual identities of the participants in order to demonstrate the horizontal organization of their movement. Leaders are hence not leaders, but anonymous artists—pushing attention to the group not the personalities involved. Of course, this is also similar to Crass's strategy of wearing their all black uniform to perform, which necessarily emphasized the group as a whole rather than the typical "front person/leader" type of group presentation and organization. Regardless of whether the Pussy Riot balaclavas have a directly Riot Grrrl lineage, they have been seen covering the faces of thousands of

[1283] See *No Alternative Girls* film, excerpted in *The Punk Singer*.
[1284] The recent example of Juli Briskman, who was fired following her flipping of Donald Trump's motorcade, underscores how useful of a tactic this masking can continue to be.

marchers internationally, as well as pop stars and other artists wishing to show solidarity for the imprisoned women while performing in Russia.

Indeed, images of Pussy Riot proliferate on the internet and in the media, far exceeding the distribution and consumption of their music. Beyond this imagery of masked identity, the brightly colored balaclava also became a symbol of solidarity with the women who were arrested. Thousands of protestors were seen wearing balaclavas in the weeks that followed the arrest of Pussy Riot, and the mask itself became associated throughout the world with this group. This could be a mere convenience for activists, for such a symbol is cheap and easy to replicate. But beyond mere convenience, we must ask what in particular makes the balaclava such a powerful image.

The mask has traditionally been a symbol of resistance to power, for even in masquerades and carnivals of the *ancien regime*, masks were worn at these events of excess. Often, these spaces allowed for further critique of regime types, including monarchy, as well as religious institutions, etc. due at least in part to the fact that the mask affords its wearer a degree of autonomy in their anonymity. This is not the space to offer a history of the masquerade, but it is notable that remnants of this tradition (as well as the *political need* for anonymity) is so explicitly witnessed in 21st century activist movements (e.g. not only Pussy Riot, but also Occupy, which widely utilized the *V for Vendetta* stylized Guy Fawkes mask as its primary symbol—not to mention the long history of black bloc 'masking up'). The mask also affords its

wearers to focus attention on the issues or performances taking place, rather than on the individual identity of the activist or performer.

Similar to Barthes's point on the importance of narrative and contextual information that informs the *punctum*, we can see a political mobilization surrounding Pussy Riot based on the facts of their repression. In other words, perhaps the *punctum* in this case wasn't actually the performance itself as it was the state's response to it. Videos of their 'punk prayer' were hence shocking to many activists and human rights organizations because the resulting state action appeared in such direct disproportion to the 'offense.' The very banality of the event (by which I do not mean to undermine its significance, but rather to demonstrate that no one was injured and no property was damaged) brought the state's violent repression into particularly sharp relief. Have we found the *punctum* of the 'punk prayer' in the bright balaclavas? Probably not, if we are attempting to strictly apply Barthes's concept. Yet, thinking through the *punctum* (and the sublime and the uncanny), we have come closer to understanding ways to interpret politically the actions of Pussy Riot. Here is how we may seek to apply Barthes's *punctum* beyond the photograph, not simply to point to examples of readily identifiable *punctums* in art objects, but rather to be better attuned to *why* details can wound, *how* things are shocking, and *what* this means for us politically.

The members of Pussy Riot not only derive their tactics and beliefs from their observations and personal experiences, but also from their extensive poetic and philosophical reading. Specifically, they cite not only Žižek as mentioned above, but

also iconoclastic thinkers including Socrates, Montaigne, Dostoyevsky, Kropotkin, Kollontai, the Situationist International and the destructive creativity/creative destruction that Zarathustra's laughter can induce.[1285] In one of her letters to Žižek, Tolokonnikova explains their theoretical position,

> To put it in the terms of the opposition Nietzsche set up, we're the children of Dionysus, floating by in a barrel, accepting nobody's authority. We're on the side of those who don't offer final answers or transcendent truths. Our mission, rather, is the asking of questions. There are architects of Apollonian equilibrium in this world, and there are (punk) singers of flux and transformation. One is not better than the other…We count ourselves among those rebels who court storms, who hold that the only truth lie in perpetual seeking.[1286]

At an appellate court date, Tolokonnikova also quoted Joseph Brodsky's Nobel lecture,

> "The more substantial an individual's aesthetic experience is, the sounder his taste, the sharper his moral focus, the freer—though not necessarily happier—he is." We in Russia once again find ourselves in a situation where resistance, especially aesthetic resistance, becomes the only viable moral choice as well as a civic duty.[1287]

Their appeals were not answered receptively. After the trials, conviction, incarceration, enforced isolation within prison, hunger strikes, and appeals, Pussy Riot has now been released, as Putin signed an amnesty decree for Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina in order to save face for the Sochi Olympic games (which coincidently

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[1285] Upon this page the beast doth dwell. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, p. 100.
Additional texts cited include the bible, a variety of Russian poets, and the prison correspondence of several Soviet dissidents (e.g. Dmitry Medvedev). Alyokhina cited Alexandra Kollontai as one of her role models at a Pussy Riot Q & A at the Warfield Theatre in San Francisco, February 10, 2016, and the Situationists' writings, propaganda, and visual are were roundly cited and explored (e.g. including projecting the Situationist slogan "Beauty will save the world") at the theatrical performance titled *Pussy Riot presents Revolution!* at the Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz, March 11th, 2017 (author in attendance at both events).
[1286] Letter of February 23, 2013. *Comradely Greetings*, pp. 39-40.
[1287] Gessen, p. 288.

inaugurated when these women's sentences were nearing their conclusion anyway), and the women have not squandered their position in the public eye. This does not mean, however, that the state isn't still turning their repressive and ideological apparatuses against Pussy Riot. The 'Orthodox' thugs that attacked Pussy Riot after their release, assaulting not only their bodies but also their allies, were in fact hired by the state.[1288] This violence was also provided a soundtrack, with these far-right mercenaries chanting, "Burn the witches! Burn the witches at the stake!"[1289]

Pussy Riot have continued to publically advocate for other dissidents, artists, and queer folks imprisoned by the regime, and are also continuing to produce music and theatrical productions. Echoing the invitation of the Crass event, Pussy Riot opens doors of inclusion to any sympathetic fellow travelers, repeatedly claiming that we can "all be Pussy Riot."[1290] They began this universalizing line of argument during their trial and incarceration, as can be seen in Alyokhina's prison correspondence in which she describes her friends and cellmates inside (those who refused to collaborate with the prison officials against her) as being part of Pussy Riot.[1291]

Pussy Riot has also continued to perform and record, releasing online songs of continuing political relevance, such as "I Can't Breathe", utilizing the final words of

[1288] Some of these were hired directly by the state-church institutional coalition, and either paid for their participation with cash or with the forgiveness of minor offensives they were faces previous criminal charges for. At least one of these men was recognized by Alyokhina as one of the people who assaulted her by dragging her body by the arm from the alter at the offending altar protest. Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 95.
[1289] Alyokhina, *Riot Days*, p. 103.
[1290] Repeated from the stage at each of the three Pussy Riot performances I have attended.
[1291] 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, pp. 18-19.

Eric Gardner when he was being choked to death by police, as well as "Make America Great Again" and "Vagina's Where You're Coming From" as feminist critiques of the Trump campaign, and the lyric "bad apples are good for something when they're six feet underground."[1292] In the 2015 third season of Netflix (U.S.A.) series *House of Cards*, a fictional political drama series chronicling the corruption, deceit, and violence of U.S. American politicians, two of the three imprisoned members of Pussy Riot (Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina) appeared in order to critique the character of President Viktor Petrov, a thinly veiled caricature of Putin. They refuse his photo op opportunity when he wishes to dine with them in front of the media cameras at the white house, pouring their wine on the table and exiting when Petrov interrupts their calling out of his monstrous, torturous policies.

In subsequent tours, both before, during, and after the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency (not to mention the re-election of Putin to the same office in Russia), Pussy Riot has used lyrics, protest film footage, music videos, parodying costumes, and masquerade to critique these two megalomaniac political figures. Pussy Riot critique Putin and Trump both individually and for the fact of their friendship (or, if friendship can't be proven, at least mutual support and admiration, not to mention multiple instances of cooperation). In other words, Pussy

[1292] At the time of this writing, the last of these hasn't yet been officially released, so I can only cite it as "Bad Apples", following their live performance of this piece at the Catalyst in Santa Cruz, CA 03/27/2018. I should also note here the widespread disappointment of the audience (myself included) with this most recent tour, as Pussy Riot in this articulation seems to have defanged, opting more for a DJ set than live musical performance. They have also traded in their angry punk aesthetic for a sweeter pop sensibility, perhaps following Kathleen Hanna's transition into the pop group Le Tigre following the dissolution of Bikini Kill, or even the earlier example of Björk from Kukl to her solo pop career. These artists have, perhaps, not simply changed their sonic aesthetic for greater commercial success, but also (or instead) for making more palatable music for broader appeal.

Riot is still widely involved in political activism through art, demonstrating further the politico-aesthetic nature of their movement, as well as their invitation for us all to join in their struggle, form our own groups, and further our own critiques of systematic oppression and the individual figures that reinforce it. Mariya Alyokhina spoke to *The Guardian* on September 1, 2017,

> Everyone has a choice at every moment of their lives…Political art is simply essential for life in the United States right now. It's not just about Trump. It's about Nazi groups that are calling for people to be judged according to racial characteristics and so on…[yet the population in the U.S. need to be] poked in the backside. Politics is not something that exits in one or another White House. It is our lives. The political process is happening all the time.[1293]

Pussy Riot is but one example of punk's consistent attempts at producing wounding affects, or *punctums*, through aesthetics. More broadly, we witness punk cultures' use of apocalyptic and undead stylistics in their aesthetic choices. In dealing with aesthetic shock, we must also account for the incredible amount of commercial success and media coverage that punk has achieved. This media blitz, however, has most often missed fundamental complexities about these cultures, as the last four chapters have attempted to show. In multiple times during its lifespan (e.g. what I will loosely term the 'Sex Pistols moment' of 1977, the 'Nirvana moment' of 1991 and the 'Green Day moment' of 1994), punk entered the pinnacle of popular imagination by topping the music charts and causing an enormous media blitzkrieg.[1294] Such

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[1293] Amos, Hannah. September 1, 2017. Mariya Alyokhina says, 'Politics is not something that exits in one or another White House. It is our lives. The political process is happening all the time.' *The Guardian* Web: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/pussy-riot-mariya-alyokhina-russian-activist-jailed-white-house

[1294] Just to be clear, each of these is a media/sales event signified by the name of the most famous group (or, at least, the most obsessively covered in the press), but represents an assemblage of artists and perspectives. These assemblages could be expanded exponentially, and often include artists who

occurrences call into question the valiance of a shock tactic, the temporary and fleeting nature of any cause of cultural shock, and the performed authenticity of adherents to a cultural scene. Pussy Riot demonstrates yet another prime example of media sensationalism of punk, even drawing ties to the highly unlikely allies of the collective from the likes of John McCain and other conservative politicians who latched onto the discourse surrounding their arrest and trial in order to gain impetus to critique the Putin regime.

Typically, these disingenuous claims for solidarity with Pussy Riot from the American elite reinforce the longstanding negative perception of punk activism as unimportant outbursts from misguided youth. Tolokonnikova stated in court that the members of Pussy Riot have been insulted not only by the criminalization of their

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long pre-existed the most celebrated group for whom the event is named, but could roughly be described as including the following in each event: the 'Sex Pistols event' of 1977 would also include the Damned, the Ramones, Television, the Dead Boys, the Buzzcocks, the Clash, the Plasmatics, the Slits, Wire, the Stranglers, X-Ray Spex, the Rezillos, U.K. Subs, the Vibrators, the Voidoids, the Jam, Blondie, the Runaways, Skrewdriver, Sham 69, the Runaways, the New York Dolls, and many more (on both sides of the pond). The 'Nirvana event' of 1991 (labeled 'grunge' instead of another articulation of punk/hardcore by MTV and its contemporaries) would also include Sonic Youth, Melvins, Green River, Mother Love Bone, Pearl Jam, Mudhoney, the Gits, Soundgarden, 7 Year Bitch, Alice in Chains, L7, Screaming Trees, or even Smashing Pumpkins, Local H, Stone Temple Pilots, Hole, and the Olympia Riot Grrrl groups, who are sometimes unfairly included in the "Seattle Sound" category, and as we've already seen above, are sometimes afforded the respect given an autonomous scene. The 'Green Day event' of 1994 would also include Bad Religion, Social Distortion, Rancid, the Offspring, NOFX, Lagwagon, Bouncing Souls, Screeching Weasel, Dropkick Murphys, AFI, Pennywise, Get Up Kids, Alkaline Trio, the Insaints, Jawbreaker, Millencolin, ALL, and the even more solidly pop sensibilities of Blink 182 and their legions of followers. In other words, each of these events includes dozens, if not hundreds, of other artists beyond the most popular, sensationalized, commercialized band, most celebrated by music journalists. This is also not meant to suggest that important and interesting additions, shifts, and nuanced modifications of punk cultures did not occur in times—or events—between these hyper-media-sensationalized examples, as the previous chapters on Crass and Oi! suggest. Indeed, every decade of punk cultures has seen innovation, be it the political explosion of anarcho in the 1970s, hardcore, street punk, straightedge, post-punk, and emo in the 1980s, the pop kingdoms of Epitaph/Fat labels, and Riot Grrrl in the 1990s, post-hardcore, powerviolence, and grind in the 90s-00s, and most recently, folk punk in the 2000s. The stylistic expansion of punk cultures doesn't ever seem to reject or elude the continuance of earlier aesthetic forms, that is, these developments are additions to punk as previously existing, a supplement not a replacement.

protest, but also for the court's declarations that they were not sincere in their apologies for their fellow citizens who misunderstood their intentions in performing at the church.[1295] Žižek also recognizes this, going so far as to argue that such punk performances as preferable to other forms of more peaceful liberal protest, writing to Nadya on August 26, 2012,

> Against all postmodern cynics, you demonstrate that ethical-political engagement is needed more than ever. So please ignore enemies and false friends who pity you as punk provocateurs who deserve mere clemency. You are not helpless victims calling for sympathy and mercy, you are fighters calling for solidarity in struggle. From my own past in Slovenia, I am well aware of how punk performances are much more effective than liberal-humanitarian protests.[1296]

There is also something radically anachronistic in Pussy Riot's chosen method of expression. In the globalized context of online outrage, megabit manifestos, and petition politicos, the choice to utilize live performance for political critique is deliciously shocking precisely because it seems (in the case of Pussy Riot specifically) not only out of place (i.e. in the cathedral), but also out of time. The have since followed Kathleen Hanna into more pop sensibilities, perhaps in a similar effort to create more appealing and accessible aesthetic for the broader public. Perhaps this lesson is salient for punks more broadly, perhaps not, for there are still hold-outs; that is, there are still punks dedicated to the radically anarchistic-anachronistic ethic, politics, and aesthetics of D.I.Y., direct political action, and

[1295] 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: The Feminist Press, p. 98.
[1296] Letter of August 26, 2012 contained in Tololonnikova, Nadezhda & Žižek, Slavoj. 2014. *Comradely Greetings*: *The Prison Letters of Nadya and Slavoj*. New York: Verso, pp. 31-32.

attempting to burn down irrelevant irreverent institutions of inequitable and oppressive power in order build a new world upon the ashes of the old.

"Being told you're a worthless piece of shit and not believing it is a form of resistance."
--Kathleen Hanna[1297]



(Left: Photo, The Catalyst, Santa Cruz, CA: March 27, 2018.
Right: Flyer for Pussy Riot Theatre, Rio Theatre, Rio Theatre, Santa Cruz, CA. March 11, 2017.)

[1297] Uehlein, Joe. Fall/Winter 2001. "An Overture to the Future: Music of Social Justice," *New Labor Forum*, p. 26.

CODA:

Liner Notes & Credits[1298]

& Postscript: What can aesthetics do politically?

The Punk Rock Revolutionary Anti-festo/Many-Fest-O

Enough is enough. This project doesn't presume to tell the complete story of either Morris's Socialist League and Handicrafts or Punk's *Crass* Event. Indeed, it seems the very nature of culture is that the telling of a culture is always incomplete. As cultural theorists like James Clifford and Hayden White showed decades ago, no matter how thorough the documentation in archive, the role of the participant-observers' power to record, once committed to a *narrative*, the very complexities of politico-aesthetic movements are *necessarily* incomplete. It seems a particular boundary in our human evolution to not have fully tapped in to even half of our grey matter, and perhaps some society will (or has) develop (or developed) the social setting of equal recognition, equity, dignity, freedom and autonomy that may in fact prove to be the environmental obstacle that blocked us from creating so sophisticated a development in our logos as to be able to properly put into words the experience of great, ethereal beauty or shocking, revolting fare without succumbing to the pitfalls of

[1298] These liner notes represent the lyrical content of the record produced in connection to and as a part of this project (written—and co-written as indicated—performed, produced, and recorded by the author). A release of this D.I.Y. production is in the works, and is expected to occur in the months following the completion of this writing. In a nod to the détournement strategy of the Letterists and Situationists—that refusal to recognize intellectual property on the same Proudhonian grounds that "property is theft" that involved plagiarism, allusion, and reallocation of ideas, sometimes in large swathes, sometimes just in spirit—I have offered quotation marks around referential lyrics *with* footnoting, but only in footnoting the entire work rather than the specific song they come from. The idea is that *you*, the reader or listener, will seek out and experience these recordings yourself, and therefore will have the autonomy to draw your own interpretive, political, and aesthetic conclusions about these original expressions—as a reference itself to the radical hip hop strategy of re-articulation and re-allocation. These references should also be explored by all means, but are involve a tad more engagement on your part. Enjoy!

romanticism and nostalgia, or moralistic hypocrisy and nihilistic disgust. In perhaps the best presentation of that most paradoxical riddle in the humanist/anti-humanist conflict within radical thought, Peter Kropotkin declares that the property (wealth, land, consent or refusal of society's status quo, knowledge) of past generations is the common property of all humans who inherit that wealth land, consent or refusal of society's status quo or knowledge.

Enough is enough. This is the message of Morris's socialist handicrafts to bourgeois Victorian fashion. Enough of the bourgeoisie's luxurious excess, callous blindness to the suffering of their fellow humans caused by wealth inequality, police union busting, and perhaps most of all the utter ugliness of industrialization. Whatever potentiality for the liberation of labor through mechanization, as promised, by Morris's time the industrial revolution had merely doubled down on exploitative labor relations.

Enough is enough. This is punk's answer to the corrupted, commodified, and sanitized grandiosity of the capitalist culture industry's bloated and defanged (popular) version of rock n' roll that has become so pervasive in our culture. Whatever potentiality for shock, awe, or subversion rock n' roll may have possessed was by the 1970s reduced to macho shirtless posing teen idols, the breakup of the beloved Beatles, Elvis's fat, strung out Vegas residency, and a music press lamenting the bygone glory days and wringing its collective hands over the explosion of disco. The excesses of privileged skill sets, elaborate spectacle, indeed the bread and circuses of arena shows are subverted through an anachronistic turn to simpler, most

essential, and therefore also more accessible and democratized space of a stripped down aesthetic. As Agnostic Front sings, "we don't need any more great American heroes."[1299] The stripping away of elitist pretense also gives space to a rising tide of angry rejection of an institution once supported or believed in. Punk rock spits in the eye of the corporatized, sanitized, mass consumed ideology of rock music, yet for all of its trafficking in the new and novel, functionally sounds out of time more so than out of place—something it continues to thrive in, when you consider the Carnival component of Pussy Riot for instance, or the lo-fi, D.I.Y. sound, recording equipment, and distribution networks of the scene writ large.

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Were these movements a temporary phase for some? Of course it was, but even those who are suspected of "selling out" are never fully detached from the struggle, but are instead exploring diverse tactics. You may try to discredit folks who "phased out" as is so often used to marginalize protest movements led by youth, when the "adults" have told them that they'll grow up, they'll grow out of it, they'll move on. We can't all be great artists, or perform in successful bands, or lead a movement; nor do we all want to buy into the system. But an art movement can only really mature into its fullest potentiality when it reaches the stage of transforming from art into action—even if that's in a "weird," "unconventional," or "radical" way.

That was the case when William Morris renounced the elitism of his class, and was then the outcast of the Pre-Raphaelite circle that the Pre-Raphaelite's liberationist aesthetic revolution spilled into the struggle for political change with Engels and Kropotkin, and other comrades that gave up their privilege for the people's struggle

[1299] Agnostic Front. 1984. *Victim in Pain*. Rat Cage Records. LP.

for change. Morris took his poetic mind and aesthetic taste for beauty into the streets with the workers. Morris's League went marching for revolutionary change in the macro and the alleviation of suffering in the micro. It was also the case when the literary and aesthetic brilliance of people interested in revolution witnessed in the work of the Situationist International, which achieved a lot in philosophy, graffiti, poetry, and critique. But it wasn't until this energy exploded out of the lecture halls of Parisian universities and into the streets in 1968—that the Situationist politico-aesthetic movement reached its peak.

And punk hasn't broken this pattern. For the claims about anarchy, destroying to create (the good) and creating to destroy (the wicked), and cooperation could not bring the punk aesthetic to its potential until someone started taking these ideas seriously and actually try to actualize them. Sometimes punk is simply entertainment and Dionysian, but other times it traffics not only in political thought, but also strategy. For instance, the Zounds' song "Subvert" details methods of micro-level sabotage—or what James Scott would refer to as infra-politics—at the workplace, offering up the possibilities for "little acts of personal and group sabotage," along the lines of:

> If you've got a job/ You can be an agent
> You can work for revolution/ In your place of employment
> …
>
> If you've got a job/ Cos there's nothing else to do
> Where they think they've got you trapped in/ The boxes that they choose
> If you've got a job you can be an agent
> If you work in a kitchen you can redistribute food
> If you are a policeman order to arrest me/ You don't have to do it, you can refuse.[1301]

Revolution in this sense, and more often then not this conception of revolution is the predominant one in punk cultures, is about everyday acts of rebellion and subversion in our lives. These acts are not enough, of course, to push systemic change, but are a way of building towards macro change through bottom-up micro shifts. As the lyricist quoted above wrote years later in reflection, "I thought we were carrying on a radical, utopian tradition…Maybe this sounds a bit grandiose today, but at that period I really did believe we were building an alternative society."[1302]

Postscript: What Can Aesthetics Do Politically?

(or, "Looking Backward, Moving Forward", Part 2)

Will this pass as a dissertation? I have my doubts. I've certainly 'done the work' necessary to trade my labor power for currency—in this case, the currency (i.e. social capital) of degree, prestige, and career. I've read, I've researched, I've traveled, taught, and written.

But…

There are many portions of this project that do not conform to the strictures of 'good' academic work. Surely, for many, this must be too unusual, too 'creative', it may be said, hopefully not pejoratively. Too 'polemical', 'passionate', 'politically biased'…

Much of this project's exploration of anachronism's radical potentiality implies a sort of imaginative time travel, a la Rip Van Winkle, in order to make sense

[1301] Zounds. 1981. *The Curse of Zounds*. Rough Trade Records. LP.
Cf. Lake, Steve. 2013. *Zounds Demystified: Lyrics and Notes*. Active Distribution/Bev Records, pp. 29-31.

of—but also to disrupt—commonplace assumptions about the nature of capital and our complacency in or resistance to the inequitable, exploitative status quo.[1303] What our politico-aesthetic movements here have sought, most broadly, is the type of change Van Winkle experiences after his 100 years of sleep, that fundamental change (for the better) of the "very character of the people."[1304]

The great aesthetic achievement of anarchist thought has been, in the last half century, is the proliferation of radical anti-state, anti-capitalist ideas in the art and music of punk rock, hip-hop, jazz, hippie, beat, rave, new-age nomads, Zapatistas, and other politico-aesthetic movements seeking a more equitable distribution of planetary resources and fundamental change in the structures of our societies rather than token, symbolic diversity. Where can this project go from here? I have identified and begun preliminary research on two additional movements that can expand this study of anachronism and imagination in politico-aesthetic movements. The most obvious of these are the Situationist International of 1960s Paris, whose influence we have already briefly explored in punk rock, and the radical quilting cultures differently mobilized by grieving mothers of the disappeared in Argentina and AIDS activists in the U.S., graffiti and street art, or even the pink 'pussy' hats utilized in resistance to Trump administration assault's on women. Yet, can't urban gardening also be conceptualized as such a politico-aesthetic movements? Can't we similarly mobilize such an analysis on the aesthetics in environmental activists' planting of a tree? How about Chicanx low-rider cars? If it does somehow manage to pass—it is of no real consequence (outside of my unimportant individual satisfaction). And that's the point! Crass nor

[1302] Lake, pp. 71.
[1303] Incidentally, Van Winkle provides one of the earliest "time travel" through prolonged sleep narratives, which clearly influenced Bellamy and Morris, but also Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Author's Court*. Irving, Washington. 2010. *Rip Van Winkle and Other Stories*. New York: Puffin Classics-Penguin Books.
[1304] Irving, pp. 17-18.

Morris, Pre-Raphaelites nor Pussy Riot, pursued their political projects simply to capitalize on their profitability. What makes this project less like a conventional book and more like a performance piece is what makes it a *punk* text. A text that, however successfully or unsuccessfully, strives for an open defiance of conventionality, my own effort towards a radical usage of anachronistic aesthetics, and political discoursein an attempt to gesture towards the new from out of the old. I may get a little credit for being 'unique' or showing 'originality'—or worse than that it 'shows potential.'

This book is ending, but the revolutionary struggle isn't a book, any more than it is a party (e.g. political, dinner, tea). The struggle is ongoing and (hopefully) never ending. Portions of this text have already been published in underground zines, as noted in the excerpted chapters. More free and otherwise low-cost D.I.Y. distribution is in the works.

These ideas are not mine, not anymore, for now they ar *ours*. I am still discovering—or should I say *creating* my voice, and I will never cease in my effort to create it. If it contributes anything, hopefully part of this project's contribution to thought, art, or thought *on* art, it is to point out that radical politico-aesthetics opens an invitation for you to do the same. Morris and punk both offered this same democratizing formula for creativity, extending the hand of invitation to those who were inspired to accept it. But crucially, neither declared with Rousseau (or so much of the liberal thought he draws from and has continued to inspire for over two centuries), that anyone should be "forced to be free." For whether you read this next

year or next century, this present (your past) inevitably requires work towards human liberation both from my present (your past) and your present (my future).

Revolution is ongoing, as Debord writes of freedom and intelligence are not "given once and for all," but instead require constant struggle and radical vigilance.[1305] All we can hope is that the potentiality of humanity will continue to be demonstrated by politico-aesthetic movements that utilize radical tactics from yesterday to change tomorrow through today. We are trying. And we also declare loud and clear to corporate capitalist system that has oppressed people in every way imaginable (and is still imaging new ways to enslave the planet—we can imagine alternatives. You may only imagine domination, but such politico-aesthetic movements as we've explored here demonstrate, we can imagine more, and we say, "enough is enough!"

"FREEDOM DOESN'T EXIST UNLESS YOU FIGHT FOR IT EVERYDAY. AND I'M IN A CAR THAT'S PICKING UP SPEED."

–MARIA ALYOKHINA[1306]

As I write this in 2018, teachers are fighting for their rights and students for their lives. This postscript is dedicated to all my teachers—formal and informal—who endowed me with a love of learning and showed me the importance of integrity, universal dignity and recognition, and nobility above the imperative to wealth, and to all of my students—formal and informal—who continue to remind me of these lessons.

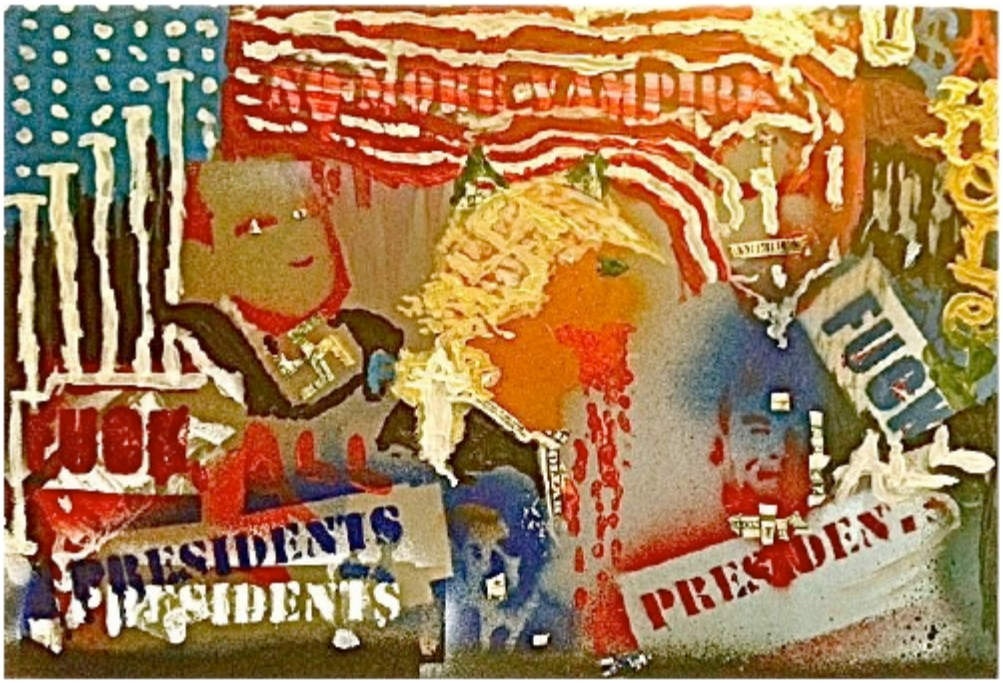
[1305] Quoted in Wark, p. 65.
[1306] Alyokhina, Maria. 2017. *Riot Days*. U.K.: Penguin Random House, p. 195.

Appendices

CODA: A COLLAGE FOR THE CAUSE–LINER NOTES

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH."* GENOCIDE, SLAVERY, THEFT, RAPE, WARS, LIES, HYPOCRISY, AND HATE. IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS EXTRA THEN SOMEBODY TOOK IT/THEN THERE WAS ACTION, SOMEBODY TOOK IT BACK/WE GET WEAPONS YOU CAN'T PRONOUNCE/SO NO FOOD, KNOWLEDGE, HEALTH, OR HOUSE/ANTEBELLUM DESIGN/CEREBELLUM DECLINE/GOOSE-STEPPING MORONS FROM SLAVE OWNER CRIME/GULAGS ALREADY READY/ CONTRACTS OUT FOR MORE/NEW JIM CROW'S PRISONS/FILLED WITH BLACK BROWN AND POOR. SURVEILLANCE, STATE, SCHOOLS, JAILS. COPS, SOLDIERS, AGENTS, MALES. ALL PROPERTY IS ROBBERY/CAPTURED AND KEPT BY VIOLENCE/PREDICATED ON INEQUALITY, EXPLOITATION, AND SILENCE/ALL COPS ARE BASTARDS/THEY JOIN TO SERVE THE MASTERS/THE RACIST/ THE SEXIST/ THE IMPERIALIST DISASTER/FUCK EVERY HIRED SOLDIER/ IN THE CLASS WAR AT HOME/UNION BUSTING, MURDERERS, COCK-SUCKING HOMOPHOBES! MEDIA, CHURCH, BANKS, PHONES, DEBTS, PILLS, BILLS, ALONE/INFORMATION MANIPULATION, VIOLENCE IN DISGUISE/PROGRAMED TO CONSUME YOURSELF DATA MINING SPIES/INSECURITY OF SELF COMMODIFIED TO WEALTH/FALSELY SEPARATED BENEFITING SOMEONE ELSE/CURRENCY IS DEBT/BUT FOR THE POOR IT'S JUST REGRET/ALCOHOL, ADDEROL, OPIOIDS: FORGET/CURRENCY IS DEBT/BUT FOR THE POOR IT'S JUST REGRET/ FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, SNAP CHAT: FORGET. SUPREMACY CONSPIRACY, IDEOLOGICAL CASUALTIES/GO TO WORK/GO TO WAR/BUY BUY BUY, CONSUME SOME MORE/GENOCIDE, SLAVERY, THEFT, RAPE, WARS, LIES, HYPOCRISY, AND HATE SURVEILLANCE, STATE, SCHOOLS, JAILS. COPS, SOLDIERS, AGENTS, TOXIC MALES, MEDIA, CHEMICALS, BANKS, DRONES, DEBTS, PILLS, BILLS, ALONE. REVOLUTION ISN'T ANYTHING THAT ASKS YOU TO SUBMIT, SO HOW ARE WE GOING TO STOP THEIR FUCKING BULLSHIT? "A (MOSCOW) GOLDEN SHOWER OF HITS." TREATING WOMEN LIKE OBJECTS/THAT BELONG TO YOU/YOU COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG/IN YOUR OPPRESSIVE VIEWS/YOU KNOW GODDAMN WELL THAT/CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T FAKE NEWS/FUCK YOUR LIES, FUCK YOUR SYSTEM, BUT MOST OF ALL/TRUMP, FUCK YOU/STARTING WARS FOR YOUR CREDIT SCORES (MOTHER FUCKER)/VIDEO TAPES WITH RUSSIAN WHORES/I DON'T MEAN THE SEX WORKERS PISSING ON YOU/YOU ARE THE REAL PROSTITUTE/BORN WITH A SILVER SPOON/IN BOTH SIDES OF YOUR MOUTH/RACIST, SEXIST, NATIONALIST TOAD/WE KNOW WHAT/YOU'RE ABOUT/PRETENDING TO CARE BOUT SYRIA/PLAYING WITH FIRE IN KOREA/ HIDING INSIDE YOUR FASH HYSTERIA/TV AND TWITTER TOO/WE ARE GOING TO BRING YOU DOWN/BOOT LICKING, TOUPED ORANGE CLOWN/YOU'RE AN INTELLECTUAL IDIOT/TEMPER TANTRUM SPOILED INFANT/"NO HOPE, NO FUTURE"***/FOR SLIME-BALLS LIKE YOU/YOU'RE NOT HELPING ANYONE BUT YOURSELF/AND YOUR FUCKIN RICH KIDS TOO/YOU THINK OUR WAGES ARE TOO HIGH/BUT THE RICH DESERVE MORE, SO THE POOR YOU DEPRIVE?/YOU FUCK EVERYONE IN THEIR SLEEP/BUT WE'RE NOT ALL PATRIOTIC SHEEP/YOU SIT AROUND AND BEAT YOUR MEAT/ALWAYS JERKING OFF THE BUSINESS ELITE/YOU THINK/ YOU'RE ABOVE IT ALL/YOU'RE UNPREPARED, BUT GET READY TO FALL/SO ARROGANT YOU STARE RIGHT AT THE SUN/AND THINK YOU ANSWER TO NO ONE/WE'LL MAKE YOU DRINK THE WATER IN FLINT/STEAL YOUR LAND FOR PIPELINES AND MAKE YOU PAY RENT/SEND ICE GESTAPO TO KICK IN YOUR DOOR/YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR YOUR WARS AGAINST THE POOR/YOU WOULDN'T LAST ONE NIGHT IN JAIL/WELCOME TO THE YARD, YOU DON'T DESERVE ANY BAIL/I'LL FIGHT NAZIS ON THE STREETS (STOMP THE MOTHER FUCKERS)/EMBRACE ANY REFUGEES THAT I MEET (SISTERS AND BROTHERS)/I CAN TAKE THE HEAT, I WON'T RETREAT, I'M A (MOTHER FUCKER)/IF MY SINGING OFFENDS YOU, WELL, I'M A (MOTHER FUCKER)/I HOPE YOU FIND THIS SONG OBSCENE/YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER BECAUSE YOU HAVE MORE BLING?/COMPARED TO YOU, GG WAS CLEAN. "LOOKING BACKWARD, MOVING FORWARD: ANOTHER SHOWER OF HITS"**** No beginning, No End (PR). EVERYBODY WANTS TO KILL YOU, IF YOU DON'T BELONG/ BUT HEY, IT CAN'T BE SO BAD/AS LONG AS WE'VE GOT OUR SONGS MAN/AND OUR SPORTS/AND OUR FUCKING TV/THAT'S HOW THEY PLACATE YOU AND ME/DON'T YOU THINK WE NEED TO CHANGE/MORE THAN THE MOVIES?/MORE THAN THE AWARD SHOWS?/MORE THAN WHO CAN GO TO THE DOCTOR?/MORE THAN WHO CAN EAT AT THE COUNTER?/MORE THAN A GIG OR A**

SHOW/COME ON NOW, IT'S TIME TO GO/'TIME'S RUNNING OUT ON BULLSHIT CHANGE' (THE LAST POETS & AMEN BREAK)/ The moment of now is eternity's sunrise. All potential, no loss. Time is the linear dimension of our conceits. **'AS A WOMAN, SHE WAS TAUGHT TO ALWAYS BE HUNGRY/HOW DOES THAT FEEL, WELL SHE SAYS IT FEELS FUCKING BLIND' (BIKINI KILL)/**Art is the last vanity. Don't even think about it; great minds are great minds because they don't think alike. **UNLESS YOU'RE RICH, AND WHITE, AND STRAIGHT (YOU CAN'T ESCAPE THEIR FUCKING HATE)/YOU'RE NOT IN THE CLUB, THEY'LL KICK YOU TO THE SIDE/BUT SAY IT'S YOUR FAULT IF YOU'RE IN THE FUCKING FOOD STAMP LINE/**The divine is in our unrealized inner being. Diverted from the present by our attachment to an illusory past. **WELL THEY RULE US THROUGH 'SEX AND VIOLENCE' (THE EXPLOITED)/AND THEY SCHOOL US THROUGH 'SEX AND VIOLENCE'**/The interpretation is not the interpreted. And they repress us through 'sex and violence'/Metaphor is a metaphor for a metaphor. **'I WANNA FIGHT AND KNOW WHAT I'M FIGHTING FOR' (THE DILS)/ 'HOW MANY MORE TIMES CAN THE GRATEFUL DEAD PLAY THEIR SAME SET?' (THE TEMPLARS) HOW MUCH MORE CASH CAN THEY MAKE BEING NOSTALGIC?/THE PROMISE OF 68 TO NOT SELL OUT TO CAPITALISTS/BUT AN IDEA IS JUST AN IDEA UNLESS YOU ACTUALLY LIVE IT/'THE SIXTIES ARE OVER, NOW THEY GONE AND DEAD.' (THE TEMPLARS)/**Nietzsche is dead./As are the Nineties, and the promise of the internet. What? Don't ask me./**NOT WHAT THEY STOLE THROUGH SOCIAL CONTROL, HIGH RENTS, AND STUDENT DEBT/BANKS TOO BIG TO FAIL BUT NOT TOO BIG TO STEAL, YOUR HOUSE AND RETIREMENT/**Just as a map can never reveal the journey, so words can never reveal wisdom. The newness of the past is what we carry into the future**/'OI! OI! OI!'/'THAT'S WHY WE DON'T WANNA BE GOOD.' (NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE. COCKNEY REJECTS)/'WELL, I'D RATHER SING SONGS ABOUT NATURE, BEING HAPPY, OR HAVING FUN' (WORDS: CITIZEN FISH, TUNE: TOOTS & THE MAYTALS)/AND TALK ABOUT/ 'SUNNY DAYS, SWEEPIN' THE CLOUDS AWAY' (SESAME STREET) BUT THERE'S TOO MUCH WORK TO BE DONE/**No matter the deal, the future cannot be bought. The choice is ours. The only limitation is our imagination. No beginning, no end./ **"CLUSTER(FUCK)BOMBS." BLUE SKIES DON'T SMILE ON ME/BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN THE DRONE STRIKES WORK MOST EFFECTIVELY.**



*LEAD VOCALS: PAT MALO. LYRICS: WOOD/MALO. DRUMS, GUITARS, BASS, BACKING VOCAL: WOOD.
**MELODY BASED ON "GYPSY MOTHERFUCKER" BY: G.G. ALLIN.
LYRICS & VOCALS, DRUMS, GUITARS, BASS: WOOD.
***DOZENS, PERHAPS HUNDREDS OF PUNK SONGS USE VARIATIONS OF THIS PHRASE, WITH A MULTIPLICITY OF INTERPRETATIONS AND MEANINGS AVAILABLE (CF. DEFIANCE, THE UNSEEN, THE NO FUTURE RECORD LABEL, HARRINGTON SAINTS, AND YES EVEN THE SEX PISTOLS AND CRASS).
**** LYRICS BY: VARIOUS & WOOD. FEATURING SPOKEN WORD BY: PENNY RIMBAUD. SOUND BITES FEATURE LIVE SPEECH RECORDING OF ANGELA DAVIS, UCLA, 10/08/1969 AND CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S PASSIONATE PLEA FOR PEACE RATHER THAN WAR AND FASCISM IN THE GREAT DICTATOR. LYRICS, DRUMS, GUITARS, BASS, PERCUSSION: WOOD.
ALL DEMOS WRITTEN, PRODUCED, RECORDED, AND PERFORMED BY: THE PUNK PROFESSOR. EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: SDW.

THANKS FOR LISTENING!

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ENOUGH IS ENOUGH:

A MANIFESTO IN MANY PARTS



VOL. I

Enough is enough. Like an abused animal who, once completely cornered and otherwise defenseless, we are ready to bite back. The miniscule percentage of the elite 1% that is actually calling the shots of the system is an arrogant child that thinks it can hold a magnifying glass over hoards of ants and burn them for its own amusement. The enemy may see us as ants, but we hopelessly outnumber them, and they know it. It is time for the ants to organize coordinated attacks against this brat that tortures us, proving that we are not inferior to them, that we refuse to be fodder for their burn any longer, and that we've been pushed into fighting (refusing what they assume to be our instinct for flight and self-preservation). Ants are stronger than they look, and can lift their body weight many times over. But they also successfully resist and overcome enemies significantly larger and better positioned than themselves through their shear strength in numbers. The billions upon billions of people in the world can be liberated by the strength of the people, and the 330 million of we Americans who are not among the few dozen elites that comprise our enemy are obliged to spearhead this effort. Every successful revolution in history shows that a very few revolutionaries can indeed defeat their enemy, as long as the majority of the people are—at least tacitly—supportive of their efforts. Let us begin the process of taking away the enemy's weapons positioned above us. Let us take away their ability to burn us. Working together, we can build. Our enemy, that petulant, impotent child, can only destroy. Why do we need them? We should not be willing to kill for them, nor to die for them. We know their system of lies does not work for us, so why should we keep it? They only think they can keep us encased in glass, tunneling for their entertainment, but it is time we break out and claim our autonomy.

This series is not for the faint of heart, nor for the hoards of spineless political performers professing their desire for kindly reformist change while maintaining the overwhelming majority of the system's status quo. No, enough of this complicit yet hand-wringing, back-patting liberalism and its requisite declarations of 'solidarity.' These pamphlets are for those who not only profess to want revolutionary change, but actually want it and are willing to act for it. Here we are dealing primarily, though not entirely, in broad strokes. However, this in no way implies that micro-level efforts at alleviating suffering in the here-and-now should be abandoned. The struggle requires these concrete efforts daily, as well as more long-term, macro level preparations. Whatever your form of resistance, by all means, continue it! Write, speak, sing, petition, organize protest, march, riot, and revolt. Only through broad based and multi-faceted strategy and tactics can we win. And we will, we must. Direct action is needed, for a moral argument

cannot be had with an immoral enemy, an enemy whose only farcical sense of morality is measured in dollar amounts in their banks rather than the blood on their hands, and is constantly doing all that it can to organize against us.

Some introductory notes to open this series of a dozen installments:

The world produces more than we need, and yet the enemy squanders the extra for their own gain. Think of the immense amount of waste discarded to the ever-growing landfills, vehicle graveyards, and dumping sites everyday. Think of the amount of resources wasted on their weapons of mass destruction, built simply to reinforce their monopoly over the planet and the people. Clearly, the planet produces enough that we can all eat and be healthy, clothed, and educated in safe shelter. Only the tyranny of capital keeps us from accessing these basic needs, forcing us into wage slavery or worse simply to survive.

The most important concept for us is cooperation, which is only achievable through true solidarity, freedom, and equity. Are people afraid of equality, or (and to us this seems more likely), are they truly afraid of equity? Equity—or true fairness for all stakeholders in society—truly frightens our enemy, for it requires a restructuring of the world and a redistribution of its resources. Equality is the disingenuous lie of liberalism. Their version of equality means that we are all equal to sell our very lives to them. We are not equal in terms of rights, the law, privileges, protections, or most of all property. They lie through their teeth about equal opportunity and laugh at us for believing it. It is ok if you once believed their lies, they are very effective at spreading them. It is not ok to continue in this delusion. Don't play their game, don't be their slaves.

Under the system of the enemy, we are only equal in so far as we are equally capable of exploitation. Even this farcical token of 'equality' has yet to be achieved in terms of racial, gendered, sexual, economic, religious, and nationalistic terms in the single wealthiest country in the history of the world. Our revolution must achieve equity for all, or else we will have failed. Yes it will be difficult, yes it will take time, and yes it will require sacrifice. But isn't it time that we recognize that moving beyond our comfort zones is the slightest of all possible sacrifices in exchange for the gains we can make for all people? As Dead Prez asks us to consider, "would you rather have a Lexus or justice?" The least we can do is stand in solidarity against the psychotic overlords of this suicidal system. Then and only then can we begin to conceptualize real freedom.

Finally, it should be clear from the outset that i would never—nor ever could—presume to describe the oppression of the people in any sort of definitive way. The purpose of this Many-Fest-O is mostly to inspire others to discuss, debate, disagree, and continue their struggles. The oppressed do not need to be told of their own oppression, they understand it all too well. There is nothing i could possibly write that could come anywhere close to describing the suffering and exploitation of the overwhelming majority of the human species. Instead, by using my voice to scream at our enemy, i want to invite others to do the same. Broad based solidarity will defeat our enemy, nothing more, nothing less. But i also have the goal of inspiring action, or at least in demonstrating the true fragility of the enemy's system. The oppressed of the world fully comprehend their oppression, yet are all too often beaten down by the system that hopelessness seems more viable than revolution. Only by defeating the former can we hope for the latter. Hopelessness and apathy can help our enemy, where as only organization and revolution can destroy them.

i hope we can disagree and discuss. We have, for far too long, accepted collective will (and our adherence to it) as the ultimate good, despite its crimes in fascist, capitalist, imperialist, and genocidal articulations. Disagreements are necessary, and in fact are a good indication of the freedom (or lack thereof) in a society. If you are not free to disagree, you are not free. And we will no longer be forced into supposed 'freedom' labeled democratic, which consists only of the freedom of the slave to choose her master. Disagreement and dis-sensus are the basis of politics among free peoples, so let's have the discussions. Let us stop insisting that we all reach ultimate agreements, i.e. consensus, and let us instead have true debates about the nature of our societies, both as they exist differently for different populations, as well as what we wish them to be and how we will move in the direction of the greatest society for all. Consensus has become synonymous with conformity, an obviously conservative tactic legitimizing consent to the system. Ultimate freedom is not perfect, it is messy, risky, and a constant struggle, but then again, so is capitalism (and so much worse) for all of humanity that is not in the plutocratic club of the elites. Enough is enough.

Some ancillary explanations:

Artist's Identity: i wish to make clear why i have chosen to remain anonymous at this time. Crucially, such anonymity allows me full intellectual and artistic freedom that an identified individual selfhood

doesn't allow. What is important is the discussion of the ideas put forth. The ideas herein are meant only to lead to further debate and discussion, not to offer ultimate truth, ideologically driven dogma, or already decided upon tactics, strategy, or solutions. i am not their owner or master; i am merely their messenger. So rather than leading to discussions of my race, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, religion, socio-economic class, culture, native language, education level, or activist credentials and social capital—all of which could be used in an attempt to de-legitimize the revolutionary message here of broad based solidarity—for the time being, at least, i will continue to work under the anonymity afforded by my nom de plume, Professor Punk. This is also important because although i am individually connected to, aligned with, and participating in several activist groups, and in solidarity with many others, i am not officially representing views of these, for i do not speak for any but my self. The system will only be overturned from the bottom up, and therefore no authority need be asserted for the author.

For safety from the enemy, anonymity is, at least temporarily, also a useful tool. Obviously I am not important enough to be targeted for incarceration or extermination, but we should take careful notice of the examples of Fred Hampton, Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, the Weather Underground, Mumia Abu Jamal, the Move 9, Leonard Peltier, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and hundreds of other political prisoners, as well as the duly elected left-leaning officials overturned by the enemy's imperialist 'intelligence' apparatus in Bolivia, Iran, Guatemala, Chile, Grenada, Panama, as well as further crusading interventions for empire in Angloa, Argentina, Afghanistan, Algiers, Bosnia, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Congo/Zaire, Croatia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Haiti, Hawaii, Honduras, Indonesia, Ghana, Greece, Guam, Guyana, Iraq, the Ivory Coast, Korea, Kosovo, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Macedonia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Paraguay, the Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Samoa, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Sumatra, Syria, Tibet, Turkey, Uruguay, Vietnam, the Virgin Islands, Yemen, Yugoslavia, and others they have not yet openly admitted to or declassified evidence of, not to mention the millions of foot soldiers our enemy has stationed in every township's police stations and over 800 military bases in close to 100 countries around the world. Also recall that our enemy is the only state in the history of the world to actually use nuclear weapons, and they did so against civilian populations in Japan not in order to win a war, but to demonstrate the supremacy of their weaponry to their diplomatic and military opposites in the USSR. Indeed, past empires held by the Egyptian dynasties Persians, Babylonians, Byzantines, Mongolians, Huns, Romans, Ottomans,

Spanish, French, and British all pale in comparison to both the expanse and efficiency of the Dick Swinging States of American empire (of course, it is also important to understand that, loosely paraphrasing Mahatma Gandhi, each of these empires at one time seemed insurmountable, but invariably HAVE been dissolved). Even Europe's fascists of the 20th century, all of whom expressed admiration for the U.S.'s governance, would similarly be astounded at the military and financial might of our enemy. All of this should reveal the importance of caution and careful planning to all radical students of history. Clearly, our enemy has a long-standing policy of shooting first. They have the guns, but we have the numbers. To be truly honest and shameless, i must remain nameless. For now...

We can also assume that the agents of the enemy already know who i am, or with limited effort could easily find this out. But unlike social media warriors and glory-seeking controversy mongers, i want them to have to work for it, and i want it to cost them something to expose, attack, de-legitimize, dismiss, or neutralize me. The swiftness and severity with which they attempt to undermine these ideas or me specifically will, at the very least, demonstrate yet again the fragility of the system that cannot afford to allow strong critique or radical action, as well as the extent of the enemy's incessant and obsessive surveillance apparatus and stranglehold over our very minds, ideas, debates, hopes, dreams, and ultimately, our lives and bodies. They should be made to answer why they were watching me? i am an insignificant nobody. But, if i have written something that inspires some further action on the part of the corporatist state, then clearly the 1st Amendment is merely a legal fiction (which it is, but it will strike a blow to our enemy if people can be jolted out of the belief that the rights of speech, publication, and free assembly are guaranteed, or in any way diminish the power of the system). If they expose me (or worse) for my advocacy of armed self-defense, then they also expose the fiction of the 2nd Amendment (ditto as to why this needs to be demonstrated). Or, if they come after me for something i have taught others, they will demonstrate their investment in monopolizing information flows, revealing how tightly capitalist powers and their right-wing ideologues control our educational systems (as well as any attempts to subvert this monopoly on information, ideology, knowledge and skill sets, historical narrative, and indeed—violence). To the agents forced to read this, welcome, now put down your arms. You have a choice, continue working for the enemy, or work for the people. Essentially, any action the enemy takes against these ideas or those who discuss them will undermine the ideological infrastructure of their system, so game on.

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Signed in Solidarity,

Professor Punk

Installment 1: The Stupidity of the Rich

We live under constant class warfare. The enemy thinks they own us. Let us show them otherwise.

The rich capitalists of previous generation were demonstrably cleverer than their offspring. Why? Simply put, these robber barons built the apparatuses for the extraction and accumulation of wealth via exploitation of the planet and its population. They built the material and ideological edifices that allowed themselves to be the sole beneficiaries of our planet's resources—including its inhabitants. The shrewd manipulation of legal, productive, consumptive, and state apparatuses for the enrichment of the elites was accomplished alongside a decided effort at selling the system to its slaves. Theater mattered, and the selling of the system required a constant vigilance in applying the false narrative that all benefit most from this system, despite its problems, tensions, and contradictions. Sure, they bought the state and founded charities, but all under the guise of investment or "giving back."

But now the robber barons are all gone and they have left the fate of their system in the hands of trust-fund babies, and their babies, and now their babies. Best and brightest? Hardest working? I think not.

Ignorance and arrogance do not make good bedfellows, which our enemy will find out soon enough. These infantile fuck-ups never had to earn anything in their entire lives. They inherited their social position, even if they have since run dad's or granddad's empire into bankruptcy. Our enemy now wants your kids to have to pay more to maintain the system that only benefits their kids, whom they want to pay nothing at all.

These miscreants are so brazen in their addiction to wealth that they no longer put any demonstrable effort into theatricality. The pretense is gone. They don't give a fuck about me; they don't give a fuck about you. And they never have. Their sympathies have not changed, but they no longer think that it is necessary to pretend. Sure, dictators may speak of love for the masses, making shit great again, reviving past strength in the enthno-nation, or fighting for the 'little guy', but their policies, projects, and properties indicate clearly their complete disregard for all but themselves. This is foolish, and will prove to be their greatest error. You can't rub our noses in it forever without expecting some push back. The plutocrats now act as if they can now park their limousines with impunity in front of horribly exploited and oppressed populations in EVERY indigenous reservation, concentration camp/prison, ghetto, barrio, and other spaces occupied by, catering to, or evenly merely friendly to populations of color and LGBTQIA+ people, and EVERY urbanized area, that they still haven't harmed enough but now are increasingly gentrifying with yuppie condominium complexes, juice bars, boutique eateries and 'artisanal' overpriced shops funded entirely by their own banks. Just a few examples of such locales in the U.S. include but aren't limited to Albuquerque, Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Camden, Chicago, Cleveland, Compton, Dallas, D.C., Detroit, East Los, East St. Louis, El Paso, Flint, Houston, Indianapolis, Kalamazoo, Long Beach, Memphis, Miami, the Mississippi Delta, New Haven, New Orleans, Newark, North Vegas, Oakland, OKC, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, Richmond, the Rio Grande Valley, Salinas Valley, San Antonio, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Southie, Seattle, Shreveport, South Central, Tampa, Tucson, Tulsa, the Twins, Watts, and your neighborhood. They think first not of human/humyn suffering or loss in nature disasters caused and intensified by climate change, but rather how they can capitalize and gain thought everyone else's loss. They also believe they can recruit white supremacists to do their dirty work for them, protecting the banks through murder, incarceration, eviction, and deportation by filling the ranks of the police, the military, and various Nazi vigilante groups. Fuck them. We must show them the risks of their greed. We must not go gently into that good night.

They decided to push and push and see how far they could go, taking an ever increasing percentage of the property of the workers—that's right, the workers' property, their time, labor power, their health and bodies, and their taxes that they are actually required to pay, unlike the banks, bankster gangsters, trust-fund balls of slime that continue paying nothing for the system that is ever more skewed to give them everything. The robber barons were perfectly willing to pay for the maintenance of the system because they recognized that the system only benefited them. Their idiotic offspring have stupidly abandoned this strategy, choosing instead to squeeze the last bit of blood out of the planet's stones. The Wall Street gamblers continue to bet on workers' inability to imagine or induce a push for a more equitable society...and are decreasing even the hint of a hedge. They continue, thread by thread, to sell the hangman's noose to the workers, in order to make a quick buck. But now, they've been so brazen for so long, they have sold out even the illusion that they aren't the real owners of this country, owners who can openly buy and sell political candidates from both the rich man's parties, take away your home that you've already paid for 2, 3, 10 times over (but due to the miracle of compound interest, you still owe decades more paying off the fucking bank that bought your debt for pennies on the dollar—and wants to push their profits over 1,000% on their investment whether or not they bankrupt you and push your family on the street). Interest on debt is nothing but the enemy's insurance against your eventual financial ruin and default. In what universe is a small percentage of a point in a financial bank's share price valued more as a 'good' than keeping families in their homes? The same question is posed to insurance companies regarding the injured and sick. Our enemy profits from our deaths; surely this demonstrates the moral perversion and psychopathic arrogance of capitalism.

As if that's not enough, they push even more, and steal publically owned, shared (I know, I know, sharing is the most offensive source of all evil in the capitalist worldview—I'll give you a moment to shudder) properties, land, resources, and services. Think, for instance, not only of privatizing our commons, but the enemy's efforts to undermine education by taking workers' taxes out of piss poor schools the workers' proud progeny attend—in the form of voucher programs—so their little brats can go to preppy posh boarding schools where they can do the best cocaine, all without ever having to interact with any child not from the plutocrat class. That is, they can be so exclusionary and force you to pay for it, as long as they declare their love for Jesus, tradition, or some other such nonsense, and recruit a few 'underprivileged' students to help the athletic department's fundraising from eager and desperate

male alumni. These fucking rich kids get to join their secretive ivy league society to network—not to contribute—and learn to 'manage' (i.e. boss around and lord over), bet against, and ruthlessly exploit workers' kids. No matter how bright, talented, innovative, special, or genius your kids may be, they will NEVER be accepted into America's true owning class unless you are already in it. This owning class, those few dozen families of multiple generations of swine, inheriting wealth with all of the many advantages each of these generations had over their much more diverse and much more numerous and deserving peasant slaves, will NEVER allow you or your children into their little old-money club. Still, they have the audacity, the fucking nerve, to tell you to work ever harder, ever longer hours, and ever more years of your life—simply to survive.

These owners don't see nationality, mind you, as evidenced by the very public and very obvious pay-to-paly visa program and arms deals made over discussions of Trump/Kushner holdings, but they still love to cloak themselves in the flag. Think about this, the true enemy of capital are so elite as to look at the more notorious dynasties of the racketeer Kennedy, the Wall Street Bush, and the real estate con-man Mafioso Trump families—the patriarchs of which all had documented and indisputable Nazi sympathies and actual Nazi financial ties previous to, and even during, the second World War. THESE dominant 1% are still not accepted into the TRUE owners club, the 1% of the 1%, who view such ruffian rabble nouveau riche as the Kennedys, Bushes, and Trumps as lightweights. Lowly. Peasants got lucky and Johnnys come lately. That is why these men are happy to serve as the elite's henchmen, their willing servants pushing the economic agenda of the true owners. Need i point out Trump's self-satisfied gloating about the racist, classist tax cut at the state of the union, his smug arm raising to the right of the room, as if to say, "See! I told you I could do it. Am I on your team or what? Can I join the club? I just gave you more money!" Or his asinine boast to his friends in Mar a Lago that he just made them "a whole lot richer."

If these elites are still just peasants got lucky to the enemy, what would that mean for how they view the rest of us? What are we...peasants who aren't so lucky? We are nothing but their ATMs, somewhere they can go to pump out a bit more cash to cover their addictions to resources and high stakes gambling. Haven't we had enough? Isn't it high time we finally stand tall and declare "DECLINED due to insufficient funds motherfuckers!"

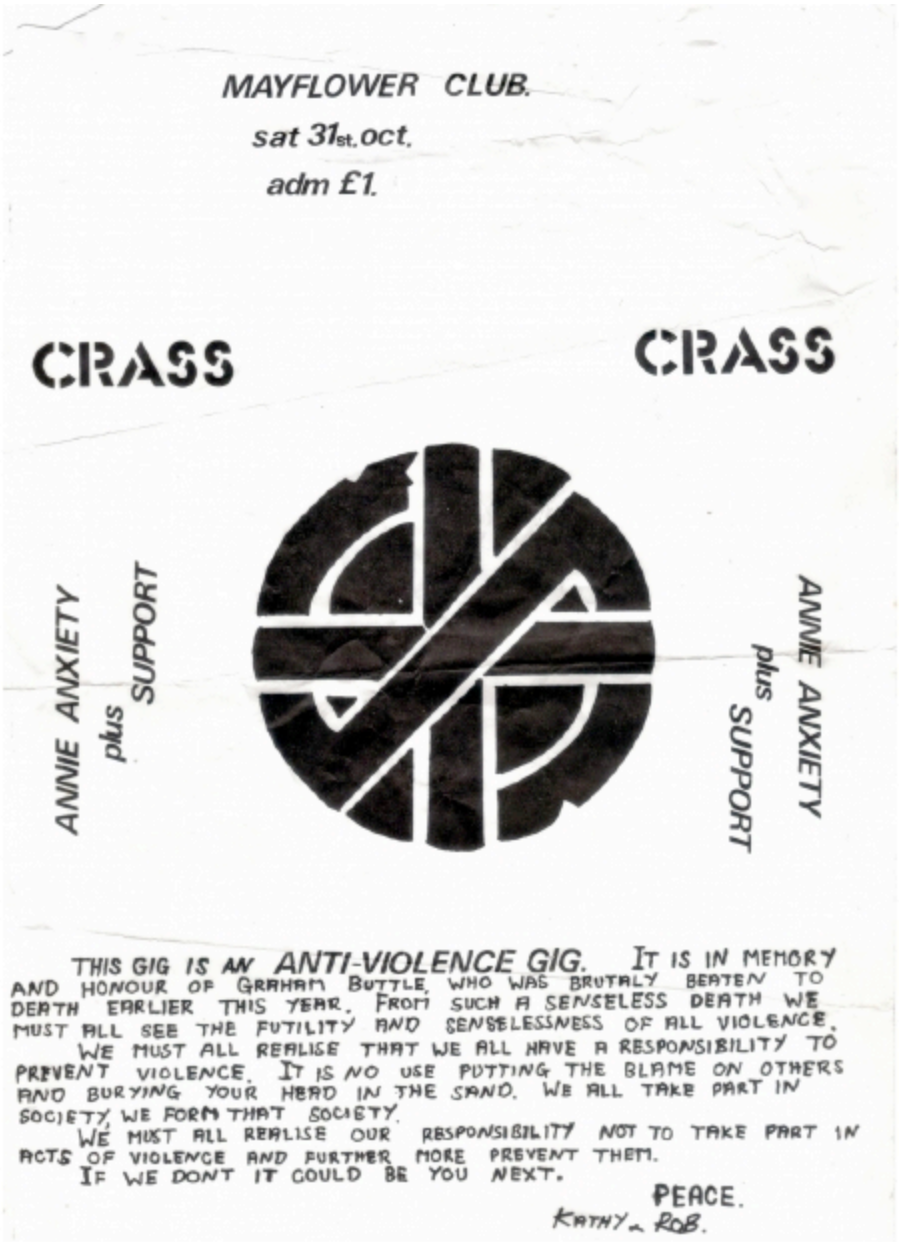
Think of how they frame societal issues, as problems caused by the victims. The 'homeless problem' is disingenuously discussed by those who gain by their continued demonization of the poor. The homeless are not the problem, the distribution of wealth and health to the plutocrats makes them homeless. The 'welfare problem' also makes welfare sound like the problem, not the fact that the largest recipients are corporate entities manipulating the system to avoid any cost of care for their workers. Wal-Mart is not alone in sending their employees to Medicaid and food stamp offices, rather than paying them the living wages that—at MINIMUM—they fucking deserve. Whenever the wealthy enemy declares that they cannot afford something, pay attention. They are perfectly aware that they can, but they would rather invest that overhead into more profitable ventures, like foreign and domestic warfare. The 'drug war' makes it sound likes drugs (and drug users) are the problem, never the CIA, FBI, and DEA that imports and distributes drugs into populations they wish to destroy, nor the prison industrial complex fully funded (and increasingly privatized) by this false war that turns our own people into 'enemy combatants.' And of course, never the biggest drug pushers in the world, the major pharmaceutical companies causing more addictions and killing more people than street drugs ever have. Each of these, incidentally, will be explored in much more detail in forthcoming installments of this pamphlet series.

Surely they have overplayed their hand. They have become so arrogant in their grabbing an ever greater portion of the planet's wealth that the absurd inequality and exploitation that has always been the defining feature of capitalism is now more obviously out in the open than ever before. But no, we won't respond, according to them, and you know they believe we won't in the enthusiasm with which they continue to bet against such an uprising. They believe they can continue to hire some of us to control the rest of us, that they can utilize television and social media to turn us against ourselves; using race, gender, national origin and location, who we decide to fuck, what we decide to put into or take out of our own bodies, beliefs in unknown and unknowable metaphysical and cosmic order or chaos, etc. to undermine what should be our solidarity. Then they fill our screens with sex, violence, and most of all violent sex, and organize resources to make sure we're all full of advertised happiness—that is, the psychoactive drugs that 'mellow' you out while making sure we also pay them again (as if our work isn't payment enough!) to keep us all armed to the teeth, but away from their gated-in and well guarded country club castles.

It is capitalism that only works in theory, for in practice it only works for the plutocrats, NOT for me, NOT for you. Enough is enough.

This pamphlet is over. The next, titled The Math of Maniacs, will expose the ways in which human/humyn lives have been fully quantified and commodified by our enemy, and the shear absurdity of capitalism's arithmetic in our contemporary moment. How is it at all acceptable, for instance, that there are literally billions of people who work for a few hundred? How have we come to accept the enemy's calculus of time, in which our very lives are regimented and disciplined into their service?

Flyers & Misc.



Show flyer. (Source: https://www.mdmarchive.co.uk/)

Below: 1. Flyer for Anarchist Black Cross Benefit
2. Crass Graffiti Campaign (Source: http://theartofcrass.uk/ via Southern Records)


ACKLAM HALL
MARCH 26 7-30 (Portobello Road)
CROSS THE WALL
POISON GIRLS
Benefit
for
ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS
CIENFUEGOS PRESS
Adm. £1
FREE ALL PRISONERS NOW
IN ALL OUR DECADENCE PEOPLE DIE
CRASS
WHO DO THEY THINK THEY'RE FOOLING: YOU?
WEALTH IS A GHETTO

USEFUL CONTACTS

IT DOES NOT MATTER HOW WELL YOU MIGHT KNOW THE LAW, IF YOU ARE DETAINED BY THE POLICE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO CONTACT A SOLICITOR OR RELEASE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

RELEASE
1 Elgin Avenue, London W9.
Tel: 01-289 1123
Open Monday, Tuesday, Friday 10-6pm/Wednesday 2-6pm/Thursday 10-10pm.
Emergency all other times: Tel:-01-603 8654.
24 hour legal (criminal and immigration law but not housing), and counselling service.
Release has one office, but it can be used by anyone in Great Britain.

REMEMBER, it's very important that you know what you are doing if you are going to squat. You need a home and you need as little trouble as possible with authorities in getting it and keeping it. Details on the law and squatting are too complex to go into detail here but if you are interested in getting a squat together properly and knowing your rights, there is a good booklet available from the Advisary Service for Squatters from which the information, given on page three, was taken. The booklet includes loads more stuff including hints on repair work, connecting cookers, changing locks etc, as well as greater detail on the law and squatting plus a short history of the movement. Send 56p including postage to:-

ADVISARY SERVICE FOR SQUATTERS (ASS)
2 St. Pauls Road, London N1.
Tel: 01-359 88 14
Legal and practical advice for squatters and homeless people, but some contacts for groups.

LONDON SQUATTERS UNION (LSU) (moving soon/destination unknown)
48 William IV Street, London WC1.
Tel: 01-379 6123
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 6-730pm. Fortnightly general meetings. Support for struggles and campaigns and some help with finding squats.

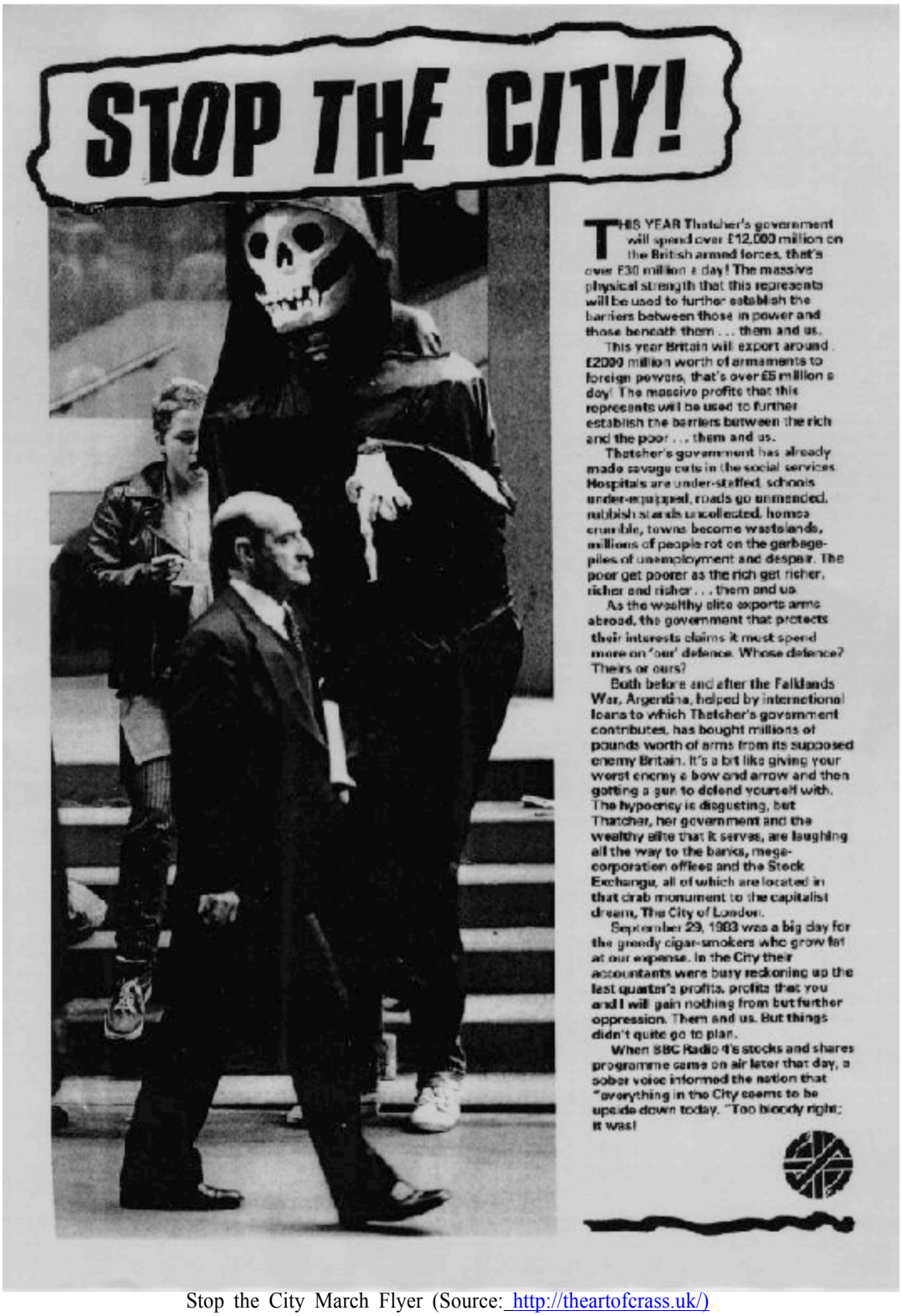
HOUSING EMERGENCY OFFICE (HEO)
157 Waterloo Road, London SE1
Tel: 01-633 9577
Charlton House, 36 Hunslet Road, Leeds 10
Tel: 0532 451 460
64 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3.
Tel: 051-708 8692
Advice and help on negotiating licences for groups and individuals. Also information and help on setting up housing co-ops.

For Scotland and Northern Ireland, where the laws relating to squatting are different, the contacts are:-

SHELTER
6 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 2AT.
Tel: 031-226 6347
Publishes notes on squatting in Scotland.

BELFAST COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE
14 UNIVERSITY Street, Belfast B17 1PZ
Tel: 0232 27422/Night time emergency number: 0232 46984

Information Flyer for People in Need of Shelter or Legal Services
(Distributed at shows, demonstrations, mail. Source: http://theartofcrass.uk/)



Stop the City March Flyer (Source: http://theartofcrass.uk/)

THE FIRST NATIONAL

BASH THE RICH MARCH

MAY 11TH, LADBROKE - GROVE TO KENSINGTON.

ASSEMBLE LADBROKE GROVE TUBE 2PM.

ENDING WITH A RALLY IN MEANWHILE GARDENS WITH SPEAKERS FROM N.U.M./A.L.F./CLASS WAR/RED ACTION/ CONFLICT/CRASS ETC.

DRESS: BALACLAVAS & D.M.s.

ATTITUDE: HOSTILE!

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT- CLASS WAR, BOX C.W, 84b WHITECHAPEL HIGH ST, LONDON, E1

Since the defeat of the miners the tories think they've got everything stitched up in the interest of their own class. They think they've smashed all

PTO.

(Source: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/studying/docs/protest/)



Example 924 Gilman St. Membership Card

I read the other day that his name isn't even really "Steve Ignorant"xxx
I dunno, just kinda makes me feel like my life up until this point has been a lie.xxx ya know?
THE MAINSTREAM IS ALL TOO EAGER TO REPACKAGE OUR CULTURE & SELL IT BACK TO US WITH A MARK-UP LIKE SHITTY HAIGHT ST. BOUTIQUES... ARTISTS THAT CAN'T MAKE A LIVING TODAY WILL BE ENSHRINED LIKE SAINTS TOMORROW - TURNING A PERSON INTO A LEGEND, REMOVING THEM FROM THE PEOPLE & BANKING ON IT.
MMMM, LOOKIT'S TH SPRINGE SANDOPUN SPRINGE SANDOPUN O DID USING IT SEE ON QUIETNIGHTS YOU CAN STILL HEAR HER SANDRIN' AWAY TRYIN TO FIND A VEIN TO FIND A VEIN NEATO!
This comic was drawn by readers of Mission Minicomix!
I got them ALL
I got Mike's autograph
Buy as many as you like for 25¢ this comic
AW! COME ON MATES GIMME A BREAK!
DON'T ASK US MAN!
WE'RE JUST A COUPLE A LOGOS GROOVIN' TO THE BEAT!
HONESTLY A LOT OF "PUNK BANDS" HAVE DONE STUFF WAY MORE COMMERCIAL WHILST GETTING SHIT FOR IT. THEY JUST WEREN'T TOKEN CLASS. A LOT OF KIDS COULD PROBABLY SCRAPE UP 21.$ IF THEY TRIED, & BEFORE YOU DO THERE IT PROBABLY RACKED MOST OF THESE COMES. IT'S JUST "THEY COULDA PLAYED 5 GIGS AT GILMAN, OR ANY NUMBER OF VENUES W/A CHEAPER (OR FREE) DOOR PRICE." HELLA HEADS WOULD ROLL THROUGH EVEN IF THEY DIDN'T PLAY CRASS SONGS & DID NEW ONES 'CAUSE STEVE IGNORANT IS IN THE BAND."
DOES STEVE OWE US A PUNK SHOW? DOES STEVE OWE US A PUNK SHOW?
so should Steve Ignorant just take a vow of poverty for the sin of being yer false idol?
I've paid my dues. now you can pay xxx at the door.xxx
would you be happy if he gouged his eyes out & lived in a yurt?x
MISSION MINICOMIX MAN ON THE STREET ASKS PEOPLE:
DO YOU THINK IT'S WRONG FOR A BAND WITH ONE REMAINING MEMBER OF CRASS TO PLAY CRASS SONGS AT A SHOW THAT COSTS 21.$ TO GET INTO?
ZONE


JUST ANOTHER
CHEAP PRODUCT
EVER GET THE FEELING
YOU'VE BEEN CHEATED?
PAY NO MORE THAN $21
Slim's
APRIL 27 OUTSIDE SLIMS SAY
NO TO CRASS COMMERCIALISM
OPEN UP THIS PAMPLET AND READ INSIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION

SO WOT'S THIS ALL ABOUT ANYWAY?

The upco[illegible] "Crass—The Last Supper" show featuring Steve Ignorant deserves p[illegible] if not an all out boycott.

The [illegible]cally charged ideas put forth by a band like Crass should be presente[illegible] a space run by punks, and not by capitalists hostile to those idea[illegible] It is impossible to ignore the enormity of the door price--$21 is no fuc[illegible]ng around. By having it so high raises questions about the evening's show. Steve Ignorant has toured DIY venues before with his Stratford Mercenaries, his absence in these spaces may signify the failures and limits of those spaces. But it is time we rip the DIY brand name from the commercial culture vultures and bring it back to practice in our daily lives.

The lack of any original member besides Steve performing "Songs of Crass, 1977 to 1984" is disappointing. If his claim is that this isn't being billed as Crass by him but by the clubs, then the retort is that it leaves little to the imagination of what will be presented—a replica. But this is a special engagement we are told, in fact it's the last time these songs will be aired in this manner thereby increasing their worth. And hell the message of Crass is still relevant today and so many people want to see him play the songs that mean so much to them. Also, Steve is a vital part in creating the popular Crass slogans like, "There's No Authority Except Yourself" and you can't argue with that.

A night of Crass will guarantee to sellout. This begs the question that the tour may be more about business than rallying the troops to fight global capitalism. Many people are drawn to Crass for their daring stand they made in being principled and intelligent when the burgeoning punk scene seemed to be otherwise. If people are outraged by another reunion show it just may be that they are again being asked to cheapen the ideas and principles they affirmed with punk. A protest of the show then will seek to gather like minds who are attracted to the power and passion of punk, but not willing to get it mediated by promoters, night club owners, bouncers etc. Basically the people who are alien to the spirit of DIY—which includes the practice of keeping our shows at cost so that impoverished people can have access to the night as well as the people with money to throw away. The door price becomes a sticking point because it supports this wrong-headed trend to make culture expensive. That poor people should be deprived of it—or suffer for it. A show and rally outside the Steve Ignorant show will affirm the efforts of a few committed people to create change and at the same time steal for ourselves a night of rage.

Surely there are more issues and atrocities in the world today worthy of our attention—and Steve Ignorant just may have a good outlook on them. With the expansion of capitalism and its after effect of creating meltdowns across communities worldwide coupled with the pernicious growth of the police state and war culture—the world could use a band with the stature like Crass. If not their songs amplified for one night. The enemies of punk and anarchism—be it the State or white supremacists, would like nothing better than to see infighting steal the energy away from unified action challenging their programs. The night to amass Crass fans will be an impressive show of strength. It will speak in action louder than words that people can and do resist capitalism's promise of "Slavery or Death." So the intent of the protest is simply to announce "Bullshit" outside the doors of the carnival show and leave it at that.

And sure, Steve Ignorant shouldn't be denied access to strengthening his network of allies in ways that are accessible to him. The $21 rally he's hosting might be more conceived by him as a sort of protest against the forces of banality, of old age, of a shrinking network of friends-which promises the night will end in some positive results. Given this light maybe the extra service charge is forgivable. People will go home warm with a glow that will radiate with them through the work week. What they won't realize is that they will have fed a place that is the antithesis of "anarchy and freedom." When the tunes from their night with the overpriced-jukebox fade they will not be anymore closer to the underground punk scene that needs their input in creating a free world.

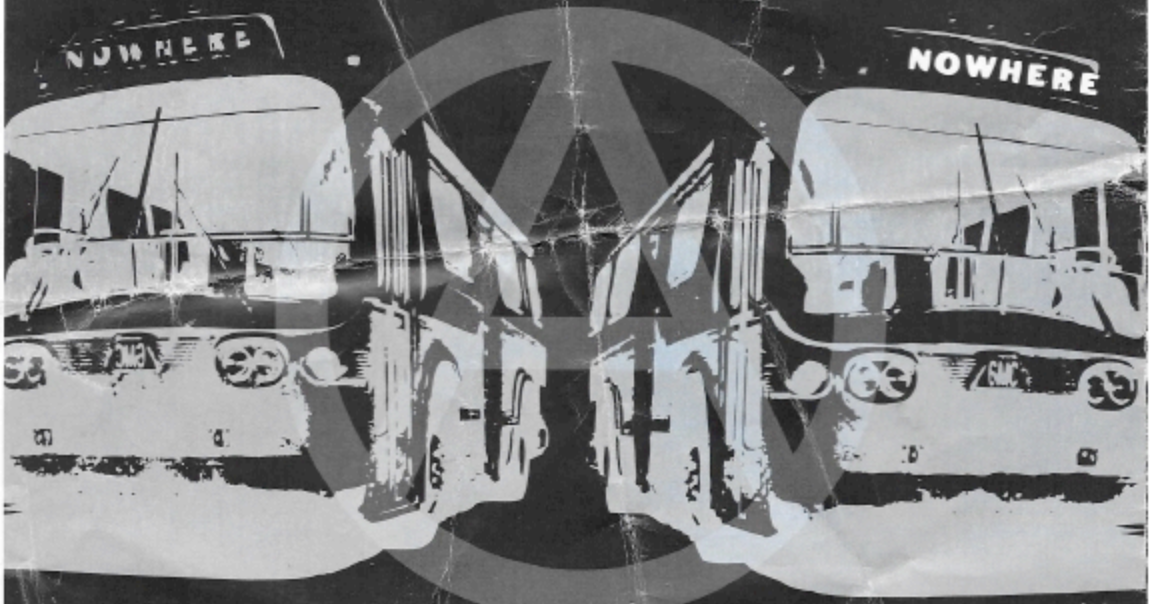
To be fair this is not the first time the Bay Area has seen a high door price at a lame club, selling us a familiar band, featuring an "Original Member," and promising a night of "Golden Oldies." The Bay Area is a major target on the Rock circuit which is rich with every niche market that has the potential for snatching a bit of the Filthy Lucre. It is such countless evenings wasted sitting through awful opening acts that reveal the false promise of reliving the past. While it may have once been easy to passively ignore or laugh at the likes of Germs without Darby or Dead Kennedys without Jello, at a certain point conditions beg for people to actively resist a cheapening of the values of a people of conscience.

People did just that in Pensacola Florida when Dead Kennedys were knee deep in controversy. The band just had a grueling legal battle partially over using "Holiday in Cambodia" in a clothing commercial, and then were touring without Jello. The punks there weren't cool with the smell floating into town and they got together (only a dozen really) and made their own stink outside the show. They made enough of an impression to get the attention of guitarist East Bay Ray outside and in a discussion. If you want to call it that—he left the earnest young punks with such gems as: "Do you know who I am...I'm East Bay Ray... I was Punk before you were born!!!" Yeah Sure he's right about that, but I think he misses the point. If part of one's reputation is founded on espousing a dissent to power, then that person should be willing to hear it when their power is being checked.

The hired guns presenting the plastic hits are not the people who struggled to make the Crass ideas flesh. Even with Steve Ignorant, the "Last Supper" band has a reputation more in common with the parasites who steal the band's image in places like Rock T-shirt emporiums that fester in shopping malls (isn't it of interest then that the Crass merchandise is exclusively licensed through Machete, the side company of Rancid? Their company also has the exclusive merchandise rights for the Sex Pistols and Agnostic Front). It would take considerably more courage and imagination for Steve Ignorant to put together a band and tour with unknown material and new ideas than he has made with his current collaborators. The protest outside the Last Supper show tempts us all to the edge of danger that is lacking in going the cover band route. If Steve wants to we will leave some microphone time on our unlicensed stage for him to play his songs that may be unappreciated by people only willing to pay for something familiar. We can even pass a hat after the show and he can get 30% of what people throw in it. In closing, what we would really like to ask Steve is what he thinks his former self thirty years ago would think about what he is doing today...he would snarl, "The Last Supper Sux!"

and so what are you/we going to do about this?

HEY PUNK! ON APRIL 27 GET ON THE JOHN BENSON BUS AND HELP US CELEBRATE THE MUSIC AND LEGACY OF CRASS, WHO WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING SHAPE THE DIY ETHICS AND POLITICAL CONCIOUSNESS EMBODIED IN PUNK MUSIC.



RVIVR THE SMELL

HUMAN BAGGAGE FREEDOM CLUB

8:00 PM LOOK FOR THE BUS NEAR SLIMS
FOR INFO ON THE DAY OF THE SHOW 510 BAD-SMUT

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