AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EMERGENCE OF THE ANARCHO-PUNK SCENE OF THE 1980s

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EMERGENCE OF THE ANARCHO-PUNK SCENE OF THE 1980s

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THESIS CONTAINS

VIDEO

CD ✓

DVD

CONTENTS

ACCOMPANYING DISC LISTING:

1. Iggy and the Stooges: 'Search and Destroy'.
2. The Yardbirds: 'Heart Full of Soul'.
3. The Sex Pistols: 'Anarchy in the UK'.
4. The Sex Pistols: 'God Save the Queen'.
5. Crass: 'Punk is Dead'.
6. Crass: 'Darling'
7. Crass: 'White Punks on Hope'.
8. Discharge: 'Fight Back'.
9. Crass: 'Bloody Revolutions'.
10. Crass: *Yes Sir, I Will*, (Extract).
11. Crass: 'How Does it Feel?'
12. Subhumans: 'From the Cradle to the Grave'.
13. Culture Shock: 'Joyless'.
14. Poisongirls: 'Persons Unknown'.
15. Honey Bane: 'Porno Grows'.
16. Conflict: 'Increase the Pressure'.
17. Sore Throat: 'Heath'.

18. Sore Throat: 'Eat Organic'.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the way in which anarchism – both as a means of theoretical political dissent as well as a practical tool of shock – was transformed from the 'chaotic' intent of first wave punk towards a more informed political ideology in the emerging 'anarcho-punk' scene of the 1980s. In particular, I wish to explore the way in which ideas surrounding 'anarcho' and 'punk' were fused together so as to provide a space where individuals could develop a more 'informed lifestyle' in expressing a subversive distaste towards corporate forms of oppression such as multinationals, governments and the police.

Chapter one will provide an overview of punk within a wider history of political and philosophical dissent, exploring ideas that link it to a continuing thread of agitation akin to groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Situationism. This debate will be further explored in chapter two. With particular attention to the music of the Sex Pistols, I wish to explore the extent to which the break down of the post-war consensus, and the resultant economic crisis in Britain in the 1970s, nurtured a social, political and musical environment for first wave punk to flourish.

The anarcho-punk scene proper is introduced in the main body of this work. Here, I will turn primarily to the way in which the musical characteristics of the anarcho-punk movement encompass the twin ideals of 'punk' and 'anarchism' so as to provide a new form of organised dissent towards a capitalist system seen to embody oppression and uniformity. In particular, I wish to explore the extent to which the practical realities of applying a complex political system such as anarchism had repercussions on the transformation of the British punk scene as a whole.

Chapter 1: The Transformation of the Subversive: Anarchist Theory and the British Punk Rock Scene of the 1970s.

Paradoxically, the very characteristics that constitute a working definition of punk are those same characteristics that contribute towards its definitional ambiguity. For those elements that define punk, such as the breaking down of the relationship between performer and audience, or the DiY aspect of fanzine and record production, inform the existence of punk as perhaps one of the first subcultures to emerge from a paradigmatic move from a modernist meta-narrative. Perhaps more so than any other post-war subculture, an interpretative analysis of punk is bound up in a self-evident twist of fate: where 'good' is 'bad' (and vice-versa), and where the so-called 'ground-roots' interpretation of a patched together Xeroxed fanzine is often as valid as a 'well-written' researched academic text.[1]

Although there remains a definitional ambiguity as to the socio-cultural significance of punk, there still remains however, a general consensus as to its temporality as a post-war subculture. Despite the many debates surrounding the movement's musical and historical origins, academic analyses of punk have been drawn predominantly from a now well-trodden historical narrative. Indeed, one needs only to turn to the work of Heylin (1993), McNeil and McCain (2000), Savage (1992) and Laing (1985) to find evidence of a discussion of 'punk' being centred around the tapered intensity of the Sex Pistols and the Clash, flanked

either side by musical and cultural influences: the Velvet Underground, MC5, New York Dolls on one hand, new wave, Oi! and post-punk on the other. Although the study of these are fundamental towards an understanding of 1970s British punk, there still remains however, one important musical and political strand of punk that has not been studied in any great depth; a strand that has subsequently been termed as 'anarcho-punk'.[2]

Disillusioned by the increasingly commercial nature of 'first wave' punk, the anarcho-punk scene could be regarded as a backlash against an increasing dependence of punk upon large record labels as well as its noticeable shift towards the mainstream.[3] Anarcho-punk therefore could be interpreted as an attempt to re-ignite a number of generic ideals that were central to the so-called 'original' or 'authentic' punk ethos of the early to mid-1970s. These included a return to an essential 'anyone-can-do-it' culture of music production and performance, a political and 'ground-roots' emphasis upon fanzine distribution, and the importance of individual personal freedom so as to experiment with identity and expression. Moreover, anarcho-punk began to build upon the so-called earlier established 'punk ethos'. Central to this was taking the concept of

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[1] It may be argued however, that punk still adheres towards a modernist meta-narrative in that it holds to a real/phoney dichotomy. Consequently, this is a debate that will also be touched upon throughout this thesis.

[2] Again, the debate to which anarcho-punk is therefore framed within an anarcho/modernist meta-narrative will be explored throughout this thesis.

[3] Anarcho-punk was by no means the only critique of punk becoming too 'fashionable' or 'mainstream'. In Perry's *Sniffin' Glue*, 'Number 11', an article written by 'Steve at Rough Trade' reads, 'you shout about being the Blank Generation, shout about getting beaten up by Teds. But you don't shout about being exploited, by record companies, fashion houses, newspapers or anything that will determine your future existance (sic). You don't want to end up like the hippies do you?' He continues, 'fight for the right to maintain your individuality, fight for the right to be able to walk down a street unmolested by the authority that <u>was</u> designed to protect us that has turned into the moron machine you all know could devour us all'. Moreover, the author concludes, 'IF YOU WANNA FIGHT <u>UNITE</u> FIGHT BACK AT THE LIES, don't take it like every other minority group, show them and yourselves that you do mean what you say, surprise yerself (sic) Punk, hit back stop posing'. *Ibid.*, 'Number 11', p. 6.

'anarchy' not only seriously but also literally and thus developing ideas surrounding co-operation in order to encourage focused political debate and organised subversive activities. These included a heightened awareness of political issues such as personal freedom and animal rights, as well as the development of local co-operatives where musicians, artists and like-minded people could meet. Furthermore, anarcho-punk did not adhere to any particular political party. Whereas many artists within first wave punk – the Clash or Chelsea for instance – were seen to have an alliance with the Left, anarcho-punk bands in particular advocated a freedom of expression away from what they saw as the constraints of party politics.

Although anarcho-punk has rarely been touched upon, this is not to say that it remains unacknowledged. Most recently, Roger Sabin, editor of *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (1999) acknowledged the movement when he apologised for its lack of any real mention within the main body of the book itself. 'But if punk stops in 1979, then it can be argued that there is a great deal of the story left out',[4] he writes in the introduction of the book. He observes that an example of this is a lack of analysis surrounding 'the anarcho-punk movement, with bands like Crass who took the anarchist message seriously and who on occasion inspired actions which were a real challenge to the "Thatcher-Reagan axis"'.[5] In effect, Sabin's commentary therefore tells only part of punk's historical significance.

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[4] Sabin, R. (1999) *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. London: Routledge, p. 4.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The central task of this thesis therefore, is to explore the emergence of the anarcho-punk scene of the 1970s and 1980s: and – to paraphrase Sabin – to raise questions concerning a scene that is scarcely mentioned, rarely written about and seemingly forgotten in the post-punk tales of new wave, Oi! and the emerging 1980s. More specifically, I will adopt an essentially analytical perspective so as to raise questions initially over the origins of the scene and subsequently over its form, structure and cultural significance. The discussion will therefore begin with an exploration into the way in which anarcho-punk emerged from first wave punk, illuminating those aspects which anarcho-punk appropriated, as well as discarded, from its predecessor. Although anarcho-punk was to build upon those ideals already mentioned above, it was soon to shrug off the use of Nazi paraphernalia as a means of shock value, as well as the boycotting of commercial record labels as a means of music recording and distribution. An important aspect of my analysis will also be to raise questions over the ways in which first wave punk and anarcho-punk used the concepts and ideas surrounding the terminology and concept of 'anarchy'. Not least, this will be concerned with how anarcho-punk moved away from using 'anarchy' as mere connotation and 'shock-value', prioritising instead a more focused political debate; a step which laid particular emphasis on personal freedom from the constraints of government legislation.

In terms of analysing its form and structure, I wish to raise questions as to the almost arbitrary manner in which institutions and established forms of communication were manifest in the formation of the anarcho-punk scene. 'By

repositioning and recontextualizing commodities',[6] writes Hebdige, 'by subverting their conventional uses and inventing new ones, the subculturalist stylist gives the lie to what Althusser has called the "false consciousness of everyday practice" and opens up the world of objects to new and covertly oppositional readings'.[7] He continues, 'the communication of a significant *difference*, [author's emphasis] then (and the parallel communication of a group *identity*), [author's emphasis] is the 'point' behind the style of all spectacular subcultures'.[8] Consequently, I will explore the significance of 'commodities' such as such gigs, co-operatives, a heightened sense of political opinion and the music material itself, to determine the extent to which they provided and communicated a coherence of beliefs and identity within the anarcho-punk scene as a whole. In turn, this raises questions about the wider cultural significance of anarcho-punk as a 'scene'. In particular, this is concerned with the way in which the relationship between both the appropriation of established objects and institutions, (musical consumption for instance) and the everyday, (such as the social and political climate of the time) were manifest in the emergence and development of what can be termed a scene.

Consequently, a central issue raised within this thesis will be the exploration of discourses and texts surrounding the development of a punk 'scene' and the way in which that 'scene' in particular explored and appropriated the concepts of 'anarchy' and 'subversion' in the political climate of the 1970s and 1980s. By drawing upon Hebdige one can note a significant importance in analysing

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[6] Hebdige, D. (1994) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge, p. 102.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

popular music texts within a wider social and cultural framework so as to illuminate the way in which those texts are experienced on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, providing a socio-cultural backdrop to the analysis of musical practices highlights the way in which music becomes a key resource in the negotiation of the everyday. This is concerned not only with the way in which musical texts are consumed, but, moreover in the way in which people can define their relationship to their local and everyday surroundings; in this case, one which can be interpreted broadly as the anarcho-punk 'scene' within my research.

A good example of the way in which the concept of 'space' can be useful in illuminating subcultural identity may be seen in Shank's *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas* (1994). In his analysis of the emerging punk scene in the late 1970s, Shank notes that 'the scene at Raul's [a music venue central for the punk scene] marked a burst of creative activity that lasted almost three years. Bands formed, magazines were founded, record companies started, movies were made. The cultural explosion was both similar to and different from the initial progressive country movement'.[9] He continues, 'as with the earlier period of intense activity, musical performance at a specific site was the central activity within a number of overlapping cultural practices that mutually reinforced each other'.[10] As such, the author concludes that an eclectic mix of artists, musicians and writers alike, 'drawn to this liberal oasis in the middle of conservative Texas, worked to make sense out of their feelings of alienation from the contemporary condition'.[11]

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[9] Shank, B. (1994) *Dissonant Identities: The Rock 'n' Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, p. 114.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Shank highlights the central importance of music in this developing scene. 'The movies that were made shared themes with and featured actors involved in the music scene. Artists designed posters and record covers. The Austin audience continued to demand that its musicians speak directly to them'.[12] Importantly, Shank also highlights the significance of the differences found within the Austin punk rock scene. Comparing it to the folksingers of the early 1960s, Shank notes the distrust that punk musicians had of the commercial structure of the local music scene. Moreover, he writes that the punk scene in Austin did not believe in the possibility of a so-called non-commercialised 'authentic' musical practice, but 'instead...created a new cultural production system that was at first wholly separate from the institutions of progressive country'.[13]

From here, Shank pulls upon the bohemian and art-school origins of the punk scene in Austin. The author notes that this new approach to music making and production was more self-critical and intelligent, a practice that was reflected in the way in which punk itself was disseminated across the country. Moreover, he also highlights the importance of the do-it-yourself ethic compared to the already existing structure of the local music scene. 'If a band needed a manager, they hired the guitar player's roommate',[14] he notes, 'if they wanted to record, they rented a four-track machine, set it up in a garage, and laid down the tracks. If they wanted to read a story about a friend's band, they wrote and, often,

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

published it':[15] a practice that Shank concludes increased the involvement of an entirely different group of people in the Austin music scene.

Yet, the notion of space and location not only raises questions over the socio-political make-up of a subculture such as punk rock. More so, it raises further questions concerning the complexities and contradictions that make up such a culture. In other words, questions over the definition of the term 'punk', the genealogical make-up of punk – whether it be sociological, musical or political – and the differing accounts that make up that history. An important example of such an account – and indeed one that is central to this thesis – is the way in which for many, punk epitomised a subversive trend in human nature itself. In other words, the way in which for many, punk embodied an almost 'mythological' subversive thread that could be traced back towards a long history of aesthetic dissent.

Consequently, the transformation of Shank's ideas of identity and space onto an analysis of British punk is useful in that it provides a theoretical framework from which to enquire into the subversive - almost pseudo-anarcho essence - of the scene itself. In the words of George McKay, the way in which 'cultures of resistance define themselves against the culture of the majority...through the construction of their own zones, their own spaces'.[16] He continues, 'these can be distinguished in part through the subcultural elements of music, style, or favoured drugs (if any – there usually are), but space itself is vital'.[17] Moreover,

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[16] McKay, G. (1996) *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*, London: Verso, p. 7.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

an analysis of space is useful in that it not only encompasses the theoretical – almost academic accounts of a given subculture – but can also raise further questions over its so-called 'living' history. 'Any interpretation of "freedom" – if it's going to materialise beyond the theoretical – needs at its heart the space in which to exist',[18] observes Mark SPOR in *Cultures of Resistance* (date unknown). It is exactly this relationship – between the theoretical and the practical, between the arbitrary items of a bin-liner, of a safety-pin, of a tube of vaseline[19] and their re-contextualisation within a new space or zone – which is central to this debate concerning the subversive within punk.

One such debate that highlights the dichotomic elements of the theoretical and practical within the genealogical subversive make-up of punk, can be seen in the ideas of Jon Savage. Writing in *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (1992),[20] Savage discusses the notion of the 'anarcho' and the use of imagery from the Situationist International [SI] used by Malcolm McLaren et al., in order to promote the anti-authoritarian stance that would epitomise British punk in the mid-1970s. In particular, Savage concentrates on the time that McLaren – the eventual manager of the Sex Pistols – spent at Croydon Art School in the late 1960s. He attributes much of McLaren's subversive tendencies to the influence

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[18] Quoted in Anon., (date unknown) *Cultures of Resistance*, London: The Book Factory, p. 2.

[19] A specific reference to Hebdige's use of the work of writer Jean Genet as a means of summing up his notion of revolt. For Hebdige, 'Genet describes how a tube of vaseline, found in his possession, is confiscated by the Spanish police during a raid. This "dirty, wretched object", proclaiming his homosexuality to the world, becomes for Genet a kind of guarantee – "the sign of a secret grace which was soon to save me from contempt"'. Hebdige, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

[20] It is interesting to note here that Savage opens the text with a brief discussion of 'Location'. 'It is the early seventies. All the participants of what will be called Punk are alive, but few of them know each other', he begins. He continues that 'they will come together during 1976 and 1977 in a network of relationships as complicated as the rabbit warren London slums of Dickens's novels. The other beginnings of punk – the musical texts, vanguard manifestos, pulp fictions – already exist, but first we need the location, the vacant space where, like the buddleia on the still

of Jamie Reid, an artist who was also a student at Croydon during the 1960s. Together they arranged a sit-in at the School to support what Savage terms as 'the near-revolution that occurred in Paris and the rest of France during May 1968'.[21] For Savage, this was an event that had an enormous political influence on youth world wide, partly because it was the 'first properly televised urban insurrection, partly because it marked a generation claiming its political rights'.[22] Indeed, the author concludes that 'the American destruction of Vietnam may have been a trigger, but 1968 turned aesthetic style into political gesture. The violent intensity of pop that had flooded the world from 1964 was translated into a public demonstration of the utopian promise: that the world could be transformed'.[23]

For Savage therefore, 'the virus of anarchy had returned with the symptoms suited to the age'.[24] He continues, 'the term most commonly used for the 1968 rioters, *Les Enragés*, made reference to the precise moment in French history, the late stages of the Revolution, when the words "anarchy" and "anarchist" were first used freely – and pejoratively – in the sense of social chaos'.[25] Consequently, the author notes that during the century after the Revolution, through anarchist writers such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Michael Bakunin, the almost rhetorical definition of 'anarchy' became what is now termed as 'anarchism'. Savage concludes, 'in George Woodcock's words, "a system of thought, aiming at fundamental changes in the structure of society and

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plentiful bombsites these flowers bloom'. Savage, J. (1992) *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*, London: Faber & Faber, p. 3.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

particularly at the replacement of the authoritarian state by some form of non-governmental co-operation between free individuals"'.[26]

Moreover, Savage continues by noting that the strength of anarchism comes through the lack of definition. Here, he again quotes Woodcock, writing, 'it can flourish when circumstances are favourable and then, like a desert plant, lie dormant for seasons and even for years, waiting for the rains that will make it burgeon'.[27] Savage therefore concludes that although the events surrounding the insurrection of 1968 were not directly influenced by French anarchist thought, he believes that the political rhetoric of the groups, and, in particular, the 'spontaneity of communications, updated anarchist ideas and methods'.[28]

Savage continues by noting that perhaps the most noticeable aspects in Paris of 1968 were the posters and graffiti that adorned the city. 'Their cryptic phrases were the perfect medium for this mediated revolt – novel, easily packageable and paradoxical',[29] he writes, noting that 'phrases like "Demand The Impossible" or "Imagination Is Seizing Power" inverted conventional logic: they made complex ideas suddenly seem very simple'.[30] As such, the author observes how they were not pieces of art in the traditional sense of being attributable to one particular artist, but rather the way in which 'anonymous, spray canned slogans like 'Never Work" or "*Sous les Pares, la Plage*" acted as polaroids of an instant'.[31] He then moves on to discussing the sit-in that occurred at Croydon Art School in support

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

of the events that had happened in Paris. 'For the bored students in the concrete cage of Croydon, it acted as a starting pistol',[32] he notes. 'Why not go one further than just putting on visiting lectures: why not *dispense* with lecturers?'[33] Therefore, Savage concludes that on 5 June, art students barricaded themselves in at the South Norwood campus and issued a series of political demands.

Although the sit-in eventually dissipated, Savage believed that it was one of the factors that made McLaren aware of the subversive ideology and imagery of the Situationist International; something that would perhaps later inform his managerial career with the New York Dolls and the Sex Pistols. Indeed, Savage draws upon a quote from McLaren himself to illuminate this idea. 'I'd heard about the Situationists from the radical milieu of the time...You had to go up to Compendium books. When you asked for the literature, you had to pass an eyeball test. Then you got these beautiful magazines with reflecting colour covers in various colours: gold, green, mauve'.[34] He continues, 'the text was in French: you tried to read it, but it was so difficult. Just when you were getting bored, there were always wonderful pictures and they broke the whole thing up. They were what I bought them for, not the theory'.[35]

The idea of 'location' as a source of exploring the debates surrounding points of origin within subcultural identity is useful in that it highlights the way in which writers interpret the extent to which individuals such as McLaren and indeed Vivienne Westwood [the fashion designer], were influenced by the imagery and

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

philosophical thought of the SI.[36] Although Savage admits that the combination of political rhetoric surrounding the SI and popular culture came to very little, he does however outline the way in which Westwood would interweave SI imagery onto her clothing designs. In discussing the design of the 'Anarchy' shirt, Savage notes that 'taking a second-hand sixties shirt, Westwood would dye it in stripes, black, red or brown, before stencilling on a slogan such as "Only Anarchists Are Pretty". The next stage was to stitch on more slogans: hand painted on rectangles of silk or muslin'.[37] As such, he notes that although many of these slogans made direct references towards the events of Paris in 1968, Westwood also turned towards more controversial symbols and political rhetoric: 'small rectangular portraits of Karl Marx (from Chinatown) were placed on the side of the chest, and on the other, above the pocket or on the collar, was placed an (often inverted) flying swastika from the Second World War'.[38]

However, the use of 'anarcho' and Situationist imagery in the manufacturing of clothing raises questions over whether McLaren, Westwood or indeed the individuals who wore those items of clothing in the 1970s were fully aware of the academic theory that surrounded those schools of thought. 'But whether the Sex Pistols and Punk Rock actually count as a revolution or a Situationist intervention is open to debate',[39] writes Tom Vague in *Anarchy in the UK: The Angry Brigade* (1997). 'So suffice to say the punks probably unwittingly

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[35] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[36] There is a fierce debate between many authors as to the extent to which McLaren and Westwood were *directly* influenced by the SI; a debate which I will unravel below with the work of Marcus (1990) and Home (1996a). However, I do not wish to get bogged down with a debate that has been covered elsewhere. Instead, for the benefit of this thesis I wish to concentrate on the notion of the 'subversive' as a means of interpretation and debate within 1970s punk as a whole.

[37] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

recuperate the bits of Situationist theory that filter down to them, and leave themselves wide open to their recuperation by Thatcher and the yuppies. However, the unconscious hooliganism side of it was not to be missed'.[40] Therefore, one must realise the clear division between the use of 'anarcho' or SI imagery and phrasing and the understanding of these areas in an academic manner. In other words, the way in the protagonists of 1970s punk used these images as mere shock value, without necessarily realising the full depth of the theoretical complexity that surrounded those areas.

In this analysis of Savage's discussion of the 'anarcho' within the socio-formation of punk, it would be useful to return to the writer George Woodcock, and his work *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1986). Here, the author's definition of anarchism is indicative towards my investigation into the subversive strand that culminates in punk. He describes anarchism as 'both various and mutable, and in the historic perspective it presents the appearance, not of a swelling stream flowing on to its sea of destiny...but rather of water percolating through porous ground'.[41] He continues, 'here forming for a time a strong underground current, there gathering into a swirly pool, trickling through crevices, disappearing from sight, and then re-emerging where the cracks in the social structure may offer it a course to run'.[42]

This (essentially) non-Marxist analysis of the historical course of anarchism – a critique that also raises further questions over the anarchic ideas surrounding the

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[39] Vague, T. (1997) *Anarchy in the UK: The Angry Brigade*, Edinburgh: AK Press, p. 135.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[41] Woodcock, G. (1986) *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, London: Penguin Books, pp. 17-18.

notion of political organisation – is particularly useful in my discussion of punk. As it also highlights the many complexities of punk as subversive, as an organisation – or whether it was a spontaneous – yet culminating aesthetic re-buff against a failing economic and social policy of the mid-1970s. Whatever our view may be – and it will be these questions that will be touched upon throughout this thesis – I consider Woodcock's analysis of the rising anarchist movement in the 1960s to be a useful framework from which to attempt to trace the so-called pseudo-anarcho in 1970s punk.

If Woodcock believed that the 1950s were a time of calm for anarchism in Britain, he notes that in the 1960s this was soon to change. The author conceives that one of the most notable events of this renaissance was the foundation of *Anarchy*, a monthly journal of anarchist thought and writing that was founded by Colin Ward in 1961. Further, accompanying this renaissance was the emergence of a number of key issues central to the growth of anarchist thought throughout the subsequent 1970s. The first of these was the growing support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, a rise that *Anarchy* itself followed with great interest. As such, it highlighted the way which in which such a campaign could benefit from the study of 'anarchist concepts of organisation by affinity groups and how much the anarchists, on the other hand, could gain in both inspiration and support from taking part in such a movement'.[43]

Indeed, coinciding with the first edition of *Anarchy*, 1961 also saw the formation of what CND terms as the Committee of 100, and the use of the politics of mass

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[42] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

civil disobedience. It is an event that is elaborated upon by James Hinton who, in *Protests and Visions: Peace Politics on 20th Century Britain* (1989) writes that:

> in December 1960 plans were announced for the initial action – a sit down in Whitehall in February – which would only go ahead if at least 2000 individuals had pledged themselves to participate. On the day more than enough people turned up and sat down. While a vigorous direct action campaign got under way in Scotland against the use of Holy Loch as a Polaris Base, a series of London sit-downs culminated in the arrest of more than 1,300 people (of the 12,000 who attended the action) in Trafalgar Square on September 17th, 1961.[44]

Throughout the 1960s therefore – and to a lesser degree today – CND became an important focus of demonstration. This was evident not only against the threat of nuclear war that was seemingly eminent in the Cold War era of the 1950s onwards, but also as a means of subversive reproach towards British society as a whole. Although CND is an important aspect in the formation of a subversive thread in the 1960s, I wish to note a link between the ideas surrounding the Committee of 100, and the way in which the anti-war stance has led itself towards an analysis of society – of space and location – within Britain as a whole. If indeed punk can be analysed against a back-drop of the post-apocalyptic – Savage cites J. G. Ballard's *High Rise* (2003) for instance – then Robert Swann writing in *Anarchy* in July 1964, provides an almost pre-cursor to the analysis of space in 1970s punk.

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 386.
[44] Hinton, J (1989) *Protests and Visions: Peace Politics in 20th Century Britain*, London: Hutchinson Radius, p. 169.

In his article 'Direct Action and the Urban Environment',[45] Swann links the ideas surrounding CND and its application towards the everyday of British cities. 'Big cities, big governments, centralisation, over organisation, over population, alienation, mass paranoia, mass schizophrenia, dictatorship',[46] for Swann are a number of ways of describing modern man. A being that, 'of which war may be said to be the only result; lacking ability to solve his problems in any other way, man tries to end it all in an orgy of self-extermination'.[47] Moreover, Swann quotes the work of sociologist Lewis Mumford, who, in *The City in History* (1962) discusses the notion that 'war as an institution, essentially war as we know it, is a product of city culture,[48] and unknown until nearly 3000 years ago, recent in terms of evolution itself.

Swann expands upon this point by noting that 'city culture, especially in its decadent phases, was closely related to a priesthood or "authority" with its accompanying magical power and divine rights'.[49] Importantly, the author observes that it was such an attitude that 'possessed the power and control over its citizens to make mass participation in war and slaughter possible'.[50] Further, he concludes, 'until we can understand and control the city, to make it liveable, vital, and free from the fears which create insecurity and paranoia, we cannot

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[45] Swann, R. (1987) 'Direct Action and the Urban Environment', in Ward, C. (ed.) *A Decade of Anarchy (1961-1970): Selections from the Monthly Journal Anarchy*, London: Freedom Press, pp. 243-257.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

expect to free ourselves from the institution of war, and the control it has over us'.[51]

Obviously one must be careful here in attempting to provide a direct, clear link or trace between the emergence of the punk scene in the 1970s and Swann's article advocating the freedom and sovereignty of the individual within the city, an action to resist the mass participation in war. Yet, as with Savage's analysis of the subversive in punk – the thread that seems to 'percolate' and form within a given subculture – I feel it important to attempt to gauge the political sentiment of the time. As it could be argued that the post-apocalyptic themes that have emerged from the social backdrop of the Cold War produced a scenario where the future lay in the balance. The Suez Canal in 1956, Britain's testing of their first H-bomb two years after, and the emerging Cuban Missile Crisis in the United States are all examples of an apparent move towards imminent nuclear conflict.

Yet Swann's analysis also provides another important concept that is useful to my analysis of the emergence of punk rock. I have been dealing mainly with 'space' and 'location' in the first part of this thesis. Yet, Swann's analysis is useful in that it highlights the role that space plays within the socio-formation of identity, both on a theoretical as well as practical level. In this sense, Swann's analysis of the city – of the everyday practicality of living – is accompanied by the 'centralisation of power, and the accompanying loss...of decision making

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[51] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

power of the "ordinary citizen"',[52] something that is 'undoubtedly at the root of man's social and psychological ills'.[53]

Swann also refers to the writings of Jane Jacobs, who believes that decentralisation is not only an essential ingredient for a growing diversity within a city, it is also systematic in providing an increase in the diversification of life and business, as well as an active participation in local government. Moreover, Jacobs is also critical in the way in which modern cities have already developed, highlighting the growth in delinquency, vandalism, social helplessness and the increase in low-quality housing. Furthermore,

> middle-income housing projects which are truly marvels of dullness and regimentation, sealed against any buoyancy or vitality of city life, luxury housing projects that mitigate their insanity, or try to, with a rapid vulgarity. Cultural centres that are unable to support a good looking bookstore. Civic centres that are avoided by everyone but bums, who have fewer choices of a loitering place than others. Commercial centres that are lack lustre imitations of standardised suburban chain store shopping. Promenades that go from no place to nowhere and have no promenades. Expressways that eviscerate great cities. This is not the rebuilding of cities. This is the sacking of cities.[54]

The link between the practical and theoretical within Jacobs, and indeed Swann's thoughts are important in the analysis of how punk was arguably born from a subversive thread that may be linked to Woodcock's framework of 1960s British anarchism. In both the academic circles of the so-called 'world' of punk, as well as the 'academic' in anarchism, there has often been the accusation of dry theory that disregards practicality. 'England is now Stirnerite[55] territory, and that is why

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 245.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 245.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 246.
[55] A reference to the anarchist writer Max Stirner, whose *The Ego and His Own* (1845) denied all absolutes and institutions – believing them to encompass authoritarian and anti-individual

the Stirnerite *Freedom* [*Anarchy*'s contemporary in the 1960s] continues to go round in circles, conscientiously saying nothing, from fortnight to fortnight',[56] writes an aggrieved reader on the paper's letter page. He continues, 'the break-out, if there is to be one, has to turn on a new traumatic discovery, manifest in action'.[57] If this rings true, then Woodcock's ideas surrounding CND – and its demonstrations towards wider social and political issues – could indeed provide another thread to the subversive make-up of punk rock in that the practical nature of its dissent was paralleled in the growing dissent in punk at that time.

A second aspect central to *Anarchy* was that 'it was one of the first leftist magazines to sense the coming wave of militant feminism and to discuss in depth the problem of women in a male world'.[58] As such, Woodcock's notion of feminist theory in the late 1960s – and its importance in the writings of 'anarcho' journals and articles – can be usefully transformed into analysing the punk era of the 1970s. Consequently, one could argue that it was a time when both space and location could open up to what Sheila Whiteley terms as 'a space for "do-it-yourself" spontaneity and established individualism, discovery, change and outrage as crucial ingredients in style and image'.[59] Although Whiteley adheres to the genealogical meta-narrative of British punk rock – in that 'the principal catalysts for the British new wave were MC5, Iggy Pop of the Stooges, the

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characteristics – instead advocating an extremity of particularity and 'ownness' of the individual. For an account of this work, one needs only to turn to Woodcock, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-89.

[56] Readers' Letters page, *Freedom: Anarchist Fortnightly*, London: Freedom, '23rd February 2002'. Letter written by Peter C., p. 7.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[58] Woodcock, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

[59] Whiteley, S. (2000) *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*, London: Routledge, p. 97.

Velvet Underground [and] the Ramones'[60] – she provides a useful musical link to the otherwise ignored influence of Patti Smith.

Importantly, Whiteley notes that 'the notorious sexism of 1960s' and 1970s' rock, which extended both power and control and where women were the "passive squaws of patriarchal hippy men", was replaced by a new emphasis on the woman as both "warrior" and "mystic", driven both by the unconscious and by social forces'.[61] Moreover, her connection to the artistic and musical poetry of Smith underlines a genealogy of artistic links that leads back to the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, artist Andy Warhol and the writer William Burroughs. Smith had moved to New York in Autumn 1967; 'I was reading all these romantic books about the life of the artists so I went to Pratt in Brooklyn, where all the art students were',[62] she says. 'I figured I would find an artist and be his mistress and take care of him. I found this guy, Robert Mapplethorpe...he started teaching me discipline and structure to put my creative stuff in'.[63]

After a brief spell in Pratt, Smith moved back to New York, where she and Mapplethorpe 'hung out in Max's'[64] (a restaurant/bar frequented by influential counter-cultural artists of the time), and Smith moved in to the Chelsea Hotel (famous for its 'bohemian' residents), a move that 'inevitably brought Patti into New York's "artistic" circles [where] Andy Warhol and William Burroughs were

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[62] Heylin, C. (1993) *From the Velvets to the Voidoids: A Pre-Punk History for a Post-Punk World*, London: Penguin, p. 106.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

regular habitués'.[65] While one must be careful in directing a causal link between British punk of the mid-1970s and Smith's residence in the Chelsea Hotel in 1968, it could be argued that musicians such as Smith – and indeed Maureen Tucker of the Velvet Underground or Debbie Harry of Blondie – contributed towards the opening for women in the emerging British scene. 'When McLaren returned to New York',[66] writes Jon Savage, 'The Patti Smith group were in the middle of a seven-week engagement at CBGBs, four nights a week. At the end of their season, the group signed a deal with Arista, the first sign of industry intervention in the CBGBs groups whose development McLaren had been observing'.[67]

Moreover, Whiteley's 'warrior-like' female figures are certainly evident in the British Punk scene of the mid-1970s; a striking example being the *Clockwork Orange* (1971) influence on the fashion and make-up of Siouxsie Sioux, a member of the so-called 'Bromley Contingent'. It was an image that, as Lucy O'Brien re-counts, 'screamed of a suburban relapse [when Sioux] went into a Bromley wine bar in fetish gear with her friend Berlin on a leash, and all fours'.[68] Furthermore, images such as Jordan, 'the first Sex Pistol'[69] in Derek Jarmon's film, *Jubilee* (1978), the image of Poly Styrene, lead singer of X-Ray Spex – with military helmet and goggles – or the Slits, breasts visible and covered in mud on the front of their album *Cut* (1979): these also became just some of the 'warriors' that Whiteley talks of, thus providing a new sense of feminist identity to the 'zone' of 1970s punk.

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[66] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[68] O'Brien, L. 'The Woman Punk Made Me', in Sabin, *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

Yet, in the same way in which I have discussed the almost subtle re-emergence of the subversive – the pseudo-anarcho – from the days of 1960s anarchism in Britain and its link to the later punk movement, so one can also highlight perhaps an almost little known aspect of women in punk. Artists such as Siouxsie, Ari Up, or the day-glo coloured lyrics of Poly Styrene are frequently mentioned, yet, as Stewart Home highlights, punk also opened the door for many other women of that era. Home's long list of 'various groups from the late seventies/early eighties who featured, at least for a time, femail (sic) members',[70] highlights an important under-current that could also be linked to post-punk groups – particularly anarcho-punk – as well as the so-called 'first wave'. Indeed, one needs only to turn to Eve Libertine of Crass, Vi Subversa of Poisongirls and Stacey of DIRT for examples of female members of the anarcho-punk scene. Consequently, if the need for a new genealogy is to be traced, then first wave punk by no means heralded the end of feminist emancipation. As will be discussed later, the anarcho-scene was also to become a central aesthetic space for sexuality. The progression of thought and ideas surrounding the de-machonisation of popular music is now significant. 'Punk opened up a specific space for women to explore and sell their own creativity',[71] concludes Whiteley, as well as to 'explore the opportunities inherent in a do-it-yourself musical culture'.[72]

A third aspect of discussion within Woodcock's framework concerns the emergence of squatting. 'When housing became a problem once more in the later

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[69] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
[70] Home, S. (1996a) *Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory and Punk Rock*, Hove: CodeX Press, p. 108.
[71] Whiteley, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

1960s and the squatters appeared again in the cities of Britain',[73] Woodcock writes, '*Anarchy* gave them support and used the occasion for studies in depth of urban problems. It devoted space...to environmental and ecological questions and to the significance of new technologies in the context of anarchist aims'.[74] If a discussion of 'space' and 'location' has been a common thread that runs throughout this first chapter, then the idea of squatting is essential within this analysis. Although squatting is primarily a movement that developed to re-house families from hostels or slums, it was also hoped that a mass squatting campaign would spark an all-out attack on existing housing authorities and regulations, with – more importantly – 'ordinary' people taking action for themselves.

Set up on November 18, 1968, the London Squatting Campaign would subsequently have what Ron Bailey notes as 'a radicalising effect on existing movements in the housing field'.[75] Their first target was 'The Hollies', a partially empty block of flats in Wanstead High Street, East London. Many of the flats had been empty since they were built four years previously, and their subsequent occupation was seen to be symbolic of the injustice which allowed private property owners to keep houses empty, whilst thousands were left homeless. Yet, Bailey believed that the 'occupation for a few hours of these flats on 1 December 1968 was symbolic too, in a different way'.[76] For, it also suggested a logical step forward: homeless people could introduce an element of control into their lives by taking over empty houses which the established institutions of society would not use.

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[72] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[73] Woodcock, *op. cit.*, p. 386.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 386.
[75] Taken from the website www.squat.freeserve.co.uk (2003).

From here, squatting began to grow. A week after the occupation of 'The Hollies' a separate group of activists took over a house in Notting Hill, West London, which had been empty or 18 months. The squatters subsequently cleared and decorated the property, demonstrating its suitability for use by the homeless. Two weeks later, just before Christmas, the London Squatting Campaign occupied All Saints Vicarage, Leyton, a building that had been kept empty by the Church for over three years, whilst at the same weekend, the Notting Hill group occupied a block of luxury flats called Arundel Court, leaving voluntarily in a symbolic gesture after a few hours. Then, on January 18 1969, Maggie O'Shannon, a mother of two children moved into No. 7 Camelford Rd., Notting Hill; an occupation that would make her the first squatter since the 1940s to obtain the right to permanent housing through squatting.

This brief outline of the origins of the squatting movement in the late 1960s is useful in that it highlights the do-it-yourself aspect of those involved. One must be careful – as with the discussion of the Situationist International above – in attempting to trace a clear link between these origins and the development of the later punk scene in the 1970s. Yet, it is useful to note that squatting was used – both by those families discussed, as well as later subcultures (such as punk) – as a way of side stepping an already established authority. Although one could argue that the squatting movement in the 1960s was born from necessity, it may also be argued that the punk scene used it as a means both for self-expression as well as a means of remaining in the margins. In other words, it was used as a

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[76] *Ibid.*

sense of individuality, as well as a means to be in control of one's 'space' and 'location'.

Yet, the discussion of the origins of the squatting movement in the 1960s also highlights the almost porous, intertwining means of dissent at that time. I have already discussed the link between CND – the politics of Nuclear Disarmament – and Swann's article concerning the alienation and over-centralisation of city culture. It is a link that could also be highlighted in the bulk of the London Squatting Campaign, for the main impetus between 1968 and 1969 came from a 'loosely-knit group of radicals, many of whom had been involved with the Committee of 100 and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign'.[77] In this sense, one could argue that the relationship between CND and the London Squatting Campaign that existed around the same time highlights the way in which subversive ideas and actions almost pollinate one another; an aspect that will be further explored below when analysing first wave punk and anarcho-punk.

The final issue, central to the link between *Anarchy*, subversion and punk rock, lies in the paper's coverage of the student revolts in France in the late 1960s. The journal not only devoted two whole issues and countless articles to the causes of the revolts, it did so without aligning its analysis to any particular political group or theoretical basis. Indeed, Woodcock believes this to have been wise, in that 'since the student rebels had a very shaky theoretical base and were as likely to

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[77] *Ibid.*

be captured by authoritarian Marxist factions as to be consistent in the libertarian impulses by which so often their actions seem to be governed'.[78]

One could argue that the student uprising in France at this time highlighted the way in which anarchist ideals and tactics could simultaneously surface in a situation where those individuals involved do not define themselves as anarchists, and who have little knowledge of anarchist history and ideals. Indeed, as Woodcock notes, those 'ageing intellectuals who publicly represented anarchism in France played no part in inspiring the event and the traditional movement played no real part'.[79] Yet, although one could argue that the uprising was not one of 'organised' anarchist dissent, the events at this time nonetheless marked a resurgence of anarchist theory, even though they did not lead to any particular social movement. Further, as already mentioned above, the graffiti that adorned the country at this time seemed directly inspired by anarchist thought, with slogans such as 'Neither Gods Nor Masters', 'The More You Consume The Less You Live' and 'It Is Forbidden To Forbid'.

In this sense, the events of 1968 are interesting for the way in which so-called disparate political groups and ideologies drew together at a point of dissent. If one could argue that anarchists were merely one group involved at the time, then there is also evidence of the wider involvement of Maoists, Situationists and what Daniel Cohn-Bendit – the unofficial spokesman of the movement – termed himself, Libertarian Marxists. 'It was as if a sudden libertarian tidal wave had

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[78] Woodcock, *op. cit.*, p. 386.
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 270-271.

come from nowhere and threatened to wash away the State',[80] writes, Marshall, 'only to subside as quickly as it had come....leaving historians to pick over the confused flotsam which it discarded in its wake'.[81] As such, what remains important between a discussion of the Paris uprisings and 1970s punk, is the way in which social dissent forms and surfaces at particular social and political moments in history. In other words, the way in which the indefinable political rhetoric of an ideology such as anarchism, remains constantly shifting and, as Woodcock observes, porous to social and political events.

I do not wish to give a detailed account of the Paris uprisings, but merely to highlight the way in which the events of 1968 were not overtly economically and politically revolutionary as such, but rather concerned more with the transformation of everyday life. 'They looked to self-liberation as the basis of social liberation',[82] writes Marshall, and as the political impetus grew into a mass movement involving all walks of life, the writer observes how 'the uprising rapidly passed from resistance to the State to a direct and permanent *contestation* with it'.[83] In this sense, one could argue that the movement that grew from the events at this time was advocating more for individual freedom and worker's rights than for a direct overthrowing and replacement of government.

As with the analyses above surrounding squatting and CND, one must be careful in equating a direct link between the events of 1968 and first wave punk. Yet, one could argue that these events are mere examples of the ways in which

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[80] Marshall, P. (1993) *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, London: Fontana Press, p. 547.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 547.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 547.

individuals, rather than large political organisations, play host to anarchist ideals and political action. In particular, the discussion concerning the student rebellion is interesting because of the way in which the ideas surrounding anarchism are bought to the fore in public dissent, even by those who have very little knowledge of anarchism as a particular political ideology. Importantly, it is this almost 'unconscious' appropriation of anarchism that will be further explored throughout this work.

However, the student revolts of 1968 also leads us to the way in which Woodcock, and *Anarchy* were particularly suspicious of what they termed as 'Playing at Revolution'. In other words, the way in which certain political factions advocated a false concept of revolution, of turning the essentially anti-Establishment anarchist dissent into a mere *rite of passage*: a notion that Woodcock believed had happened to the earlier counter-culture. As such, an important issue lies in the way in which it meant

> the constant search, within society as it is, for the opportunities to put anarchist principles into action without waiting for revolution, the underlying thought being that governments and especially welfare states are so destructive of freedom and of individual and mutual initiatives that, if we wait for a revolution, it may be too late to create the free society of which the anarchists dream, because the natural social impulses will all have been atrophied.[84]

Further, this thought not only takes us back to Savage's quotation of Woodcock concerning the ambiguity of anarchistic thought, but also to both the spurious link between anarchism as an established political ideology and as a subversive thread that leads us towards the late 1970s.

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[83] *Ibid.*, p. 547.

Indeed, it could be argued that McLaren and Reid's use of Situationism and the definitional ambiguity of anarchism, as well as the use of subversive elements through fashion, symbolic displacement and lyrical content drew upon all three of those elements of those ideas mentioned above. For instance, although one could highlight McLaren's lack of awareness of anarchist theory, one can also see the awareness of McLaren's thoughts as to the provocation and incitement of British society, and how this would provoke the necessary publicity for punk rock. In retrospect, it is evident how McLaren not only used ideas inherent in the ambiguities of anarchism as a political concept, but also capitalised on the very real sense of fear that had been instilled in the British public throughout the 1960s and 1970s. As Woodcock concludes, this was

> personified in the confident and mostly young contingents who would be there behind the black banners in every Aldermaston March and would figure prominently and often uproariously in the demonstrations in London and the larger cities....Where young British rebels in the decade before World War II joined the communists, in the 1960s they were more likely to become anarchists. Mark the change; becoming rather than joining, a change of heart rather than a party ticket.[85]

Another author who links the emergence of the British punk scene with the May 1968 uprising and the influence of the Situationist International is Greil Marcus. Writing in *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (1990), Marcus supports his argument with reference to the ideas of the once leader of the SI, Guy Debord. Quoting from Debord's 'Theses On The Cultural Revolution', a work written for the first number of *Internationale situationniste*,

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[84] Woodcock, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

Marcus notes that, 'victory will be for those who know how to create disorder without it'.[86] He continues, 'as empty of disorder as rock 'n' roll was in 1975, McLaren understood that it remained the only form of culture the young cared about, and at thirty in 1975, he clung to a sixties definition of young – youth was an attitude, not an age'.[87]

Lipstick Traces is an interesting account of punk, in that Marcus not only attempts to trace a subversive thread back to the student revolts of the 1960s, or indeed even to the formation of the SI in the 1950s, but even as far back as 1534 and to the Dutch heretic John of Leydon.[88] 'The question of ancestry is culture is spurious',[89] writes Marcus in the prologue to *Lipstick Traces*, 'every new manifestation in culture re-writes the past, changes old maudits into new heroes, old heroes into those who should have never been born'.[90] And he continues by noting that 'new authors scavenge the past for ancestors, because ancestry is legitimacy and novelty is doubt – but in all times forgotten actors emerge from the past not as ancestors but as familiars'.[91]

Here, Marcus draws upon a number of examples to illuminate his ideas surrounding this ancestry. 'In the 1920s in literary America it was Herman Melville; in the rock 'n' roll 1960s it was Mississippi bluesman Robert Johnson of the 1930s. In 1976 and 1977, and the years to follow, as symbolically remade

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[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 386-387.
[86] Marcus, G. (1990) *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 53.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[88] *Ibid.*, pp. 90-94.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

by the Sex Pistols, it was perhaps dadaists, lettrists, situationists, and various medieval heretics'.[92] Consequently, Marcus admits later that 'I found myself caught up in something that was less a matter of cultural genealogy, of tracing a line between pieces of a found story, than of making the story up'.[93]

Lipstick Traces is useful in that it raises a number of key issues that surround current analyses of punk rock. The first of these concerns the almost mythological status that punk has commanded in many texts. 'There are LOADS of myths about Punk',[94] quotes Sabin, 'but NONE of them live up to what it was/is like'.[95] The way in which Marcus weaves a so-called 'secret history' of the subversive into his analysis of British punk could certainly be, in his own words 'spurious', as the linking between a diverse and eclectic range of subversive sources towards punk becomes increasingly mythological in nature. A perfect example of this can be seen in his account of the magazine *Potlatch.* 'Long before I tracked down *Potlatch*', he notes, 'I'd come across an advertisement for it, titled "The Gilded Legend", dated 1954, a page in *Les Levres nues*, a slick-paper, Belgian neo-surrealist review'.[96] He notes that, '"The century has known a few great incendiaries" the ad read. "Today they're dead, or finishing up preening in the mirror...Everywhere, youth (as it calls itself) discovers a few blunted knives, a few defused bombs, under thirty years of dust and debris; shaking in its shoes, youth hurls them upon the consenting rabble, which salutes it with its only laugh"'.[97] Marcus continues by noting that 'such a

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[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[94] Sabin, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[96] Marcus, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

claim is not so much an argument about the way the past makes the present as it is a way of suggesting that the entanglement of now and then is fundamentally a mystery'.[98] For the author, therefore, *Potlatch*, as it described itself, 'drew "its title from the name, used among the Indians of North America, of a pre-commercial form of the circulation of goods, founded on the reciprocity of sumptuary gifts"; the "non-saleable goods such a free bulletin can distribute are previously unpublished desires and questions, and only their thorough analysis by others can constitute a return gift"'.[99]

Lipstick Traces therefore, 'grew out of a desire to come to grips with the power of "Anarchy in the UK" as music, to understand its fecundity as culture; it may be that the key to those questions is not that the Sex Pistols could have traced their existence to the LI's gift, but that blindly, they returned the gift – and in a form those who first offered it, aesthetes who would have been appalled to see their theories turned into cheap commodities'.[100] Moreover, 'if "Anarchy in the UK" truly did distil an old, forgotten social critique, that is interesting; if, in a new *Potlatch* in a conversation of a few thousand songs, "Anarchy in the UK" brought that critique to life – that is something far more than interesting'.[101]

In defence of Marcus – and indeed also Savage's *England's Dreaming*, another work which offers a sometimes uncritical view of punk – *Lipstick Traces* is not an attempt to critically evaluate the socio-political formation or effect of punk. In the same vein as perhaps Dave Haslam's *Manchester England: The Story of the*

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[98] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Pop Cult City (1999), both Marcus and Savage do not set out to uncover a wholly political or social meaning for punk in the 1970s. In the case of Savage's *England's Dreaming* it is a thorough and well researched account of punk and the Sex Pistols: in Marcus' *Lipstick Traces* we find an extremely well written account of an uncovering of subversive intent throughout the twentieth-century.

However, in the same way as I have used Savage's 'anarcho' framework in an attempt to discover a link between the alternative movements of the 1960s and punk rock, one must be very careful in attempting to link an embodiment – to use what Stewart Home terms as 'free association'[102] – between disparate and arbitrary voices and a subcultural movement such as punk without positive evidence of association. Calling him 'Groovy Greil Marcus', Home writes in *Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory and Punk Rock* (1996a), that 'PUNK,[103] to paraphrase Howard Devoto, came out of nowhere and was heading straight back there. What was punk if not a media hype? It was empty, shallow and trivial – and that was its greatness'.[104] Moreover, Home explains, 'when I was fourteen and first got into punk in 1976 I didn't know anything about the Situationists, I was too young and ignorant, they wouldn't have interested me. I hadn't even heard of Dada until one of the Sunday papers ran a feature comparing the PUNK phenomena to events at the Cabaret Voltaire. PUNK was much sound and fury, signifying nothing'.[105] Home's views on the social and political have some bearing. Even most recently, in *Punk.* (2001), Stephen Colegrave and Chris Sullivan write, 'as with all musical eras, there is a nostalgia industry for punk,

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[102] Home, (1996a) *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[103] Home uses upper case letters here as part of his dialectical unfolding of the history of punk rock. For more information on this aspect, one can turn to *Ibid.*, pp. 36-44.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

which continually re-invents myths, aggrandizes the trivial and over-estimates the legacy'.[106] (Although one must note that they conclude, 'unfortunately, the original spontaneity, madness, violent creativity and sheer audacity of the period is in danger of being lost').[107]

The idea that analyses of punk are becoming mythological, also draws upon another central debate – one that also raged between Marcus and Home; the influence of the Situationist International upon the punk scene of the 1970s. I have already noted above Savage's constant reference to the influence of the aesthetic behind the SI and its culmination in the later subculture. Moreover, Marcus' account of punk in *Lipstick Traces* is firmly rooted in a clear link between the SI and the punk. Home, on the other hand, refutes this notion completely. Indeed, in a chapter 'Blood Splattered With Guitars: A demonstration of the fact that there are no direct links between PUNK ROCK, the Sex Pistols and the Situationists',[108] he runs through an extremely detailed account of a number of political neo-Dada groups, Specto-Situationsts and revolutionary groups such as King Mob, Black Mask and the Motherfuckers to provide evidence of what he believes as such tenuous links.

Although I do not wish to cover the debate in detail in this thesis – the detail and pedantry of Home's analysis would demand a work in its own right – it is also worth noting that the author draws upon a quote from *Internationalle Situationist* 12, from which he concludes, 'The Debordists made their state of affair quite

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[105] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[106] Colegrave, S. & Sullivan, C. (ed.) (2001) *Punk.*, London: Cassell & Co., p. 15.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[108] Home, (1996a) *op. cit.*, pp. 20-31.

clear....when they [the SI] stated: a rag called KING MOB....passes, quite wrongly, for being pro-Situationist'.[109] Moreover, Home reiterates his view in a previously published work *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (1991). Talking of the article 'The End of Music',[110] written by a member of King Mob, Home notes that 'unfortunately, Dave W. completely overestimates the influence and importance of specto-Situationist theory, both on punk and in general. This is perhaps not surprising, since at the time the text was produced he was part of the miserable milieu centred on Guy Debord and the Champ Libre publishers in Paris'.[111]

From here, Home also goes on to note that 'although W. sneers at the negative influence of the Motherfuckers or King Mob, he ignores that fact that the influence was actually more determinate than that of the specto-SI'.[112] The ambiguity in McLaren's and indeed Reid's understanding of the background of the SI – and the extent to which this is paramount in the SI being influential towards the two protagonists has already been mentioned above. Yet one could argue that Home 'misses the point', for while punk did not entirely embody the SI aesthetic, it could be argued that it did embrace a sense of 'spectacle', thus providing a relevant critique of late capitalism in the 1970s. In other words, while it is accepted that punks generally were unaware of the first use of the circled 'A'[113] as signifying anarchist thought, or indeed the underlying

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[109] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[110] Wise, D. & Wise, S. 'The End of Music', in Home, S. (ed.) (1996) *What Is Situationism? A Reader*, Edinburgh: AK Press pp. 63-102.
[111] Home, S. (1991) *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents From Lettrisme to Class War*, Stirling: AK Press, pp. 81-82.
[112] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[113] The circled A was first created by the French group Jeunesse Libertaire in 1964 as re-defining of Proudhon's slogan 'Anarchy is Order'.

philosophy of Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1997), they were aware of the symbolic power of anarchy as an expression of subversion. As Hebdige notes in *Subculture: Meaning of Style* (1994), 'the various stylistic ensembles adopted by the punks were undoubtedly expressive of genuine aggression, frustration and anxiety. But these statements, no matter how strangely constructed, were cast in a language which was generally available – a language which was current'.[114] He concludes, 'this accounts...for the success of the punk subculture as spectacle: its ability to symptomise a whole cluster of contemporary problems'.[115]

The debate between Home and Marcus, between the former's notion of 'free association' and Marcus' attempt to uncover a subversive thread through the twentieth-century is indeed central to this thesis. Not least, it has led to a concern to investigate more fully the meaning of the term 'anarcho' and, in particular, its relevance to the late 1970s punk scene. Thus, while it is unlikely that the average punk on the street was aware of theoretical origins of such terms as 'detournment' and 'spectacle', or indeed the writings of Proudhon or Debord, it is evident that certain ideas and items were appropriated and recontextualised as expressions of discontent which, in turn, could be associated with the anarchic.

While my discussion of Home and Marcus informs two key debates within the analysis of punk, namely the often overly mythical analyses of punk, and the link between the SI and punk, their focus on class also draws attention to the contradictions inherent in the 'dialectical interplay between the "authentic" and

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[114] Hebdige, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
[115] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

the "counterfeit"'.[116] As Home writes, in reference to *Lipstick Traces*, 'the problem with self-styled "contemporary cultural critics" is that they are so concerned with the former that they actually expose themselves as the latter',[117] adding 'there is a long tradition of snobbish individuals attempting to derive social status from the cult of obscurity, and the results are at times hilarious.[118] He then chides Marcus for liking bands such as Gang of Four and the Au Pairs, noting that he 'doesn't seem to realise that his enthusiasm for bands with university backgrounds, combined with a deeply intolerant attitude towards phenomena such as Oi!, exposes him as an exponent of class prejudice and petit-bourgeois values'.[119] While Home's observations are, at least, provocative, they nevertheless highlight the importance of class to an analysis of punk.

There is often a misconception as to the 'class based' aesthetic expressed by British punk rock in the late 1970s. Even Craig O'Hara's recent work *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise* (1999), draws upon the now more traditional analysis of punk as an expression of 'working-class anger' and 'despair'. Pulling upon Tricia Henry's earlier writings in *Break All Rules* (1989), O'Hara believes that 'punk in Britain was essentially a movement consisting of underprivileged working class white youths'.[120] He concludes, 'many of them felt their social situation deeply and used the medium of punk to express their dissatisfaction'.[121] More specifically, O'Hara's analysis extends towards questioning the extent to which 1970s punk was the embodiment of any sense of

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[116] Home, (1996a) *op. cit.*, p. 18.
[117] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[118] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[119] *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
[120] O'Hara, C. (1999) *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*, Edinburgh: AK Press, p. 27.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

theoretical political expression. 'It would be a lie...to say that these original punks had well-developed social and political theories',[122] he writes, 'they may have been against all the standard '-isms', but were more apt to spit and swear than to explain their feelings to the mainstream public'.[123]

It could be argued, however, that O'Hara's – and indeed Henry's – analysis is simplistic. One needs only to turn to such writers as Frith (1978) and Hebdige (1994) to realise the complexities inherent in defining and analysing the relationship between aesthetic expression and class. Indeed, even as early as Frith's article 'The Punk Bohemians' (1978), the author notes that although punk was associated primarily with 'pop...vandalism [and] the unemployment statistics'[124] he believes that 'the most interesting sociological feature of punk is not in its nebulous place on the dole queue, but its firm place in the history of radical British art'.[125] Although Frith disagrees with O'Hara's Class analysis of punk as inherently 'working-class', their discussions nevertheless highlight one of the central debates concerning punk, viz. the extent to which punk was led by an organised political sense of direction, whether the movement was simply an expression of dissatisfaction and frustration with the increasing economic crisis of the late 1970s or, indeed, whether it was a combination of both.

This discussion is usefully extended by reference to Frith and Horne's *Art into Pop* (1987) which argues that while 'punk rock was the ultimate art school

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[122] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[124] Frith, S. (1978) 'The Punk Bohemians', *New Society* 805 (43) 9 March, p. 535.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 535.

movement',[126] it also had two very separate histories. Differentiating between 'punk' and punk as 'style', they argue that punk 'brought to a head fifteen years of questions about creativity in a mass medium'[127] and that it 'tried to keep in play bohemian ideals of authenticity *and* Pop art ideals of artifice'.[128] They conclude therefore, that 'punk-as-art movement was always intertwined with a punk-as-pub-rock movement'.[129]

Frith and Horne's analysis is useful in that it provides a way of dealing with some of the complexities – as well as the mythologies – which surround the punk rock scene, while encompassing many of the so-called contradictions that exist in an analysis of a problematic subculture. I do not wish to use this as a complete framework for a discussion surrounding class. One needs only to turn to a writer such as Home (1996a) who, on the one hand highlights the almost 'academic' movement of punk rock and its relationship towards art-school influence and, on the other, the influence of the 'working-class' aspect of punk rock into the subsequent skinhead culture and Oi!. Yet, Frith and Horne's critical analysis of punk is useful in that it highlights the heterogeneity of the movement. It is an analysis that lends itself to the debates concerning the subversive threads that culminated in punk, in that it illuminates the ambiguities of placing punk in any one social, political or artistic 'camp'. In other words, instead of proclaiming a sense of fixed definition in what one may call 'punk' or 'punk rock' Frith and Horne highlight the diversity of political and social thought within the subculture as a whole.

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[126] Frith, S. & Horne, H. (1987) *Art into Pop*, London: Routledge, p. 124.
[127] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Indeed, this notion is useful in a discussion of Home's 'unfolding' of 1970s punk or O'Hara's dependence upon punk being merely an expression of disenfranchised youth, in that many writers have already pre-conceived ideas of the meta-narrative of the British punk rock scene; from its so-called conception with the Sex Pistols and its development towards Oi!, post-punk and anarcho-punk. The way in which these later movements re-appropriated aspects from the 'original' punk scene of the mid-1970s and of each other; incorporating musical expression, political thoughts and modes of dress into a diverse and complex form of popular culture in the post-1970s. Consequently, in Horne and Frith's analysis of class, I would argue that there remains a sense of definitional space where a discussion of class and aesthetic expression remains flexible instead of 'fixed'. Whereas writers such as O'Hara or Henry – even Home in his analysis of Oi! – become almost bogged down in attempting to clearly label punk rock within an art-school *or* working class mode of definition, Frith and Horne believe that punk was a subculture that was made-up of a complex mixture of both.

Moreover, Frith and Horne's discussion is useful in that it becomes a useful framework in which to explore the later anarcho-punk scene. A way perhaps of illuminating how this later scene would encapsulate elements of the 'anger' supposedly found in the working class aesthetic of O'Hara's punk scene, as well the pacifist – almost bohemian – make-up of a punk scene that would advocate vegetarianism and peace politics. There has already been a discussion of the way in which writers such as Hebdige, Home and Marcus have attempted to explore punk within given boundaries, and all are useful in the illumination of first wave

punk within the 1970s. Yet, Frith and Horne's analysis is particularly useful in that it highlights the complexity of the subversive thread that culminated in punk: a thread that will be continued to be unravelled throughout this work.

The aim of this thesis therefore, is to trace the emergence and development of the anarcho-punk scene of the late 1970s and 1980s. This involves further research into the transformation of the subversive beyond the 1970s – first wave punk – towards an analysis that illuminates and raises questions over a post-punk scene that has rarely been touched upon by many 'punk writers' and cultural critics. Whereas chapter one was primarily concerned with writers who investigated the anarchic elements in punk, such as Home (1996a), Savage (1992) and Marcus (1990), chapter two examines the emergence of punk rock within a social and political framework. The chapter begins with an examination of what is termed as the 'post-war consensus', exploring the way in which the eventual break down of the social and political policies surrounding the consensus contributed towards an environment that allowed a subculture such as punk to emerge and flourish in the 1970s.

While chapter two begins with a social and political analysis of first wave punk, the next section within the chapter turns towards an examination of the musical environment of the 1970s. This section investigates the extent to which particular areas of the popular music environment of the time – such as the growth of progressive rock and the emergence of the so-called 'novelty single' – were tantamount in building a musical arena that resulted in the backlash that was punk rock. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the Sex Pistols, a band

commonly regarded as the quintessential musical and political embodiment of British punk rock in the 1970s. In particular, this analysis continues the investigation into the transformation of dissent discussed above, exploring the ways in which both the Sex Pistols and the accompanying punk rock scene as a whole used ideas and concepts surrounding the notion of 'anarchism' as a means of scare tactic and shock value.

Chapter three develops my discussion of the Sex Pistols and other punk rock bands and leads into the anarcho-punk scene of the late 1970s and 1980s proper. I do not give a so-called 'blow-by-blow' account of the anarcho-punk scene, but instead examine the ways in which the notion of 'anarchism' is transformed from an expression of shock, as previously highlighted within first wave punk, towards a more organised form of political protest within the later anarcho-punk movement. As such this chapter will concentrate upon three key musical styles of the anarcho-scene to illuminate such a transformation. It will begin with a discussion of the work by the seminal punk band Crass. Seen by many as one of the most important of all British anarcho-punk bands, Crass embodied much of the so-called anarcho-punk ethos, including the return to DiY aspects of record distribution and the 'anyone-can-do-it' philosophy of first wave punk. Tracks such as 'Punk is Dead', 'Bloody Revolutions' and 'How Does it Feel?' are analysed so as to provide evidence of the way in which Crass uses musical material to express a means of organised subversive dissent based upon the political notion of anarchist thought.

A discussion of the musical and political transformation of first wave punk into the later anarcho-punk scene continues in the second section of chapter three where there is an analysis of the band Discharge. Whereas Crass appropriated the musical style of first wave punk in order to convey a new complexity of political thought and action, Discharge transformed 1970s punk into a new form of extreme aesthetic that encompassed musical simplicity, 'in your face' lyrical content and a forthrightness of musical delivery. The concluding section within this chapter explores the music and lyrics of the vocalist and author Dick Lucas. Involved with two prominent anarcho-bands throughout the 1980s – the Subhumans and Culture Shock – Lucas's work is important in that it illuminates the way in which the anarcho-scene became increasingly uniform and oppressive in its own right, aspects that were considered contradictory by Lucas, not least because they emerged within a subculture built upon the ideas of anarchism and freedom of expression.

Although these analyses are based upon a discussion of the subversive nature of anarcho-punk – raising questions over the extent to which the movement embodied anarchist thoughts and ideas – they also raise questions over the idea of 'scene', examining the way in which almost arbitrary ideas are re-contextualised into new surroundings. As such, chapter three also maps out key issues within the so-called anarcho-punk 'scene' – including a discussion of animal rights, squatting, co-operatives and the development of the travellers movement – in an attempt to 'build-up' a coherent picture of the subversive nature of the scene itself.

Chapter four, my concluding chapter, not only summarises subsequent findings throughout this thesis, but also highlights further questions that need to be raised in future research conducted of the 1980s anarcho-punk scene. As with any analysis of a subcultural movement, it is impossible to encompass the entirety of the scene in question. This chapter begins therefore with a brief discussion of the continuing thread of dissent beyond the temporality of the 1980s and into the punk movement of the next decade. In particular, this discussion centres upon the porous nature of 'anarchism' and 'punk', highlighting the ways in which ideas from both schools of thought fed into wider actions of protest from the 1980s to the present day, including those against multinationals and government. The second section within this chapter explores the musical heterogeneity of the anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s. Although one could argue that Crass, Discharge and the Subhumans are central towards a musical analysis of this particular punk scene, lack of space within this particular thesis also dictates a lack of discussion surrounding the diversity of musical styles and political ideas within the scene. This section therefore briefly covers a number of bands that make up such diversity, such as the Poisongirls, Donna and the Kebabs and Chaos UK. The concluding section of this chapter turns towards a reflective analysis of this particular work as a whole, exploring the way in which the relationship between punk rock and anarchism is one that constantly shifts in focus – not simply in response to the historical circumstances in which its various manifestations are embedded – but rather because the concept of anarchy is itself indefinable and anarchic.

Chapter 2: From War to Recession: Determining Factors in the Emergence of British Punk in the Late 1970s

Within this chapter I will attempt to draw together a number of key elements that contributed to the emergence of the British punk rock scene of the 1970s. As with many subcultures, punk was a complex mixture of vital ingredients, three of which are discussed below. The first is the breakdown of what is commonly termed as the 'post-war consensus'. I begin by providing an outline of the political policies that emerged from the consensus, tracing these policies through the 1950s and 1960s to their eventual demise in the late 1970s. It is considered that such an analysis is important for a number of reasons. First, seminal texts on punk consider that British punk rock served as a critique of the diminishing success of the post-war consensus. More specifically, the music and lyrics provided a somewhat *angry* and *noisy* criticism of the consensus, as well as tapping into a number of key issues within the framework of the consensus, including immigration, the Cold War, the crisis in a British identity and the monarchy. It is also considered that a clear outline of the policies that emerged from the post-war consensus will provide an informative basis with which to lead into chapter three of this thesis, 'The Politics of Post-Punk: Crass and the Move Towards the Anarcho'.[130] Here, I will explore what is termed as 'the ending of the consensus', and the subsequent election of the Conservative government in 1979, so illuminating any distinctions that may have existed between the political environment of the late 1970s and the move into the 1980s. More specifically, I

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[130] As will become apparent below, the term 'anarcho' is more often used within the context of 'anarcho-punk' or 'anarcho-scene', to describe the emergence of a post-punk subculture that adopted a more theoretical understanding of anarchism.

will explore the extent to which changes in the socio-political environment of this time contributed towards the formation of the so-called 'anarcho-punk' scene of the 1980s.

The second section within this chapter will deal with what Dave Laing terms the 'formation'[131] of punk rock. Whereas the previous section deals specifically with the political and economic environment surrounding the advent of punk, this section will investigate the accompanying musical climate of the late 1960s and 1970s. It will deal specifically with what Laing identifies as 'The Music Machine Before Punk':[132] examining the way in which the growth of major record companies contributed towards the development of pop music and progressive rock during the 1970s. The second part of this section, 'From New York to Sex: Sonic Reducing in the Big Apple', will examine the development of the so-called 'attitude' found within punk. It will focus specifically on the influence that American bands such as Iggy and the Stooges and the New York Dolls of the early 1970s had upon the musical and political formation of British punk later in the decade. It will also explore the extent to which the notion of attitude within the American scene would be transformed by their British counterparts as 'punk rock' crossed the Atlantic.

The importance/significance of attitude – and more specifically the concept of 'anarchy' – is explored further in the concluding section, where both the political and musical are drawn together in an examination of the Sex Pistols and the

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[131] Laing, D. (1985) *One Chord Wonders: Power of Meaning in Punk Rock*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press. Chapter 1, 'Formation', pp. 1-40.
[132] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-5.

British punk scene as a whole. Here, tracks written by the Sex Pistols, 'Anarchy in the UK' and 'God Save the Queen' will be analysed in order to determine the extent to which punk rock became a form of protest song in the political climate of the late 1970s. The relationship between 'protest' and 'anarchy' provides a specific focus here, raising questions as to whether punk rock was related to any form of political agenda, or whether it was indeed motivated simply by shock-value; an expression that I have termed as 'rhetorical anarchy'.

1. Punk and The Consensus: The Move Towards the Anarchic

The relationship between the demise of the post-war consensus and the emergence of British punk rock is arguably no coincidence. Writing in *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (1992), John Savage notes that, 'by July 1975, England was in recession. The unemployment figures for that month were the worst since the Second World War [with] school leavers [being] among the most vulnerable'.[133] He concludes,

> the whole idea of the "consensus" that had dominated post-war politics and social life was disintegrating: it was as though the whole post-war ideal of mass consumer enfranchisement fostered by the Prime Ministers of both parties was being proved a sham. The bright colours, the "classlessness", and especially the optimism of the sixties now seemed like a mirage. Just as the pop culture of its mid-decade had fragmented into small segments, so the country's social life seemed to be degenerating into warring factions.[134]

The idea of the so-called 'post-war consensus' rests upon the broad political agreement between the two major parties of Labour and Conservative in

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[133] Savage, J. (1991) *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*, London: Faber and Faber, p. 108.

attempting to re-build the 'key areas of management of the economy, welfare and defence',[135] following the cessation of the Second World War in 1945. In summary, the post-war consensus proclaimed a time of economic and social optimism built upon the creation of a welfare state, the economic stability of near-full employment, and a new balance between the public and private sectors so as to attain the 'mixed economy'[136] that emerged in the 1950s.

As such, an analysis of the post-war consensus may be divided up into four separate, but overlapping sections. The first, between the years 1940 and 1955, saw the initial building of this consensus, thus heralding a time of increasing public optimism. The second stage, between 1955 and 1979 however, saw the demise of such political confidence, as the consensus came under considerable strain. Thus, the years 1979 and 1997 witnessed the ending of the consensus, eventually leading to a post-1997 political environment that has often been termed as the building of a new post-Thatcherite consensus under 'New Labour'. Although all four phases will be touched upon within this thesis, this chapter will concentrate primarily on the periods 1940-1955 and 1955-1979, in that they provide the political background central towards an analysis of the emergence of British punk (1976-) and the anarcho-punk movement of the early 1980s. In other words, the policies that remained the basis of the consensus will be examined along with the subsequent strain that those policies found themselves under until the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Given the complexities of the issues under discussion, my intention here is to provide the necessary

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[134] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[135] Coxall, B. & Robins, L. (1998) *Contemporary British Politics*, London: Macmillan, p. 19.
[136] A 'mixed economy' is one that has a balance between privately owned industries and those attained by the state.

political and social contextualization for the emergence of punk/anarcho-punk. As such, the following discussion provides a summary of the key points arising rather than a critical evaluation of the source material itself.

1.1. 1940-1955: The Building Blocks of the Consensus

The foundation of the post-war consensus was built upon three key areas. The first involved governmental Foreign Policy and, in particular, Britain's so-called 'World Role' that continued to emerge immediately after the Second World War. The second area was concerned with the implication of social policy, in particular the development of the welfare state and the National Health Service. The final area involved economic policy and the attempt to build a 'mixed economy'; an area whereby the government would subsequently become more involved in the running of the economy than at any previous time in modern politics.

1.2. A Force to be Reckoned With: Sustaining Britain's 'World Role'

In 1945, Britain continued to be recognised as a World Power. 'Although far outmatched in population, industrial production and military capacity by the new superpowers, the USA and USSR, it was far in advance of other potentially second rank, but heavily defeated countries such as Germany, Italy, France and Japan'.[137] It is generally accepted that this status was built around three key areas of foreign policy. The first of these was based upon Britain being one of the

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[137] Coxall, B. & Robins, L., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

major victorious powers in the Second World War. Here, Britain was one of the three major powers at the two conferences of Yalta and Potsdam that, in default of an official post-war treaty would nevertheless constitute a post-war settlement. Further, it was considered that 'in Churchill, the country had a towering leader who, by a combination of personal magnetism and bluff, seemed able to treat on equal terms with the American and Soviet leaders, Roosevelt and Stalin'.[138]

The second contributory factor in Britain's so-called 'world leader' status, lay in its possession of a large empire. At its peak in 1933, the British Empire covered nearly one quarter of the globe and contained almost one quarter if its population. Indeed, it could be argued that 'although to some extent destabilised by the growth of nationalist movements in the non-white territories, the empire remained of considerable economic and military significance'.[139] Lastly, Britain had a 'special relationship' with America. As early as 1941 Britain had formed what was termed as a Land-Lease agreement, providing a system of credits for Britain to obtain a continuous supply of American goods and materials in order to sustain its war effort. Because of this agreement, the two countries subsequently became military allies in 1942 in the war against Germany and Japan.

Following Clement Atlee's post-war election victory in 1945, Britain's foreign policy was led by the Labour Party's Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. Based upon two guiding principles, Bevin believed that not only a vigorous British Foreign Policy was vital to world peace, but also that it was important to

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[138] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

maintain the notion that Britain was still a great power with important global interests to protect. Consequently, Bevin presided over the development of a number of treatises to sustain Britain's status as a world superpower. The first of these was the containment of communism. Here, Bevin looked to the close involvement of the United States in the so-called 'defence' of Europe against possible Soviet military aggression. Therefore, although he was to play a leading role in negotiating the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949, the Atlee government (1945-1951) also allowed American strategic bombers (with atomic capability from 1949) to be stationed in Britain in 1946. Consequently, when the Soviets blockaded Berlin in 1948 Britain participated with the United States in an airlift of supplies to keep the city open.

If the containment of communism was high on the agenda, then Bevin also recognised the economic and political value of the Empire and Commonwealth; and this was reflected in a number of strategic actions that were aimed at preserving Britain's status as a world power. On the one hand this involved the withdrawal of troops from countries that were deemed untenable. Due to a growth in Nationalist discontent and economic reliance the territory of British-ruled India was partitioned in 1947, creating Pakistan, and independence was granted to Burma and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1948. Accompanying such a retreat, Britain began to provide financial relief for Colonial and Commonwealth countries, thus participating in the Colombo Plan in 1951 to help Asia and the Far East to develop basic aspects of 'transportation, irrigation, power, communication and public utilities, which could not be supplied by private

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[139] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

investment'.[140] However, Bevin also decided that Britain would use force to defend its interests. This included a war fought against a communist threat in Malaysia, the crushing of revolts in Kenya and Cyprus and the imprisonment of Nationalist leaders such as Kwane Nkrumah in the Gold Coast and Dr. Hastings Banda in Nyasaland. Britain also defended its foreign interests by retaining a world-wide system of naval and military bases, two most notable being those in Hong Kong and the Suez Canal Zone. The maintenance of the base in Hong Kong is significant in that the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 continued to compound the already established paranoia by the West of a so-called Russian led Communist Conspiracy.[141] The subsequent Suez Canal Crisis in 1956 however, is significant in that it grievously weakened Britain's claim to be a military superpower and a major force in World politics.

The third way in which Bevin's Foreign Policy was to preserve Britain's 'world role' was by further investment in defence and, in particular the A-bomb. A successful testing of a British A-bomb in 1952 preceded Churchill's decision – 'in the wake of US and Soviet development of the more powerful H-bomb – that Britain should have this weapon too'.[142] This was subsequently developed in 1954. As such, Britain's international military obligations and overseas commitments, sanctioned an increasing defence budget that rose to almost 8% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 1954, a figure that meant Britain had a higher *per capita* burden of defence spending compared even to the United States.

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[140] Hall, D. G. E. (1981) *A History of South-East Asia*, London: Macmillan, p. 912.
[141] For further reference to Britain's decision to keep control of Hong Kong through its worry of the spread of communism, turn to Welsh (1993) pp. 438-440.
[142] Coxall, B. & Robins, L., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

1.3. Looking After the Nation: The Establishment of the Welfare State

The second major aspect of the post-war consensus was the development of the welfare state: a policy that was built upon four key platforms. The first of these platforms was the large expansion in the role of post-war government. For instance, the government took upon itself the powers to over-see both the production and distribution of resources as well as the distribution of the labour force itself. An example of this can be seen in the allocation of raw materials to priority purposes, manpower planning, price controls and rationing. The second key area was the drawing up of vast new governmental responsibilities in the provision of welfare and the sustenance of full employment. This was reflected in the *Beveridge Report* of 1942, which 'called for a new social security system based on compulsory social insurance and fixed subsistence-level benefits in return for flat-rate contributions'.[143] This was also complemented by the *White Paper on Employment Policy* (1944), which concluded that 'the maintenance of a "high and stable level of employment" was one of "the primary aims and responsibilities" of government after the war'.[144]

Whilst the consensus can be interpreted partly as a form of extreme paternalism - ensuring that the state took care of its 'family' through the National Health Service and the Family Allowance Act, and so contributing towards a stable workforce – it was nevertheless considered by many as an intrusion into social life/civil liberties. As such one could argue that the government increasingly undermined personal choice and thus constructed instead what has since been

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[143] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

termed as a 'nanny state'. As will become evident, the problems surrounding these optimistic governmental interventions became an important source of political backlash which involved punk, and even more so, the anarcho-punk movement of the early 1980s.

The third key area in the welfare state provision within the consensus was a commitment by post-war government for social reconstruction. This was to include actual government legislation, examples being the 1944 Education Act, the introduction of family allowances in 1945 and two government White Papers. The first entitled *A National Health Service* – was to provide a free health service funded by taxation, whilst the second, *Social Insurance*, implemented the *Beveridge Report* outlined above. The final key area of the welfare state was an obvious left-wing swing of both elite and public opinion that accompanied the implication of the consensus. Here, 'post-war social reconstruction enjoyed widespread support from reformist intellectuals, civil servants [and] political parties',[145] who advocated an unprecedented degree of support for government intervention in economic and social affairs; a policy that underpinned much of the resultant development – and consequent demise – of the post-war consensus itself.

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[144] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

1.4. Fixing the 'Balance of Payments': The Development of the 'Mixed Economy'

In terms of the economy, one could argue that the most important aspect of post-war policy concerned the nationalisation of a number of key industries by the Atlee government. These included the coal industry, the railways, iron and steel, gas, electricity and aviation. Importantly, with the exception of steel and road haulage, these were retained by subsequent Conservative governments (1951-1964). Moreover, the idea of a 'mixed economy' provides a specific example of the government's close intervention in the running of the economy, with both parties using 'a combination of fiscal techniques (i.e., manipulation of tax rates) and monetary methods (i.e., interest rate charges)...to ensure full employment, stable prices, economic growth, protection of the value of sterling and the avoidance of balance of payments crisis'.[146] Indeed, as the historian Keith Middlemass points out, there was now a growing relationship between government and so-called 'peak' organisations of industry and trade unions, a relationship he terms as 'corporate bias'.[147] This was to ensure that the damaging industrial conflict that had occurred during the 1920s would not be repeated: 'the rationale of informal corporation for business and the unions was that it gave them a permanent voice in policy-making, thereby increasing their capacity to serve the interests of their members'.[148]

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[145] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[146] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[147] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[148] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

As such, the Labour Party's attempts in post-war re-construction – involving a new form of consensus founded on the concept of reformed capitalism and where support for a mixed economy was tempered by the construction of a welfare state and an expansion in public ownership – were simply appropriated by the election of the Conservative Party in 1951. Here, there was a continuing commitment to welfare and full employment created by the post-war boom under the slogan 'capitalism for the people'. The class war, it was argued, was over, no longer necessary as the interests of the working people and their rulers were identical: capitalism was at last being politically managed to produce, for the mass of ordinary people 'a better life'. The mixed economy therefore, was a framework for the newly found optimism of the post-war era. A time where a sense of British identity was high on the agenda as Britain looked strong both at home – with the implementation of social policy explored above – as well as retaining its 'world role' through its Empire and the Commonwealth. Yet, in retrospect, one could argue that the post-war consensus was not so easily managed and, by the mid-1950s, serious cracks were beginning the show in the so-called 'collectivist' politics of the immediate post-war years.

1.5. 1955-1979: The Breakdown of the Consensus

If, indeed, the central task of the consensus was to achieve the most painless transformation from wartime to a peacetime economy, then one can soon perceive the social and political effect that the breakdown of this ideal would have on Britain during the 1970s. '"Winning the war" had....twisted the balance

of power from its previous axis so that Britain was no longer a world power',[149] notes Savage. 'It was merely a small island held in thrall by the USA, both strategically and economically. When America called in its Lend Lease agreement five days after VJ day, Britain owed £3 billion'.[150]

Whilst the balance of payments was a contributory factor in Britain's demise as a world power, other factors, such as the displacement of the Commonwealth by Europe, and the increasing reliance on the United States provide specific insights into the significance of external relations in the maintenance of the consensus. Britain, it seemed was torn between the safeguarding of its traditional role as a major power and the urgent need to develop an effective mixed economy. As Coxall and Robins observe 'the major strand in Britain's domestic history was the continued reluctance to sacrifice its pursuit of national "greatness" in order to dedicate itself to the goal of developing an efficient modern economy'.[151] Even so, de-colonisation, which had slowed considerably during the 1950s, now began to increase during the 1960s. Here, seventeen colonial territories gained their independence between the years 1960 and 1964. By 1979 this process was nearing completion, and little remained of the British Empire. Furthermore, it could be argued that it was a dissolution that was inevitable, and that the only factors underlying the timing of the process were in question.

Indeed, a central reason for the increase in de-colonisation during the 1960s, is often attributed to the Suez Affair of 1956, 'when – in response to the

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[149] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[150] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
[151] Coxall, B. & Robins, L.,*op. cit.*, p. 24.

nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser – Britain colluded with France and Israel to launch a joint military expedition against Egypt'.[152] However, due to a run on sterling and international pressure from the USA amongst others, Britain was forced to withdraw, thereby dealing a deep-rooted blow to the country's self image as a great power.[153] However, other reasons that may have pointed to an increase in de-colonisation may have been France's decision to speed up de-colonisation in North and West Africa after 1958, and the decision by Belgium to withdraw from the Congo in the mid-1960s. Furthermore, Britain was anxious to avoid further acute embarrassments such as the 1959 revelations of the Hola Camp 'massacres' in Kenya and of accusations of so-called 'police state' conditions in Nyasaland.

It could be argued, therefore, that by the mid-1950s Britain's now over-stretched global responsibilities, plus the increasing burden of defence expenditure, were already damaging the country's economy. Even so, the Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (1957-1963) remained hopeful for a 'world role' for Britain, with the most important one perhaps being the development of a British Nuclear Deterrent. Yet, it was an ideal that was soon to break down. The British attempt at real nuclear independence ended in the cancellation of the surface-to-surface missile 'Blue Streak' in 1960, and the eventual forced negotiation of an agreement to purchase a new generation of nuclear weapons launched from Polaris submarines from the United States.

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[152] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[153] A more detailed outline of the Suez Crisis can be found in Dorey (1995) pp. 56-59.

Therefore, by 1965, the notion of the Commonwealth as a world force was at an end, although the concept itself had succeeded in disguising Britain's retreat from its Empire. Trade with the Commonwealth was also in decline when, in the 1960s, exports to the EEC grew quicker than exports to the Commonwealth. Britain had initially opposed the EEC, forming instead the EFTA (The European Free Trade Association), a move that was reflected when Britain's applications to join the EEC in 1961 and 1967 were blocked by French President, Charles de Gaulle, who rejected Britain on the grounds of not being a 'member' of Europe. 'The General's vetoes also owed much to wartime antagonisms and to French unwillingness to share European leadership with Britain',[154] write Coxall and Robins, 'but he undoubtedly had a point about Britain's pro-American sympathies'.[155] Indeed, the Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath's (1970-1974) eventual entry into the EEC in 1973 was one that was disadvantageous to Britain. In 1978 – the end of the transitional period of membership – Britain provided one-fifth of Community income, which was reasonable, but in return, because the EEC's payments were skewed towards farm support in the Common Agricultural Policy, received back under one-tenth of EEC spending.

The demise of the colonies, and the problems concerning the EEC were but two factors in Britain's declining economy. The maintenance of the consensus undoubtedly depended upon a buoyant economy and, as Britain began to slip down the so-called international 'league table', this was accompanied by an increasing economic decline. A wage freeze, cuts in expenditure, a seaman's strike and a move to more coercive and punitive measures led increasingly

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[154] Coxall, B. & Robins, L., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

towards a harsh 'control culture', that was to lead into the 1970s. 'The post-war economic boom that had produced the foundation for [the consensus had] ground to a halt as early as July 1966',[156] wrote Savage, 'when a six month wages freeze was initiated and the pound devalued. The economy began its long decline: by 1972, inflation was running at thirteen per cent, and in January of that year unemployment went over the million mark for the first time since the 1930s'.[157]

Indeed, the inflation rate, which had been on average at 2-3% in the 1950s and 4-5% in the late 1960s rose to over 9% in the early 1970s and consequently, 'after the quadrupling of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) oil prices in 1973-4, to over 24% in 1975'.[158] Unemployment, which had averaged an annual 335,000 in the 1950s and 447,000 in the 1960s also increased sharply after 1970, rising to a national average of 1.25 million in the years 1974-9. Consequently economic growth, which had averaged 2.8 per cent per annum between 1948 and 1973 plunged to a mere 1.4 per cent between 1973 and 1979.[159] A new term therefore – 'stagflation' – was coined to describe this unprecedented situation of slow growth combined with both rising unemployment and accelerating inflation.

The years between 1972 to 1979 were also the heyday of 'corporalist' economic management between government, employers and unions, with interventionist governments using incomes policies, as well as wage freezes, in order to contain inflationary measures. This was an approach that was symbolised by Labour's

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[155] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[156] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[157] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[158] Coxall, B. & Robins, L., *op. cit.*, p. 27.

'social contract' with the unions between 1974 and 1975. It was an arrangement whereby the unions agreed to voluntary restrain their members' wages in return for government social and industrial policies. This in turn, served to politicise industrial relations between government and the unions, culminating in the Heath government's clash with the miners between 1972 and 1974 and the Labour government's James Callaghan's (1976-1979) consequent battle with the public sector unions between 1978-9: both of which contributed towards their downfall.

In terms of the welfare state, there was very little policy difference between the two parties, thus continuing the post-war consensus that had produced the National Health Service, The Education Act and The Family Allowance Act. However, there were certain differences of opinion, especially in those concerning education and housing. In education Labour began a rapid movement towards comprehensive schools, whereas the Conservative government – although continuing this policy in 1970 – preferred a move towards the continuing development of grammar schools. In terms of housing, Labour increased the need for the stock of council housing, whilst the Conservatives wished to encourage more home-ownership. Yet, both parties moved towards a more means-tested system of social security policies, which for Labour was regrettable, in that it was a departure from the principle of universality. The Conservatives, on the other hand, approved such a policy believing that it preserved work incentives as well as containing the growth of state welfare.

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[159] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Yet, by the mid-1970s, the welfare state had also come under severe strain. In the 1950s, it was expected that the rapid growth in the economy would allow welfare spending to rise without raising tax, but by the 1970s this expectation had been diminished: for whereas National income had failed to grow as rapidly as expected, government welfare commitment had increased dramatically. Consequently, by the mid-1970s, even people officially classified as amongst the poorest in the community paid tax, with what was defined as the 'average' wage-earner with two children, paying one-quarter of their income in direct taxes compared with 3.3% in 1955. Unfortunately, Britain was falling ever deeper into recession.

1.6. 'Rivers of Blood': Another Blow to the Consensus

If there has been a discussion centred primarily around the key areas of the post-war consensus, then one must also turn to an issue that became central to British politics throughout the 1960s and 1970s: governmental policies surrounding immigration. 'For the first ten years or so after the war',[160] writes Peter Dorey in *British Politics Since 1945* (1995), 'Britain operated an "open door" policy *vis-à-vis* immigration from the countries of the Empire and Commonwealth':[161] a policy that rested upon two central issues. On the one hand it reflected a need to overcome labour shortages that were created through the expansion of the British economy through post-war reconstruction and Keynesian techniques of economic management, whilst on the other, immigration also derived from the fact that citizens of the Empire and Commonwealth countries enjoyed the so-

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[160] Dorey, P. (1995) *British Politics Since 1945*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 95.

called status of 'British subjects', and as such were allowed to take up residence in their 'mother country'.

The first attempt at introducing legislation to limit the influx of settlements to Britain came from a Labour government when, in 1948 the Atlee Administration passed the British Nationality Act. Although at this time the Conservative Party opposed such restrictions, by the mid-1950s many Conservative MPs began to express concern over both the scale of immigration, as well as the rights accorded to immigrants from the countries of the Empire and Commonwealth. Subsequently, the demands on stricter controls on immigration during the 1950s increased for three main reasons. The first was the actual number of immigrants who were entering Britain at this time. In 1953, for example, there were a total of 2000 immigrants entering the country, compared to 29,850 in 1958 and 136,400 in 1961.[162] Secondly, racial disturbances occurred in Nottingham and Notting Hill during the second half of 1958 and thus opening out the issue of immigration into the public domain. Indeed, Dorey observes that, 'during the autumn, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Minister for Commonwealth Relationships, was suggesting that curbs might need to be placed on "the unrestricted flow of immigrants from the West Indies"'.[163] Such a call for restriction was further highlighted at this time at the Conservatives' annual conference, where – in spite of being urged to oppose it by the Home Secretary, Rab Butler – members supported a motion calling for tighter immigration controls.

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[161] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[162] There is a full and comprehensive table entitled 'Immigration from the Commonwealth, 1953-1962' in *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[163] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

The third reason for the increasing demand within the Conservative Party for controls on immigration during the late 1950s, stemmed from a number of so-called 'anti-immigration' Conservative MPs being elected for constituencies in the Birmingham area; a part of Britain where many immigrants were residing. The figures quoted above as to the steady rise in immigration, set in the context of concern over Britain's deepening economic problems – including higher unemployment – served to push the issue of immigration up the political agenda. Dorey quotes from an entry that the Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan (1957-1963) had made in his diary in May 1961 regarding 'a long discussion [in Cabinet] on West Indian immigration into the United Kingdom, which is now becoming rather a serious problem'.[164] Dorey concludes, 'such was the concern over the scale of immigration by the early 1960s that the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act was introduced, which established a voucher system to regulate the number of Commonwealth immigrants entitled to move to Britain'.[165]

It could be argued that this piece of legislation, far from relieving public concern over immigration, seemed actually to fuel it – and effectively legitimise it – by implying that people's concerns over the number of immigrants entering Britain were justified. This effect was compounded when the opposing Labour Party 'recognising the danger of losing working class support to the Conservative Party on the "race issue" – began to support tougher immigration controls, albeit with anti-discrimination legislation for those immigrants already settled in Britain'.[166]

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[164] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[165] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[166] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Indeed, the debate over race and immigration consequently came to a head under the Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, as in April 1968 the Conservative Member of Parliament Enoch Powell delivered his now notorious 'Rivers of Blood' speech. 'We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual influx of some 50,000 dependants who are, for the most part, the material of the future growth of the immigrant population',[167] said Powell. 'It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre...As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see the "River Tiber foaming with much blood"'.[168]

Whilst most educated people were appalled by Powell's speech and sentiments, the tabloid press applauded him, seeing him as a heroic figure and a true patriot, merely concerned in saving his people and their nation from invasion and take-over by 'alien forces'. The social and political effects of Powell's speech have been well documented elsewhere,[169] but of the 110,000 letters that Powell received in response to his speech, the overwhelming majority were supportive, often congratulatory. Indeed, support for Powell was evident when workers from the East End of London, such as dockers and meat-porters from Smithfield Market, staged a series of strikes and marches to Downing Street, many of them calling for him to be made Prime Minister. Instead, Powell's speech resulted in his dismissal by Edward Heath, now leader of the Conservative opposition, who later admitted that he found the speech deplorable in tackling such a delicate

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[167] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[168] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[169] An exhaustive account can be found in Patrick Cosgrave (1989) *The Lives of Enoch Powell*, London: Bodley Head, pp. 241-255.

topic in this way.[170] Yet, ironically Heath was soon to speak of the need for stricter controls on 'coloured' immigration, a move that could perhaps be perceived as both a calming of Conservative backbenchers on this issue as well as a 'need to counter any challenge by Powell for the Conservative Leadership'.[171] This move was further reflected in the Party's election manifesto which pledged that although Commonwealth immigrants residing in Britain would retain the right to be joined by their wives and children, in future, immigrant workers and their families would not enjoy the right of permanent settlement in Britain. In other words, Heath believed that there should be no further large-scale permanent immigration. Yet, although the Conservatives won the election in 1970, and further defused the situation by implementing the 1971 Immigration Act, the issue of immigration soon came back to the forefront of British politics when the racially motivated National Front party became a serious electoral force a few years later.

The National Front was formed in 1967 from the remnants of three far-right organisations, namely the British National Party, League of Empire Loyalists, and the Racial Preservation Society. Having amassed a combined membership of about 4,000 - which by early 1974 had risen to 15,000 - the National Front was undoubtedly a political party rather than a pressure group, and was perceived by most people to be concerned almost exclusively with the issue of coloured (i.e. non-white) immigration and race. Indeed, although the party spent much of its

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[170] Heath, E. (1998) *The Course of My Life: My Autobiography*, London: Coronet, pp. 290-294.
[171] Dorey, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

time denying its fascist past,[172] 'the "ideology" or programme of the National Front was largely based on the notion that British society, and the (white) British race, were being undermined by coloured immigration'.[173]

Consequently, the National Front's opposition to immigration worked on two levels. 'Firstly, there was the notion of eugenics which National Front leaders and intellectuals (*sic*) espoused, entailing arguments about racial hierarchies and innate biologically determined levels of intelligence, civilisation, culture, etc.'[174] In terms of race, the National Front believed in the superiority of whites over all non-white races and civilisations. Consequently, the party warned – as Hitler had done in *Mein Kampf* (1936) – that the so-called purity and superiority of the British 'race' would be destroyed if its members began breeding with the members of another (inferior) race. Therefore, the National Front insisted that the purity and superiority of the British race depended upon putting an end to all mixed-race marriages and sexual relationships.

The second level of the National Front's opposition to immigration was the electoral or populist one, whereby British people were warned of the threat that coloured immigrants posed in their everyday lives. Pulling upon the propaganda used on the Jewish population by Hitler and the Weimar Republic, 'the National Front played the numbers game, suggesting that many socio-economic problems in Britain – rising unemployment, slum housing, increasing crime, poverty, the escalating cost of maintaining the welfare state – were "caused by too many

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[172] For a thorough account of the birth and subsequent development of the National Front one can turn to Richard Thurlow (1998) *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985*, London: I. B. Taurus, 'The Grand Synthesis, 1967-1985', pp. 245-267.
[173] Dorey, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

immigrants"'.[175] In other words, if a 'black' person was in paid employment, the National Front claimed that they were denying a white person that job. Conversely, if a 'black' person was unemployed, they were then accused of 'scrounging' off the welfare state, paid for by the taxes and national insurance contributions of British workers.

The most significant 'breakthrough' for the National Front came in the West Bromwich by-election in May 1973, when it polled over 4,700 votes (over 16 per cent of the total cast). The following year, in the two 1974 general elections (February and October), the Party fielded 54 and 90 candidates respectively, polling 76,000 votes in February and 113,579 in October. Indeed, as Dorey points out, 'the October 1974 result "confirmed its position as England's fourth party"'.[176] Moreover, although the National Front failed to win a seat in a local election in Leicester, they did poll over 43,000 votes, whilst in 1977, in elections to the Greater London Council (GLC), they managed to poll 119,000 votes, and won over ¼ million votes nationally.[177]

Dorey also turns to another way in which the Far Right would impose its views on minority groups, noting that the National Front 'was also engaged in direct action, usually in the form of physical assaults on "non-white" individuals and criminal damage – including arson – to their property. Such racial attacks have long been particularly prevalent in the East End of London'.[178] Indeed, as electoral influence for the Far Right decreased towards the end of the late 1970s,

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[174] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[175] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[176] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[177] Figures taken from *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

there is evidence to suggest that members had fewer qualms about relying on direct action and violence in order to 'drive out' ethnic minority sections of society.

More importantly, Dorey also sees two main factors that contributed to the decline of the Far Right in the late 1970s: the first being the involvement of the Conservative Party. Under Margaret Thatcher's leadership, the party contested the 1979 general election on a manifesto that promised much stricter immigration controls. Dorey notes that, 'the previous year, Margaret Thatcher had herself said, in a television interview, that she understood "the fears of our people" about being "swamped" by "alien cultures"'.[179] Consequently, 'many of those who might have voted for the National Front could now consider it worthwhile voting Conservative'.[180] As such, even though the National Front fielded 303 candidates in the 1979 General Election, it could only secure 1.5 per cent of the vote nationally.

The second factor attributing to the decline of the National Front in the late 1970s was the increasing fragmentation of the party, due partly as a result of its diminishing electoral support. In 1982 a former senior figure in the National Front, John Tyndall, founded the British National Party – taking many NF members with him – thus amassing a membership of about 2,000 – 3,000. Moreover, since its formation, the British National Party has displaced the National Front as Britain's main party of the Far Right, subsequently securing

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[178] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[179] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[180] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

the election of a councillor in a local by-election in Tower-Hamlets, London in 1993.

1.7. Final Thoughts: The Beginning of the End

The demise of the post-war consensus was therefore central to the social and political environment that would eventually encapsulate the mid-1970s. The post-war optimism that was felt by Britons in the late 1940s and 1950s eventually gave way to a deepening economic recession, increasing unemployment, a decline in the nation's role as a world 'superpower' and a subsequent crisis of national identity. For Savage, 1976 'was a time of portents....In June, unemployment reached 1,501,976, 6.4% of the workforce, and the worst figure since 1940. The pound dropped below $2 to reach the figure of $1.70. By July, the chancellor, Denis Healey was told by the Treasury that he had to cut public expenditure to regain the confidence of the markets'.[181] Indeed, rapidly rising inflation and unemployment, slowing economic growth, and high and increasing levels of public expenditure meant that by the end of September the government had to turn to the International Monetary Fund.

> When the IMF team arrived in England in England on 1 November, American monetarists came to dictate the policy of a centrist Labour government. Even the avuncular James Callaghan could not disguise the fact that the consensus that had governed post-war politics and social life was cracking up. The consensus, partly inspired by the century-long democratic ideal of American consumerism, was not only inadequate against the recession of the mid-1970s but was also patently untrue: one had only to look at the decaying inner cities to realise that poverty and inequality, far from being eradicated, were visible as never before.[182]

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[181] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

2. Pop vs. Progressive Rock: Starting Out on the Punk Rock Road to Nowhere

There is much evidence to suggest therefore that the economic breakdown of the post-war consensus was to play a significant role in the shaping of punk sensibilities. Not least in the underlying ideology surrounding the dole-queue (and its relation to the worsening economy), immigration (and Rock Against Racism) and the decline of Britain as an affluent 'superpower'. While these points will be considered in more detail below, this section will concentrate upon two further contributory factors which also played a significant part in the emergence and attitude of 1970s punk: the British musical environment of the 1970s and the New York punk scene of the early to mid-1970s. Firstly, I would like to argue that the essence of punk related to a number of important musical characteristics, including simple musical form, non-virtuosity, a 'do-it-yourself' ethic and the breaking down of the relationship between performer and audience. Further, I would like to argue that the emergence of these characteristics lay in the backlash towards the progressive rock and pop scene during the late 1960s and 1970s. In particular, I would want to argue that progressive rock had become increasingly complex in both form and content, so emphasising the significance of the virtuoso performer and the increasingly large-scale, economically expensive reliance on both studios and performance venues characterised by groups such as Pink Floyd and King Crimson. In terms of the pop music at this time, one can see the emergence of mass produced music by large 'transnational' record companies (EMI for instance), and the emergence of TV advertised compilation albums.

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[182] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

The second influence on punk rock relates to *attitude*, not least the way in which the temperament of British punk rock was influenced by the New York punk scene of the early to mid-1970s. Attention will be drawn to the role of Malcolm McLaren and his involvement with the earlier American scene, thus providing a consideration of the extent to which this subsequently influenced his 'masterminding' of the emergence of British punk. In particular, I will highlight the importance of the New York scene to British punk rock by discussing bands such as The New York Dolls and Iggy and the Stooges. This section will conclude with an analysis of the track 'Search and Destroy' by the Stooges, highlighting a number of key elements that can also be found in British punk rock, characteristics that will become apparent in the subsequent analyses of the Sex Pistols in part three of this chapter below.

2.1. Musical Whiplash: K-Tel and the Politics of Boredom

In *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (1985), Dave Laing notes that 'in 1976, two thirds of the British record market was shared between six major transnational companies. These "majors" were vertically integrated: not only did they originate recordings by signing artists and putting them in the studio, they also manufactured discs and tapes and then distributed them and promoted them to shops'.[183] He continues, 'each controlled three or four main aspects of the record business, while EMI had a stake in the fourth – retailing –

[183] Laing,, *op cit.*, p. 1.

through its chain of HMV record shops'.[184] To provide evidence for his observation, Laing includes figures from the British Phonographic Industry (BPI). Here, EMI for example, a British owned company, had 21 per cent of the market in terms of single sales in 1976, compared to CBS who had 16 per cent and Polygram who came third with 13 per cent. In terms of album sales, EMI had 22 per cent of the market; CBS had 9 per cent and Polygram 13 per cent. Laing also points out that 'in some cases the proportion of record sales in which a major had a financed interest was even higher, since many smaller record companies used the majors to manufacture and distribute their products'.[185] Consequently, the author estimates that EMI handled about one-third of all records sold in Britain during the mid-1970s.

The dominance of these major companies can also be observed in the international market, not least the way in which they could ensure access to every market of significance in Western and Third world countries. In *Rock and Roll: A Social History* (1996), Paul Friedlander provides a commentary on the rapid expansion of the record industry in America during the late 1960s and early 1970s. He notes that record sales, which had topped $1 billion in 1967, continued to grow, reaching $2 billion in 1973 and $4 billion in 1978. Moreover, the revenue from record and tape sales began to surpass all other types of mass entertainment revenue including sports merchandise and cinemas. Subsequently, it could be argued that music had entered the climate of 'Big Business' and with profits soaring and growth levels reaching 25 percent annually, record-labels began to attract the scrutiny of corporate bosses. 'Lawyers and accountants

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[184] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

replaced old-time music aficionados such as Atlantic's Ahmet Ertegun and Elektra's Jac Holzman as the final arbiters of major-label decision-making'.[186]

Because of the growing profits to be made, major record labels began to merge with smaller companies as the trend toward corporate consolidation increased. By 1973 Warner Bros./Reprise, Elektra/Asylum, Atlantic/Atco combined, (given the acronym WEA) and other related subsidiaries were united under the corporate umbrella of the Kinney Corporation, a company that began in funeral homes and parking lots. Industry giant Columbia Records was only one part in the CBS conglomerate that owned the CBS TV network, Hertz Rent-a-Car, Banquet Foods and much more. Consequently, by 1973 the top six record corporations were selling approximately 66 per cent of all the Hot-100 singles and albums, a figure that had reached 82 per cent by 1980.[187]

If Friedlander highlights the move of the international music industry into Big Business, then one can point to the importance of the British music scene in such a development. For instance, Laing believes that because of the success of the Beatles, many British musicians with international status in the mid-1970s were signed to foreign-owned record companies. As evidence of this he quotes among others David Bowie, who was signed to RCA, the Bay City Rollers, who were signed to Arista and Led Zeppelin who were with Atlantic – WEA. The transnational success of these artists – which also included Rod Stewart and Fleetwood Mac – had an effect on the process of the actual recording of the

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[185] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[186] Friedlander, P. (1996) *Rock and Roll: A Social History*, Oxford: Westview Press, p. 233.
[187] All figures taken from *Ibid.*, p. 233.

material written. Because of the expansion of the world market, financial rewards from a world-wide hit record were potentially vast, and subsequently this monetary gain encouraged major record companies to invest large sums of money in the preparation of both the musicians involved and in the recording process. Therefore, money was spent on improving the technology in recording studios. 'In particular',[188] Laing notes, 'the exponential increase during the decade in the number of tracks, or channels of sound, into which the music to be recorded could be separated, allowed musicians and producers to manipulate the sounds to an unprecedented degree'.[189] In this sense, musical value began to rely increasingly on the expertise of the studio engineer and music producer. Although the emergence of punk rock proved that 'valid' recordings could be made for a fraction of the cost, the general consensus in 1976 was that 'good' records were identified by a clean, and thus superior, quality sound recording. Furthermore, as Laing points out, as one could only finance studio time by the sponsorship of a major record label, 'the only path to artistic success musicians could imagine lay through convincing labels that one's own work would prove commercially viable'.[190]

There was however, another reason for signing to a major or large independent record label. Since the late 1960s, the so-called 'progressive rock' genre had further emphasised the primacy of recorded music over live performance, and had thus equated musical excellence with a meticulous (and time-consuming, hence expensive) attention to detail in and maximum use of, the recording studio.

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[188] Laing, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[189] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[190] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Indeed, Laing illuminates this by turning specifically to the Beach Boys, whose 'Good Vibrations' single, recorded in 1966 'reputedly took six months in four separate studios and cost £5,000 (over $10,000) to produce'.[191] This in turn began to have an effect not only on the way in which progressive rock was performed, but also towards the musical form and content found within the style. Live concerts were increasingly expected to sound exactly like the artists' studio albums and consequently needed increased technology and extra musicians. 'In many instances, such shows ran at a loss and the record companies covered the costs, regarding them as a form of publicity for the album proper',[192] continues Laing. At the same time artists began to deviate from the traditional three-minute song format, turning instead to writing lengthy and more complex 'concept albums'. Musicians became increasingly virtuosic and the themes of the concept albums became ever more verbose, as artists began to explore both musical form and subject matter in their work.

An example of the musical complexities surrounding the notion of the so-called 'concept album' can be seen in two lengthy works by the band Pink Floyd, whose origins in the psychedelic underground shifted after Syd Barrett (guitar/vocals) – who suffered a drug-related breakdown – was replaced by David Gilmour. *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), a song cycle that remained in the top-200 charts for fifteen years could be argued to be the quintessential concept album, whilst *The Wall* (1979) featured the construction and destruction of a huge wall during its live performance. Another example is David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), an eleven

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[191] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

track album that tells the story of its title, or *Heroes* (1977), the title track exploring ideas around loneliness and love.

Yet it must also be noted that progressive rock was merely one style within the British popular music scene of the 1970s. Not only did these particular artists concentrate on making albums rather than singles, it could be argued that their audiences were also predominantly made up of those whose sense of a musical tradition stretched back to the Beatles and the Beach Boys. In contrast, Laing also highlights the existence of what is often termed 'teenybopper' music – '(exemplified by the Bay City Rollers) and the emerging disco dance music of artists like Chic and Tina Charles facing the main pop trends'.[193] The Bay City Rollers in particular, are a good example of the teeny-bop scene that was emerging in the 1970s. Formed in the late 1960s as the Saxons by brothers Derek and Alan Longmuir, the band changed its name by sticking a pin in a map of the USA. Manipulated by the dance band leader Tam Paton, part of the band's eventual success was due to sending pictures of themselves to 10,000 addresses lifted from so-called 'teen' magazines in 1974. Subsequently, their image of being a short-trousered, tartan-trimmed, spiky-haircut group contributed to two number one hits the following year. 'Bye Bye Baby' – a track 'plundered' from Dusty Springfield's 'I Only Wanna Be with You' – spent 16 weeks in the chart, whilst 'Give A Little Love' stayed for 9 weeks. Furthermore, the band have admitted to not playing on a number of their tracks.

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[192] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[193] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Laing also continues by noting that 'these two genres (progressive rock and pop) represented two poles of music in the mid-1970s...and between them were a range of other styles'.[194] These styles were able to 'straddle the rock/pop divide'[195] and included artists such as ELO, Elton John, and Paul McCartney, whose 'Mull of Kintyre' sold over two million copies in Britain alone. Here, it could be argued that Laing highlights the changing – almost fragmenting shift – in popular music audiences of the 1970s. In particular highlighting the effect of what is termed the second wave of the post-war 'baby boom' who were about to hit puberty, and who were now ready for the next wave of so-called 'teenyboppers'. What had essentially been a teenage audience of the 1950s, and then a larger diversity of audience brought together by the Beatles in the 1960s, now began to fragment. Evidence of this can be seen in analysing the top 20 best selling singles in October 1976,[196] the month that the Damned released 'New Rose' – hailed as the first punk single – and the release of the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK'. Artists such as Rod Stewart, Abba and the Bay City Rollers, share the chart with older, longer serving artists such as Manfred Mann and Elvis Presley. The singer Demis Roussos also makes an appearance, as does the clarinettist Acker Bilk. Moreover, the so-called novelty song, the Wurzel's 'I Am a Cider Drinker (Paloma Blanca)', slips to number 14 after reaching the dizzy heights of 12 the month before (the single actually reached number 3 in the British singles chart in September of that year).[197]

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[194] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[195] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[196] Figures are taken from McAleer, D. (ed.) (1996) *The Warner Guide to UK and US Hit Singles*, London: Carlton/Little Brown.
[197] Rice, J., Rice, T., Gambaccini, P. & Read, M. (1981) *The Guinness Book of Hit Singles*, London: Guinness Superlatives, p. 266.

Laing also highlights the emergence of a new company entitled K-Tel, who was to subsequently launch the first television-advertised compilation album of hit records. It was aimed at an audience that would not otherwise buy records, and would be in a slightly higher age group. 'Hence, they were sold "oldies" collections by stars of the 1960s or else new albums by already established superstars'.[198] Indeed trends to promote these television advertised compilation albums became so popular that by 1976 nine of the top 20 best-selling albums in Britain were TV advertised re-issues. Two such examples of K-Tel's albums are the compilations *Disco Fever: 20 Original Disco Hits* (1977) and *Action Replay* (1978). It is interesting to note that both albums epitomise Laing's notion of the fragmentation of Seventies music. *Disco Fever* for example, contains artists such as Dolly Parton, Hot Chocolate and David Soul, whilst the latter has the Three Degrees, Hot Gossip and Rose Royce. Yet, what is also interesting is the inclusion of so-called punk – or new wave[199] – acts such as Blondie and the Boomtown Rats, evidence perhaps of what could be termed as the smooth end of punk during the late 1970s.

The increase in sales of K-Tel's compilation albums was also assisted by large multiple stores such as Boots, Woolworths and W.H. Smith beginning to move into the selling of records. To be competitive with the already established records outlets, this group of shops began a policy of discounting selected albums that maximised sales of records already in the top 20. 'The result of this was that the "turnover" of album titles in the charts slowed down considerably, making it

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[198] Laing, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[199] 'New wave' was a term given to an emerging post-punk movement that although co-opted much of first wave punk – the critical attitude towards society, or the penchant for

more difficult to succeed, especially the newer artists'[200] notes Laing. Indeed, it was made even more difficult to succeed as the artist now had less support due to an increased advertising budget for the TV albums. Furthermore, difficulty for those artists also lay in the fact that the growing market share of the multiple stores (30% by 1976) was made at the expense of the specialist record shops. These independent retailers, whose numbers now began to diminish, would invariably stock a far wider range of titles than the multiples. Therefore, they would certainly be more likely to make available records by new or unknown musicians.

By the mid-1970s therefore, it was more difficult to locate an epicentre for British popular music. Laing notes that 'there was no guarantee that the new teenyboppers would follow the evolution of their predecessors...who graduated from screaming at the Beatles to analysing the lyrics of their later songs'.[201] He also highlights the so-called lack of new musical talent emerging during the mid-1970s, a process heightened by the pressure on funds available for investment in such talent caused by discounting and TV advertising. The future of popular music during this time consequently seemed uncertain: and Laing concludes by asking whether 'some people wondered, that the future lay not with the pop and rock sphere but with the new-style MOR (middle-of-the-road) audience revealed by the success of TV marketed albums?'[202]

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unconventional dress for instance – contained what could be argued as a more educated and skilful attitude towards the musical material.

[200] Laing, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[201] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[202] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Although this section has dealt predominantly with the emergence of major records labels in the mid-1970s, it may be useful to briefly conclude with the discussion of a number of so-called 'independent' labels that existed at this time. If, on one hand, the mid-1970s witnessed the increasing centralisation of record production and distribution, then, on the other, one can also find evidence of smaller labels such as Stiff Records in London and Factory records from Manchester, beginning to issue and distribute what Laing notes as 'Xerox music'.[203] Formed in 1976, Stiff Records made the first punk signing with The Damned in 1976, resulting in the issue of the single 'New Rose' in that year for instance, whilst Factory Records became home to a number of post-punk bands such as Joy Division and Durutti Column. Here, the emphasis was placed upon the initial signing of the bands and the distribution of musical material, rather than the 'polished' and 'professional' recordings from the majors. Also, these labels relied upon an alternative method of distribution, with material often being delivered by hand to a variety of outlets, or sold by mail order.

In this sense, the independent label became a useful alternative to the growing commercialism of the majors. The shop and label Rough Trade for instance, based in London's Kensington Park Road, being a good example of this. (Interestingly, the label became home to two European post-punk bands in the form of Metal Urbain from France and Switzerland's Kleenex, as well as the British based Raincoats and Scritti Politti). Although catering to a number of different musical tastes – including a wide range of punk and reggae – Rough Trade also began to develop a distribution network named 'The Cartel',

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[203] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

alongside its retail activities. More so, the shop became a meeting place for local musicians, with the advertising of band members and gigs, as well as selling a number of home grown fanzines. In this sense, independent labels played key roles in the decentralisation of punk in the mid-1970s, seemingly disputing the notion of 'good' music being equated with superior sound quality and a nation-wide network of distribution.

2.2. From New York to Sex: Sonic Reducing in the Big Apple

While the musical polemic of the 1970s was significant to the aesthetics of punk, not least in its backlash against the centralised control of record companies, there is also evidence to suggest that the increasingly stale musical environment was an expression of the failure of the post-war consensus and worsening recession of the 1970s. By 1976 Britain was facing soaring inflation, high unemployment and increased poverty within inner-city areas. Moreover, the intricate aspects of the consensus that have been dealt with above were arguably finally taking its toll upon the British economy, as taxes were increased to pay for the Welfare State and Defence. Furthermore, as Britain was gripped by rapidly rising inflation and unemployment, slowing economic growth and increasingly high levels of public expenditure, it was also accompanied by an increasing loss of 'national identity' due mainly to a sharp decline in international political status and relative economic strength. Consequently, it could be argued that the mid-1970s was a time that encapsulated an era for a more realistic musical backlash

that highlighted these problems and demonstrated the negativity of the time.[204] The social and musical aspects that contributed towards the birth of punk rock is further highlighted by Malcolm McLaren who, in *Please Kill Me* (2000) noted that 'by the dawn of the seventies, the philosophy was that you couldn't do anything without a lot of money. So my philosophy was back to "Fuck you, we don't care if we can't play and don't have good instruments, we're still doing it because we think you're all a bunch of cunts"'.[205] Indeed, in McLaren's eyes, 'that's what really created the anger – the anger was simply about money, that the culture had become corporate, that we no longer owned it and everybody was desperate to fucking get it back. This was a generation trying to do that'.[206] He also acknowledged, 'I was at least a generation older than the generation I managed. I wasn't from the Sex Pistols' generation, I was from the generation of the sixties. So my relation to the Sex Pistols was a direct link to that existential angst-ridden early motive for doing anything in rock & roll – giving up the notion of career, and the do-it-yourself, amateur spirit of rock & roll'.[207]

Whilst McLaren draws attention to both the adverse economic climate, as well as the need to recapture the early DiY spirit of rock 'n' roll, it could be argued that his intentions towards managing the Sex Pistols and his ethos behind re-claiming

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[204] One may note here that the so-called 'traditional' mode of protest song within the popular music genre came predominantly from folk music. Yet, while it may not be surprising for the folk movement to have revived to provide a political commentary on the failure of the post-war consensus, this role primarily fell to punk. Although the folk genre of the 1960s had similarities with its later counterpart, in that it 'communicated a personalised reflection in issues of contemporary concern', one may also note that 'by the mid-1960s resonated more with the student peace movement than with the underprivileged rural poor'. In this sense, radical protest came to the fore in a new guise: chaos replaced the relative clarity of Dylan et al. In Whiteley, S. (2000) *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*, London: Routledge, p. 72.

[205] McNeil, L. & McCain, G. (2000) *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* London: Abacus, p. 304.

[206] *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

corporate culture were questionable. Many have cited the £40,000 advance from EMI Records, the £75,000 he received from A&M Records (for the 6 days they were on the label) and the £15,000 received from Virgin, to question such an ethic. Although this matter has been covered in great length elsewhere,[208] I merely wish to highlight the way in which the anarcho-punk movement would later question the sincerity of McLaren's motives. While the question of McLaren's financial relationship with the Sex Pistols will be dealt with below in chapter three, (where I wish to outline the contempt that anarcho-punk had for bands such as the Pistols and the Clash for signing to major record labels), it is evident that his motives for launching punk into the British arena were based on an acute sense of entrepreneurship that drew heavily on his experience of the New York punk scene of the early 1970s. In 1973 McLaren, Westwood and Gerry Goldstein [McLaren's business associate], were invited to exhibit clothes from their shop Let It Rock at the National Boutique show at the MacAlpin Hotel in New York. It was during this time that McLaren first met bands such as the New York Dolls, Iggy and the Stooges and the Ramones. McLaren was particularly impressed with the New York Dolls. According to Savage, the Dolls were '"a reflection of their audience", who congregated in the tiny Oscar Wilde Room at the Mercer Arts Center right in the middle of SoHo'.[209] This scene was 'the tail end of the sixties Warhol scene, which had been the venue for drag queens, speed freaks, every possible outcast'.[210] Savage also pulls upon the

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[207] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

[208] The financial affairs of McLaren and the Sex Pistols are dealt with in depth in Savage (1992). The author covers the signing of the band to EMI (pp. 223-227), the ending of that deal (pp. 287-289) as well as the eventual signing to Virgin (pp. 344-349). Moreover, Savage also covers the acrimonious relationship between Lydon and McLaren (p. 227) and the eventual court case between them (pp. 531-535). He has also written an update in an Appendix (pp. 542-545).

[209] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[210] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

evidence of Sylvain Sylvain, guitarist of the Dolls, who said that 'we played Max's Kansas city: that was the scene...Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis, Warhol stars would hang out there in the back rooms'.[211]

McLaren's relationship with the Dolls has already been well documented, most notably perhaps in Savage's *England's Dreaming*. Here, Savage sums up the influence of the New York scene when he states that,

> for McLaren, New York was like a jump-cut to the present. The city seemed boundless, unfolding a series of freedoms – from class, from stasis, from puritanism – that had seemed a distant dream in England. With the New York Dolls, McLaren at last found himself in the world of celebrity – and he wanted more. The group themselves were impressive. Beginning from a similar point in fashion and fifties music, they had managed to update the original wildness of teenage Rock 'n' Roll to suit the 1970s. They had attitude, they had style, they had media attention, they lived out what they sang, and most of all, they made him feel that he belonged.[212]

Therefore, it was a particular mix of rawness and theatricality that fascinated McLaren; aspects that also permeated through bands such as the Dead Boys, the Ramones and Iggy and the Stooges. Yet, the Dolls in particular encompassed a sense of pantomime, a sense of nihilistic theatricality built upon an image of sexual ambiguity and an extremity of attitude. Although one could argue that their music lacked the rawness of the Ramones or and Stooges, McLaren saw the Dolls as his first 'prototype of testing public reaction'.[213] They encapsulated a sense of a band that existed around a package. Their dress-sense – wearing women's clothing and garish 'glam type' outfits – meant that, for McLaren, the Dolls were a throw back to the very ethos of 1950s rock 'n' roll in their raw and

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[211] *Ibid.*, p. 60.
[212] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

uninhibited sound, albeit with a contemporary edge that reflected the hedonistic life-style associated with the Warhol Factory.

Although McLaren was predominantly influenced by the defiant posing of the New York Dolls – an aspect that will covered in more depth below – it may be useful to draw upon a track by Iggy and the Stooges to highlight a number of musical characteristics that were to become apparent in the British punk scene a few years later. Iggy embodied an attitude and musical style that McLaren felt threatened by. 'What I saw was a very tough, incredibly sexy, wonderfully enjoyable singer',[214] said McLaren, 'I adored the album *Raw Power* (1973) – but I didn't wanna walk into a guy with a lion's head full of drugs and pills, shouting and screaming "RAW POWER" at me'.[215] It was this sense of 'raw power' that was to characterise the British punk scene a few years later and, as such, it is considered relevant to provide an analysis of 'Search and Destroy' (track one on the accompanying disc) to highlight the musical characteristics that were later to become commonplace in British punk rock.

'Search and Destroy' is the opening track on Iggy's second album *Raw Power*. Written in 1973, the track embodies many of the stylistic traits that were to become commonplace in British punk rock. On one hand, the track is musically very simple. It entails 'poor' production techniques, simple musical form and lacks instrumental virtuosity, aspects that were otherwise essential in the developing progressive rock scene at the time. Socially however, 'Search and

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[213] Antonio, N. (1998) *Too Much, Too Soon: The Makeup and Breakup of the New York Dolls*, London: Omnibus, p. 166.
[214] McNeil, & McCain, *op. cit.*, p.157.
[215] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Destroy' remains far more complex. Iggy's generation had seen the demise of the counter-culture during the late sixties. In an atmosphere dominated by talk of the Vietnam War, the New York punk scene was a move away from the organised politicisation of popular music towards a new form of identity. Something that Iggy noted, when he said that 'the People don't give a fuck. [John] Sinclair would say, "We are going to politicize the Youth!" But the kids were like "WHAT? Just give me the dope". They didn't care, That's how it really was'.[216]

'Search and Destroy' opens with a simple four-bar introduction. Consisting of the rhythm guitar, this introduction is made up of two power chords - D flat and G flat – and is low in the mix. Although the introduction is short, it could be argued that the alternation of the two power chords is an attempt to introduce the essence of a drone, reminiscent of Iggy's previous band The Prime Movers. 'Iggy kind of created this psychedelic drone act as a backdrop for his front man antics',[217] noted John Sinclair, '[the Stooges would] just get this tremendous drone going, but they weren't songs, they were like demented grooves – "trances"'.[218]

If the first four bars are 'trance like', then the spell is soon broken with the introduction of an eight bar – question and answer – phrase on a D flat blues scale. These two sections – the drone and the phrase – seem almost mismatched, as if two completely different tracks had been mixed together, or as if someone had been messing with the tuner on a radio. As the phrase enters, the pace

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[216] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[217] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[218] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

quickens slightly – although probably on purpose and not because of musical incompetence – and the lead guitar sounds almost 'tinny' and uncomfortable to the ear. The drums increase the driving force of the track with the emphasis on the crotchet beat. 'What you gotta do is play your own simple blues',[219] Iggy once said after seeing a gig with Sam Lang and Jimmy Cotton. 'What I noticed about these black guys was that the music was like honey off their fingers. Real childlike and charming in its simplicity'.[220]

As the vocal interjects, the lead guitar drops out completely, leaving the eighth note drive of the rhythm and bass guitar that is so characteristic of punk rock, to accompany the lyrics. As with the introduction of the blues phrase in bar five, the opening lyric reflects a sense of uneasiness. Iggy begins with the line, 'I'm a street walking cheetah with a heart full of napalm', a phrase that refers to his time spent in London whilst Bowie produced *Raw Power*. 'I used to walk around London, through the park and stuff, with this leopard jacket I had, a cheetah skin jacket actually – it had a big cheetah on the back – and all the old men in London would drive by in their cars and they'd stop and try to cruise me'.[221] Iggy concluded, 'all I liked to do was walk around the streets with a heart full of napalm. I always thought 'Heart Full of Soul' was a good song so I thought, What's my heart full of? I decided it was basically full of napalm'.[222]

Indeed, 'Heart Full of Soul' (track two on the accompanying disc) – a track written by Graham Gouldman and recorded by the Yardbirds in 1966 - has a

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[219] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[220] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[221] *Ibid.*, p. 155.
[222] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

number of similarities with 'Search and Destroy'. 'Heart Full of Soul' begins with a menacing blues motif on the lead guitar, accompanied by an acoustic sounding rhythm guitar. The rhythm guitar is percussive in nature and thus adds to the rhythmic momentum of the track. After this two bar phrase has been played once, the drums enters with a snare drum accent on beats two and four. Again, this helps in building texture and pace. At bars five to eight, the blues phrase is repeated twice, but this time accompanied by full drums, rhythm guitar and bass. The musical arrangement again has similarities with 'Search and Destroy', not least in the introduction of the vocals (bar nine) where the lead guitar drops out, returning only at the end of the chorus where the ensemble sing 'heart full of soul'. There is also a comparable contrast between the two major sections. The introductory phrases in both are menacing in feel, while the solos revert to a more 'laid back' blues style.

Lyrically, 'Search and Destroy' might be seen as an attempt to capture the feelings and mood of what Jeff Nuttall terms in *Bomb Culture* (1968) as the 'post Hiroshima teenager'.[223] Nuttall writes that 'VE Night took place in one world and VJ Night in another. The world of the European Victory was...a place in which there was considerable sure and common ground between men on issues of morality, where good was good and bad was bad'.[224] On the other hand, 'the world of the Japanese victory was a world in which an evil had been precipitated whose scope was immeasurable, the act being, in itself, not an event but a continuum, not an occasion but the beginning of a condition'.[225] Nuttall continues

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[223] Nuttall, J. (1968) *Bomb Culture*, New York: Delacorte Press, p. 1.
[224] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[225] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

by noting that 'what way we made in 1945 and in the following years depended largely on our age. The people who had passed puberty at the time of the bomb found that they were incapable of conceiving of life *without* a future. People who had not yet reached puberty at the time of the bomb were incapable of conceiving of life *with* a future'.[226] 'Search and Destroy' mirrors such a lack of faith in any kind of future. 'I'm a runaway son of a nuclear A-Bomb', shouts Iggy, 'I am a world's forgotten boy, The one who searches and destroys'. It is almost as if Iggy himself wants to destroy the pretence of the post-Hiroshima society. His vocal style is shouted instead of sung and his accent is overtly American, placing an emphasis on the enunciation of each word. 'Dad was a liar',[227] notes Nuttall, 'he lied about the war and he lied about sex. He lied about the bomb and he lied about the future. He lived his life in an elaborate system of pretence that had been going on for hundreds of years'.[228]

Nuttall also believes that 'in the new world the light was harsh, a perpetual noon of decisions, every crucial action being possibly final.[229] He observes, 'the society for which we had more or less cheerfully fought and (some of us) more or less cheerfully died had dropped its mask and, in doing so had robbed all its institutions – church, political party, social class, happy family – of moral authority'.[230] The imagery within the lyrics attempts to point to this harsh New World. As the track continues Iggy begins to plead with his audience: 'honey gotta help me please' – he cries, 'somebody gotta save my soul'. But he realises the lack of time, the possibility of this crucial action being his last. 'Look out

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[226] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[227] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[228] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
[229] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

honey, 'cause I'm using technology' he sings, 'ain't got time to make no apology'.

Musically the track also reflects the uneasiness of this New World. The track lacks the pretence and virtuosity of progressive rock, as well as the political connotations of the MC5 and the surrounding counter-culture of the time. It really is *raw*. There is a clear sense of rhythmic flexibility, as the pace of the track varies throughout, a lack of production technique and a resultant sneer of anger through the vocals: similar to that which was soon to be heard in the Pistols. As the track closes, each instrument becomes more desperate. Iggy's wailing of the phrase 'forgotten boy', disintegrates into a screaming of the lyric. Also, the lack of production aids to the chaotic ending of the track, as the rhythm guitar often overpowers the now improvising lead guitar and the clear back beat on the snare is about all that is heard from the drums. As the tracks fades, the music comes to an abrupt halt, adding to the live feel, as if the band were not sure to whether there was to be an abrupt ending or fade out.

It could be argued therefore, that the unpretentious, raw nature of 'Search and Destroy' embodied a number of key characteristics that would culminate in British punk rock in the mid-1970s. In stark contrast to the earlier counter-culture of the late 1960s, punk did not have a definite political or philosophical manifesto, let alone the organisation that accompanied the emergence of the hippie movement. Instead, bands such as the Stooges, Dead Boys and the Dolls attempted to express the extremity of desperation felt in Nuttall's harsh New

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[230] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

World. Out went the art-school manifesto of the Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol, in came a new extreme of expression condensed into a form of music that was built upon an aggressive three-chord, under-produced, 'anyone-can-do-it' rock. 'What happened was by the time I finished *Raw Power*, my standards were different than other people's',[231] noted Iggy, 'that's the only way I can put it. I wanted the music to come out of the speakers and just grab you by the throat and just knock your head against the wall and just basically kill you'.[232]

3. The Sex Pistols and Anarchic Rhetoric: 'Cos They Meant it *Man*

The term 'punk' was coined by Legs McNeil and John Holstrom, the two American founders of the magazine *Punk*.[233] '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',[234] notes McNeil. Instead, the writer believes that, 'it was about real freedom, personal freedom. It was also about doing anything that's gonna offend a grown up. Just being as offensive as possible'.[235] As such, this sense of offensiveness aligned to the concept of 'raw power' discussed earlier was central to McLaren's subsequent realisation of British punk. From the very beginning, McLaren was able to tap into the mood of negativity that accompanied the failure of the post-war consensus, not least in how it was contributing towards the formation of a disenfranchised and powerless youth. In this sense, it could be

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[231] McNeil, & McCain, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
[232] *Ibid.*, p. 174.
[233] One should note that the term 'punk' most probably originated in seventeenth-century British slang, denoting a prostitute of both sexes. It has been well established in American English since the nineteenth-century, referring particularly to a petty criminal or gangster.
[234] McNeil, & McCain, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

argued that McLaren sensed the moment of opportunism in recognising the offensiveness of the Dolls and the Stooges, and thus realising the moment to shape the concept and trappings of a British punk scene. Further, it was a trapping fostered in part by his unofficial management of the New York Dolls (1975) and, in particular his agenda concerning what he believed to be 'the group's tired façade'.[236] As McLaren re-styled the Dolls – 'out went Glam, in came Communism'[237] – is evident from the onset that he was an opportunist who was quick to recognise the explosive impact of imagery and symbolism. For instance, throughout the 1950s America had been absorbed by the now infamous post-war 'witch-hunt' against alleged Communist subversives. Termed as McCarthyism – after the Senator Joseph McCarthy – the 'great fear' as it was also known, rested upon America's paranoia over the spread of Communism in the 1950s and 1960s, a fear that McLaren exploited in his use of a Russian hammer and sickle backdrop behind the Dolls performance. Furthermore, this was compounded by his use of the Chinese revolutionary slogan to accompany the Dolls' new look: 'WHAT ARE THE POLITICS OF BOREDOM? BETTER RED THAN DEAD!'[238]

While the New York punk scene lacked a coherent political agenda, images and symbols were often used as a means of purposely shocking the onlooker. 'As well as exhibiting their exciting incompetence, the Dolls occasionally used the swastika',[239] notes Savage, but 'the New York Dolls were far too wayward ever to be considered coherent about anything, so that an occasional swastika band on

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[235] *Ibid.*, p. 371.
[236] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
[237] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[238] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Thunder's arm was just a good metaphor for obnoxious intent'.[240] The purposeful use of imagery in order to shock is an important trait that runs through both the American and British punk scenes. Yet the use of the swastika[241] epitomises an important aspect of this shock in that it not only highlights shock value but also notes the lack of political intent; a paradox that runs through much of punk and will be further discussed in the analysis of 'Anarchy in the UK' and 'God Save the Queen' below. As Dick Hebdige notes in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1994), due to the support for anti-fascist movements (such as Rock Against Racism), 'the punk subculture grew up partly as an antithetical response to the re-emergence of racism in the mid-1970s'.[242] Moreover, he quotes an interview from the magazine *Time Out*, quoting a punk whom, when questioned on why she wore a swastika, replied 'punks just like to be hated'.[243]

Here we can see a clear distinction between Iggy and the Stooges and the New York Dolls. For McLaren, the Dolls were a package. 'I didn't see the fashion about Iggy',[244] McLaren had said, but with the Dolls there was now a *complete* outfit, consisting of 'a uniform made by Vivienne Westwood...red vinyl trousers, red ciré T-shirts, high-heeled Sex[245] boots, a hammer and sickle

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[239] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[240] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[241] The debate surrounding the use of Nazi memorabilia as either a means of mere shock value rather than political intent is an issue that is still rife within post-punk writing today. Indeed, one needs only to turn to Home (1995) and Sabin (1999) to find inflicting accounts of the rise of fascism in punk: in particular when both writers talk of the extreme-right wing band Skrewdriver. Personally, I believe that the use of the swastika was one of relative innocence, with many musicians and punks being fascinated by pre-World War Two German memorabilia, including David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, the Sex Pistols and Siouxsie Sioux.
[242] Hebdidge, D. (1994) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge, p. 116.
[243] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
[244] McNeil, & McCain, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
[245] The notion of 'Sex' refers to the shop owned by Westwood and McLaren in Kings Rd., London.

backdrop, and a manifesto'.[246] It was the theatricality of the Dolls that impressed McLaren, something that was to become essential in the forming of the Pistols later that year. A theatricality that would fuse together the potential shock of the British punk scene in pulling upon sado-masochistic imagery and the more politically charged significance that surrounded earlier ideas of Nazi oppression and the emerging National Front with the current paranoia surrounding Communism.

McLaren was also impressed with another musician, Richard Hell, bassist and vocalist with the band Television. Hell and a school-friend Tom Verlaine had formed Television in 1973, and had played regular gigs at CBGB's in New York. Although McLaren was fascinated by the Dolls he also, in Sylvain's words 'loved Richard [Hell]'.[247] Indeed, Savage outlines the importance of Hell on the punk scene. 'Hell had also worked out a visual package to go with the chopped musical style: large fifties shades, leather jackets, torn T-shirts and short ragamuffin hair'.[248] Savage also notes that 'this was a severe aesthetic that carried a series of messages: the existential freedom of the fifties beat, the lazing, beautiful self-destruction of the *poete maudit*, and the razor-sharpness of the sixties'.[249] And the author concludes that, 'if such a thing is possible to identify, it was the origin of what would become the punk style'.[250]

As such, on his return to London in May 1975, McLaren's utmost desire lay in forming a band that reflected the essence of the New York punk scene within a

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[246] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
[247] McNeil, & McCain, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
[248] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[249] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

politically-charged frame that resonated with the current UK economic and political climate. Before he returned to London, he begged Hell to accompany him to front what would eventually become the Sex Pistols. Yet, according to Savage, Hell was already having fights with Verlaine over who was to become the star of Television, and felt that he was too old as well as too proud to allow himself to be manipulated. Yet, the seeds of McLaren's fascination with the New York punk scene had already been sewn. Already fascinated by the raw expression of Iggy and the Stooges, the theatricality of the Dolls, and the so-called 'punk' attitude of Hell, McLaren realised the opportunity of importing these characteristics into what he believed to be a stagnant musical and political environment of Britain in the mid-1970s. As such, McLaren not only wanted to form a band that encompassed the DiY – 'in your face' – aspect of American punk, but also perhaps more importantly, a band that would shock the very foundations of British society.

Yet, if McLaren's purpose to import the very essence of the New York scene into Britain is well documented, it nevertheless raises questions as to the nature of political intent he desired from the eventual formation of the Sex Pistols. In this sense, it means asking whether McLaren wished the Pistols to encompass a sense of mere political shock value – as he had done earlier with the Dolls – or whether indeed the Pistols were to be based upon any kind of theoretical political base: in other words, exploring the extent to which McLaren adorned the band with the circled 'A' for 'anarchy' – as the Dolls had accompanied the hammer and sickle – as a means of shock tactic, or whether indeed he was espousing some kind of

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[250] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

theoretical understanding of anarchist politics. It could be argued that the Pistols have always primarily been perceived as anarchists. From their aptly named first single 'Anarchy in the UK', released on 19th November 1976, the band have been embroiled with the political ideas surrounding the notion of anarchism. As such, I now wish to turn to the way in which the Pistols nurtured this 'anarchist' label, in particular, exploring whether the Pistols used the label of 'anarchism' in its theoretical sense – whereby individuals can live in co-operation without the coercion of government – or whether it was a label exploited for its ability to encapsulate a sense of shock-value within the every-day.

Although the Damned's 'New Rose' is hailed as the first punk single to be released, it could be argued that 'Anarchy in the UK' (track three on the accompanying disc), was a track that best epitomised this emerging subculture. From the sneering 'I am an antichrist, I am an anarchist', to the final lingering 'destroy', the track was, as Savage notes, 'a call to arms, delivered in language that was as explosive as the implications of the group's name'.[251] The track is immediately confrontational, and begins with a contemptuous, laughing John Lydon – lead vocalist – delivering a drawn-out declamation of the words 'right, now'. The tone is almost one of mocking the audience, celebrating the emergence of punk against the stale musical environment of the time, as well as the increasing economic and social breakdown that was gripping Britain.

As the track continues, themes such as the Antichrist, the destroying of passers-by, the IRA and Council Estates are juxtaposed, almost laboured so as to produce

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[251] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

clashing half rhymes. Whilst UK, UDA and IRA are fused together, the line 'I use the *NME*, I use anarchy' highlights the ambiguity of syllabic pronunciation: the question as to Lydon actually meaning 'enemy' – rather than a reference to the established popular music press and the *New Music Express* – could be asked. Moreover, the track pulls upon a notion that will become more evident in the latter single 'God Save the Queen': the idea that those listening lack a sense of future. It could be argued that the Pistols do indeed sum up the unemployment figures of July 1975, of the seemingly apocalyptic atmosphere of the time. 'How many bridges do we have to cross before we get to meet the boss?',[252] reads the graffiti on a bridge in West London. 'Anarchy in the UK' seems to sum up this sense of helplessness, this supposed lack of future in 1970s Britain.

Yet this track also moves towards establishing the idea of a punk rock aesthetic. The track is regimental in character with the rhythm adhering to a straight eight-pulse beat, with Glenn Matlock's bass closely following Steve Jones's distorted, three-chord guitar playing. As with 'Search and Destroy', Jones plays 'power-chords', chords which are easier to play then their diatonic counterparts yet, because of their lack of thirds, they have a sense of eeriness, a sense of openness in their sounding. Musically, the track is also very simple with both melody and harmony being encapsulated within the form of a so-called 'standard' rock 'n' roll track of the 1950s.

Although it could be argued that 'Anarchy in the UK' epitomises the punk aesthetic, it could also be viewed in another, more controversial way. If Savage

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[252] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

links the track to McLaren's and Westwood's use of anarchist symbols, then Stewart Home slots the track into what he believes to be a 'novelty record'. In *Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory and Punk Rock* (1996a) he describes how he listened to the track for the first time in a number of years. Although his first thought is of Paul Cook's drumming, 'real meat and potato stuff',[253] he notes that the track sounds very much like a 'novelty production' and concludes that '"Anarchy in the UK" sounds like history'.[254]

Although the author admits that familiarity breeds contempt, one must also be careful in drawing such a conclusion before reflecting upon the way in which an audience may have perceived such a track in the 1970s. Indeed, one needs only to turn to a recent artist such as G. G. Allen[255] to highlight the way in which modern audiences may have been de-sensitised towards shock-value. Yet, it could be argued that Home has a valid point. 'Anarchy in the UK' does indeed seem contrived at times. The mocking sneer at the beginning of the track, as well as the juxtaposition of 'IRA' and 'UK' do indeed highlight the way in which the Pistols were purposely trying to shock.

In this sense, it also highlights the way in which McLaren used his business acumen to full force. Again, this will become evident in the analysis of 'God Save the Queen' below, yet it could be argued that McLaren knew instinctively

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[253] Home, S. (1996a) *Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory and Punk Rock* Hove: Codex, p. 14.
[254] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[255] An artist who, during performances, defecates on stage so as to throw it at the audience. Once more I do realise the lack of discussion concerning the definitional problems with the term 'punk' and the placing of artists under such a musical umbrella. Yet I am merely attempting to highlight the shifting parameters of shock value within this genre and not dealing with the musical and political nuances of this area of punk rock.

how to 'tap' into the British psyche; he knew how to produce a sense of shock value at its most central. Moreover, if Home believes 'Anarchy in the UK' to be a 'novelty production' then musically the track is actually very well produced.[256] The idea of punk being a return to a 'DiY aesthetic', a return to an 'anyone-can-do-it' ethic, does not quite fit into this track. Not only is Jones's guitar part over-dubbed, but the track has the bassist Glen Matlock who, although had already left the band, was asked to return because of his replacement's – Sid Vicious – lack of talent.

This argument is by no means an effort to belittle the Sex Pistols, but merely to continue the debate from chapter one in analysing the depth of theoretical political intent within the punk movement. Home's analysis is useful in that one must be careful in applying anarchist political theories upon a subculture such as punk; it highlights and questions whether indeed Lydon, Cook et al., were aware of the politics and ideas surrounding the libertarian movement known as anarchism. Yet, what McLaren influenced however, was the moving of the idea of 'anarchy' – whether in terms of chaos or political theory – into the public domain of a subculture such as punk, a notion that will become evident in the analysis of the anarcho-punk movement of the 1980s below.

Yet, it could also be argued that this track epitomises the paradoxes of punk. The way in which the term 'anarchy' takes on two simultaneous meanings; the libertarian ideas surrounding an anarchist writer such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon on the one hand, and the idea of chaos, a sense of menace and disorganisation on

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[256] Chris Thomas, a producer who had begun his career on the Beatles' *The Beatles* (1968),

the other. A paradox that one could argue runs the full length of the track as Lydon pulls together a number of central themes that were politically sensitive at the time, such as unemployment, loss of a 'national identity' and a lack of an economic and social future. As with 'God Save the Queen', released six months later – and analysed below – the Sex Pistols pulled upon lyrical imagery to shock, to deal with themes that, like the Dolls' before them, are imbued with malicious intent.

If the debate surrounding anarchism – as well as the previous discussion of Situationism throughout chapter one – and their significance to punk is ambiguous, what does seem clear is the way in which the Sex Pistols were able to draw upon specific elements central to a quintessential British identity to produce shock. If 'Anarchy in the UK' was a so-called 'call to arms', then their next single, 'God Save the Queen' (track four on the accompanying disc), moved the Pistols towards a new level of hatred by the British public. In *England's Dreaming*, Jon Savage notes that the Sex Pistols released their single at a time when it would make the most impact. He observes, 'nobody connected with the group, least of all John Lydon when he scribbled the words in a Hampstead Squat, could have foreseen the effect that "God Save the Queen" would have, just as nobody could have foreseen just how successful the Jubilee would be'.[257] Released by Virgin Records on 27th May 1977, 'God Save the Queen' was a final rally to the breakdown of the post-war consensus. Perhaps more so than any other track in Britain's popular music history, 'God Save the Queen' provided a damning attack on the very essence of a British identity itself. Not only did the

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produced 'Anarchy'.

track swipe at Britain's 'fascist regime', the moronic importance of the H-bomb and of course, the Queen herself, more importantly, what provided the track with the obnoxious intent required was that it was released at a time when the general public were feeling most patriotic.

What is interesting here is the way in which 'God save the Queen' also lacked an organised political agenda. As with the discussion of 'Anarchy in the UK' above – as well as the shock value surrounding the use of the swastika in the punk movement noted earlier – 'God Save the Queen' ran on political rhetoric instead of an organised political attack. If McLaren's business sense had seen monetary gain in the releasing of such a track at this time, it was also a business sense that was mirrored by Richard Branson, head of Virgin Records. According to Branson, the Pistols had impressed him when he had first heard 'Anarchy in the UK'. Although there are conflicting views as to Branson's musical appreciation,[258] what is certain is the way in which he saw the band as a way of transforming the image of Virgin Records, an image that portrayed the company as a group of so-called 'hippies' due to earlier releases such as Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* (1973) and Gong's *Flying Teapot* (1973). Indeed, it was one that was not helped by earlier pictures of Branson promoting 'free love' in his first record shop in Oxford Street and of the entrepreneur protesting against the Vietnam War. In this sense, Branson was soon to revel in the notoriety of the Pistols' release of 'God Save the Queen'.

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[257] Savage, *op.cit.*, pp. 351-352.

[258] For an analysis of Richard Branson's involvement with McLaren and the Pistols turn to Branson, R. (1998) *Losing My Virginity: The Autobiography*, London: Virgin, pp. 141-150. Other

'The Sex Pistols were a turning point for us',[259] notes Branson, 'the band we had been looking for'.[260] He continues, 'the Sex Pistols generated more newspaper cuttings than anything else in 1977 apart from the Silver Jubilee itself. Their notoriety was practically a tangible asset. Most of the press was negative, but so had it been for the Rolling Stones when they had set out fifteen years earlier'.[261] It could be argued therefore, that 'God Save the Queen' was an organised, opportunistic business-like swipe at the very heart of a British identity, at the monarchy, the British government and the post-war consensus, and one that would provide McLaren, Branson and the Sex Pistols with a new notoriety.

Yet, it was not just the way in which 'God Save the Queen' embodied what Savage terms lyrical 'time-bombs'.[262] More importantly it was the way in which they were delivered. 'What was so great about "God Save the Queen" was that it was confident, clear, unapologetic',[263] notes the author, a phrase no more evident than in Lydon's disdained, sarcastic delivery of each line. Not only does he begin the first verse with reference to 'God save the Queen/The Fascist regime'; he then goes on to proclaim that 'They made you a moron/Potential H-Bomb'. As he continues through the track – at one point even claiming that the Queen 'ain't no human being' – Lydon concludes the anti-Royalist feeling of the track with a mocking, sarcastic 'We laaaarve our Queen/God Save ussss'.

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accounts can be found in Bower (2001) pp. 34-36, Jackson (1994) pp. 60-63 and Savage (1992) pp. 344-350.

[259] Branson, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[260] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

[261] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

[262] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

[263] *Ibid.*, p. 353.

Musically 'God Save the Queen' draws upon a number of different influences, perhaps the most obvious one being the Rock 'n' Roll style of the 1950s. It begins with a chromatically sliding A power chord, reminiscent of Eddie Cochran's 'C'mon Everybody', a track incidentally covered by the Pistols. This blatant reference increases the sneering attitude of the track. Not so much *menacing*, as witnessed in the Iggy Pop track analysed above, but more ironic and played with derision. This is not to say that the track was comical in any way, just that the Pistols seemed to be playing with the age-old notion that rock 'n' roll is somehow *dangerous* and *immoral.* 'Each generation has the power to restate an archetype in a new language',[264] wrote Savage, 'like reggae, punk drew from the millenarian well, but it gave the draught a peculiarly British flavour'.[265] 'God Save the Queen' takes the American sound of Cochran and turns it British through Lydon's vocal delivery. As with Iggy's overtly American vocals, Lydon accentuates each word, lending an almost fake Cockney accent to each line.

Formally, the track is very simple. Proceeding the four-bar introduction, bars five to eleven provide the basis for the rest of the track. Consisting of a four-note motif – A-D-D flat-D – the phrase lasts for two bars and is repeated four times, culminating in a sliding A chord that leads us into the first verse. To increase the menacing nature of the track, this two bar phrase is cut in half, with the guitarist providing a clear contrast between each bar. For instance, in the first bar, where the guitarist plays an A chord – and whilst the vocals are sung – Jones uses palm muting so as to produce the characteristic eighth note pulse common in punk rock and heard earlier in 'Anarchy in the UK' and the Damned's 'New Rose, two

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[264] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

quintessential punk tracks. The second bar that consists of the chords D-D flat-D however, the section of the verse where the vocals are not present, sees the guitarist playing the chords with increased sustain. In this sense, beneath each phrase sung the guitar remains menacing, a device that underpins such lines as 'the fascist regime', 'potential H-Bomb' and 'she ain't no human being'. As such, it is as if Steve Jones is replying to each line sung with a sneering *so there*.

The accompanying ensemble provides further nuances. Cook uses his high-hat and ride cymbal very much in the same vein as 'Anarchy in the UK', so as to create contrast and momentum between verse and chorus. Within each verse, Cook plays the hi-hat on the crotchet beat in order to slow the pace slightly, whereas in the chorus he switches to the ride cymbal and the eighth note beat so as to add momentum. Each section is also interjected by a series of cymbal crashes. Matlock, the bass player, relies firmly on the eighth note, reminiscent and characteristic of punk rock.

The chromaticism inherent in each section – although less so in the chorus – adds a sense of 'eeriness' and unpredictability to the track. From the very beginning, where one hears the chromatically sliding A power chord and the subsequent D-D flat-D motif in every other bar of the verse, the track's use of the semitone continues to the very end of the track. Originally titled 'No Future' – a title that caused a severe disagreement between McLaren and Lydon – the track ends with a chromatic downward D-D flat-B motif on the vocal line 'no future'. This is repeated a number of times until Lydon finally concludes the phrase by adding

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[265] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

'for you' on the end, and finishing on the tonic A. At least there is some certainty for the listener after all, albeit a negative one.

It could be argued therefore, that British first wave punk was a rhetorical – rather than theoretical – anarchic swipe at all things Established. It would certainly be naïve to place responsibility for British punk on the individual shoulders of McLaren himself, for the formation of any subculture is a complex mélange of ingredients, often coupled with the culmination of many, often diverse and unpredictable, events. Yet, it could be argued that McLaren's business acumen, combined with his previous fascination for the attitude as well as musical and theoretical characteristics of American punk, enabled him to tap into the moral and political sensibilities of Britain in the 1970s. Moreover, McLaren sensed the relationship between the political and musical environment of the time, as the deepening recession gripped Britain – compounded particularly by a crisis of National identity – and the increasing stagnant musical climate allowed a time where a subculture such as punk could flourish.

With this in mind, one can also turn to the political and social imagery that Westwood wove into her fashion. Swastikas, the hammer and sickle and degraded images of the Queen with a safety pin inserted through her nose, all point towards images and sentiments being used for mere shock value, instead of those built upon any kind of theoretical political stance. Anarchism in this sense points towards the chaotic instead of the theoretical. As both a term in itself, as well as the circled 'A' found on the clothes of Lydon and many punks, shock-value superseded any real effort to discuss 'anarchism' in terms of a political

doctrine drawn from the writings theoretical writings of Joseph-Pierre Proudhon or Max Stirner.

Yet, as the excitement of these initial ideas surrounding first wave punk declined, and the subculture was inevitably pushed further into the mainstream, so the idea of the 'anarcho' was once more transformed. As the first wave of British punk dissolved, making way for a disparate scene of 'second wave' punks, so one movement in particular took the idea of anarchy seriously. Later to be termed the 'anarcho-punk' scene, this newly emerging subculture would herald a new stage in the transformation of the subversive that has been unravelled from chapter one. Moreover, this 'anarcho-scene' would become a space where new political sentiments would come to the fore, where punk itself would be transfigured from the rhetorical towards the theoretical and where anarchism would envelop both.

Chapter 3: The Politics of Post-Punk: Crass and the Move Towards the 'Anarcho'

'In 1979 [punk] had transmogrified into an absurd caricature. Now punk meant ridiculous six-inch-high mohican hair-dos, facial tattoos, fake bondage and steel toe-capped boots – and now, for the most part, the swastikas were for real. This was a year when everybody – Westwood and Lydon included – turned their back on punk. It had become the uniform of the stupid'.[266] Although there is controversy surrounding the exact date of the demise of British first wave punk,[267] there is a shared opinion that it was moving towards the mainstream, and thus becoming increasingly commercialised. What, for many had begun as an exciting 'new' subculture – epitomising individuality and freedom of artistic expression – had very quickly been transformed from 'movement' to 'faction'. 'It was all over in 18 months',[268] notes the stand-up poet Jock Scott, an idea echoed by many of his contemporaries in the punk scene at the time.

Yet, as punk became ever more incorporated into mainstream culture, so the political ideology initially manifested within the movement – and in particular those ideas surrounding 'anarchy' and 'chaos' – became ever more ambiguous. I have already discussed the music of the Pistols, and the ways in which one could argue that Malcolm McLaren was instrumental in 'orchestrating' much of the punk milieu. Yet more importantly, and as chapters one and two of my thesis argue, it would seem that punk was very rarely an expression of 'anarchism' in

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[266] Colegrave, S. & Sullivan, C. (2001) *Punk.*, London: Cassell & Co., p. 342.
[267] Turn to Sabin (1999) pp. 3-4 to find a concise debate as to the termination point for British punk.
[268] Colegrave, S. & Sullivan, C., *op. cit.*, p. 352.

the purely political sense of the word, but rather an expression of chaotic intent that was realised through the use of various shock tactics. Even so, there is little doubt that the first wave of punk – however orchestrated – embodied a freshness of expression, something that was also important in the emergence of the anarcho-scene of the late 1970s and 1980s. Thus, while it could be argued that punk was never the so-called 'authentic', 'real' anti-establishment subculture that many believed it to be, the movement nevertheless became a location where marginalised youth could express diverse emotional and political views. Perhaps this is evidenced in the post-punk environment that heralded a number of subcultural movements and a diversity of musical styles and fashions. 'In Britain',[269] wrote Colegrave and Sullivan in *Punk*. (2001), 'punk, in its demise had left behind an eclectic music scene, which, although not directly related to it, would probably not have blossomed without punk's assault on the '70s music establishment'.[270] Indeed, one could cite 'two-tone, new wave, electro, hip-hop and the new romantics',[271] as examples of subcultural movements that emerged from the punk milieu.

While it is interesting to note the way in which new wave or Oi! for instance transformed the 'original' impetus of British punk – the former in the sense of artistic expression through fashion and the latter through the appropriation of the three-minute song structure – my concern here is to examine the way in which the 'anarcho-punk' movement of the 1980s transformed the notion of the political within 1970s punk. In other words, exploring the ways in which the

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[269] *Ibid.*, p. 342.
[270] *Ibid.*, p. 342.
[271] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

ideas surrounding 'anarchism' moved beyond the realm of the chaotic found within first wave punk, towards a more critical aesthetic attacking specific 'corporate' forces of society, such as government legislation, the police and multinational corporations. As such, this chapter will concentrate on exploring the make-up and essence of a number of key areas within the emerging 'anarcho-punk scene'. As with the study of American punk and the Sex Pistols above, my attention will be primarily drawn towards the musical material surrounding such a 'scene'. Exploring the way in which certain musical characteristics – such as those already defined within the punk rock aesthetic – were central in creating an artistic space for the newly emerging politicisation of punk in the late 1970s and 1980s. With the analysis of the musical material as a framework, I will also explore three other key areas – the first two of which seem fairly obvious – in illuminating my discussion.

The first of these is the transformation and continuation of the term 'punk'. Even today, 'punk' has become a label steeped in a sense of definitional ambiguity, a label that is seemingly used freely in order to encompass a diversity of subcultures that have developed from the 1970s onwards. Here, I wish to analyse the way in which this term was re-appropriated and transformed by individuals within the anarcho-scene, reflecting the way in which these individuals – as with new wave and Oi! – 'appropriated' certain aspects of first wave British punk (as well as the American scene of the early 1970s) and re-built these ideas in the emerging 1980s.

The second area of discussion will be centred primarily upon the ideas surrounding 'anarchism'. I do not wish to provide a long history of anarchist thought or action, for one needs only to turn to Woodcock (1986) or Marshall (1993) to gain valuable insights into this movement. Instead, I wish to investigate the way in which anarchism, both as a means of terminology and as a political tool, was transformed from the chaotic – as a tactic for mere shock value in first wave punk – towards a more informed political ideology in the emerging anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s. In other words, the way in which both 'punk' and 'anarchism' were combined within the so-called 'anarcho-punk' scene, so as to provide a space where individuals could nurture a more informed 'lifestyle' in expressing a subversive dislike towards those 'corporate' structures mentioned above.

While the concepts of 'anarcho' and 'punk' are central to my discussion of 'informed subversion', there is little doubt that the election of Margaret Thatcher to Prime Minister in 1979, and the subsequent wave of conservatism that ran through the 1980s was instrumental in galvanising the anarcho-scene into direct action. My subsequent analyses of the Falklands War and the emergence of what many saw as an overly oppressive government being perfect examples of this. As Jon Savage observes, 'the conservatives won the election by fifty-three votes: by 4 May, Mrs. Thatcher was in Downing Street'.[272] Although the writer admits that Britain did not change overnight, 'Thatcherism', as this conservatism was subsequently to be termed, 'promised to curb union power, restore incentives,

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[272] *Ibid.*, p. 541.

strengthen defence and uphold the role of Law and the primacy of the family'.[273] As such, this was to 'strike a chord amongst the people who felt swamped by left-wing union activists, decaying cities, and all the archetypes of youth Culture decay, whether rastas or punks'.[274] As with the discussion of the post-war consensus above, the political environment – particularly with regards to the anarcho-scene – is integral towards an understanding of the musical emergence of this movement, in that its central thesis was built upon a need to express social and political ideas through its work.

Although at first it may seem logical to deal with all three areas separately (i.e. anarchism, punk and the emerging political environment of Thatcherism), I would argue that a more effective way of illuminating the anarcho-punk scene would be to discuss the ways they are mutually constitutive. That is because they inform each other at different times and different places, so a separate discussion of all three would merely overlap. In addition, the relationship between anarcho-punk and the emergent political framework will also serve to illuminate the fluidity and contradictions of this rarely discussed post-punk scene.

As such, this chapter maps out three very different music paths of the emerging anarcho-punk scene. The first investigates the music and politics of the band Crass, seen by many as the most far-reaching and influential band of the anarcho-scene of the 1980s. The examination of Crass concentrates upon the way in which the band transformed the almost 'chaotic' ideas of anarchism from first wave punk, towards a new sense of focused dissent based upon the theoretical

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[273] *Ibid.*, pp. 540-541.

aspects of anarchist thought based upon an essentially anti-government stance and individual and political co-operation. Further, Crass would appropriate musical stylistics of first wave punk to provide a criticism of bands such as the Sex Pistols and the Clash, whom they believe used punk as a means of monetary gain. The second path of the 'anarcho' discussed below involves the exploration of the band Discharge. If Crass had appropriated the form and musical style of first wave punk, so as to convey a more intellectualised form of dissent, then Discharge used the punk aesthetic to retreat into writing music that involved a new level of musical simplicity and 'in your face' forthrightness. The final path of discussion centres upon the writer and musician Dick Lucas. Involved with two pivotal anarcho-punk bands in the 1980s – the Subhumans and Culture Shock – this analysis explores a number of key areas of the anarcho-scene that would also eventually contribute towards its demise later in the decade.

1. New Beginnings: The Transformation of the Punk Rock 'Ethos'

Writing in *Shibboleth: My Revolting Life* (1998), Penny Rimbaud[275] believes that, 'for the first few months of 1977, the Roxy Club, black hole in the wet London streets, drain-sucker for the painted sewer-rats, played host to a phenomenon'.[276] He continues by noting that, 'out from the hippy corpse of Haight Ashby, out from the rural corpses, where anarchy had hidden its face

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[274] *Ibid.*, p. 541.

[275] Penny Rimbaud is the pen name for the male writer and musician J. J. Ratter, who was to become the drummer for Crass. Although 'Rimbaud' refers to the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, Ratter outlines his decision to adopt 'Penny' for the way in which it 'created a gender blur which, if not following officialdom, certainly confused it; discreet visual checks that usually centred on my chest soon became a way of life'. Rimbaud, P. (1998) *Shibboleth: My Revolting Life*, Edinburgh: AK Press, p. 70.

[276] *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

those last years, out again to the streets rose the voice of futures that had been buried in the narcotic fuck-up of the sixties. Punk had come out to air its dirty wings, resurging from the stagnant mire that was the Beach Boys' sperm at Malibu, the Beatles' death-pickings in Central Park'.[277] For Rimbaud therefore, 'there were high jinks to be had on the high street. The Pistols, the Damned, the Clash: new sounds, new vocabulary. The dirty little Roxy bounced to this fresh energy, and the city pricked up its ears to the ring of cash-tills'.[278] Yet, it was an optimism that was to be short lived. 'Within six months the movement had been bought out',[279] he continues. 'The capitalist counter-revolutionaries had killed with cash. Punk degenerated from being a force for change, to becoming just another element in the grand media circus. Sold out, sanitised and strangled, punk had become just another social commentary, a burnt out memory of how it might have been'.[280]

Rimbaud expands upon this notion by observing that 'in its infinite ability to nullify, mainstream culture had quickly incorporated punk into its cosy, cash-based overview. One by one the young revolutionaries who'd been protagonists fell over backwards to exploit its new commercial potential, and its political and social roots became obscured'.[281] From here, the writer turns his criticism to specific bands of the era. '"Play as you earn" became the new message, and if the Pistols, the Damned, the Clash and the rest of punk's *nouveaux richex* (sic) thought they were getting their message through despite the commercialism,

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[277] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[278] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[279] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[280] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[281] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

they'd got it wrong'.[282] As such, Rimbaud compares punk to earlier incarnations of counter-culture movements. 'Punk had offered an alternative to the Glam rock superstars of the early seventies, and Johnny Rotten's mug-shot on the covers of thick colour magazines belied everything that it had stood for. The Beatles were dead. Bowie was dead. The Stones always had been, and so now was this first wave of punks'.[283] The writer concludes, 'torn sweatshirts had become "de rigueur". Safety-pin jewellery was radical chic. There was still talk of revolution, but it was from the seats of limousines and the safety of armoured minds, empty rhetoric bouncing around the steel and glass offices of the new glitteratti. Bacardi and bullshit'.[284]

And so are outlined the views of Penny Rimbaud, drummer and – it could be argued – founding member of the anarcho-punk band Crass. Rimbaud's views surrounding the birth and eventual demise of first wave punk are useful, in that the author highlights the way in which the initial vitality and freedom of expression that embodied punk in 1976, was finally dissipated through increasing commercialisation. In particular, one could argue that Rimbaud's reference to David Bowie is poignant, in that it encapsulates the resemblance between punk and Bowie's alter-ego Ziggy Stardust, a character created in the early 1970s by the musician to represent 'the perfect hedonistic, Lurex-and-makeup-superstar'.[285] The retirement of the figure in 1973 by Bowie reflects the essence of the temporal and almost mendacious role of the 'star' in the popular music canon. As Bowie had the ultimate influence over his alter ego, so the

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[282] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
[283] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[284] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

commercialisation and demise of punk seemed to heighten the way in which its rebellious and 'anarchic' nature had become increasingly spurious.

Yet, if one was now aware of the increasingly manufactured make-up of the so-called 'tail-end' of first wave punk, then one could argue that Crass's transformation of the 'anarchic' became ever more credible. Seen by many as *the* seminal band within the so-called 'anarcho-punk' genre, Crass – as George McKay notes – was 'an anarchist band/collective/ commune...who were to survive and flourish as a radical underground organisation in the dark days of Thatcher's early 1980s'.[286] He continues, 'more than that, they were to produce a large and varied body of cultural texts, with record sales in the tens of thousands'.[287] Here, McKay backs up his ideas by drawing upon the writing of Stewart Home, when he refers to Crass as a 'significant and neglected example of "political-cultural agitation and protest groups"'.[288]

Although one can note a relative neglect by academic writers and journalists alike in providing analyses of the anarcho-punk scene, the diversity of media used by Crass as a means of political agitation – and their influence upon a number of underground movements in the post-punk environment – is highlighted by Jon Savage. He notes that, 'their *Feeding of the 5000* [Crass's first album released in 1978] was the first of a sequence of media (records, slogans, books, posters, magazines, films, actions and concerts) so

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[285] Buckley, J., Duane, O., Ellington, M. & Spicer, A. (eds.) (1999) *Rock: The Rough Guide.*, p. 119.
[286] McKay, G. (1996) *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*, London: Verso, p. 75.
[287] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[288] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

complex...and so effective that they sowed the ground for the return of serious anarchism and the popularity of CND in the early 1980s'.[289] He concludes, 'it's also possible to trace the current popularity of the travelling lifestyle to Crass's huge success in the early eighties'.[290]

The importance of both writers' remarks on the dual make-up of Crass as a political, as well as musical, organisation is that the band was responsible for a wide-range of multi-media events. Mick Duffield, for instance would write and direct films to be played behind the band at gigs. *Autopsy* (1979), *Choosing Death* (1981) and *Yes Sir, I Will* (1984)[291] are all works that encompass a juxtaposition of images portraying Western capitalism and human barbarism. Artist Gee Vaucher would design the album covers of each release and – as I will discuss later – these culminated as both a criticism of modern society as well as the conformity of the punk movement as a whole.[292] As such, record covers were also covered in political commentaries and information on local anarchist groups. It would be the culmination of these aspects that resulted in Crass – and the anarcho-movement as a whole – as paradoxically embracing what may be termed a more organised 'punk' lifestyle, something that will also be analysed in more detail below. For McKay then, 'Crass were a radical anarcho-pacifist, anarcha-feminist, vegetarian collective, and the anarchism it espoused was not the anarchy of the Pistols....but a lifestyle and world-view they developed through a combination of hippy idealism and resistance, punk energy and cheek, and some

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[289] Savage, J. (1992) *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*, London: Faber and Faber, p. 584.
[290] *Ibid.*, p. 584.
[291] All three can be found on Duffield, M. (date unknown) *Christ – The Movie*, London: Exitstencil Films, Exit 1.
[292] Vaucher, G. (1999) *Crass Art and Other Pre Post-Modernist Monsters*, Edinburgh: AK Press.

of the cultural strategies of the Situationist'.[293] He concludes, 'in the slightly later and somewhat ignored post-punk culture, the earlier political thrust was more keenly developed and deeply explored'.[294] The central concern of Crass therefore, was to move away from the rhetorical – almost nihilistic – notion of the anarchic, away from the Pistols' shouts of 'anarchy' and 'chaotic' intent, towards the building of a new anarcho-framework; where a far more organised form of political agitation would come to the fore.

The band consisted of nine male and female musicians, film-makers and artists living in a commune – named Dial House – in Epping Forest, Essex. First rented by Rimbaud in 1965, the house soon developed into a thriving artistic space when, in 1968 he 'declared the house a commune, and threw open the doors to any-one who cared to drop in'.[295] It was such an action that was later to become central to the development not only of Crass in the late 1970s, but also the newly emerging anarcho-punk scene of the early 1980s. As McKay notes, 'the communal living was a utopian experiment, and contributed to the total package – right down to lifestyle, right down to living in a version of what anarchist thinker Murray Bookchin calls an "affinity group"'.[296] More importantly however, he believes that 'there's an effort here to close the gap of rhetoric and practice, a rarely achieved thing in anarchist thought and movements (anarchism might be better defined, less through theory and practice than the gap between the two)'.[297] In this sense, Crass was an attempt to put into practice the rhetorical shouts of 'anarchy' from the 'armoured minds' of first wave punk, to transform

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[293] McKay, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
[294] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[295] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[296] McKay, *op. cit.*, p. 77. Original source not given.

this now defunct subculture into a new form of political protest. 'Well, we'd seen through the con. There was a whole new generation of dissenters out on the streets, and if we'd been waiting for orders from General Rotten,[298] we'd realised the mistake. This time we were on our own',[299] Rimbaud continues. He concludes, 'if the first wave punks had become velvet zippies, it was up to us to put the record straight. We weren't going to be made into another set of market-place victims. This time round we were going to make it work'.[300]

1.2. From Protest to Parody: The Building Blocks of the 'Anarcho'

If one of the central aims of Crass was to develop a more politicised form of the punk rock genre, then an analysis of their work could begin by discussing their vehement disgust for the increasing commercialisation of first wave punk in the late 1970s. If punk was originally a rhetorical swipe at all things Established, then Crass's first two albums – *Feeding of the 5000* (1978) and *Stations of the Crass* (1979) – were not only to continue that tradition, but were also to turn post-punk against the very subculture that had nurtured its development. For a start, both albums overall are characterised by hard-edged commentary, ranging from the confrontational ('Asylum'), through images of Nuclear war ('They've Got A Bomb'), gas chambers ('The Gasman Cometh') and child murderers ('Mother Earth'). There is almost a sense of reflective despair, leading back to Iggy Pop and Nuttall's portrayal of a harsh New World (pp. 90-93): where a

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[297] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[298] McLaren on the other hand, continued to court controversy by forming the band Bow Wow Wow: most famous perhaps for the lead singer, Annabella Lwin, appearing naked on the front of their debut album *See Jungle! See Jungle! Go Join Your Gang! Yeah, City All Over! Go Ape Crazy!* (1981) whilst only fifteen.
[299] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

sense of future hangs in the balance and individuality of expression is brutality oppressed by Late capitalism. Moreover, central to both albums on the other hand, is a constant thread of parodic musical and lyrical subtlety, with tracks such as 'Hurry Up Garry', and 'Tired', being musical swipes respectively at the punk bands Sham 69 and the Buzzcocks.[301]

Yet perhaps above all, both albums are unrestrained. The imagery is unpredictable, the syntax disjointed, with the effect of making the familiar (images of motherhood, love and the workplace) unnatural and uncomfortable. 'Very few punks had the rigour or the courage fully to investigate the ideas contained in their subculture',[302] notes Jon Savage using a quote from Rimbaud as highlighting the exception in Crass. 'As one of the few groups to take up the gauntlet thrown down by "God Save the Queen" and "Anarchy in the UK" explain: 'Our anathema was no future' says Penny Rimbaud of Crass, 'we said, "we're not going to have all these young kids thinking that there isn't. We'll go out and show there is a future"'.[303] Yet there is a sense of intense contradictions within both albums; a deep sense of irony that remains beyond the very music itself. As such, Crass are using the very medium that they are denouncing: the mechanised three-minute rant that characterised first wave punk has been turned against itself. Transformed into a new intellectualised form of protest, not only through lyrical imagery and shock value, but more so through a continual parodic swipe at first wave punk itself. It is as if Crass are constantly attempting to move the parameters of the subculture that has now been defined as 'punk', to

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[300] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[301] The track 'Tired' refers to the Buzzcock's 'Boredom', found on *Spiral Scratch* (1977), whilst 'Hurry Up Garry' is a swipe at Sham 69's 45 'Hurry Up Harry', released in 1978.
[302] Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

endeavour to turn its very musical and political attributes back on itself, thus highlighting punk's increasing commercialism and encroachment in mainstream culture.

'Punk is Dead' (track five on the accompanying disc) – from *Feeding of the Five Thousand* – is an example of this. Beginning with an upbeat, four bar introduction the track instantly establishes a sense of punk-like forthrightness. The lyrical interweaving of consumerist ethics ('bubblegum rock on plastic transistors, school-boy sedition backed by big time promoters') and its juxtaposition upon talk of war ('punk narcissism was a social napalm, Steve Jones started doing real harm') creates a sense of abhorrence as they get drawn into association through syllabism and rhyme: 'looking through shit-stained glass, tired of staring up a superstar's arse'. Despite the reiteration of rhythm, the climbing bass part and the constant punk-like drive of the guitar, it is evident that the track's strength lies in the political narrative of lyrical content coupled with a constant swapping and changing between disparate thoughts and notions of imagery. They shift from Steve Jones, towards the idea of 'Patti Smith, you're Napalm, you write with youre (sic) hands but it's Rimbaud's arm'; the inner rhyme itself characteristic of the American poet and musician Patti Smith, whose hero was the French writer Rimbaud.[304] Further, criticisms surrounding the mainstream inclusion of punk are explored; 'movements are systems and systems kill', shouts Steve Ignorant [lead vocalist], 'punk became a movement 'cos we all felt lost, but the leaders sold out and we all pay the cost'. Moreover, one hears

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[303] *Ibid.*, p. 481.

[304] For a succinct analysis of Patti Smith's musical and poetic influence on the punk movement turn to Whiteley (2000) pp. 95-118.

a clear swipe at first wave punk bands: 'CBS promotes the Clash, but it ain't for revolution it's just for cash'.

Ignorant's forthright, aggressive vocal delivery/style effectively cuts through both the words and meaning, and the vocabulary and phrases are over-emphasised so as to heighten symbolic meaning through intonation:

> And me, yes, I, do I want to burn?
> Is there something I can learn?
> Do I need a businessman to promote my angle?
> Can I resist the carrots that fame and fortune dangle?
> I see the velvet zippies in their bondage gear,
> The social elite with safetypins in their ear,
> I watch and understand that it don't mean a thing,
> The scorpions might attack, but the systems (sic) stole the sting.

One hears a growing sense of panic and, with an increase of pace, the track continues to build. The hacking staccato delivery and musical phrasing seem to cut through the lyrical syntax. Ignorant has problems with crushing the third and fourth lines into the rhythm, with the phrase 'business man to promote my angle', being forced into the already established arrangement of words and meaning. The fragmentation and repetition of 'Punk Is Dead' also works through play between lyrical phrasing and meaning. The track's title is repeated over and over, but now not just by Ignorant but the entire ensemble. The phrase almost loses all meaning as the track slows and the kit attempts to stop the track – a final resolution of 'Punk Is Dead' is heard from Ignorant and the drums roll into the last beat. Consequently, a firm 'grunt' is heard from the vocalist, as the track segues into the next, 'Reject'.

The juxtaposition and abstraction of syntax and lyrical imagery is a common method used by Crass. A more extreme example of this can be seen in a track on their next album *Stations*, entitled 'Darling' (track six on the accompanying disc). The female vocalist on the track, Eve Libertine, swaps constantly between repeated words and half rhymes, placing emphasis on the clash of the *rhythmic* pronunciation of syntax, rather than just the meaning itself. The track is built predominantly around the phrase 'hero hello' – two words that are embedded within the majority of the text. 'Desire for protection; hero hello', she sings, 'protect your possession, Enola hello', a line typical of the track. As with Ignorant, Libertine snaps at the vocals, over pronouncing each syllable. The effect is both confusing (as the rhythm of the syllables take precedence over the sense of the words) and enhancing: the association of 'hell-o' with Enola drawing on the apocalyptic imagery (hell) of the first atomic bomb whilst simultaneously questioning the status of the heroic (hero hello/Enola hello).

The track – very much in the vein of 'White Punks on Hope' discussed below (pp. 125-129) – moves from an almost subtle political stance towards a scathing attack on societal attitudes as a whole: 'they sell us love as divinity, when it's only social obscenity', snaps Libertine at the beginning of the track. And from here further juxtaposes the imagery of Enola and the so-called 'macho' stereotype of the 'hero', of 'possession' and the 'obscene sentimental'. The track further emphasises the dichotomy of macho-heroism and the female by ending with a male vocalist repeating the word 'protection', accompanied by Libertine reiterating 'protect your protection, protect your possession' over the top. The constant repetition of words and rhythm is a favourite compositional device by

Crass, in that it places the listener in an uncomfortable position. Even though the Sex Pistols were to sing of a subject such as abortion[305] for instance, their musical syntax was still relatively comfortable to the ear. It is as if Crass themselves are encouraging you to re-evaluate the way in which one listens to punk rock, encouraging the listener to think about the very subject-position they are taking as an individual.

While my brief analyses of 'Darling' and 'Punk is Dead' highlight two generic strands that run through and build towards the musical development of Crass, it will also be helpful here to turn to the third and final strand that I wish to discuss within their early work. As their more self-conscious anarcho stance is evidenced in the second track on *Stations*, 'White Punks on Hope' (track seven on the accompanying disc). Released in 1979, at a time when the band were actively disassociating themselves from the original wave of punk rock, the musical form and lyrics point towards a new sense of political and ideological coding. The lyrics on this later track continue to be tight, almost mechanical as they follow the four-in-a-bar pulse. Ignorant begins the solo, the regimented character of the words exploring each clash of the half rhyme:

> They said that we were *trash*,
> But the name is *Crass* not *Clash*.
> They can stuff their *Punk* credentials,
> 'Cause it's them that take the *cash*.

The regimented lyrical delivery of the words is emphasised by Ignorant's almost farcical cockney accent – the jerky delivery of the opening lines now accompanied by a mechanical, feedback enhanced, chordal progression on the

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[305] In particular in the track 'Bodies' from *Never Mind the Bollocks* (1977), Virgin.

guitar and drum-rolls on the kit. 'They won't change nothing with their fashionable talk, their RAR [Rock Against Racism] badges and their protest walk', continues Ignorant. Above all, the song is mimetic in its reproduction of a mechanical world, nihilistic and noisy in its emphatic delivery. Yet, as with 'Darling', 'White Punks On Hope' heralds a clear progression, both musically and politically in the direction of Crass, in that it mirrors a new depth of subtlety, a new parodic shift in the criticism of first wave punk.

On one hand, the lyrical delivery and syntax – stereotypical now in the musical genre defined as 'punk' – is turned against itself so as to provide a criticism of the first wave movement. The swipe at the Clash, at the RAR movement and the so-called 'punk credibility' is further elaborated upon as the track continues: 'Punk was once an answer to years of crap', snaps Ignorant, 'a way of saying no when we'd always said yep. But the moment we found a way to be free, they invented a dividing line, street credibility'. Yet the lyrical content is not merely rhetorical, not just a Clash like, Sex Pistols like, rant at a passer-by or the Notting Hill Riots. Instead, Crass attempt to move beyond the merely rhetorical – beyond the pseudo-anarchic of the first wave punk – towards a more succinct swipe at governmental organisations as a whole.

'White Punks On Hope' continues '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 trouble starts'. Here, there is a clear shift in the parameters of punk – of the political ideology and musical delivery that the anarcho-punk scene of the late 1970s – away from a sense of 'chaos' and pseudo-subversion,

towards a more evaluative criticism of the very movement it was born. More importantly, however 'White Punks on Hope' draws upon the notion of 'anarchy': but not in the semantic sense of earlier punk bands. 'Boring fucking politics that'll get us all shot', ends the track, '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'.

'White Punks on Hope' therefore, is indicative of both the musical and political development of Crass. The title is an obvious play on words,[306] and this sense of word-play is crucial to the overall effect of the track. Mention has already been made of the solo introduction and spitting emphasis of the vocal delivery, the off-rhymes, the assonance, sibilance and repetition that both confuse and move the lyrics into new associations through the juxtaposition of images. In the next section, this sense of juxtaposition continues, this time instrumentally, as the sparse chords of the guitars and bass combine with a rolling drum-rhythm that impels the track forward. The vocal line is now low in the mix as if to reinforce the sense of unpredictability.

As such, the capricious nature of the track does not end there. This sense of the almost over-mechanised, the idea of form and texture almost accompanying the lyrical subject matter, of punk becoming a commodified genre – an anyone-can-do-it-ethos – gives way to a pseudo-melodic section. The guitar and drums – with bass and vocals – now pull into line and the texture changes. The track becomes easier to listen to, as if the mechanised delivery of the first section is

somehow forgotten. Moreover, the track switches once again, as if the music itself is attempting to encapsulate the political ideas surrounding the 'anarcho': attempting to highlight the unpredictable, 'anti-label' aspects inherent within this new movement.

Although the textural make-up of the track changes, it does not detract from it being defined within the so-called punk rock genre. The musical characteristics are still forthright in nature, with both the lyrical delivery and four-in-the-bar rhythm still indicative of 1970s punk rock. As with the already mentioned parodic swiping of Crass of earlier punk bands, so 'White Punks on Hope' seems almost contrived in nature, as the band are consciously highlighting the way in which first wave punk has become nullified and void of any real political threat or meaning. Consequently, one hears a final change of texture at the end of the track, as each instrument within the ensemble reverts to a scarcity of texture: the bass playing a 'reggae style' line with the guitar 'vamping' in the same style, low in the mix. The track eventually ends with an emphasis upon the 'want', as it echoes, fading into the background.

The importance of 'White Punks On Hope' therefore, is that it epitomises a sense of musical and political experimentation in the music of Crass. Although it is short, it also hints at a conscious effort by the band to move away from the earlier form and style of three-minute, three-chord punk rock, towards a more sophisticated form of political and musical style, an aspect that will be further investigated in section three of this chapter below, 'Bloody Revolutions: Crass

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[306] The title is a play on the Tubes' single 'White Punks on Dope', released in 1978. A brief

and the Forging of a New Direction' (pp. 144-166). Importantly however, one can also turn towards another parallel unfolding of the anarcho-punk genre. Whereas Crass were attempting to experiment with musical form and structure, coupled with a succinct political debate, there was also another form of 'anarcho-punk' developing at that time; one that was based more upon the now established punk rock aesthetic of the 1970s.

2. Breaking the Sound Barrier: The Parallel Emergence of Discharge

'To their detractors, Discharge were not really a musical proposition at all',[307] writes Alex Ogg, 'just a grating minimalist thud delivered by snot-nosed kid brothers of Crass's peace and protest movement'.[308] He continues, 'alternatively they were the group that made noise sculpture a legitimate art form. *The Kerrang! Directory of Heavy Metal*, of all creations, once observed that they were "perhaps the most influential band since the Sex Pistols". The lyrics made little effort to...rhyme, preferring a hectoring, compulsive recitation of facts [that] took away any frills and reduced punk to its elements. Where others had cross-stitched tunes and melody into the package, Discharge were almost Puritanical'.[309] Moreover, the author concludes that the band were 'an aural bombardment marshalled into a military tattoo with Cal [lead singer], a twirling Tasmanian-devil of commitment and intensity, serving as drill sergeant'.[310]

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history of the band can be found in *Rock: The Rough Guide* (1999) pp. 1035-1036.

[307] Quoted from Alex Ogg's commentary found within the inner sleeve of Discharge's compilation compact disc release *Vision of War*, (1997) by Snapper Music.

[308] *Ibid.*

[309] *Ibid.*

[310] *Ibid.*

It is tempting to read Ogg's commentary on the musical stylistics of Discharge as being a quintessential antecedent of what would eventually be termed anarcho-punk – a generic which was to subsequently describe such innovatory bands such as Disorder, Extreme Noise Terror, Chaos UK and Sore Throat. Three-minute, three-chord, under-produced, structurally simple, grinding texture, incomprehensible vocals and a return to an essentially 'do-it-yourself', 'anyone-can-do-it' mentality. One could argue that there could be no other band better than Discharge to promote this new idea of the 'anarcho', a band whose music the journalist Garry Bushell described as 'umpteen versions of the same pneumatic drill solo...awful...no tunes, no talent, no fun...dull, boring and monotonous...the equivalent of sniffing-glue'.[311] Yet there is little doubt that Discharge's initial output did indeed herald a new direction in the post-punk, anarcho-movement.

The twelve tracks that are contained within their first three EP's – *Realities of War*, *Fight Back* and *Decontrol* – all released in 1980 – are analogous to demonstrative snap-shots. All – like the record covers themselves – are as harsh and simplistic as monochrome photographs, often piercing and barbaric, enlightening their audience 'by blasting sonic titles about the realities of war and power'.[312] Their material is brutal, forthright and overtly simplistic, arguably a backlash towards the increasing commercialisation and incorporation of a now stylistically produced punk rock into mainstream culture by groups such as Subway Sect or the Undertones. Moreover, whereas Crass embodied a sense of

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[311] *Ibid.*

[312] Quote taken from the Internet site http://www.ziplink.net/users/writer/history.html (2002), a site dedicated to providing historical information on Discharge.

parodic subtlety, the quoting here and there of established musical characteristics in a swipe at first wave punk, it could be argued that Discharge was a step in the opposite direction: a move to strip punk rock back to its very basics.

There is often an emphasis placed by writers upon the musical simplicity of punk rock, a return to an essentially do-it-yourself, 'grass-roots' aesthetic, where musical production, form, melody and harmony are stripped back to their very basics. Yet, as Paul Friedlander notes, although punk 'was generally driven by a frantic, eighth note pulse, carried by the entire ensemble',[313] it was also 'a heterogeneous style, comprising a complex mélange of ingredients and orientations, spread across a spectrum of artists'.[314] As such, whereas punk rock is often perceived to be an under produced, musically simple subcultural movement, there is evidence to suggest quite the contrary.

I do not wish to suggest that first wave punk was characterised by a sense of musical virtuosity. Quite the contrary. What I am suggesting, however, is the way in which punk evolved into what Tom Vague calls 'Style Culture'.[315] One needs only to turn for instance, to the Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks* (1977), an album that has already been discussed above, to find evidence of Matlock's more than competent bass playing or Jones' over-dubbed guitar solos. It is also interesting to note that Sid Vicious was dropped from the recording due to his 'lack of talent'. Moreover, the musical complexity of the Clash's '(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais'[316] or 'Rudie Can't Fail',[317] provide examples of the

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[313] Friedlander, P. (1996) *Rock and Roll: A Social History*, Oxford: Westview Press, p. 249.
[314] *Ibid.* p. 249.
[315] Vague, T. (1997) *Anarchy in the UK: The Angry Brigade*, Edinburgh: AK Press, p. 137.
[316] From The Clash's *The Clash* (1977), CBS.

subtle mixture of reggae and punk, while the quality of the musical production for each of these tracks also highlight examples of punk not embracing a completely DiY type attitude. Indeed, one may even turn to the saxophone playing of Rudi Thomson,[318] or the reggae pastiche of the Ruts.[319] The complexity of these acts perhaps epitomise a sense that in fact not everyone *can* do it – as the punk ethos implies – that even within this so-called 'vulgar' subculture there was both creativity and musical proficiency.

Yet, it is against this background that the music of Discharge comes into its own, heralding a return to Tom Carson's notion of the Ramones, in that 'they had defined the music in its purest terms: a return to the basics which was both deliberately primitive and revisionist...a musical and lyrical bluntness of approach'.[320] Indeed, a central aspect of such a comparison can be seen in the way in which Discharge 'cut-down' to a bare minimum both the production techniques of 1970s punk rock, as well as its now increasingly elaborate textural and melodic characteristics. As such, their songs adhered to the bare minimum of a typical three-chord melodic cell in the verse and a one-chord trick in the chorus, both of which are distinguished only by subtle textural variation. A typical example of this can be seen in the track 'Fight Back' (track eight on the accompanying disc). Here, the verse is accompanied by a three-chord descending motif of D# C# C power-chords, whereas the chorus is merely delivered over a straight chordal sequence of C. The melody is cut back with declamatory style

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[317] From The Clash's *London Calling* (1979), CBS.
[318] Saxophonist for X-Ray Spex, and who most notably played their album *Germfree Adolescents* (1978), EMI.
[319] Epitomised by The Ruts' single 'Jah War', from the album *The Crack* (1979), Virgin Records.
[320] Laing, D. (1985) *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, p. 59.

vocals and, unlike much 1970s punk, the lyrical subject matter is indecipherable. The drums are extremely high in the mix – dominating the sound – with the 'fuzz' distortion on the guitar taking third place behind the shouted, dry produced vocals. The bass, however is nowhere to heard and there is a feeling this is a live recording without over-dubs on any parts.

Because of the lack of complexity, there is now an emphasis placed on the relationship between overall structure and the make-up of each melodic cell within the piece. If one could argue that the track is structurally very simple, then the construction of subtle textural variation is used to produce a sense of momentum within the piece. Indeed, as will be discussed within a concluding section of this thesis, this would be a trait inherent in many subsequent anarcho-punk tracks. As discussed earlier, 'Fight Back' begins with a four bar dotted rhythm motif of D# C# C. Accompanying this, however, is a 'stabbed' drum rhythm. If we term this as a four bar introduction, we can then see the next two bars as textural development. The drums increase in texture, providing a 'fuller', more complex rhythmic backdrop to a now predominantly 'flowing' guitar line. Indeed, it is this texture that dominates the remainder of the track. Both the verse and chorus are four bars long – but what differs can be seen after the second verse where the intro is again repeated to interject verses one to four. 'Fight Back' is indeed a good example of a track based upon what is often termed as an 'anarcho-punk' tradition. The track is extremely fast – approximately 280 beats per minute – and lasts a grand total of one minute and sixteen seconds. The subtle textural development around a three-chord/one-chord verse/chorus

structure (it is actually more common to have two chords in the chorus) and the predominance of a live, un-dubbed production are integral characteristics.

If the musical form and style of 'Fight Back' is an indication of a newly emerging post-punk subculture, then the same could be said of the track's lyrical content. Gone are the so-called subtle Situationist shock lyrics of first wave punk, or the 'laid back' call-to-arms style of bands such as the Clash or the Ruts. Instead, Discharge embraces a new level of harshness and aggression, a new form of expression that adheres to a unique sense of reality and shock. 'Fight Back' is an example of the almost simplistic way in which the band expresses a harsh aesthetic: the constant repetition of 'fight the system, fight back', interloped with what could be termed as phrases of 'stark reality'. 'People die in police custody', Cal shouts, 'why don't you go see if God can see them', before reverting then back to 'fight the system, fight back, fight the system, fight back'.

While 'Fight Back' embraces the idea of police brutality, other tracks on the first three EPs cover a range of subject matter, including war, homelessness, the oppressive nature of government and organised Religion. 'Realities of War'[321] for instance, is starkly realistic, noting images of 'mutilated corpses and chopped off flesh', whilst 'War's No Fairytale' describes the scene of 'meat flung yards apart from bodies'. This harsh aesthetic – Discharge admits in another track that 'realism is what we're preachin'[322] – seems to encompass the extremity of lyrical content. The grinding texture, simple, hacked away musical form, the move away from the 'traditional' three-minute punk track towards a one-minute roller-

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[321] Discharge, *op.cit.*,

coaster ride, the harsh vocals and subject matter – war, child death and police brutality – are inextricably connected. The lyrical content *informs* the musical texture which, in turn, enhances the brutal realism of the words and vocal delivery.

There has already been a discussion above of the link between the peace movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the emergence of the anarcho-punk scene. Discharge seem to reinforce this, not only in the sense of just being anti-war as such, but also in the linking of the 'reality' and 'harshness' of military conflict towards what they believe to be the 'system' as a whole. In other words, the brutality of war may be linked to the brutality of government, organised religion and the monarchy: all of which are placed beneath the overall control of the capitalist system itself. 'Government and Queen are your only enemies', they sing in 'War's No Fairytale'.[323] 'Don't be fooled by their plastic smiles', proclaiming 'guns and bombs aren't fucking toys'. Another example can be seen in 'Religion Instigates', where Cal observes that, even though 'a stray bullet kills an innocent child, nothing's gained and nothing's solved, Religion instigates this hate and war'.

The inclusion of the ideas surrounding police brutality and war, as well as an anti-monarchy and government stance can be interpreted as a conscious move towards a more politically focused punk rock aesthetic. If one can turn back to the analyses of 1970s punk, set against the back-drop of the failure of the post-war consensus and the enduring recession that was gripping Britain at the time,

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[322] From the track 'But After the Gig' found on the album *Why?* (1981), Clay Records.

then one may also note the sense of helplessness in the punk scene. Tracks such as 'Career Opportunities'[324] by the Clash, 'Boredom' by the Buzzcocks or Johnny Rotten's call of 'no future' in 'God Save the Queen', all herald a punk scene that is predominantly negative. In other words, it was merely a declaration of increasing poverty, growing dole queues and inner-city problems in the 1970s: the movement itself did not profess to hold any answers to these problems.

Obviously one needs to be careful in proclaiming 1970s punk rock as entirely negative, not least in the Rock against Racism stand. The backlash towards the stale musical environment, as well as creating the space for individuals to explore and re-build their own identities are aspects that could be defined as positive attributes to the emergence of such a scene. Yet, it could be argued that the mainstream incorporation of this 'alternative' sense of identity, coupled with a lack of political impetus within the scene, paved the way for a band such as Discharge to provide a more focused political commentary: a notion which would subsequently become integral to the anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s.

In this sense, although Discharge lacked Crass's subtle parodic criticism of first wave punk, their music did indeed push the idea of focused political debate to the fore; a move that one could argue was merely the next step in the unfolding of the punk rock aesthetic. In other words, whereas the Pistols introduced the ideas surrounding the notion of 'anarchy' to the punk scene – whether or not they meant theoretical anarchism or indeed the idea of 'chaos' – the post-punk movement did indeed seem to embrace parts of this political ideal. 'Anarchy's

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[323] Discharge, *op.cit.*,

your solution now', sings Cal in 'Always Restrictions', 'smash to fuck the fuckin' system'; evidence that there are still questions to be raised over the relationship between the theoretical and the chaotic.

Yet, if the punk movement's increasing political awareness could be explained by the notion of theoretical anarchist thought being introduced to the fore, then there is no doubt that another key aspect towards this awareness was the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Not only in the way in which Thatcher as an individual became the source of criticism from a wide range of post-punk bands, but also in the way in which this dislike was expressed in a musical manner. As such, it must be noted that Discharge – or the anarcho-punk movement as a whole – was not the only post-punk band to criticise the Thatcher administration. The Newtown Neurotics' 'Kick Out the Tories',[325] as well as the Exploited's 'Let's Start a War Said Maggie One Day'[326] are two particular tracks that are self-explanatory in their criticism of the then Prime Minister. Yet, both tracks seem to reinforce the notion of punk being now an incorporated subculture. 'Kick Out the Tories' in particular – an inclusion on the compilation album *Punk and Disorderly III: The Final Solution* (1983) – is musically a well-produced melodic track that could be argued slots into the quintessential definition of this strand of post-punk. The track itself sounds almost restrained, convoluted and 'safe'. Whereas the British nation was shocked by the release of 'God Save the Queen', 'Kick Out the Tories' seems almost guarded, even somewhat comical. 'Evil will triumph', sings Steve Drewett the guitarist and vocalist, 'if good men

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[324] The Clash, (1977), *op. cit.*,
[325] A track on *Punk and Disorderly III: The Final Solution*, (1983) Anagram.
[326] The title track on the Exploited's *Let's Start a War Said Maggie One Day* (1983) on Future Earth Records.

say nothing, evil will triumph, if good men do nothing'. The track is easy to listen to, even to sing along to, lacking any real menace or intent.

In many ways this may be reinforced up by the artwork on the cover of *Punk and Disorderly III.* Writing in *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (1999), Frank Cartledge describes punk fashion from 1980 onwards as 'black, studded, leather jackets and Doctor Marten boots, bondage trousers and a predominance of black [with] mohicans exaggerated in both size and colour'.[327] The author concludes that this accompanies 'a culture related to the political doctrines of both the Left and Right promoted by bands such as the Exploited, Crass and Discharge'.[328] Although Cartledge is right in the exaggerated mohicans, as well as the Left wing ideology spouted by bands such as the Exploited, it could be argued that bands such as Discharge – and certainly Crass – were beginning to express a far more anarcho-type political stance.

In this sense, *Punk and Disorderly III* epitomises the idea of Stewart Home's 'novelty production';[329] the way in which punk at this time seems defused, almost devoid of any shock value. The UK Subs' 'Police State' and the Destructors' 'Jailbait', two further tracks from the album, reinforce this almost comical incorporation, an aspect arguably epitomised by the amateur looking, montage album cover.[330] A punk, blindfolded 'hangs', dead in Downing Street,

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[327] Cartledge, F., 'Dress to Impress? Local Punk Fashion and Commodity Exchange' in Sabin R. (1999) *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk Rock*, London: Routledge, p. 146.
[328] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[329] Home, S. (1996a) *Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory and Punk Rock*, Hove: Codex, p. 14.
[330] Perhaps even more so on the previous release *Punk and Disorderly: Further Charges* (1982), Anagram Records. Here, the black and white photographs that cover the front and back of the album are of now 'stereotypical' punks wearing Mohicans, Doctor Marten boots and bondage

whilst Margaret Thatcher stands in the doorway mimicking a Nazi salute – in fact she's merely waving – next to Adolf Hitler. Two swastika flags are flying either side of the entrance whilst police, dressed in riot uniforms pretend to shoot dead three punks who are lined up blindfolded, as if facing a firing squad. Absurdity now replaces shock and fashion now seems to replace individuality, as all bar one punk wears a mohican, (the other wears a spiky haircut, reminiscent of Sid Vicious). Moreover, most are wearing studded black leather-jackets,[331] accompanied by bondage or combat trousers and Doctor Marten boots.

Although one could argue that the post-punk politics expounded by the Exploited et. al., are as valid as Discharge's own ideas – the Exploited also cover the subject matter of war and unemployment for instance – the difference between the two is the way in which these ideas are expressed in a musical manner. I have already discussed the almost comical delivery of the post-punk aesthetic on records such as *Punk and Disorderly III.* Yet one can turn to a number of other bands – GBH or 999 for instance – as examples of punk bands that stood apart from the aesthetics of what would be defined as the 'anarcho-punk' genre. The difference between these bands and the emerging anarcho tradition is in their sense of incorporation; the way in which these bands remain more accessible to the listener. This is not to say that bands such as the Exploited were in any way 'easy listening'. Quite the opposite. Yet, even a track such as 'Let's Start a War' remains within a popular song framework. The track has a sense of predictably in

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trousers. Moreover, the photographs are obviously 'coloured in', with one punk in particular having snot dripping from his nose.

[331] It must be noted that one punk has 'Discharge' and 'Fight Back' written on his jacket.

that it skips periodically from a recognisable verse and chorus framework. There are three verses each interspersed with a rendition of:

> Let's start a war said Maggie one day,
> Let's start a war said Maggie one day,
> Let's start a war said Maggie one day,
> You fight for your Country,
> You die for their gain.

Indeed, the track even ends with a reprise of the first verse, adding a sense of form and aural stability. Another band, Anti-Pasti, is another example of the way in which this style of post-punk is inherently melodic. 'No Government'[332] for instance, on the album *The Last Call* (1981) is similar to 'Let's Start a War' in that the track remains within a verse/chorus framework, with the reiteration of 'no Maggie Thatcher and no government', dispersed between verses. Moreover, the two albums are well produced, with the Exploited's album in particular having the sound of a radio being 'tuned' to a variety of different stations between tracks, and thus creating a montage of Thatcher herself talking of war, claiming 'these casualty figures were not as high as those expected'. On the other hand, the Anti-Pasti track is preceded by the sounds of gunshots and of a plane flying overhead, dropping bombs.

One must be careful here in implying that this style of post-punk was in any way completely melodic or pleasant to the ear. The lyrics are still shouted, the guitar distorted and the BPM still predominantly fast. Yet the difference here lies in the way in which each track is still formulaic in nature; each one is built upon clear melodic and harmonic ideas within the guitar and vocals, and there is often clear

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[332] Anti-Pasti, *The Last Call* (1981), Rondelet.

textural variation between verse and chorus and at times even a guitar solo. The tracks themselves are also often anthemic in nature and one can often sing along with them; there is even the odd 'sing-along' track as with the Exploited's 'Exploited Barmy Army'.[333]

Also, one must be careful in focusing merely upon the melodic characteristics of the music expounded by the Exploited or the Newtown Neurotics, as one could argue that regardless of musical form, the obvious target of criticism is that of Thatcher herself as a 'larger than life' political figure. As such, she became a natural iconic figure to attack clearly given the anti-Queen stance of first wave punk. Moreover, one needs only to turn to the musical style of Bob Dylan to realise that political messages do not always have to be set in confrontational musical styles. Yet, one could argue that for a band to be politicised, rather than topical, there needs to be more than a frontal attack on Thatcher – and this is where the anarcho-punk movement demonstrated an awareness of the larger political arena. In this sense, many bands within the anarcho-movement did not merely swipe at Thatcher as an individual, but recognised instead the way in which the ideology of the state encompassed the ideas of war and oppression. In other words, the way in which anarcho-bands bombarded the listener with apocalyptic images of war and poverty, recognising that it is not the 'individual' that is the problem, but the 'system' as a whole.

As such, one could argue that the difference with the music of Discharge lies in their relative inability to become incorporated. Their hacking, grinding musical

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[333] Found on the Exploited's album *Punk's Not Dead*, (1981) Secret Records.

style, with the vocals rarely understood without a lyric sheet in front of the listener, means that their tracks often seem to mould into each other with very little textural difference. It is as if they just start and stop without warning: 'Two Monstrous Nuclear Stockpiles',[334] being a good example. 'Should East and West be ever divided, resigned to living in fear' shouts Cal over a discordant, distorted guitar: a track that lasts just over one minute. Their music is, at times almost inaccessible, too discordant on the ear, leaving the listener feeling increasingly uncomfortable. These are not anthemic 'sing-along' punk tracks that have been discussed above, but short bursts of harsh, dissonant flashes of feedback and intense declamatory vocals making them difficult for the listener to access.

As such, each track is like an individual snapshot. Short, fast, 'real' commentaries on the brutality of war and government; 'unanswered cries of pain and desperation, dazed and stricken survivors search for lost families', sings Cal in 'Never Again', 'choking lust crazy with thirst drinking from poisoned pools and streams'. In this sense, imagery becomes more important than specific political events, drawing upon the political. Thatcher's decision to purchase the Trident missile system in July 1980 so as to replace the Polaris as Britain's Nuclear deterrent, coupled with her increasingly close relationship with the American President Ronald Reagan. Discharge creates snapshots of the almost apocalyptic environment of the early 1980s. Yet Thatcher herself is rarely mentioned:[335] reinforcing the notion that as an individual she is not the problem, it is the system as a whole that needs to be addressed.

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[334] Discharge, *op. cit.*,

[335] As with almost all examples there are, of course, exceptions. In 'Always Restrictions', Discharge mention the Prime Minister in the line 'Thatcher, you're so full of crap'.

What may define Discharge as a so-called 'anarcho-punk' band therefore, is the way in which the musical expression and subject matter were simultaneously inside the punk rock scene yet also beyond it, shifting the parameters by writing music that is, at times, almost too overwhelming to listen to. There has already been a discussion above as to the heterogeneous styles within the punk rock genre, most of whom are accessible. Yet if one could equate the Pistols with a form of 'organised chaos' – resonating with McLaren's ability to 'tap' into the helplessness of a post-war recession and the stale musical environment of the 1970s – then this idea could also be applied to bands such as the Exploited or Anti-Pasti, both of whom epitomise Penny Rimbaud's notion that the mohican has merely become a fashion accessory.

In this sense therefore, the music of the Pistols, the Damned, the Clash and the post-punk bands that have been discussed above, are accessible in terms of political ideas as well as to the ear. Obviously, one must be careful here in that familiarity does indeed breed contempt. Yet the music of Discharge really does strip away musical recognition to its very base: there are no anthemic tracks of Thatcher or football, no 'sing-along' tracks espousing 'barmy armies' or 'cop cars'.[336] Instead, Discharge sing predominantly of the brutality of war and of the 'system': an aspect that is mirrored in their hacked away, minimalist musical expression.

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[336] Found on the Exploited's album *Punk's Not Dead*, *op.cit.*

3. 'Bloody Revolutions': Crass and the Forging of a New Direction

'Notwithstanding, our political bluff had been called during the recording of *Stations* when we received a mysterious phone-call from a group called Persons Unknown. They wanted to know whether, as anarchists, we would support them'.[337] And so begins Rimbaud's commentary that led to the eventual release of the single 'Bloody Revolutions' (1980) and the next stage in the transformation of the anarchic within the work of Crass. Rimbaud goes on to reveal that

> Persons Unknown turned out to be the support group for five anarchists arrested in July 1978 on charges of conspiring to cause explosions. Those charges were later dropped, but replaced by charges of conspiring to rob, possession of explosive substances, possession of firearms and handling stolen goods.... Persons Unknown had been formed by supporters to argue their innocence, and to raise money for their impending trial.[338]

If the first two albums had encompassed a sense of rhetorical dissent towards first wave punk, then here Crass began forging a new direction towards anarcho-punk as organised political protest, as a month later, Crass performed a benefit gig in order to raise money and publicise the group. Although Rimbaud notes that 'shortly after the gig [the group] were found not guilty of the charges against them, and were set free',[339] Ronan Bennet, a member of Persons Unknown suggested setting up an Anarchy Centre with what was left of the funds. As such, in support of the Centre – and to raise essential funding – Crass co-released the single 'Bloody Revolutions'. The track shared the release of the single with the

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[337] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
[338] *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.
[339] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

song 'Persons Unknown', written by The Poisongirls[340] with whom, as Rimbaud commented 'we'd toured extensively, and who shared our libertarian, or were they now bona fide, anarchist views'.[341] Yet, for Rimbaud the release of 'Bloody Revolutions' – and indeed the support given to the Anarchy Centre – was to further many of the 'confusions that [he had] felt during and after the Persons Unknown benefit gig'.[342]

Although Crass supported the Anarchy Centre, the band decided that they wanted very little involvement with its everyday running. 'Soon after the release of our first album, we had realised that we were in very real danger of becoming "leaders" of a new movement for social change',[343] Rimbaud writes. 'It was a role that we refused to play; the revolution we sought would be without leaders. So having donated over £12,000 to the cause, we backed off into the shadows, happy enough to consider the matter closed'.[344] The Anarchy Centre was open for barely a year 'before collapsing in disarray',[345] as Rimbaud notes that 'conflict arose between the older generation of anarchists and the new generation of anarcho-punks'.[346] Although the mutual interest between these two groups were Crass themselves, the band still refused to have any direct involvement with the centre. 'We did however, play one gig there',[347] notes Rimbaud, 'in which the degree of inter-camp bitching left me wondering whether the whole thing hadn't

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[340] The Poisongirls will be discussed in more detail below. (pp. 230-233).
[341] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.
[342] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[343] *Ibid.*, pp.123-124.
[344] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[345] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[346] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[347] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

been a dreadful mistake'.[348] Moreover, after the Centre's eventual demise, Rimbaud writes that 'all in all I was happy that the project had come to an end it deserved; if that was a demonstration of anarchy in action, what hope was there come the much-vaunted revolution?'[349]

The problems that Rimbaud had experienced with the Anarchy Centre are problems that are reflected in the practicality of implementing a complex political system such as anarchism. Not in a rhetorical sense of the word – as seen above in the work of the Pistols or the Clash – but instead the conscious effort of a band such as Crass to encourage the implementation of anarchism in terms of an organised political ideology. 'But even among those who recognise anarchism as a social-political doctrine, confusion still exists',[350] writes George Woodcock in *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1986). 'Anarchism, nihilism, and terrorism are often mistakenly equated, and in most dictionaries will be found at least two definitions of the anarchist. One presents him as a man who believes that government must die before freedom can live. The other dismisses him as a mere promoter of disorder who offers nothing in place of the order he destroys'.[351] Woodcock concludes, 'the stereotype of the anarchist is that of the cold-blooded assassin who attacks with dagger or bomb the symbolic pillars of established society. Anarchy, in popular parlance, is malign chaos'.[352] In terms of this stereotype that surrounds the term 'anarchism', one can now see the way in which the punk scene of the 1970s used it as a tool

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[348] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[349] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[350] Woodcock, G. (1986) *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, London: Penguin Books, p. 11.
[351] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[352] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

for cultural terrorism and chaotic intent. In other words, the way in which punk used imagery and symbols – such as the swastika or sexual intent – to consciously invoke outrage towards the mainstream, or the way in which it drew upon a new aesthetic within the popular grounded in a fast, monotonous, loud music so as to express a sense of anger and often despair. 'No Future', sang Rotten and 'Boredom' sang Devoto, probably – they would argue – because there was nothing else to say.

More importantly however, any attempt to define the practical ideas surrounding anarchism as an established political thought is difficult. 'To describe the essential theory of anarchism is rather like trying to grapple with Proteus',[353] writes Woodcock. 'For the very nature of the libertarian attitude – its rejection of dogma, its deliberate avoidance of rigidly systematic theory....its stress on extreme freedom of choice and on the primacy of the individual judgement – creates immediately the possibility of a variety of viewpoints inconceivable in a closely dogmatic system'.[354] The author continues by noting that 'as a doctrine it changes constantly; as a movement it grows and disintegrates, in constant fluctuation, but it never vanishes....[I]ts very protean quality has allowed it to survive where many more powerful but less adaptable movements of the intervening century have disappeared completely'.[355] In terms of The Anarchy Centre therefore one can see how this ambiguity of definition – the shifting parameters between the practical application of anarchism and its theoretical counterpart – contributed towards the Centre running into trouble. Woodcock

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[353] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[354] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[355] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

also notes that 'the peculiar fluidity of anarchism is reflected in its attitude toward organisation. By no means all anarchists reject organisation, but none seeks to give it artificial continuity; the fluid survival of the libertarian attitude itself is what is important'.[356] Indeed, Woodcock writes that 'in fact, the basic ideas of anarchism, with their stress on freedom and spontaneity, preclude the possibility of rigid organisation, and particularly of anything in the nature of a party constructed for the purpose of seizing and holding power'.[357] Here Woodcock quotes from Proudhon,[358] noting that '"all parties without exception, in so far as they seek for power, are varieties of absolutism".... And none of his descendants has thought otherwise'.[359]

The idea of rejecting any form of group that attempts to seize power is notable within the work of Crass, not least in the track 'Bloody Revolutions' (track nine on the accompanying disc). Here, the importance lies in its reiteration that successful revolution can best be achieved through a social and political campaign that lacks central leadership. In this sense, 'Bloody Revolutions' is not only a critique of established political thought, but is also a critique of systems *per se*. Whether it be democratic government, 1970s punk rock or indeed anarcho-punk, Crass are attempting to highlight the futility of following leaders. As Rimbaud has already noted, Crass were not only attacking the leaders within government, but also their own role as 'leaders' of the anarcho-punk movement that had been thrust upon them.

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[356] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[357] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[358] Here, Woodcock is referring to Pierre Joseph Proudhon, whose work *What is Property* – written in 1840 – is regarded as one of the first anarchist texts.

'Bloody Revolutions' itself, is characterised by a sense of political tension that is immediately established by a repeated phrase from the French National Anthem. The importance of this melodic element is that it is played twice: the first by an instrument sounding similar to the kazoo, the second by a more so-called 'traditional' brass band. The metonymic de-contextualization of the melody provides a musical swipe at organised government, not just because the phrase constitutes part of a National Anthem, but because within its very rendition one can sense the notion of a National identity. This regimented – almost mechanised swipe – is reiterated by the introduction of the first section of the track beginning with a four-in-a-bar rhythmic idea, each instrument playing a chord on the crotchet beat. The lead guitar and bass are played in a predominantly percussive manner, with the drums low in the mix. The mood is forthright, regimented and – as will be discussed later – has a march like quality due to the crotchet emphasis of each instrument. The juxtaposition of the parodic – almost comical – first rendition of the Anthem and the mechanical march-like introduction adds suggestions of conformity of identity, a control by governmental organisations and the military. Each line of the verse consists of four bars. Harmonically these bars alternate between the chords of D and G, a relationship similar to that of the first phrase of the French National Anthem itself. Moreover, although each line of the verse consists of four bars, the phrase sung only covers the first three of these bars, as each line is concluded with a phrase from the French Anthem on the electric guitar.

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[359] Woodcock, *op cit.*, p. 18.

The subtle parody evident in Crass's use of the French National Anthem is further elaborated upon in the introduction of the lyrics in verse one. The vocals begin with the phrase, 'You talk about revolution, well that's fine', a rendition that has an obvious melodic and lyrical reference to the Beatles track 'Revolution 1' on *The Beatles* (1968).[360] However, whereas the Beatles' version has the line sung in a smooth melodic style, Ignorant delivers his line in a declamatory, almost sarcastic manner. Indeed, Ignorant's dissection and emphasis of the lyric line is particularly effective in preventing the familiar from being one-dimensional. The stabbing nature of each syllabic delivery provides a metaphor for political and subcultural tensions, the reiteration of the failed idealism of 1960s counter-culture, the increasing commercialisation of 1970s punk and the over-bearing encroachment of government. 'Bloody Revolutions' also provides a further subtle parodic shift from Crass's earlier works where their criticism of the 1960s counter-culture was more forthright and lyrically pronounced. On *Feeding the 5000* for instance, Crass states that 'alternative values were a con, a fucking con. They never really meant it when they said "get it on". They really meant, "mine, that's mine"'. Moreover, the track 'General Bacardi' concludes with, 'They formed little groups, like rich man's ghettos, tending their goats and organic tomatoes. While the world was being fucked by fascist regimes, they talked of windmills and psychedelic dreams'.

As the first verse continues, there is also another deliberate swipe at the punk band the Clash. There has already been a discussion above concerning the disapproval that Crass had towards bands like the Clash and the Sex Pistols, who

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[360] The original line reads 'You say you want a revolution, Well you know we all want to change

in their eyes lacked much of the political intent delivered in their music. In 'Bloody Revolutions' Crass draws upon two tracks by the Clash in order to criticise what Crass feels is their lack of commitment towards the ideology spouted in their work. In a track called 'Guns of Brixton', the Clash sing 'When they come at your front door how you gonna come? With your hands on your head or on the trigger of your gun?'[361] Crass replies to this by singing 'But what are you going to be doing come the time? Are you going to be the big man with your tommy gun?' It could also be argued that the latter part of the line is a blatant swipe at another track by the Clash entitled 'Tommy Gun', found on the album *Give 'Em Enough Rope* (1978).

Once again there is evidence here of the intertwining complexities of organised government and the mainstream – almost mechanised – incorporation of 1970s punk, the ideas of subcultural elitism and what Dick Hebdige terms 'plastic punks'.[362] The way in which bands such as the Clash and the Pistols – or individuals such as Jordan, Sue Catwoman, Simon Barker, to name just a few – were later seen to be so-called 'authentic leaders' of the emerging punk movement of the 1970s: 'The style no doubt made sense for the first wave of self-conscious innovators at a level which remained inaccessible to those who became punks after the subculture had surfaced and been publicised',[363] observes Hebdige.

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the world'. the Beatles, *The Beatles*, (1968) EMI.
[361] The Clash, (1979) *op. cit.*
[362] Hebdige, D. (1994) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge, p. 122.
[363] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Yet Crass's parodic de-contextualization of musical characteristics and their lyrical swipe at the 1960s counter-cultural movement, as well as their constant criticism of the Clash and the Pistols is perhaps saying the opposite. Instead, Crass may be highlighting a need for constant re-negotiation, the importance of fluidity of ideas for a subculture such as punk to remain on the so-called 'outside'. Moreover, this idea incorporates the way in which punk itself had seemed to lose its so-called authenticity: the DiY aspect, the anyone-can-do-it ethos, as well as its so-called shock tactics approach. Instead, Crass are advocating a criticism of the way in which bands such as the Clash, Siouxsie and the Banshees and Public Image Ltd.,[364] are now becoming 'icons', musical 'heroes' for a new generation of incorporated punk rockers.

Further, 'Bloody Revolutions' also highlights the clear shift from the punk ethos of the Pistols towards the so-called 'anarcho', by the use of images on the record sleeve itself. 'Despite its rather conciliatory tone, the record was immediately banned by HMV',[365] writes Rimbaud, 'not, however because of the lyrics, but because of "inflammatory nature of the cover"'.[366] He continues, 'Gee's meticulously detailed portraits of the Pope, Margaret Thatcher and the statue of Justice transferred to the bodies of the Sex Pistols, were, we learnt, "Beyond the bounds of good taste"'.[367] Indeed, what Gee had adapted was a photo of the four Sex Pistols taken in May 1977 standing in front of a number of posters

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[364] Public Image Ltd., or PiL was formed in 1978 by Johnny Rotten – who by now had changed his name back to John Lydon – with Keith Levene on guitar, Jah Wobble on Bass and the Jim Walker on drums.
[365] Rimbaud, *op.cit.*, p. 122.
[366] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[367] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

advertising their 'God Save the Queen' single.[368] As Rimbaud so rightly points out, the heads – and indeed the background of the photo has been transformed. Sid Vicious for instance now has the head of the Queen, whilst Steve Jones the head of the Pope. Instead of the 'God Save the Queen' advertising, they are now standing in front of an advertisement for lingerie, accompanied by Crass graffiti and the scrawled words 'All you need is love', another blatant swipe at the Beatles.

As such, it could be argued that Crass's de/re-contextualization of musical phrases (e.g., the French National Anthem and the Beatles' 'Revolution 1') was meant to provide a more succinct political criticism. Their sniping at the ineffectual posturing of groups such as the Pistols and the Clash suggest not only a musical critique both of the counter-culture – and its soft approach to the overthrow of the status quo – but also towards first wave punk's pseudo-anarchy. It is also possible that their intent was to highlight the need to remain on the 'outside', a notion evidenced earlier in their refusal to act as 'leaders'. Indeed, one could argue that this is further highlighted by the use of the Beatles, a band who had already assumed an iconic status. This is also demonstrated by the way in which Vaucher had superimposed the Queen's head on to Sid Vicious, thus drawing attention to the fact that he too, had assumed a 'star-like' status that was supposedly diametrically opposed to the intentions of first wave punk. In effect, he too was merely a consumable commodity – standing against the lingerie – which undermined the intentions of punk and its relationship to the anarchic.

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[368] Vaucher, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

What is also important here, is not simply that HMV had banned the record, but more the complaints and abuse they also received from a number of first wave punks. 'More disturbing by far was a phone call we received from a very angry and rather drunk Glaswegian punk',[369] continues Rimbaud. '"You fucking bastard", he shouted, "how dare you defile the Pistols like that. Don't you know they're fucking sacred? If you come up here I'm going do (sic) the lot of you, bastards"'.[370] Crass's identification of the similarities between organised government and organised subcultural identity – that both, in effect are part of 'the system' – is something Crass attempted to highlight throughout their career. As such, 'Bloody Revolutions' can be identified as a seminal track for the emerging anarcho-punk movement.

Further, Crass point out in the final two lines of the first verse, 'Well, freedom has no value if violence is the price'. The 'Bloody' of the title is thus more an expletive than a call to arms. Political revolutions – as the opening reference to 'The Marseillaise' (1792) reminds us – all too often end in tyranny and terror and Crass's position as pacifists is reflected in the final line, 'don't want your revolution, I want anarchy and peace'. One could argue therefore, that this was a reiteration of an ideal state, rather than a specific call to overthrow the government.

If 'Bloody Revolutions' is a lyrical swipe at both organised government and political thought, as well as the notion of punk being integrated and de-sensitised into mainstream culture, then the musical form and make-up of this track also

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[369] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

reflect Crass's growing reluctance to write in the now 'stereotypical' punk idiom. This is also highlighted by Crass's desire to move away from the three-minute, three-chord musical form that can be found in the earlier bands such as the Pistols or the Buzzcocks. Obviously, one does need to bear in mind that this part of the anarcho-scene was by no-means the only post-punk movement to move away from such a compositional style, as 'new wave' bands such as the Ruts, Stranglers and Subway Sect, also heralded the increasing fragmentation of the quintessential punk idiom, with the incorporation of 'pop' melodies, reggae grooves and a sense of political commentary that often bordered on the comical. Indeed, one needs only to turn to the Ruts' 'Jah War', to find an integration of the reggae style, or Sham 69's almost 'dumbed down' political message throughout *That's Life* (1978), an album that incorporates a 'soap opera' type drama between each track, as two male characters go out drinking, fighting and attempting to 'chat up' girls one evening. Yet, whereas the Stranglers et al. were forming new musical identities outside of the now well defined punk idiom, Crass began to turn the style back upon itself. They began to use the musical form and texture – and therefore this now newly defined 'punk style' – as a means of political and subcultural criticism. In other words, parody now moved not only from the lyrical – and almost plagiarised musical style – but also into the very musical form and delivery itself.

The first instance of this can be seen in the transition from the verse towards the chorus. During the former, the ensemble remains playing on the crotchet beat of each bar with the guitar in particular palm muting so as to emphasise the

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[370] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

percussive texture of the music. At the chorus however, the musical temperament changes. There is an obvious build, as Ignorant's vocal delivery becomes far more aggressive in manner and, although the bass continues to accentuate the crotchet beat, the guitar fills the space between each beat with feedback. The drums also become far more apparent by introducing 'fills' that add momentum to the music. The two bar phrase of the French National Anthem is also omitted from the end of each line. The change of musical temperament is also mirrored in the harmony of the chorus. Although each line of the chorus is still sung over four bars, there is no harmonic alternation within each line. There are four lines in the chorus with the first being accompanied by a G chord played on the bass and guitar. Each line is given more harmonic emphasis by rising a tone each time. Therefore the climax of the chorus – the concluding line – is eventually sung over a C sharp chord, the leading note of D major.

Lyrically, the piece continues to discuss the political implications of revolution. The first line reads 'You talk of overthrowing power with violence as your tool', and continues with the second line, 'You speak of liberation and when the people rule'. Further, the final two lines read 'Well ain't it people rule right now, what difference would there be? Just another set of bigots with their rifle-sights on me'. Although one could argue that the chorus reflects a typical punk track – in the way in which the musical texture and delivery as a whole reflects the hard-edged stereotypical style of 1970s punk – the relationship between verse and chorus is accentuated by the constant stopping and starting. The effect is to restrain a chorus that rises in harmony, lyrical aggression, pace and expectation. For example, immediately proceeding the third rendition of the chorus the entire

ensemble ceases playing and Libertine interjects with the shouting of the phrase 'Vive la revolution, people of the world unite, Stand up men of courage, it's your job to fight'. The words are accentuated by the adoption of a mock French accent and the phrase is accompanied by the French National Anthem played in a patriotic style by the brass band heard at the introduction. There is a sense of irony accompanying this musical break, and one could argue that the rendition of 'The Marseillaise' should not be taken at face value.

The symbolism of using the French National Anthem is apparent. Written in 1792 by Roget de I'Isle, 'The Marseillaise'[371] – as it is called – was adopted to provide a 'battle hymn' for the volunteers from Marseille, marching north to depose Louis XVI on 10th August 1792 and then proceeding to fight the Austrian and Prussian armies in the cannonade of Valmy. The importance of the song lies not only in illuminating what was termed as 'the Terror' – the period that immediately proceeded the French Revolution – but also in terms of events that led up to the deposition of the monarchy and the building of the First Republic.

For the historian and writer Colin Jones, the French Revolution[372] was primarily based upon the two defining principles of words and symbols. 'Old hate-words ("privilege", "feudalism", and so on)',[373] he notes, 'contrasted with terms newly infused with Revolutionary meanings – "citizen"...."nation" [and] the Revolution triad "liberty", "equality" and "fraternity", which formed the building

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[371] Although 'The Marseillaise' was accepted as the French National Anthem in 1795, it was dropped in 1815 due to its revolutionary associations. It was, however, reinstated in 1879.
[372] A full account of the French Revolution can be found in Cobban, A. (1981) *A History of Modern France, Volume One: Old Regime and Revolution*, London: Penguin, pp. 152-266.
[373] Jones, C. (1994) *The Cambridge Illustrated History of France*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 183.

blocks of the newly emergent political culture'.[374] For Jones therefore, deep-rooted political dialogue and labels were soon manifest in the Revolutionary symbols of the time, saturating French society at every level. 'The Bastille, symbol of royal despotism, was transformed into a symbol of the people in arms',[375] continues Jones, 'and found its way on to flags, wallpaper, shop-signs, pocket-knives, fans, buttons, book-covers and all the bric-a-brac of everyday life'.[376]

Further, this new wave of social, political and economic optimism was accompanied by a number of substantial reforms at all levels of French political life. The ancient provinces – *ancien régime* – from which France had hitherto been ruled, was replaced by a new constitutional monarchy, where eighty-three departments would reside over all forms of government administration, such as financial, judicial, religious and military matters. Careers within the administration were also opened to all, as a system of election was introduced to the clergy and judiciary as well as those in political positions, establishing what was termed as a 'career open to talent'.[377]

The spirit of *laissez-faire* prevailed, as state intervention in trade and industry was cut back, and the freedoms inscribed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man[378] accompanied a new found economic liberalism. Religious tolerance was encouraged, *habeas corpus* was introduced, freedom of speech strengthened and

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[374] *Ibid.*, p. 183.
[375] *Ibid.*, p. 183.
[376] *Ibid.*, p. 183.
[377] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

the independence of the press celebrated. Indeed, in the early days of the Revolution, the press 'crystallised the lines of division and adversity within the nation. In the early days political culture was diverse and decentralising. The principle of election gave local communities far more sway over their daily lives than had ever been the case before'.[379] As such, 'the incorporation of the personal freedoms stimulated a hubbub of different, often divergent voices'.[380]

Yet, this new era of French history was certainly not without its problems. 'Far from the nation's defeat of tyranny having ushered in a golden age',[381] Jones remarks, 'it soon became apparent that severe social, economic and political problems remained'.[382] For a start, the large emigration of nobility to escape the Revolution, effected the economy through the ruination of many luxury trades, while political instability in the Caribbean in particular, put the sugar islands in a state of open revolt. The new sense of tranquillity and social affluence soon gave way to conspiracy from noble exiles, foreign powers, counter-revolutionaries and Royalty. Indeed, from the early days of the Revolution, Louis XVI found it increasingly difficult to maintain the role of constitutional monarch set out for him. Jones believes that 'to refashion himself from miracle-absolutist ruler into liberal constitutional monarch proved beyond his powers, especially when he was so ill-advised by the grudge-bearing Marie-Antoinette [Queen of France]'.[383] Subsequently, in June 1791, the pair fled the country by heading towards the

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[378] Founded in 1789, the Declaration of the Rights of Man was a mixture of civil and political rights, including freedom of speech, religious tolerance and the freedom from overbearing government.
[379] Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
[380] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[381] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[382] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[383] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

German border. Although found and returned, the King would never recover his status, even after France went to war with Austria in 1792. 'On 10 August 1792 the King was overthrown, and on 21 September a constitutional Convention, elected by universal suffrage, proclaimed a republic that was to be "one and indivisible"'.[384] Unfortunately however, the overthrowing of the King was just one of a number of deep-rooted political and social problems inherent with the Revolution. By 1793 France was at war with much of Europe, whilst also experiencing counter-revolutionary insurrections, notably in the west of the country. Compounded by these problems, Jones notes that 'there developed a number of fault-lines – notably over religion, social radicalism and political centralisation – which threatened to tear the state apart'.[385]

The first of these concerned the Nationalisation of the church, and its inevitable restructuring. Introduced by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790, it was an action that, although had a great deal of clerical support, also received much hostility. In particular, the act required an oath of allegiance that subsequently turned into a kind of 'national opinion poll' on the Revolution, as parishes pressurised their priests into voting either for the act or against. As such, 'a rough fifty/fifty split between "jurors" (those who swore the vote) and "non-jurors" (those who refused) emerged, plus the geographical profile of "two Frances"'.[386] Further, those areas that rejected the oath – most notably those in the north and west of the country – remained predominantly in favour of church and tradition, residing on the right-wing of the political spectrum: an act that would remain

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[384] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[385] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[386] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

steadfast even down to the Fourth Republic (1945-1958). On the other hand, those regions who accepted the oath tended to be (and remain) essentially anti-clerical and republican. More importantly however, non-jurors were associated with counter-revolution insurrection in the west of the country. Termed as 'Church and King' peasants many took arms against the Republic in 1793, but 'their uprising, fuelled by opposition to religious reform, but also antagonism towards new taxes and other Revolutionary demands, was put down in a sea of blood'.[387]

The second problem that emerged during these war years was concerned with questions of social class and political radicalism. In particular, the Convention was split between those Jacobin deputies who favoured Revolutionary victory even at the cost of co-operation with the lower classes, and the more moderate deputies in the Convention, the Girondins, who expressed caution at such a strategy. Indeed, Jones pulls upon a quote from the Jacobin Maximilien Robespierre, who believed that, 'if the republic in mid-1793 was to be saved, "we must rally the people"'.[388] Yet, the Girondins 'feared mob rule if too many concessions were made to the Parisian street radicals'.[389] The Jacobins prevailed and took control of the Convention of Public Safety, the war cabinet at this time. Further, to enlist public support for the war effort, the Jacobins introduced a number of radical measures, including incomes and price-fixing policies, radical divorce legislation and an initial draft of a welfare state. These measures seemed to be successful, for when national conscription was introduced in August 1793

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[387] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
[388] *Ibid.*, p. 191.
[389] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

the army enlisted three-quarters of a million men and increased the total size of the army to over a million individuals. Not only was the Revolution suddenly worth fighting for, Jones also believes that 'radical politics saturated every town and village in an entirely new way'.[390]

If radical reforms within the Church and the Convention had highlighted a deep split in the social and political structures of revolutionary France, then this was compounded by what is arguably the most important event at that time: 'the Terror'. With the on-going threat of invasion and counter-revolutionary insurrection, the Jacobins took full advantage of the subsequent political centralisation, which had occurred through the reforms of the war cabinet. As Jones observes, 'Terror was made the "order of the day": the committee of Public Safety was given sweeping powers, a Revolutionary Tribunal was set-up in Paris, while mass executions were conducted in civil war zones throughout France'.[391] During the years of 1793/4, it is estimated that 35,000-40,000 'enemies' of the Revolution were executed or died in prison. Although a large number of those killed were peasants or manual workers, the privileged classes were arguably treated the worst. Further, the widespread arrest and imprisonment of many intensified the impact of the Terror – a move that affected 3 per cent of the adult population – adding to a sense of witch-hunt and trepidation though out the country.

The quote from 'The Marseillaise' that presages 'Bloody Revolutions' is, then, more a salutary reminder that patriotic zeal can lead to violence and terror, than a

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[390] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

'call to arms'. Moreover, it is a sense of uncertainty and caution that is further reinforced in the second section of the track. No longer reliant upon the verse-chorus structure of the first section, it runs through a number of different musical ideas without fully establishing any central theme. The section begins with the tempo quickening to approximately 150 bpm and the guitar switching octave so as to play a descending semitone motif high in the register. The motif is one very similar to that heard in the Dead Kennedys' later track 'Holiday in Cambodia', written in the same year.[392] The drums provide a clear back beat on two and four, relying on the half-closed hi-hat to somehow slow the pace. At the end of each vocal line the drums play a small fill to add momentum for the next line. Vocally the mood changes too. Whereas in the first section of the track Ignorant delivered each line of the verse with a hint of sarcasm, he now turns far more aggressive. The lyrics once more turn on those who believe in the political notion of revolution; be it those of the First International, the late 1960s counter-culture or the socialist idealists of punk in the late 1970s. 'Your intellectual theories on how it's going to be', sings Ignorant, 'don't seem to take in to account the true reality'.

Once again Crass juxtaposes imagery. The next line reads that 'the truth of what you're saying, as you sit there sipping beer, is pain and death and suffering, but of course you wouldn't care'. At this point the track slows down again, as a descending semitone motif on the lead guitar provides an interlude between the aggression of Ignorant and subsequent introduction of Libertine's vocals.

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[391] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[392] Although there is no evidence to suggest that the musical similarity between the two tracks is in any way purposeful.

Accompanied by cymbals and bass, which is reduced to playing one note on the first beat of the bar, Libertine sings in a high register pulling once again upon the juxtaposition of images. 'What's the freedom of us all', she sings, 'against the suffering of the few?' And she concludes with, 'that the kind of self-deception that killed ten million Jews'. Here, the drummer increases the tension by playing toms on the eighth note, adding momentum for the move in to the next musical idea of this section.

At this point the mood returns to the aggressive stance found at the beginning of this second section. This time however, it is Libertine's turn to take on the role of pushing the track forward, mocking those who talk of revolution but who in Crass's eyes lack political intent and foresight. Again, there are references to the failures of revolution: that one political system is as bad as the next. 'So don't think you can fool me with your political tricks', she sings, 'political right, political left, you can keep your politics'. Libertine's final contribution to this section comes in the form of yet another snipe at counter-cultural heroes of the late-1960s. At this time, the counter-culture's challenge to the status quo of capitalism and so-called Western democracy involved the exploration of alternatives such as Communism, Marxism and the 'Little Red Book' of Chairman Mao. 'You romanticise your heroes', she sings, 'quote from Marx and Mao, well their ideas of freedom are just oppression now'.

At this point, Libertine drops out and Ignorant takes over the vocal line. What is interesting here, is that the drums cease to play the cymbal pattern and now merely plays the back beat on two and four. This change of drum pattern not

only reflects the introduction of Ignorant's more monotone vocal delivery – in that the cymbals helped place emphasis on Libertine's melodic female vocals – but also creates a clear change of texture which lends itself to the final climax of the track. The lyrics, however, continue their anti-government stance. 'Nothing's really different', Ignorant sings, ''cos all government's the same, they can call it freedom, but slavery is the game'. The beginning of the third section mimics the instrumental introduction of the track, with the guitar and vocals dropping out, leaving the bass and drums playing the crotchet beat once more. After four bars, the lead guitar enters with the two bar phrase of the French National Anthem. This is followed by a march-like drum pattern that eventually accompanies the phrase itself. Consequently, the guitar plays the rest of the melodic idea from the anthem, accompanied by the bass playing a D on the crotchet beat and the drums improvising around the march-like figure.

Libertine takes over and, whilst the French anthem continues on the guitar, she says, 'nothing's changed for all the death that their ideas created', and concludes with 'it's just the same fascistic games, but their rules ain't clearly stated'. The march-like drum-fills sound the end of each line, adding an element of militaristic menace to the piece. Libertine's voice is, at this point multi-tracked, providing further emphasis on both the vocal delivery and subject matter. The track concludes with the line 'the truth of revolution brother is the year zero'. At this point Ignorant interjects and the track ends with an echo – obviously produced – of the word 'brother'.

'Bloody Revolutions' therefore reinforces Crass's pacifist ideals. The track is not a 'call to arms' as such, but rather a reflection on the failure of violent revolution, where the notion of idealism has all too often degenerated into nihilism, thus resulting in no real social or political change. In this sense, the track does not advocate the violent shouting of 'Revolution', but is instead a cry towards the anarcho-punk scene in facilitating a space for pacifist self-awareness against the oppression of government and Western capitalism. Little did Crass know however, that it would be a debate that would soon be forced to the foreground in the next stage of development both within the band and the anarcho-movement as a whole.

4. Parliamentary Questions: Crass and the Politics of War

Writing in *Shibboleth*, Penny Rimbaud notes that, 'in the spring of 1982, a pinprick popped the anarcho-pacifist bubble, ensuring future flaccidity if not downright defeat'.[393] He continues by noting that, 'to boost her party's flagging pre-election image, Margaret Thatcher, self-appointed Queen of Babylon, had declared war on Argentina'.[394] As such, the Falklands War was to become central to the musical and political development of Crass. As Rimbaud notes, although 'as young men died in their hundreds, Crass's songs, protests...words and ideas seemed suddenly worthless',[395] Crass nevertheless became one of the few voices of dissent towards an effective critique of the war.

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[393] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
[394] *Ibid.*, p. 219.
[395] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

The first criticism that Crass made towards the Falklands War came in the form of a flexi disc. 'Knowing that any adverse comment on our "great leader and her glorious war" would lead to instant prosecution, we decided to produce the flexi as if it was bootleg',[396] notes Rimbaud. 'Manufactured in France, and lacking any identifying label or packaging "Sheep Farming in the Fucklands" was smuggled into the country and, with the aid of like-minded distributors and retailers, was randomly slipped into albums and singles of any label but our own'.[397]

Rimbaud continues by writing that 'throughout the war, presumably to give some weight to what in reality was little more than a playground scrap, the more hysterical element of the media went as far as to suggest that there was a real danger of escalation into global conflict'.[398] Rimbaud admits that this is a 'ridiculous assertion',[399] but one that he believes 'had the desired effect of instilling fear into a population whose lives were already controlled by fear. As long as people remained dependant on leaders to get them out of the mess that those leaders had themselves created, there was very little chance of dissent; such is the power of paradox'.[400] In order to express the anger that Rimbaud felt for this apparent rise in jingoism, the author decided to write a piece of work that 'became a stream of consciousness rant against everything that [he] loathed about what had then become known as "Thatcher's Britain"'.[401]

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[396] *Ibid.*, pp. 219-220.
[397] *Ibid.*, p. 220.
[398] *Ibid.*, p. 220.
[399] *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.
[400] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[401] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

Entitled 'Rocky Eyed', the work was soon to be re-written and produced on vinyl as an album entitled *Yes Sir, I Will* (1983), (track number ten on the accompanying disc). Arguably the first punk 'concept' album, *Yes Sir, I Will* is a one-track album lasting for forty-five minutes. It begins with a short, softly spoken introduction by a female vocalist:

> The door stands open –
> Across lines, invisible hands are held, golden streamers building in the night.
> Alone, the possibilities are enormous.
> Step outside and parasites, deprived of their meat, wait to suck on tiring flesh,
> Unending statistics that fatten leaders, prisoners of their morality.
> Afraid of death, we can not save ourselves.
> To breathe is not enough.

From this softly spoken introduction, the track lurches into a discordant mélange of white noise, rhythmic unpredictability and shouted declamatory vocals. There is an almost desperate feel to the track – a sense of helplessness from Crass themselves – in their criticism of war and Thatcher. 'Friends in adversity are not necessary friends at all',[402] writes Rimbaud, 'Humans, like rats, cling to sinking ships, and in many respects Crass had been no exception'.[403] Shared between a male and female vocalist, the lyrical delivery is spilled out in a fast, aggressive manner; 'words don't seem to mean much; of anyone we've used more that (sic) most', begins the second stanza. It concludes, 'feelings from the heart that have been distorted and mocked, thrown around in the spectacle, the grand social circus'. Crass's refusal to allow writers to 'pigeon-hole' their work, instead encouraging a fluidity of debate and political ideas – as well as the rejection of the band as so-called 'leaders' – within the anarcho-scene is encapsulated in the

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[402] *Ibid.*, p. 291.
[403] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

constant switch between the discordant unpredictability of the drums and rhythmic stability. The first section of the track lacks any real musical form, with aural cohesion being provided by the constant switch between rhythmic unpredictability and the drum-kit shifting towards a recognisable back beat. The overall texture is uncompromising, and the feedback of the guitar runs parallel to the shouted, declamatory vocals thus creating at times a track that becomes uncomfortable to listen to.

Indeed, although *Yes Sir, I Will* has been described as a one track album there are a number of different musical styles within the work. As the introduction fades to an end, a piano motif is introduced and the next part of the album consists of a piano and voice, underpinned by a synthesised string section that provides a calming accompaniment to the now melodic vocal line. The track is based upon a call and response pattern, with each line sung being followed by the response of 'what did you know? What did you care?' Again, the lyrics partly consist of a subtle swipe at first wave punk. One line in particular, that reads 'anarchy's become another word for "got 10p to spare?"', for instance, is arguably a reference to the track 'Have You Got 10p?'[404] by the Ejected, released in the same year. Another line reads, 'another token tantrum to cover up the fear', a reference to a criticism of Crass by the music journalist Steve Sutherland in an article written for the popular music paper *Melody Maker*.[405]

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[404] A track incidentally found on *Punk and Disorderly III* (1983), *op. cit.*

[405] Sutherland, S. (1981) 'Keep Off The Crass', *Melody Maker*, London. 20 June, p. 30. The line from the article notes that Crass are 'so unattractive, unoriginal and badly balanced in an uncompromising and humourless extremist sort of way, simply adds to the diseased attraction of their naively black and white world where words are a series of shock slogans and mindless token tantrums to tout around your tribe and toss at passer-by', p. 30.

The shifting of musical parameters not only highlight Crass's attempt to create definitional ambiguities over their work. As the track reverts to the discordant texture of the initial section, Ignorant 'sings' the phrase 'anything and everything can be so easily institutionalised, a poor parody of itself. Itself contained by itself'. The dichotomy of musical form and structure – the difference between the rhythm and texture, between the softly sung vocals and piano and the descent into rhythmic unpredictability and a wall of white noise – seem to highlight the absurd. In other words, it illuminates the way in which punk, initially heralded as a strong form of protest in the 1970s – and the early 1980s – had finally lost its menacing impetus. 'Punk has spawned another rock 'n' roll elite', Ignorant continues, 'how many times must we hear rehashed versions of *Feeding of the 5000*, by jerks whose only fuck off to the system has been one off the wrist?'

Although *Yes Sir, I Will* is probably one of the most important pieces of work in Crass's repertoire, it must be noted that the idea of the institutionalisation of the punk movement refers not only to first wave of the subculture in the 1970s, but also to Crass themselves. On a number of occasions *Yes Sir, I Will* becomes almost too discordant to listen to. At times, the music breaks down and seems to lack direction, an indication of Rimbaud's admission that the words and music now seem to add very little to the so-called reality of war. Indeed, it could be argued that Crass are themselves questioning the effectiveness of anarcho-punk as providing an effective critique of society; in a sense highlighting the notion that the anarcho-movement itself may also have become institutionalised and incorporated into the mainstream. As in the earlier discussion of the Exploited's defused rants about Margaret Thatcher, questions can be raised over the way in

which the anarcho-movement itself would need a constant fluidity of ideas and shifting identities if it was to continue to form an effective challenge to a subcultural and societal status quo.

Indeed, this is a thought discussed by Rimbaud in *Shibboleth*. 'The speed in which the Falklands War was played out, coupled with the devastation that Thatcher was creating both at home and abroad',[406] he notes, 'made us realise that despite our growing sense of tiredness, we needed to respond to world events far faster than we had ever needed to before'.[407] Consequently, their first 'tactical response', was to release the 7" single 'How Does it Feel to be the Mother of a Thousand Dead' (1982), (track number eleven on the accompanying disc). Released so as to coincide with what Rimbaud terms as 'Thatcher's parody of a "victory parade"',[408] the single was 'met with immediate hostility from the authorities'.[409]

'How Does it Feel' is arguably the most important record that Crass produced. 'Initial sales of the record were high, twenty thousand in the first week, creating a wave of interest from the national press'[410] writes Rimbaud. 'Robin Eggar, a rock journalist for the left wing *Daily Mirror*, attacked it as "the most revolting and unnecessary record I have ever heard", which reflected the tenor of most of the coverage it received'.[411] Rimbaud also discusses the interest that the record received from the Conservative MP Tim Eggar. 'A few days later, the article was

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[406] Rimbaud, *op. cit.*, p. 241.
[407] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[408] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[409] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[410] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[411] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

picked up on by Robin's brother, Tory MP Tim Eggar, who, describing himself as a "dutiful brother", read the article, was duly enraged, and immediately wrote to the Attorney General requesting that Crass be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act'.[412]

Rimbaud goes on to discuss the press release that Eggar produced, noting that the MP believed the record to be 'an insult to the Prime Minister, the government, the armed forces and the families of those who died in the Falklands'.[413] Rimbaud goes on to give an account of a radio interview between interviewer and Andy Palmer and Pete Wright, members of Crass. 'After having heard his hysterical description of the record as "going beyond the acceptable bounds of freedom of speech, being the most vicious, scurrilous and obscene record that had ever been produced"'[414] Rimbaud says, 'Andy quietly and confidently replied,

> I consider that Margaret Thatcher, her government, Mr Eggar and all others who support her are responsible for sending young men to be slaughtered, which in my view, amounts to pre-meditated, calculated murder. Now, that is obscene.[415]

Rimbaud also gives an account of the mention that the record received during Prime Minister's Question Time. 'In Parliament, a Labour backbencher asked Thatcher...whether "she will take time off....to listen to the record"...Naturally, she declined to comment, but later that week her Press Secretary issued a statement which announced the decision "not to give these people (Crass) the

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[412] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[413] As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[414] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[415] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

dignity....of having a public platform"'.[416] Rimbaud also observes that 'a memo was circulated within the Tory Party advising that the record should from now on be ignored, as should any further provocation from Crass'.[417] Moreover, responding as the law does to political pressure, the Attorney General quickly announced that the record 'does not contravene Section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act, thus giving a clean bill of health to the most vicious, scurrilous and obscene record ever produced'.[418]

Formally, 'How Does it Feel' adheres to a verse/chorus structure. In stark contrast to a track such as 'Bloody Revolutions' – or indeed *Yes Sir, I Will* – 'How Does it Feel' has a clear introduction, a distinct verse and chorus and an established outro. It is almost 'designed' and anthemic in nature, reinforcing the militaristic overtones that Crass are highlighting. The track begins with a short motif, rocking between A flat and A on the lead guitar, adding a sense of eeriness and expectation to the track. Although the bar-lines are somewhat blurred - as the guitar plays the motif rubato[419] – one could argue that the bass and drums enter at bar nine. The bass underpins the lead guitar, playing the rocking A flat/A natural motif, against a two bar drum pattern. In bar one of this pattern the drums accentuate every crotchet beat with a cymbal crash – accentuating the guitar part – whereas in the second bar they play a quaver roll on the toms, providing momentum to the track.

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[416] *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.
[417] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
[418] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
[419] A piece of music that is to be performed with a flexibility of tempo.

The vocals enter at bar thirteen, and as already mentioned echo the introduction of *Yes Sir, I Will.* The vocals are declamatory in nature, with each line shouted aggressively into the microphone. Although Libertine's voice is relatively low in the mix, her vocal delivery is shouted, giving the impression that she is fighting to be heard. As with much of anarcho-punk, the lyrics – or indeed the often political message – is arguably more important than the music itself. Although one cannot hear the lyrics clearly – due also to the speed of their delivery as well as being low in the mix – when they are read one realises that they are describing the difficulty in providing an effective criticism of the state. 'It doesn't get much better', she shouts, 'your voice can just get ripped up shouting in vain. Maybe one hears what you say, but you're still on your own at night'. The vocalist then turns to the apathetic public, the public that has already been discussed in terms of being a mass that needs the comfort of leaders. 'You've got to make such a noise to understand the silence', she continues, 'screaming like a jackass, ringing ears so you can't hear the silence'.

Accompanying the voice is the rocking semitone (A flat/A natural) motif played by the guitar, bass and drums. As the vocals conclude, the rest of the ensemble fade-out and the listener is almost hit by the apparent silence; the extremity of aesthetic between the discordant female vocalist (and the over-powering ensemble) and the final move into this stillness. Moreover, what is interesting here is that Crass leaves out a paragraph from the lyrics printed on the record sleeve. The paragraph begins 'we never asked for war, nor in the innocence of our birth were we aware of it. We never asked for war, nor in the struggle to realisation did we feel as if there was a need for it'. It concludes, 'we never asked

for war, nor in the joyful colours of our childhood were we conscious of its darkness'.

The next section of the track begins with a male vocalist shouting 'How does it feel?', followed by the first rendition of the chorus. Each line of the chorus consists of two, two-bar phrases. The first two bars contain a simple diatonic melodic motif around the tonic A. Sung by a male vocalist, the lyrics resemble the title of the track and are sung almost monotone. Bars three and four are sung by the remaining ensemble, providing emphasis and aggression, as well as perhaps, an air of solidarity. Each lyric is sung on the crotchet beat and reads 'Young boys rest now, cold graves in cold earth'. Whereas in the first two bars the guitar mirrors the vocal motif and the drums play a simple 'two and four back beat' in bars three and four the texture changes. The drums play a cymbal crash on each crotchet beat in bar three and a drum fill in bar four, adding momentum to the latter end of the chorus while the lead guitar is used to add imagery and word painting to the idea of 'cold graves in cold earth' by playing a descending, almost jarring semitone motif.

The chorus consists of a repeat of the line 'how does it feel to be the mother of a thousand dead', yet the second time through the latter section of the chorus changes. The lyrics for the second time read 'sunken eyes, lost now; empty sockets in futile death', and is accompanied by an upward guitar motif that moves the track into the proceeding verse. Each verse is also split in half. The first half is based upon the semitone movement of the A flat to A natural motif played on the guitar at the introduction. Again, the vocals are declamatory and

the end of the first section is echoed by a downward semitone motif on the guitar. The lyrics are forthright, beginning with the phrase 'your arrogance has gutted these bodies of life, your deceit fooled them that it was worth the sacrifice', and conclude with 'your lies persuaded people to accept the wasted blood, your filthy pride cleansed you of the doubt you should have had'.

The second half of the phrase quickens in tempo and, although the drums provide stability by playing a clear back beat on the two and four each phrase breaks down into an uncomfortable texture of feedback. The vocal delivery changes too, as the vocalist becomes far more sarcastic, almost contemptuous. 'You smile in the face of death because you are so proud and vain', he sings, 'your cruel inhumanity stops you from realising the pain that you inflicted...'. At this point what may be termed as a coda signals the end of the verse. On the word 'inflicted' the guitar, bass and drums play a chord on the first crotchet beat of the bar, with the fourth bar – the end of the chorus – consisting of a drum fill to add momentum into the next verse. The lyrics at this point are equally as poignant, with the phrase 'you determined, you created, you ordered – it was your decision to have those young boys slaughtered'. The rest of the track is surprisingly rather predictable. Unlike a track such as *Yes Sir, I Will*, and even to a degree 'Bloody Revolutions', 'How Does it Feel' sticks to a verse/chorus structure. I have already discussed the introduction, the first rendition of the chorus and the first verse. The rest of the track continues with verse two, chorus, verse three, chorus, verses four and five and finally the outro. Except for the third verse, each sounding of the verse and chorus are identical.

The difference in verse three can be seen in the change of musical texture. The drums play a continual drum fill on the toms whilst the guitar is reduced to the sound of distorted feedback. The verse lacks both harmonic stability and melody, although one can just hear the lead guitar picking up certain chords, providing an almost comfortable axis to the dark scenery that is painted by the feedback. The lyrics however are just as poignant. The verse begins with the phrase, 'throughout our history you and your kind have stolen the young bodies of the living to be torn in filthy war'. And continues with 'what right have you to devour that flesh?'. This verse is not chopped in two as with the others, yet ends with the same phrase as the other verses. 'What right to spit on hope with the gory madness', he sings and, echoing each of the other verses, 'that you inflicted you determined, you created, you ordered – it was your decision to have those young boys slaughtered'. Although there is a variation in the musical texture, the subject matter in each verse is very much the same. In verse four, for instance, we hear the phrase 'you accuse us of disrespect for the dead, but it was you who slaughtered out of national pride'. In the first verse, the beginning phrase opens with 'you use those deaths to achieve your ends still, using the corpses as a moral blackmail', and continues with 'you say "think of what those young men gave" as you try to blind us in your living death...'

The outro to the track lasts for twelve bars and is preceded by an almost desperate plea from the vocalist with the final questioning of 'how does in feel to be the mother of a thousand dead?'. The outro resembles the semitone motif that underpins bars three and four in the chorus. The first four bars consist simply of the ensemble, with the remaining eight bars enlisting a number of vocalists

shouting '1,2,3,4, We don't want your fucking war'. On the third repetition a drum fill accompanies the second half of the phrase, bringing the ensemble to a close. The track eventually ends with a solo vocalist shouting '1,2,3,4, You can stuff your fucking war'.[420]

Although 'How Does it Feel' provided a succinct outline of Crass's views on the Falklands War, it did however coincide with the political polarisation that the group were facing both in terms of public opinion, as well as the anarcho-movement as a whole. Although a gig in the Zig Zag Club in 1982 revitalised the band – 'the message of "do it yourself" had never seemed so real as it did that day',[421] notes Rimbaud – it seemed that the helplessness that Crass felt in effectively undermining Britain's role in the war also mirrored problems that had begun to unfold in the anarcho-movement as a whole. As such, it was a sense of helplessness that was further compounded by one particular political action that would herald the eventual demise of the band: the emergence of the now infamous 'Thatchergate Tapes'.

Produced by Pete Wright, the bass player in Crass, the tapes involved a 'secretly edited tape' taking the form of a telephone conversation concerning the Falkland's War between the American President Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Not only did Thatcher 'admit' responsibility for the controversial sinking of the Argentinian ship The Belgrano but also, 'using information sent to us by a sailor serving in the Falklands, details concerning the sinking of the

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[420] The lyrical content perhaps being a reference to Country Joe and the Fish's track 'The Fish Cheer & I Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die-Rag', from the album *I'm-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die* Vanguard (1967). The lyrics of which read, 'And it's one, two, three, What are we fighting for?'
[421] Rimbaud, *op.cit.*, p. 245.

British destroyer Sheffield were included'.[422] The significance of the Sheffield lay in the ship being involved in a crude decoy operation by the aircraft carriers Invincible and Hermes. In order to protect Prince Andrew – who was a member of the Royal Family serving on the Invincible – the tape alleged that the Sheffield was used as protection for the aircraft carrier when two Exocet missiles were fired towards it. Moreover, the tape also went on to 'present Reagan threatening to "nuke" Europe in defence of American interests, a hypothesis which probably wasn't quite as absurd as it seemed at the time'.[423]

As the tape surfaced, and Crass eventually owned up to the hoax, the band realised the enormity of the political repercussions surrounding its publication: a naivety that resulted in a sense of paranoia sweeping through the group. Rimbaud outlines that it was a journalist from the British newspaper *The Observer* who had contacted the band and revealed the hoax, an action that still remains a mystery to the band today. 'We had been meticulously careful to ensure that no one knew about its production and distribution',[424] writes Rimbaud, 'it acted as a substantial warning for us'.[425] The author continues,

> Since the days of '77, we had been involved in various forms of action, from sabotage to subterfuge. If walls did indeed have ears, how much more was known about our activities? We barely had time to consider the implications of our confession before the world's media pounced upon the story. They were thrilled that a "bunch of punks" had been able to so effectively embarrass The State Department, and "by the way, what else had we done?"[426]

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[422] *Ibid.*, p. 250.
[423] *Ibid.*, p. 251.
[424] *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.
[425] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[426] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

As the tape generated increasing interest from the world's media – Crass subsequently travelled to Amsterdam and Tokyo for 'exclusive radio interviews'[427] for instance – the band felt themselves 'thrown into an arena in which [they] were given a form of political power, and were being treated with a slightly awed respect'.[428] Yet, if Crass's political views were reaching a wider audience, the band also found themselves increasingly questioning their own political integrity. 'After seven years on the road',[429] writes Rimbaud, 'we had become the very things that we were attacking'.[430] Although the band had finally found a platform for their ideas, Rimbaud believes that they had lost a valuable insight to the very functioning of the band itself. 'Where once we'd been generous and outgoing, we had now become cynical and inward',[431] he concludes, 'we'd become bitter where once we had been joyful [and] pessimistic where once optimism had been our cause'.[432]

As such, it now seemed that Crass had been drawn into the very political arena that they so vehemently despised. The original conception of Crass, as a means of transforming the almost chaotic business-like anarchy espoused by McLaren and the Pistols, into a means of organised political action within the punk genre had now become institutionalised – as Crass would say 'a poor parody of itself'[433] – similar to first wave punk. In other words, the earlier discussion of Woodcock's ideas concerning the complexity of anarchism as an indefinable political ideal needing a constant fluidity of ideas and lack of leadership in order

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[427] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[428] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[429] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[430] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[431] *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.
[432] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

to survive had become apparent in Crass's own transformation – and one could argue institutionalisation – of the anarchic.

In addition, one could argue that the so-called institutionalisation of Crass within the anarcho-scene became increasingly apparent on two central platforms. Firstly, in terms of the ground-roots level of the scene – through the organisation of the Zig Zag Club and the Stop the City Campaigns, the latter of which is discussed in more detail below (pp. 220-221) – Crass now found themselves uneasy, and more unwanted, 'leaders' of a new movement. Where Rimbaud had previously attacked 'General Rotten'[434] and the 'counter-revolutionaries'[435] of first wave punk, the writer now found Crass and himself to be in much the same position. Moreover, events such as those organised at the anarchy centre discussed earlier, highlighted the deep political rifts between a disparate number of post-punk off-shoots, further highlighting the ambiguity and difficulties of the practical implications of a political doctrine such as anarchism.

On another level, Crass also found themselves caught within a wider theoretical political arena. Whereas their original political impetus was one that encouraged a sense of direct action and DiY practicality against the oppressive nature of government and capitalist society, Crass were cast more in the role of political commentators. It would now seem that the band had appropriated the role of counter-cultural 'heroes' such as Dylan or Mao, a political position and form of ideology that Crass equally despised. In this sense, it would seem that their

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[433] Lyrical quotation from Crass's album *Yes Sir, I Will* (1984).
[434] Rimbaud, *op.cit.*, p. 76.
[435] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

advocating of political awareness and their attack on government per se had aligned them more in terms of intellectual activists than Stewart Home's previous notion of a 'neglected example of political-cultural agitation protest group'. In this sense, Crass had merely replaced one set of rules with another. 'Can't wear leather boots because they're not vegetarian',[436] notes Rimbaud, 'can't enjoy looking at girls' tits because it's sexist. Can't indulge in a holiday in the sun because it's bourgeois. Christ, it sometimes feels like we've put laughter out of fashion'.[437]

It had seemed, therefore, that Crass had encountered the complexities and contradictions that are manifest in a political system such as anarchism. Whether it be the replacement of rules, such as those surrounding vegetarianism and sexuality, or Rimbaud's increasing struggle between pacifism and direct forms of action,[438] Crass had eventually found themselves increasingly part of a mainstream political debate: something that the band had strove to avoid. Tired of the mounting pressure and attention from other dissident groups – such as Baader Meinhof and the IRA, as well as the police and the authorities – Crass were subsequently prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act for the 'depraved' nature[439] of their material, and split in 1984. 'We'd attempted to avoid the pitfalls that other social prophets had fallen into',[440] notes Rimbaud. 'We'd attempted to tell others to live their own lives, but perhaps because we'd increasingly been unable to live our own, we'd become a parody of ourselves, an

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[436] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[437] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[438] For a detailed account of this struggle turn to *Ibid.*, pp. 260-276.
[439] For an account of the trial turn to *Ibid.*, pp. 255-258.
[440] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

empty vessel on an empty sea'.[441] Yet, if the anarchy that Crass had espoused was reaching an end in 1984, then there was one other band that was taking the message of the anarcho-scene further into the 1980s, a band that attempted to unravel the political and subcultural contradictions that surrounded the anarcho-scene at this time: the Subhumans.

5. Instantaneous Spontaneity Drive: The Final Path of the 'Anarcho'

'Punk Rock! WOW! Ignition to the imagination! So easy, so fast, so real, so let's go! For the first time I felt involved and identified: it justified my feelings of alienation and brought me into contact with like-minded people, the beginnings of a social life'.[442] And so begins the musician and author Dick Lucas in discussing his own initial involvement in punk rock. Writing in *Threat by Example: A Documentation of Inspiration* (1990), he continues, 'all the young punks wanted to be on stage – "anyone can do it" – and my first vocal venture was with the Mental [1979-1980], formed with my brother and friends at school, and reflecting the chaotic spontaneous atmosphere prevalent at the time'.[443] Lucas continues by discussing the way in which first wave punk was to soon transform into the later more politically conscious anarcho-scene. 'I was yet to get into forming political opinions or a social conscience beyond my own area: punk was "new", it was "bollocks" it was, above all, "Look at me!"'[444] He notes,

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[441] *Ibid.*, p. 276.
[442] Lucas, D. (1990) 'Dick Lucas', in Sprouse, M. (1990) *Threat by Example: A Document of Inspiration*, Edinburgh: AK Press, p. 15.
[443] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[444] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

> difference in such diversity became indifference to many people over the years, but a standard way of being for the rest of us; as Crass appeared on the hitherto unknown "anti system" pedestal...a new sense of relevance and self-reliance took the ever-increasingly commercialised punk scene back to a deeper emotional and social roots than we'd ever bother to consider.[445]

The idea of a so-called 'anarcho-punk' ethic was manifest primarily in the way in which Lucas's next musical venture – the Subhumans – recorded and distributed their work. On the writer's own admission, he was lucky enough to receive the financial help needed to start a company named Bluurg Records, an addition he believed, to his already established distribution network Bluurg Tapes, which he had set-up in 1981 in order to promote the Subhumans and other local bands. Lucas believes that this was of central importance to those bands recorded and distributed by Bluurg Records. Further, in emphasising the DiY ethic and freedom of expression central to anarcho-punk, it gave those bands involved complete control over their musical output as well as political viewpoint. Having been signed to the Flux of Pink Indians'[446] Spiderleg label, the Subhumans had earlier refused the option of signing a record contract with the larger Small Wonder label, so as to pursue their belief in cheaper than-standard record and tape prices. As such, Lucas believes that Bluurg Records 'reaped' the rewards with working with an established band such as the Flux of Pink Indians. He notes that the band took advantage of 'Flux's methods, adopting and adapting their ideals of independence as they had learnt the same way from their experiences

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[445] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[446] Formed in 1980, Flux of Pink Indians were another influential anarcho-punk band inspired by Crass's marriage of politics and music. They disbanded in 1987.

with Crass Records[447]...low prices, no contracts, no obligation, printed lyric sheets'.[448]

Lucas further demonstrated the practical application of what may be considered as a so-called 'anarcho-punk' ethic by restricting gig prices, avoiding agencies and seeing no need for a manager. For Lucas, the importance of the Subhumans was in what he termed as 'keeping both sides of our productivity as accessible as possible'.[449] Importantly, he believed that the band may find it increasingly difficult to convey any meaningful political and social message if they are 'surrounded by the machinations of the music industry, which is geared to maintain image above reality, profit above message and band above audience'.[450] As such, he concludes by drawing upon the experience of earlier punk bands. 'And as I saw my old favourite bands progress/regress into commercial poptunes with nothing more to say (Damned, Stranglers, Banshees, etc), I mentally swore I'd never go that way'.[451] Consequently, Lucas 'consciously made myself available and accessible to conversation (questioning, praise, abuse, etc)'.[452] He notes that, although 'this seems obvious...to me it was important to not forget that I'd never had a chance to talk to bands I'd seen on stage when I was younger; they had seemed so removed...So my address appeared on the record sleeves and prompted a train of mail that won't even stop even when I have!'[453] In this sense Lucas concludes that, although at times he finds it difficult to keep

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[447] After encountering problems with the release of *Feeding of the 5000*, Crass decided to set up their own record label in order to have overall control of their musical material.
[448] Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[449] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[450] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[451] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[452] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[453] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

up with the work-rate, 'the feeling of satisfaction having taken hours over a long interview is really something else, a reason for existence as a communicator'.[454]

Lucas therefore conceives that the basis of a 'ground-roots' relationship between listener and audience alike allowed his music to embody an increasingly focalised political standpoint. Further, the author believes that it was a relationship that helped the emerging anarcho-punk scene to develop a new sense of autonomy and self-reliance that had never existed in first wave punk. As such, political dissent shifted from the rhetorical, anti-Establishment ethic that had existed in 1970s punk towards a new sense of political awareness that encapsulated specific areas of capitalist society. Lucas notes that his 'anger became specifically directed against tangible forces of control and oppression (media, politicians, police, etc.) as well as further stressing the rights of freedom of speech and action'.[455] Further, he believed it was a harsh and realistic awareness that 'reflected the political and social nightmare that was Thatcherism'.[456] Musically, it was an animosity that was to manifest itself in the lyrical output of the Subhumans. As Lucas notes, the band 'continued my lyrical progress into this new realm of intensified awareness...no one should suffer, yet we are all suffering'.[457] Lucas elaborates upon this by continuing, 'the anger I felt at the way people behaved towards each other presented itself in emotional mirrors held up to myself for anyone to see. All thoughts went to words and their intended effect, that of recreating the feeling experienced when writing the lyrics...All else is peripheral, but still essential: it's the outside view of what you

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[454] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[455] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[456] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[457] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

are about'.[458] From here, he turns to the relationship between the theoretical ideas that were generated from the origins of the anarcho-punk scene and the way in which these were manifest in the practical elements in the development of the scene itself. 'Words will not sustain ideas',[459] he writes, 'if behaviour contradicts them, and the gap between lyrical honestly and empty sloganeering is the gap that proved that for some, punk was an attitude, and for others it was a trend to exploit'.[460] As such, he further differentiates between first wave punk and the newly emerging anarcho-punk scene. He concludes, 'so with an air of honesty and communication the scene developed its strongest sense of unity yet, spawning a new wave of independent fanzines, bands and labels, the revised longer running version of "anyone can do it"'.[461]

From the very beginning therefore, the Subhumans attempted to explore the complex relationship between an overtly oppressive capitalist system and the diversity of the individual. If one could argue that the main impetus of Discharge and Crass were to directly criticise the political machinery of government,[462] Lucas's writing was a subtle mélange of analyses between 'tangible forces of oppression', and individual behaviour within the anarcho-scene itself. From tracks such as 'People Are Scared', which asks the question of why 'nobody says anything on buses', to 'Susan', who 'ends up in a factory' and the Nuclear war driven 'Parasites', the Subhumans' music is an attempt to move away from

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[458] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[459] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[460] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[461] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[462] Although Crass turned their attention towards the individual – and the way in that individual should think for him/herself – on a number of occasions.

'punk' as a lumpen youth, towards an encouragement of the individual to become aware of what Lucas sees as the brutality of capitalist society.

Although one could focus upon any of the above tracks in order to highlight the political complexities and anarcho-ethics surrounding Lucas's work, one track in particular encompasses much of the writer's own thoughts and own political ideals: 'From the Cradle to the Grave'. The term refers to the implementation of the National Insurance Act of 1946, when the government introduced a 'comprehensive, universal system of benefits and pensions covering unemployment, sickness, motherhood and retirement'.[463] Further, a number of means-tested Social Security benefits were introduced for those whose incomes were inadequate to meet their basic everyday needs. Subsequently, these two types of benefit, contributory and means-tested, 'were intended to ensure that all citizens were effectively guaranteed a minimum income, whatever their circumstances, from "cradle to grave"'.[464] Whereas such legislation was seen to be largely beneficial towards society at the time, however, the Subhumans' track echoes the later sentiment held by many, that this kind of provision led to an overly intrusive infringement of government into everyday life.

5.1. Us Fish Must Swim Together: Anarcho-Punk and Lyrical Reflection

'From the Cradle to the Grave' (track number twelve on the accompanying disc), is immediately unique in that it musically defies the already established three-chord, three-minute, 'punk rock' track stereotype. It runs for just over sixteen

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[463] Dorey, P. (1995) *British Politics Since 1945*, Oxford: Blackwell. p. 14.

minutes and alternates steadfastly between a number of original and newly established musical ideas and motifs, reinforcing a notion of repetition and social monotony. The introduction in particular, is a perfect example of this. The track does not begin as such, but slowly fades in, providing a feeling of constant, unrelenting movement. There is no abrupt start, no immediate musical texture or introduction of a short central motif to establish the material to the listener. Instead, the introduction lasts for approximately forty bars, beginning with a drawn-out, three-chord descending motif of A-G-F. This motif is repeated three times, until its final playing when it moves to the chord of F# instead of F natural. The variation on this final descent seems to briefly destabilise the now established musical pattern of the introduction. As such, the momentum produced by the move back from F# to F provides both resolution and return to the original idea. Textural differences also enhance this duality of focus. In the first section, the drums play a distinct triplet feel on the cymbal on each downward run, thus adding momentum to the track and creating pace for a song that is already approximately 120bpm. On the concluding section of the motif however, the entire ensemble plays the chord of F#, with the drums emphasising each beat of the chord, almost stalling the rhythmic integrity of the track. This distinction is important, as musical and textural variation within an overly long introduction relies predominantly upon a distinctive move between chords a semitone apart.

If the introduction established a sense of textural difference and bpm, then the musical momentum is then further interrupted, grinding almost to a rhythmic halt

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[464] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

so as to prepare for the first verse. The drums fall out completely, and the bass and lead guitar continue by reversing the second section of this initial musical idea. The chromatic movement between F# and F-natural creates an underlying sense of conflict and tension that is reinforced by the introduction of the vocals. Lucas's delivery is immediately forthright and declamatory, beginning with the line 'well they took you from your mother's womb and put you in a school, taught you how to run your life by following the rules'. 'From the Cradle to the Grave' is an interesting track in that it constantly pushes the musical boundaries of the so-called 'traditional' punk idiom. From the drawn-out, chromatic ambiguity of the introduction, the track then draws upon the quintessential elements of punk rock by re-establishing a sense of rhythmic and harmonic stability. The drums turn to provide a clear back beat on the two and four, with the guitar alternating between a semitone motif, this time on the chords of F# and G. Furthermore, the lyrical content echoes that of first wave punk, as Lucas continues with the line, 'told you not to pick your nose or disrespect the Queen, scrub your teeth three times a day, keep your mind and body clean'.

Although the next verse remains musically similar to its predecessor, 'From the Cradle to the Grave' is interesting in that it does not depend upon the verse/chorus structure equated with a traditional punk rock track of the late 1970s onwards. Instead of relying upon musical and motivic repetition (and what one could argue as providing a sense of musical 'safety' for the listener), the track relies predominantly upon a constant succession of short motifs, subtle textural differences and long instrumental breaks between verses, to provide musical and aural momentum. As such, musical patterns – in this case, the move

from F natural, to F# and subsequently to G – are increasingly important in assisting the rhythmic and harmonic momentum of the track. In this sense, one might argue that 'From the Cradle to the Grave' does not rely upon the more 'traditional' V-I clichés that are apparent in earlier punk tracks, but instead draws upon a sense of chromatic movement and textural variation to initiate musical and motivic development. Yet, if each verse varies in length, as well as being interrupted by long instrumental breaks, then they adhere to a clear sense of political and lyrical narrative. As such, verse two continues to express Lucas's ideas surrounding education and conformity already heard in the previous verse. 'And when they send you off each day, remember what you're told', sings Lucas, 'you may think you don't need teaching, but you'll need it when you're old'. In this sense, the political narrative becomes central to musical unity and coherence, as the music moves to and from each musical motif.

Lucas's ideas surrounding education within 'From the Cradle to the Grave', are echoed by his thoughts in *Threat by Example.* Here, he outlines his own thoughts and experiences of school: 'I was young, I was innocent, it was all new...constant change belongs to those unfettered by the problematic thoughts of security, futures, pasts and other people's present'.[465] He then elaborates on this by focussing on the juxtaposition of innocence with the inculcation of greed – fostered by the entrepreneurial philosophies of Thatcherism. 'We are born wanting nothing and are told to want all we can get...but all you're likely to get is attention, most of which is patronising or derisory'.[466] As such Lucas observes,

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[465] Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[466] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

'that's how it seemed as the first wave of heavy authoritarian came along, in the form of boarding school at the age of eleven'.[467]

He continues, 'previous to this I can't recall being continuously miserable...it was an all-boys school, you lived and acted macho to avoid the rut of persecution, which I fell into beyond escape (so it seemed) in my last Form year there'.[468] Subsequently, Lucas outlines the way in which 'physically inept at sports but mentally able to learn in class, I didn't fit the macho conscience that puts belligerence above intelligence'.[469] He then turns to the constant persecution that he received whilst at school. 'How could people be so petty and vicious?',[470] he asks, noting that:

> I had no choice but to think it was "human nature", and that they'd all grow into more mature people one day – not realising that boarding school was to later seem like a miniature version of the "outside world", where ideas and communication came second to obtaining the means to survive in an atmosphere of material gain and control over others.[471]

The writer continues, 'my hopes that once out of school I'd be in a less stressful situation were crushed as soon as I got a job, where the playground mentality had been distorted and mixed with a vast range of social fixations....that I couldn't believe had such a hold over people'.[472] And he concludes that, 'with apparently no imagination to fill the gaps, conversations repeatedly dwelt on cars, television, drinking and sport, like there was nothing else!'[473]

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[467] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[468] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[469] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[470] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[471] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[472] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[473] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Lucas's commentary concerning his school days reflects the very relationship between authority and the individual that he attempts to explore within his work. Yet, whereas his previous references to such authority has predominantly focussed upon those forces that are politically Established (the government or the police for instance), Lucas also attempts to deal with the way in which a sense of control works on many other levels. In other words, his own thoughts concerning the way in which he encountered the so-called 'pettiness' of his contemporaries in the education system, is also mirrored in his thoughts in the way in which individuals create hierarchical relationships on an everyday basis. In this sense, Lucas began to transform once again, the political and social essence of anarcho-punk. Whereas previously discussed bands concentrated their attack upon the government and corporate forces, which were identified as the prime movers in control politics, Lucas argues that we should take personal responsibility for our social actions – whether as part of the anarcho-punk movement, or as part of society as a whole.

Lucas's thoughts concerning the oppressive nature of the education system within a wider societal framework, is lyrically elaborated upon in the next section of 'From the Cradle to the Grave'. 'And if you're too intelligent they'll cut you down to size, they'll praise you 'til you're happy, then they'll fill you full of lies', begins the third verse. It concludes that 'intelligence is threatening and genius is sin, if you could ever see through them, they know they'd never win'. Again, the musical texture changes, in this case to admit the introduction of the ska/reggae influence that was to become so dominant with Lucas's later bands

Culture Shock and Citizen Fish. The track also changes key to the dominant minor – C minor – and the guitar vamps a reggae style riff from the chords of C, to B flat, A flat and then back to B flat again. With the slowing of the bpm, accompanied by the relative sparse reggae type musical texture, the mood turns to one of helplessness and reflection, compared to the more punk-like style of the introduction.

As such, the change of mood and texture accompanies the change of lyrical narrative. If the previous two verses were an indictment of the Education system, then the next two contemplate upon the future of the individual. On the one hand, notes Lucas, the system could 'channel your ability into the right direction', and, consequently 'if you're good enough and rich enough you can be a politician'. Yet, on the other, 'if you're too thick they'll tell you that you're lazy, they'll put you down and wind you up until it drives you crazy'. Further, Lucas's delivery is almost an ironic dig at the Establishment, and the way in which it remains powerful by reproducing its own. The reggae underpinning his commentary is again like a musical metaphor, proclaiming those 'outsiders' who are not included: the irrational, the pot smokers and those whose loyalties and dreams are excluded from the dominant elite that fails to take into account of individuality. From here, the musical texture changes once more. The reflective reggae style texture makes way for a more forthright declamatory style vocal delivery. The ensemble drops out completely and the vocalist continues each line near solo, with the ensemble only playing on the third beat of each bar giving emphasis to the vocal line and lyrical content.

The noticeable rise in musical tension reflects Lucas's innate political commentary. As each line is delivered the musical tension builds, until Lucas's rendition of the word 'crazy' is left sustained, hanging solo, before the ensemble picks up the musical material and moves forward towards the next verse. Once again, lyrical content, coupled with the subtle accompaniment of stylistic variation in the musical material reminds the listener that the Subhumans are a band within the now established anarcho-punk genre. As such, what defines the Subhumans, as well as Crass and Discharge, as essentially anarcho-bands, is the way in which they have found a space within the punk rock genre so as to provide an increasingly focalised political debate through their work. Not only do each band provide a sense of informed political commentary within their lyrical content, one could argue that each group also have a sense of self-awareness of the power in underpinning and informing their ideas. Whereas Discharge used an extremity of expression as a political tool, and Crass relied upon parody and subterfuge, within this particular track the Subhumans have combined different musical styles, with an inherent sense of lyrical narrative, so as to express political understanding and dissent.

Indeed, one needs only to turn to the subsequent section in 'From the Cradle to the Grave', to find evidence of such a relationship between the musical arrangement and lyrical narrative. If the last verse had ended with rising musical tension, and the hanging vocal of the word 'crazy' had sounded like the climactic ending of the verse, there would be a sense of finality. Rather, the reggae figure effects a musical metaphor of difference. It stalls the listener, albeit briefly, before the texture and mood changes once more into a driving rhythm based

around the chord of E flat. The musical motif is again short, simple and cyclical – a never-ending present that heightens the promised drudgery of the predictable: 'They'll say you ought to learn a trade to help you with your life, success is written in three parts, a job, a house, a wife', Lucas sings. The verse subsequently concludes with the line, 'they'll say that school prepares you for the awesome world outside, well it certainly gives you bigotry, and a patriotic pride'. On this final line the ensemble drops out whilst the guitar plays a short upward motif with the chords of E flat, E and F, continuing with the motif D, E flat and E. Once again, the pace of musical style and lyrical delivery is stepped up. Gone are the reflective thoughts and musical style of the previous verse, replaced instead, by a new surge onwards.

As such, immediately after Lucas delivers the line 'and a patriotic pride', the texture changes again, this time with each instrument emphasising the chord of D flat. Musical tension starts to build once more, as Lucas delivers the line, 'racism, sexism, teacher to class'. The vocal delivery is almost deadpan, as the ensemble moves up a tone to E flat on the singing of the next line. The rhythmic emphasis is placed upon each word, reinforcing the forthcoming climax of the verse. Lucas continues, 'from school to work remain the same', he sings, this time with a little more conviction, working up to the musical intensity of the next line: 'are you white and middle class?' As with the word 'crazy', musical emphasis is placed upon the word 'class'. Lucas's vocal style is jarring, almost discordant, adding a depth of meaning not only to the word, but also to the line as a whole. The emphasis also causes a sense of déjà vu – 'class' is musically aligned with 'crazy' to effect a sense of momentary reflection on 'them and us'.

The ascending motif starting on the chord of E flat is played once more and, after a short bass solo, the ensemble returns to the texture found at the beginning of the verse. As such, there is no pause and no stalling for the listener. Instead the track moves further forward towards verse six, where once again the lyrics counter the way in which schools teach you morals that you keep and – for Lucas – hardly question.

The musical essence of this track therefore, is the way in which the mood and rhythm is almost unrelenting. This analysis has concentrated predominantly upon a so-called 'blow by blow' account of each verse and the associated musical motif and style. This is merely to emphasise the way in which the Subhumans have attempted to merge musical material and political narrative. In this sense, musical unity is held together by the development of a series of small, inter-related motifs that echo the political essence of Lucas's narrative. Yet, one also gains the feeling that the ideas inherent within the lyrical content, coupled with the musical succession of motivic ideas, provide the track with a sense of unpredictability. It is as if the Subhumans themselves are not quite sure where they are musically heading.

Yet, if the first half of 'From the Cradle to the Grave' has been predominantly concerned with the way in which school and the education system are instrumental in almost 'mapping out' the future of an individual, then the second half of the track turns to adulthood. 'They'll give you a decision when you get to 18 too!', begins this half of track. The lyrics are delivered in an almost speaking style, accompanied by the rest of the ensemble playing in a percussive manner,

adding a clear sense of rhythmic momentum. Lucas continues, 'the right to vote for someone else, who says he cares for you'. This line is accompanied by the same guitar pattern, but the drums now play a clear back beat on the two and four, adding a sense of stability to the track. The harmonics shift up a tone, raising the tension for the next line. 'But the only thing he cares about', sings Lucas – his melodic inflection mirroring the rhythmic stability – 'is getting to the top, by conning you with empty words that promise you a lot'. The drums now play a cymbal motif that pushes and drives the music instead of pulling it back. On each line the guitar ascends a tone, but plays a monotonous percussive eighth note figure. 'But the end result is slavery to a false set of ideals', notes Lucas, 'you'll be tempted to believe then 'cos they'll seem so very real'. Yet, at this point, the texture changes once again. The track seems to grind to a halt over the line, 'the slavery of attitudes that make you keep in line, subconsciously devoted to the morals of our time'. The drums play a roll on the cymbals and the guitar and bass play a descending musical figure so as to provide once again, a feeling of stalling and slowing down of the rhythmic momentum. The lyrics are spoken, almost as recitative before a final cymbal crash and the track reverting back to a quiet, repetitive motif on the guitar just keeping the rhythmic momentum 'ticking over', and thus leading onto the next section of the track.

The ideas surrounding the relationship between school and work are also well documented in *Threat by Example*. Lucas believes that 'the universality of the numb repetition in people's work centred lives is the springboard the rest of us use to escape into the realms of imagination and awareness of the potential...I

don't wanna be like *that*, I wanna be like *this*!'[474] He continues, 'education can be useful in showing where your talents lie, whether they're artistic, mechanical or whatever: but it leaves untouched the world of imagination within these talents, so producing a streamlined attitude that drives all talent into repetitious jobs designed to exploit, and not enhance these abilities'.[475] Consequently, '"Work" becomes a dirty word and "Leisure" becomes geared to television and a suntan once a year...Work is mental slavery in the way it sets out our future actions, controls our lifestyles – indeed, shapes our lifestyle and makes us forget any alternatives'.[476] At this point Lucas points to a definition of work. 'Basically, it's income: how much of it you think you need dictates how long and hard you continue in a tedious working environment'.[477] He concludes that, 'once you realise you only need money to help you *survive*, and that any happiness otherwise derived from money is transitory and often self-deteriorating in its addiction, you can free yourself from the mundane[478] and get more out of work by gearing towards your likes and abilities'.[479]

'From the Cradle to the Grave' runs for a further eight minutes, dealing with a subject matter that examines the subsequent escape from the monotony of the 'dole queue' by joining and serving in the British army. Both musically and lyrically, the track continues in the same vein, pulling upon almost separate, unrelated musical motifs to provide an accompaniment for Lucas's politically

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[474] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[475] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[476] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[477] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[478] It seems as if Lucas is inadvertently drawing upon the Marxist idea of 'false consciousness'. A belief that a standardised, capitalist-led and oppressive 'culture industry' works to stifle the imagination and revolutionary tendencies of its audience by the 'false fulfilment of wish dreams,

succinct lyrical content. Further, one could argue that the narrow range of musical motifs (those of three semitone steps for instance) provide a metaphor for the narrowness of opportunity and the never-ending cycle of work, reinforced by Lucas's monotone – almost monotonous – recitative-like vocal delivery. Thus, while first wave punk was characterised by the simplicity of the three-chord progression, Lucas seems to take this further with his play on the constant iteration and mutability of three notes. If the importance of the track lies partly in the way in which the Subhumans have transformed the so-called 'traditional' punk rock idiom in extending musical form, then its importance also lies in the way in which lyrical content has become ever more reflective towards the individual listener. Written at a time when the anarcho-punk movement had been established by bands such as Crass and Discharge, musical content was seen to predominantly vilify corporate structures such as government or the police. Although the Subhumans continued this somewhat short tradition, their lyrical and musical material also became increasingly reflective and critical of the relationship between the individual, and the anarcho-punk scene as a whole.

It would be misleading to suggest that 'From the Cradle to the Grave' is typical of the Subhumans' complete repertoire. On the contrary, the remaining material on the self-titled album, as well as much of their musical output for instance, remain within what can be termed as a traditional punk rock idiom, albeit with an essentially political bent. Yet, what is interesting with this track in particular is the way in which it seems to reflect the almost forward looking, self-appraising

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like wealth, adventure, passionate love, power and sensationalism in general'. Lowenthal, L. (1961), p. 11.

[479] Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

nature of Lucas's later work. In essence, Lucas himself attempted to defy the characteristics of 'anarcho-punk'. As such, his personal approach towards composition and lyrical content became a means of attempting to encourage the listener to constantly re-define themselves, not only within the anarcho-punk movement, but also within society as a whole.

It is an idea that is perhaps best summed by a later track, 'Powergames', from the album *Worlds Apart* (1985). Although musically the track adheres to a simple verse/chorus structure, accompanied by the now 'quintessential' punk rock sound, the lyrics inform Lucas's own distrust of conformity within subcultural movements:

> A passing stranger dressed in black
> With slogans painted on his back
> Turned and stared and laughed and carried on
> Another came and did the same
> At first they made me feel ashamed
> And then I'd realised what I had done
>
> Without asking, I had broke the rules
> Without knowing, I had made them fools
> By merely looking different
> To those who knew the game
> The unity was there to see
> A mass of non-conformity
> There's something wrong or is it me?
> But they all look just the same

In essence, 'From the Cradle to the Grave' – and indeed 'Powergames' – were both musical and lyrical ventures that attempted to reflect and explore the increasing conformity of the anarcho-punk movement, an ideal that Lucas would continue to investigate within his next musical project, Culture Shock.

5.3. Onwards and Upwards: 'Culture Shock' and the Hindrance of Stereotype

If the music of the Subhumans had attempted to reflect upon the growing conformity of the anarcho-punk movement, as well as its wider relationship with organisations such as the state and the police, then Lucas's next musical venture, Culture Shock continued to consolidate and build upon those very ideals. In *Threat by Example*, Lucas notes that, 'the positive tide of creative thinking in the punk/alternative scene with the renewed diversity of music and expansions into other art-forms...has produced a new feeling of co-operation that goes beyond fashion conscience or media mentality – at least, it should by now'.[480] As such, although Lucas realised the relative openness and political diversity of the anarcho-scene in the late 1980s, the author was also aware of the problems that the movement faced in terms of political complacency and subcultural uniformity at the time. In particular, he observes the ways in which the anarcho-scene had transformed into a subculture built upon what the author believed to be 'another short-lived media spot-light [with] new styles to wear, words to say, names to drop and past attitudes to forget'.[481] Consequently, Culture Shock shifted somewhat from dealing merely with those corporate organisations already cited above (such as the government or police), towards a musical commentary that explored the problems inherent within the anarcho-movement itself. As such, Lucas believes that 'still we suffer the consequences of merely *wishing* our own internal problems away instead of tackling them with the zeal we have when dealing with external issues'.[482]

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[480] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[481] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[482] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Indeed, one needs only to turn to a track such as 'When the Fighting's Over', from the album *Onwards and Upwards* (1988), to find evidence of this. This track in particular discusses a number of problems that the anarcho-punk scene was facing during the mid-1980s, a particularly critical time in the development of the subculture. As previously discussed, 1984 saw the purposeful disbanding of Crass so as to avoid the label of 'leaders' within an increasingly elaborate 'movement'. Further, one could argue that a growing sartorial sense of identity and 'anarchy' began to overtake the original impetus of a scene apparently built around freedom of expression and individual co-operation. As such, 'When the Fighting's Over' encompasses a sense of reflection that would inform much of Lucas's work as a means of analysing anarcho-punk's increasing congruity: a problem, one could argue, also reminiscent of first wave punk.

One particular verse within the track is useful in illuminating the way in which individuals within the anarcho-punk movement talk of unity, regurgitating 'certain phrases [that] catch our minds'. Further, Lucas emphasises the problems of complacency within the scene by noting, 'we analyse and memorise the slogans but we know, that words are only meaningless if that's all we can show'. As such, the lyrical content here continues to discuss the complexity between the theoretical and practical applications of a movement built upon anarchic ideals, an area that has already been discussed in length above in chapter one. In particular, Lucas uses the metaphor of fighting and the violence that he has witnessed at gigs to explore such a relationship. 'Aggression misdirected against ourselves and not the state, the mindless clone minority with the sick contorted

hate', he sings within the same track. The line concludes, 'with drink and false security they turn gigs into fights, then when the state turn up they run away in fright'.

Lucas provides further insight into this relationship by linking his lyrical analysis of violence with contradictory ideas between the notion of an anarcho-punk movement supposedly built upon co-operation, and an individual's expression of freedom. In *Threat by Example* he writes, 'tolerance levels...how much freedom can there be before you have to restrict your ambitions to treat people equally? The freedom to get drunk too often becomes the freedom to fight'.[483] As such, Lucas believes that 'freedom of speech tolerates prevalent songs that pave the way for people to act out their final slogans...people say it's "human nature" to be violent, I say self-defence is natural but all other violence is caused by a distorted view of reality',[484] one, that has been, in Lucas's eyes, imposed by a history of capitalism, greed, competitiveness, envy and above all, 'fear of being known when we don't know ourselves'.[485] In this sense, Lucas remains ever more reflective in his analysis of the anarcho-scene. He believes that although many people are unable to know themselves in great depth, there is a possibility of realising the ways in which wider social forces – such as violence and prejudice – are almost mirrored within an individual's own actions. As such, the writer believes that it is a constant process of eliminating those outside influences in order to become more aware of our own behaviour. Consequently, this idea of what one may term as a catharsis for Lucas, is one of the reasons for

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[483] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[484] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[485] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

his lyric writing. 'I find "writing it down" not only relieves any frustrations',[486] he notes, 'but helps me understand my own ideas and resolve any contradictions by arguing them out'.[487]

Importantly, Lucas continues by noting that 'being able to see two or more sides to any given concept makes insight easier but sometimes too confusing for words, never sure which one is right, but knowing one or the other *is* right'.[488] Indeed, although the author believes that being in a band is different, he notes that 'the range of emotions and actions are so far beyond the realities of the 9-5 lifestyle that it's easy to wonder if you can change anything outside the van or venue'.[489] He continues,

> the state of mind controls the conclusion: if you see the contrivance of war, poverty, etc., as failure of you or the movement to achieve change then your sights are set too high...but if you consider the way your own ideas have evolved and influenced others (as they have influenced you), then you can only conclude that change is always happening in the mind.[490]

In this sense, Lucas sees a important correlation between wider issues and actions of the state and society – such as rioting or armed revolution – as a macrocosm of the way in which individuals act towards each other on an everyday basis. For Lucas therefore, the way in which the anarcho-scene has evolved into a movement beset by violence and a sartorial sense of dissent, is a problem that needs to be solved and unravelled on the very ground-roots level of the subculture itself.

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[486] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[487] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[488] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[489] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[490] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

As such, although *Onwards and Upwards*, and indeed the earlier album *Go Wild!* (1986), deal with a range of social and political issues, the lyrical content remains ever more reflective towards an understanding of individual relationships within a politically motivated subculture such as anarcho-punk. 'Ignorance is bliss?', Lucas sings in 'Open Mind Surgery', 'blew it away with a kiss, blew it away with a fist'. He continues, 'live and learn, watch the innocence burn and the naivety turn'. Lucas's lyrics now seem to reflect a striving for flexibility and development on an individual basis, the breaking down of accepted thought – in particular within the anarcho-movement – and rebuilding with new ideas. 'So feed me and help me, smash my own apathy', he sings, 'feed me and help me, instil some creativity'. Yet Lucas does not attempt to preach or patronise the audience. Instead, he is asking them for answers, encouraging a sense of communication between individuals within the scene itself. Furthermore, on his own admission, the lyrical content has transgressed the almost argumentative, angry subject matter of the Subhumans towards a sense of reflection and optimism found in the newly formed Culture Shock.

Other tracks on the album also reflect this. 'Fast Forward', for instance hints at the complexity surrounding the loss of political apathy and a new voyage into a sense of self-awareness. 'It was you messed up my plans, 'cos you showed me what I am, and I couldn't understand where I went wrong', it begins. So 'now I have to ask directions, 'cos I made the wrong connections, and I haven't got a clue where I belong'. Yet the track does not dwell upon the pessimistic character of this 'loss', but instead almost celebrates the ambiguity of this new self-

awareness. 'I'll forget the airs the graces, rearrange and fill the spaces', he sings in the last verse, 'it may look like I've been beaten, but – no. Not yet!' Once again, there is also no clear sense of direction. Lucas deals with the complexity of becoming politically aware, of breaking away from what he sees as a predominantly apathetic public, but not only in the sense of opposing what are deemed as oppressive structures, such as the state or the police. Instead, his lyrical content also turns to the importance of the *individual* as a means of dealing with – almost deciphering – the now constantly shifting ideals of the anarcho-punk scene. As such, the lyrics on the album are interesting because they deal with the everyday occurrence of life and not only the relationship between individual and state as seen earlier with Crass and Discharge. 'But don't forget if you feel on your own', he sings in 'You Are Not Alone', 'that person right next to you could feel the same, unloved or unwanted repressed or unknown'. It is an idea that is mirrored in another track 'Civilisation Street', where Lucas describes such a place as 'where the neighbours never meet, and you have to be discreet, don't ever talk to strangers, even when they offer you sweets – keep your mouth shut'. The importance lies in the way in which Lucas seems to reinvent the very essence of the anarcho-punk scene, turning its own criticisms of the Establishment back towards a subculture that he believed was itself becoming increasingly conformist and sartorial.

Yet, if 'Civilisation Street', 'You Are Not Alone' and 'Fast Forward' are useful tracks in highlighting Lucas's continually reflective political commentary, then one track in particular is useful in exploring the ways in which one could argue he approaches the now established ethos of the anarcho-punk scene itself:

'Joyless' (track number thirteen on the accompanying disc). 'A couple of years ago, I met an old punk from '81',[491] writes Lucas, 'who was brandishing an enormous payslip and lecturing me on the massive future in buying property'.[492] He continues, '"Punk rock innit?!" I sneered and asked him if he was happy doing what he was, he answered, "Well, no-one likes working, do they?"'[493] As such, 'there he was, old principles forgotten, future planned and not even considering whether he was happy or not! For him, "happy" will remain one of the seven dwarves and a useless concept if it doesn't generate profits! Such people I call "Joyless"'.[494] On the one hand, 'Joyless' is an obvious reproach towards individuals that Lucas believes rely predominantly upon a material-led capitalist system for a contentment of existence. Yet, on the other, one could argue that the track is a subtle swipe at the anarcho-movement itself, raising questions as to whether the subculture now relied upon a sartorial sense of dissent rather than one of organised political action.

5.4 A Revolt Against the Rational: The End of the Road for the 'Anarcho'

If 'From the Cradle to the Grave' had been a subtle mix of punk influenced forthrightness and reggae/ska influence, so as to convey a diversity of political commentary, then one can certainly hear the latter musical style coming to the forefront within the more reflective stance of Culture Shock. From the very beginning, 'Joyless' depends upon a 'vamped' style guitar pattern that alternates between the chords of G natural and G#. Yet this time, the chromatic semitone

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[491] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[492] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[493] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

shift does not create tension through uncertainty – as 'From the Cradle to the Grave' – but rather an uncertainty that conveys a sense of reflection, reinforcing Lucas's thoughts above and the unravelling of subcultural identity at an individual level. The phrasing of the 'vamping' is cut in two, meaning that whereas the first bar has the guitar 'vamping' on each beat, the second bar consists of two crotchets and a 'syncopated' motif on the G# at the latter half of the bar, thus providing momentum for the musical material. The bass plays a walking motif that begins on G, but ends on the tonic of C. The drums play a steady back beat on the two and four, with a pattern on the half-closed hi-hat to seemingly slow the track. As the vocals enter, the guitar plays a syncopated idea on both the latter sections of each bar, thus helping to add to the texture and complexity to the aural quality of the track. In stark contrast to the music of Discharge, Crass and even the Subhumans, the overall texture is melodic and more 'easy listening'.

The lyrics enter at bar nine. Unlike the declamatory delivery heard in much of the Subhumans' material, they are melodic in nature, and although Lucas retains his forthright singing style, the lyrics are not particularly shouted. 'I can feel your empty mind, through your joyless empty eyes', he sings, consequently concluding the first verse with the line, 'without the spark of life, you hide behind your anger and your pride'. Between this verse and the next, there is a short, four bar instrumental. Here, the guitar plays a short motif, high in the register, while the drums emphasise the break by playing a fast fill on the toms. Again, this provides textural difference and momentum to a track that is running

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[494] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

at approximately 80bpm. As such, 'Joyless' lacks the earlier punk ethos of almost lecturing the listener towards a particular political ideal. There is no direct reference towards politicians, the police, the Establishment or even anarchism: Lucas is merely *asking* – even encouraging – the listener to look inward instead of outward, to re-evaluate their own thoughts and actions, slowing the music to seemingly accompany this more reflective stance.

As the second verse enters, the texture and form of the track remain the same. 'Can your image ever lie? Is there room for me to try to put a bit of life inside, let your instincts open wide'. Again, we can hear further references to a number of ideas that Lucas discusses in *Threat by Example*. Most importantly, the author is placing the emphasis upon the listener and audience, moving away from the criticism of corporate structures that had dominated the earlier incantations of the anarcho-scene, and instead advocating an approach whereby individuals within the movement can exercise self-criticism and flexibility of political view point. Further, Lucas interjects the track with the idea of spontaneity, and his idea of using 'instinct' instead of 'logic'. It is an idea reminiscent of an earlier track, 'Go Wild (My Son)' written in 1986. Here, the author cites the lines 'rules are to be broken, and walls are to be climbed, so throw away your values and leave them all behind. Go wild, my son. Go wild!' Again, it is a call for 'instinct' – for action – rather than just social, political and subcultural posing. Obviously, Lucas is not advocating the listener to run wild in the streets, flouting laws and rules in the name of 'anarchy', but rather to re-evaluate their own ideas and values both as 'anarcho-punks' and as individuals.

It is an idea that is immediately echoed in the next verse of 'Joyless'. 'So take my words and fill your ears, and understand it can happen for years', continues Lucas, 'or just a second, but it stays the same, simultaneous total change'. Musical texture accompanies the forthright delivery of change, as the guitar plays a motif of descending chords beginning on F, then running through a number of semitone leaps and ending on C. The motif is offbeat – almost syncopated – and the vocal delivery becomes shouted. 'With a flick of a switch the light goes in', continues Lucas, 'pre-conceptions re-arranged'. The words 'changed' and 'arranged' almost hang in the air, accompanying the sudden shift in the mood and style of the musical material. Yet, before the listener can become accustomed to this change of texture, the ensemble comes to a halt – this time to the sound of a drum-fill – and the ensemble shifts back to the reggae-style outlined above. The change of mood, and the obvious use of word painting to accompany the idea of 'flicking a switch' however, does not feel abrupt to the ear, but merely reinforces Lucas's own ideas over the advantageous benefits he believes can be reaped over constant change and re-arrangement.

One is tempted to read 'Joyless' as a reproach towards those who are deemed to be 'brain washed' by an 'oppressive' capitalist society. Yet, one could argue that the track is a subtle swipe at the very nature of the anarcho-punk scene itself. The move towards a more melodic sense of musical style, away from the aesthetic extremity of Discharge, Crass and the Subhumans, seems to be a conscious decision by Lucas and Culture Shock to indicate the musical heterogeneity of the anarcho-punk scene. It is suggested that this was not only a means of trying to move away from the musical three-minute forthright style of 'punk', but also as a

means of looking forward, pushing subcultural values and boundaries beyond what Lucas now sees as stereotypical and sartorial constraints. If first wave punk had initially been a call-to-arms for individuality and freedom of expression then it was newly reinforced by the emerging anarcho-punk scene of the late 1970s, a time when McLaren et al., were pushing the first wave towards the market place of red mohican haircuts and bondage trousers. It would seem then, that Lucas is merely highlighting the similarities between both punk movements, echoing the words of Crass, in illuminating the ways in which the anarcho-scene itself had turned into an almost repressive subculture with its own set of norms and values that were not to be broken.

Further, if one could highlight the failings of punk rock in maintaining a space whereby individuality and freedom could prevail, then one could also discuss the failings of the anarcho-punk scene in appropriating theoretical anarchist thought as a means of organised political dissent. Supposedly a political doctrine that rejects any form of government and oppressive political leadership, anarcho-punk soon became the very anathema of its original intent. As already discussed, 'leaders' were soon carved out of band-members, in-house fighting ensued between punks, anarcho-punks and anarchists, as well as an appropriation of a dress code and accepted musical styles, meant that the anarcho-scene soon turned into the very stereotypical culture that it had originally despised.

One could argue that the failings of the transformation of 'punk' and 'anarchism' can best be highlighted by Culture Shock's aptly named track 'Punks on Postcards', written in 1986. 'They'll put your name on files, taps on your

telephone, your picture on a postcard, if you really need the cash', sings Lucas, criticising what he believes to be the oppressive nature of the Establishment. Yet the author then turns to the complex relationship between capitalism and the failings of a subculture such as punk. 'They'll make you the epitome of what the tourists love to see', he continues, concluding the track with the line, 'packaged non-conformity, nothing more than trash'.

Conclusion

The complex relationship between anarchism, first wave punk and anarcho-punk raises two further issues that I wish to conclude with here. Although both are beyond the remit of this particular work, they are nevertheless, two areas that I feel worthy of investigation in the future. The first concerns the way in which punk rock continued its anarchistic relations/dissent into the 1980s and beyond. If one could trace a thread of dissent from the 1950s onwards, through consequent squatting movements and CND for instance, then further research would provide an insight into the porous relationship between anarchist/marginalised groups of the 1980s and the now well-defined anarcho-punk movement. Further, this analysis will draw upon the work of a number of anarcho-bands from the mid-1980s onwards, highlighting the way in which the political message of Crass et. al., continued throughout the decade. As such, this section also raises questions over the development of the anarcho-scene further into the 1980s and its role within the protest movement as a whole.

The second area of study concerns the musical heterogeneity of the anarcho-punk movement. I realise that I have been guilty of concentrating upon the 'main players' of each wave of punk rock that I have discussed and, as such, constructing a canon that is arguably at odds with an anarcho-philosophy. For instance, I have relied predominantly upon the music of the Stooges in the discussion of the American scene, as well as the Sex Pistols in the analysis of British first wave punk. Furthermore, my later discussion of anarcho-punk – rather paradoxically – centred upon the musical material of Crass, Discharge and

the Subhumans, all of whom rejected any idea of becoming so-called 'leaders' of the movement. Whereas one can turn to Heylin (1993) and Savage (1992) respectively to find a discussion of this issue within American punk and British first wave punk, I wish to conclude with a brief outline of the musical diversity of the British anarcho-scene of the 1980s. The reason for such an inclusion is not just an admission of the limited material that I have used within this work: as with perhaps all subcultures, to cover the complete spectrum of music within each movement is almost impossible. More so it is an indication of a punk scene that is musically as diverse as it is politically: a notion that I would like to deal with in further studies of such a movement.

1. Unfinished Business:[495] The Thread of Dissent into the'80s and Beyond

Whereas chapter one was useful in attempting to unravel the emergence of first wave punk rock within a preceding framework of social and political dissent, within this section I wish to turn briefly to the continuation of this relationship throughout the 1980s and, in some instances, beyond. If one could argue that first wave punk embodied a sense of 'marginalised' resistance against the Establishment per se, then one may also trace such a thread through the emergence, and subsequent development, of the anarcho-punk movement. Indeed, one needs only to turn to McKay (1996), Home (1996a) and O'Hara (1999) to find evidence of a wider community of 'punk rock' resistance that accompanied the expansion of protest into areas such as animal rights, feminism and environmental issues. Although one could draw upon a wide number of

groups to explore the diverse political development of anarcho-punk – including analyses of so-called 'Crusty' culture or the 'Peace Convoy'[496] – I wish to concentrate upon one group whose political involvement in the 1980s provides a valuable framework in exploring the porous relationship between the anarcho-scene and the wider protest movement: Class War.

Class War was formed in the early 1980s and, as Stewart Home notes, was 'led' by Ian Bone, a former writer for the South Wales agitational paper *The Scorcher*. Home continues, the original 'collective' of Class War were made up of 'assorted *headbangers* from South Wales and London'[497] as well as a 'group of *nutters* who lived together in a large house in Islington (North London)'.[498] As such, he concludes, it was a group that had been involved in the anarchist movement that 'stretched back more than a decade and numerous projects',[499] including the writing of 'the satirical magazine *Authority*, two issues of which had appeared in the late seventies'.[500]

In its early days Class War did not seek to recruit from a traditional workers' base, but importantly targeted what Home terms as a 'disaffected youth',[501] attracting instead the large punk, anarchist and pacifist movements of the time. Indeed, within an early copy of Class War, the group emphasised the influence

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[495] The section heading is a direct reference to The Class War Federation (1992) *Unfinished Business: The Politics of Class War*, Stirling: AK Press.
[496] A description given to the growing number of individuals who embraced the travelling life-style especially during the 1970s and '80s. For in excellent insight into their lifestyle, turn to McKay (1996), pp. 45-71.
[497] Home, S. (1991) *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents From Lettrisme to Class War*, Stirling: AK Press, p. 96.
[498] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[499] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[500] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[501] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

that the earlier punk movement – in essence its notion of attitude and subversion – had upon the group. 'Dylan got rich on the fuck-ups and misery of sixties middle class youth',[502] they write. 'Maclaren (sic) and punk got rich on the fuck-ups and misery of working-class youth. Punk saved the record industry and the music hacks...Emphasising energy and aggression punk kicked the arse of the flabby supergroups of the '70s. But for the working class the laughs at the expense of boring old farts and the British Establishment must be put in focus'.[503] The article concludes, 'music trends and the music papers and industry are just the raciest example of how the modern market works according to the principle of "if it moves sell it". Working class anger, via Maclaren's rehash of old '60s politics...is good for business'.[504]

Although Class War re-iterated the idea of British punk in the 1970s 'selling out', this is not a subject that I wish to dwell upon here. Instead, I wish to concentrate upon a number of ideas that are integral in linking the anarcho-punk scene and the politics espoused by both Class War and the wider anarcho-movement. The first of these is the rejection by Class War of so-called 'organised' political parties and movements of resistance, such as CND, Socialist Workers Party and Militant. 'Firstly, Class War is not another "Party" trying to gain power',[505] they write in an Internet article outlining their history. 'We don't want to swap one set of bosses for another, no matter how "radical and progressive" they pretend to be'.[506] Although the group believe that some members join left-wing groups like the Socialist Workers Party, or Militant as a

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[502] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[503] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[504] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[505] Found on www.londonclasswar.org (2003).

means to change society primarily through revolution 'what type of society will be formed and by who, is fundamentally different to what we think and want'.[507] As such, a pivotal aspect of Class War can be seen in their distrust in the form of the so-called passive resistance of many of the organisations that encompass the Left, including incidentally Crass. 'The only band (sic) to carry the musical-politics line forward was Crass,[508] they write in an early edition of *Class War*. 'They have done more to spread anarchist ideas than Kropotkin, but like him their politics are up shit creek. Putting the stress on pacifism and rural escapism they refuse the truth that in the cities opposition means confrontation and violence if it were to get anywhere'.[509]

Nonetheless, Class War did believe that 'at last bands are emerging that reject the rock music/celebrity/wealth escape route from working-class boredom as much as they do the normal political escape route of the trade union/Labour party'.[510] And it continues, 'not interested in making it without smashing up the show and those who run it they mark a real departure from Oi! that has declined into glassing each other (rather than the rich), pledging support to our boys in the S. Atlantic and voting Labour'.[511] What is interesting here is the way in which Class War turns to specific bands in the anarcho-punk sub-genre. 'The Apostles [in particular] link with the war against the rich and make for the real possibility of taking the anger and frustration away from the gig and out onto the streets and

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[506] *Ibid.*
[507] *Ibid.*
[508] Home, S., *op cit.*, p. 96.
[509] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[510] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[511] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

once and for all saying "fuck that" to the shitty rituals that pass for pleasure'.[512] As such, it is also important to point out here that there remains an important juncture between the pacifism of Crass and the ideas of direct action that many other punk bands adhered to.

Indeed, writing in an article on anarcho-punk, Andy Martin (from the band the Apostles) notes that 'the clearly pacifist stance adopted by the early Crass fans prevented any effective political activity. Fortunately help was at hand in the form of Class War, a loosely organised group of malcontents who wanted revolution and they wanted it now'.[513] And he continues by noting that 'anarcho-punk...caused change and unrest, not by itself, but due to...people such as the Apostles...Class War and various other individuals whose desire for revolutionary change was a genuine expression of class anger'.[514]

In this sense, 'butchers, McDonalds, Army Recruitment Offices and other government institutions were attacked via fake bomb threats, graffiti, smashed windows and glued locks; fire bombs were used against the most offensive of these establishments'.[515] Moreover, Martin believes that 'there have been two wonderful riots, which while not organised exclusively by any one group – being spontaneous expressions of class hatred – boasted many disillusioned ex-Crass fans and punks among their participants'.[516] The first of these included the 'Stop The City' demonstration of 1983-4, where 'anarchists, pacifists and other members of the counter-culture [amassed] in the city of London with the aim of

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[512] *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
[513] Found on www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/music/apunk/autcent.html (2002).
[514] *Ibid.*
[515] *Ibid.*

closing it down for the day'.[517] Martin believes that 'Stop the City' 'was a concerted assault upon the business sector of London by hundreds – perhaps as many as three thousand – angry young people, many of whom were homeless'.[518] He observes, 'Black, Asian, and White youth took to the streets of East Central London around Holborn, Liverpool Street, Threadneedle Street and the City to protest – violently – against the callous, greed-ridden old men who dictated our futures from behind closed brass doors; oppression wore a grey suit'.[519] As such, the writer concludes, 'the day was ours despite the heavy toll of arrests and assault by the faces of evil who probably wished that they'd used the tear gas after all. Punks were not taken seriously...until then'.[520]

Importantly, it was an action that was to arguably influence a number of political protests beyond the early 1980s and into the next decade. As George McKay notes, 'the sheer popularity and widespread nature of street protest and direct action emanating from single-issue campaigns is in part a response to a lack of confidence – even the rejection of – Parliamentary democracy'.[521] As such, one needs only to turn to groups such as Earth First!, Reclaim the Streets and the Critical Mass bike rides to find examples of direct action similar to that of Stop The City. Indeed, Reclaim the Streets is a good example of this method of protest. Formed in London in Autumn 1991, and coinciding with the anti-car demonstrations (most notably those at Twyford Down), Reclaim the Streets began a campaign 'FOR walking, cycling and cheap, or free, public transport,

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[516] *Ibid.*
[517] *Ibid.*
[518] *Ibid.*
[519] *Ibid.*
[520] *Ibid.*

and AGAINST cars, roads and the system that pushes them'.[522] DiY cycle lanes were painted overnight in London streets, subvertising on car adverts appeared around the city and a trashed car was placed in Park Lane to symbolise the arrival of 'Car-maggedon'. One of the most effective protests came in July 1996, when 8,000 people took control of the M41 Motorway in West London and 'partied and enjoyed themselves, whilst some dug up the tarmac with jack-hammers and in its place planted trees that had been rescued from the construction path of the M11'.[523]

On their admission, Reclaim the Streets uses such political action not for any specific political gain, but rather as a form of symbolic protest, as the Movement not only dislikes the way in which the urban community is dominated by the car, in polluting and congesting the environment, but is also against the very nature of the capitalist system itself. 'More goods travelling on longer journeys',[524] they write, 'more petrol being burnt, more customers at out-of-town supermarkets – it is all about increasing "consumption", because that is the indicator of "economic growth"'.[525]

In this sense, Reclaim the Streets share the view of Class War in proclaiming a more direct form of action, as well as in violent confrontation with opponents and the authorities. Indeed, if we return to a discussion of Class War, early copies of the paper included an image of Margaret Thatcher having a meat

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[521] McKay, G. (1996) *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties*, London: Verso, p. 128.
[522] Found on www.rts.gn.apc.org/evol.htm (2004).
[523] *Ibid.*
[524] *Ibid.*
[525] *Ibid.*

cleaver striking her bloodstained head, with the caption, 'The Best Cut of All' beneath the image. Another would show a picture of a cemetery, with the caption 'We Have Found New Homes For The Rich', and a picture of a foxhunter accompanied by the words 'You Rich Fucking Scumbag...We're Gonna Get You'. Class War's approach was therefore far more direct and forthright, using what Stewart Home regards as 'black humour'[526] in an attempt to raise a wider awareness of anarchism and class-consciousness.

An example of the way in which Class War themselves utilised their ideas surrounding the use of 'direct action' was in their organising of 'Bash The Rich' Marches in the mid-1980s, where they targeted the more affluent areas in London including Hampstead Heath and the Henley Regatta. Although one could argue that these marches epitomise the relationship between Class War and the anarcho-punk scene, they are by no means exhaustive. Indeed, one needs only to turn to *Class War: A Decade of Disorder* (1991), to find further evidence of the organisation condoning aspects such as squatting, a dislike for the monarchy, shop-lifting and prison riots. However, there is evidence to suggest that the ideas discussed below encompass and touch upon the main impetus of the Class War movement's anarchist thrust.

As the group point out, the ideas surrounding such a march is nothing new. Drawing upon the ideas of the anarchist Lucy Parsons, Class War notes that exactly the same form of protest was used in Chicago on April 28th 1885, when the activist 'told people who were on the verge of killing themselves to "take a

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[526] Home, S. *op. cit.*, p. 96.

few rich people with you", let their eyes be opened to what was going on "by the red glare of destruction"'.[527] The plea was furthered by groups of up to twenty-thousand anarchists who would march from working-class areas of Chicago, congregating in rich neighbourhoods displaying banners such as 'Behold Your Future Executioners' resulting in riots with the arriving police. The first 'Bash the Rich March' then, was held on May 11th 1985, when the group marched through 'swanky Kensington chanting "rich scum" and "we'll be back" as they peered bewildered at us from behind their drawn curtains'.[528] Due to a massive police presence at the final destination – the Henley Regatta – the march caused very little disruption. Yet, as Stewart Home points out, the media coverage was sufficient in that Class War could hail the march as a victory. Moreover, the march also highlighted the 'membership' of the group. 'At its head were the ten or so anarchist militants – dressed in standard street clothes',[529] writes Home, 'while behind them were several hundred teenage punks'.[530]

Although later marches would end in anti-climax – the March on Hampstead on 21st September 1985 for instance – this form of protest highlights the way in which Class War preferred the idea of direct action rather than what they termed as 'getting 250,000 people to tramp like sheep through London to listen to middle-class CND wankers like Joan Ruddock and Bruce Kent telling them to go home and do nothing'.[531] Moreover, it highlights the way in which one could argue the anarchist movement of the early 1980s was beginning to inform a movement such as the 'anarcho-punk' scene so as to transform the punk ethos of

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[527] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[528] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[529] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[530] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

anarchism as a quintessential idea of 'nihilism' towards a more coherent form of political expression.

Obviously one must be careful associating all forms of post-punk in the early 1980s with the anarchist movement. Indeed, it would be a vast generalisation to directly link post-punk to the ideas of Class War. Moreover, there is also a strong debate surrounding the notion and definition of anarchism, a political system and thought that is strewn with ambiguities. Yet, with an analysis of the 'Bash the Rich' campaigns – as well as the group's hatred towards the monarchy, the police and the oppressive control of government in working-class areas does indeed point towards the discussion earlier in creating a space where protests against corporeal structures of oppression was possible.

Yet, the political use of direct action is an idea that many anarcho-bands openly advocated. One needs only to turn towards the work of Conflict, a band many believe to be a direct descendant of Crass – albeit with a more forceful edge. 'Conflict are not pacifists', they proclaim on the inner gatefold of *Increase the Pressure* (1984), 'we believe and strive for freedom but will not let people destroy the little we have'. As such, much of the band's material provides a 'call to arms' in the fight against butchers, the police and government structures alike. 'This is the A.L.F [Animal Liberation Front]' a track on *The Ungovernable Force* (1986) particularly highlights such an idea. 'What does direct action mean?' begins the track. 'It means that we are no longer prepared to sit back and allow terrible cruel things to happen', proclaiming 'direct action in animal rights

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[531] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

means causing economic damage to those who abuse and make profits from exploitation'.

Further, it is interesting to observe how a number of anarcho-bands began to move away from the subtle, parodic swiping of Crass towards a more forceful, 'hands on' political approach towards what many of bands saw as an oppressive capitalist system. Indeed, 'This is the A.L.F' continues,

> it's possible to do things alone, slash tyres, glue up locks butchers, burger bars, the furriers, smash windows, bankrupt the lot. Throw paint over shops and houses. Paint stripper works great on cars. Chewing gum sticks well to fur coats. A seized engine just won't start, sand in the petrol tank means that delivery's going nowhere. When the new death shop opens up make sure you're the first person to be there. If the circus comes to town remember what goes up must come down. Stop contributing to the abuse yourself – don't eat meat, don't buy leather. Buy non-animal tested make-up, herbal soap and shampoo's better.

As such, it is also useful to highlight the way in which the animal rights movement, such as the Animal Liberation Front, fed into the anarcho-punk movement. If Conflict's material had been a calculated attack on animal abuse, then this can be reiterated by a number of fellow musicians at this time. Indeed, one needs only to turn to Mortal Terror's 'Sick Butchers', whose chorus simply repeats the phrase 'die sick butchers, die', or Extreme Noise Terror's 'Murder', which begins '450 million animals are murdered in Britain every year, to be stuffed down your throat and shat out of your arse: murder', to find examples of support for the animal rights movement. Yet, if 'Stop the City' had arguably been a precursor to the Reclaim the Streets movement or Critical Mass, then the issue of animal welfare – and in particular vegetarianism – further highlights the

cross-fertilisation of anarchism, anarcho-punk, and the continuing thread of dissent throughout the 1980s and beyond.

The issue of vegetarianism also highlights two central issues that I wish to briefly deal with here. The first is the obvious dislike by the anarcho-punk scene towards multinationals and, in particular, the fast food chain McDonald's. 'There's a McDonald's on every corner, making big profits from animal murder', sing Mortal Terror on 'Yankee Go Home'. The track continues, 'drive the bastards out of towns, smash them up, burn them down'. It is an issue reiterated by another band, Napalm Death on the album *Scum* (1987). 'Multinational Corporations', they sing on the self-titled track, proclaiming them to be the 'genocide of the starving nations'. The importance of this dislike for large multinationals, linked with the mistreatment of animals also leads into another cross-fertilisation between anarcho-punk and the anarchist movement, and the final issue I wish to deal with here: the Court case termed as McLibel, and the group London Greenpeace.

Founded in 1971, London Greenpeace was formed following the publication of *Peace News*, a 'Green Peace' broadsheet that was compiled of a number of ideas of how individuals could take practical action in their own lives to preserve the 'ecosystem'. A number of Greenpeace groups began to grow around the world until in 1977, the Vancouver group decided to establish a centralised Greenpeace International, inviting London Greenpeace to set up a branch in the UK. However, the group declined, 'deciding to keep its autonomy and radical

character'.[532] In this sense, London Greenpeace has deliberately remained a small group of activists – without 'leaders' only 'members' – with decisions taken within the group by the initiative and consensus of all of those involved. The main ethos behind the political action of the group is to encourage people to organise themselves to take practical action, and to network with others in an attempt to effect real change. 'We need to create a new society based on the co-operation and sharing between people, and harmony between people and the rest of nature',[533] they write in 'London Greenpeace: A History of Ideas, Protests and Campaigning'. They conclude, 'together ordinary people can reclaim our world, currently based on the greed and power of the minority, and create an anarchist society based on strong and free communities, the sharing of precious resources and respect for all life'.[534]

London Greenpeace therefore was a small, diverse mixture of anarchists, pacifists, libertarians and vegetarians, brought together in a common belief in non-violent political action. A meeting of the group would range from anywhere between three to a dozen or more people, and the group 'traditionally' campaigned against issues such as Nuclear power and the Falklands War. In 1986, however, the group decided to target McDonald's, a corporation they believed to epitomise 'everything we despise: a junk culture, the deadly banality of capitalism'.[535] Members of the group began to distribute a six-page leaflet entitled 'What's Wrong with McDonald's? Everything they don't want you to

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[532] Quoted from the pamphlet 'London Greenpeace: A History of Ideas, Protests and Campaigning', found on www.mcspotlight.org (2003).
[533] *Ibid.*,
[534] *Ibid.*,
[535] Schlosser, E. (2002) *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World*, London: Penguin, p. 245.

know'. The group accused McDonald's of 'promoting Third World poverty, selling unhealthy food, exploiting workers and children, torturing animals, and destroying the Amazon rain forest, among other things'.[536] Along the top of the leaflet ran a number of 'golden arches', the recognisable insignia of McDonald's accompanying slogans such as McProfits, McMurder and McGreedy.

Although the leaflets were distributed for up to four years previous without McDonald's complaining, in September 1990, the company decided to sue the group for libel, proclaiming that every aspect of the leaflet was false. I do not wish to provide a detailed account of the trial itself. One needs only to turn to Schlosser (2002) to find a discussion of the case. Instead, as with Stop The City and Class War, it is interesting to note the way in which political ideas and actions seemingly independent of one another constantly cross over between the newly formed anarcho-punk movement and the older anarchist organisations. In other words, the way in which both 'movements' are marginalised 'spaces' for individuals to protest against what many see as an oppressive, banal capitalist system.

Obviously, one needs to be careful in casting over-spurious links between marginalised groups and often fragmented forms of protest: a notion that I have already discussed in chapter one. Yet one could argue that whereas a direct link between groups may at times be ambiguous, their protests are subsumed beneath the umbrella of an anti-system and anti-capitalist stance. In other words, individual forms of protest, be it surrounding Class, vegetarianism, or the

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[536] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

environment are often aimed towards what many deem an all encompassing oppressive capitalist society. In this sense, before I move onto a brief discussion of the musical heterogeneity within the anarcho-punk movement, I feel it best to give the last word to one of the bands involved the subculture. 'System's shit, greed and power, system's shit, money grabber', sing Extreme Noise Terror in 'System's Shit'. They conclude, 'system's shit, lying bigot, system's shit, fuck off'.

2. From Conflict to Sore Throat: Musical Heterogeneity of the Anarcho-Movement

If the anarcho-punk scene of the late 1970s and subsequent 1980s provided a 'space' for subcultural/marginalised resistance against what many saw as an overriding, oppressive capitalist system, then one could argue that it also nurtured an environment for an individuality of artistic and musical expression. I have already confessed to the almost 'restricted' musical analyses above, of bands that many may perceive as the 'main players' in the emergence of this particular subculture: a 'limitation' due to the lack of space in this thesis. Within this section, therefore, I wish to briefly cover a number of bands that, although defined under the all-encompassing umbrella of 'anarcho-punk', have nonetheless expressed their dissent and political ideals in a diversity of musical styles. I do not wish to provide an in-depth analysis of the musical/political impact of each band mentioned, but rather to briefly highlight the way in which each artist has used the anarcho-punk 'scene' as subcultural space in which to experiment with a range of musical styles. I wish to begin with an analysis of

two bands, Poisongirls and Donna and the Kebabs, both of whom provide a stark musical contrast to those artists (in particular Crass and Discharge), that I have previously discussed in chapter three. The second part of this section will turn towards musicians that have appropriated the musical style of those bands previously discussed (albeit in their own individual manner), such as Conflict, Extreme Noise Terror and Sore Throat.

Noted as 'one of the most uncompromising bands in rock history, challenging racism, sexism, the Nuclear industry and all manners of abuses at every step',[537] Poisongirls were formed in 1977 by the vocalist – and, incidentally 42 year old – Vi Subversa, drummer and anarchist Lance D'Boyle and the guitarist Richard Famous. The position of bass-guitarist would be a particular problem, and the band would subsequently employ a total of thirteen bassists throughout their existence. Already mentioned above, in connection with the co-release of the single 'Persons Unknown' (1981) with Crass, the Poisongirls' musical material is an eclectic mixture of 'in your face' style punk, comical intent and serious political commentary.

'Persons Unknown' (track number fourteen on the accompanying disc), for instance, is a track that musically fits more closely with a definition of 'punk rock' than much of their other material. Although relatively slow, the track has a menacing repetitious guitar-riff that runs throughout, and although melodic at times, Subversa's vocal delivery is almost recitative – speech like – and high in the mix, providing the lyrics with a sense of forthrightness. 'Survival, silence,

isn't good enough no more', sings Subversa, 'keep your mouth shut, head in the sand'. It continues, 'terrorists and saboteurs, each and every one of us, hiding in the shadows, Persons Unknown'. Although not in a verse/chorus format, the track is nonetheless anchored by the lyrical and melodic repetition of names and fragments, even noting 'the Queen on her throne', in between the mention of 'anarchists and pacifists', and rendition at the end of each phrase with the words 'Persons Unknown'. As such, the repetition of lyrical content and the recurring guitar-riff stabilises the aural quality of the track, and 'Persons Unknown' becomes relatively easy to listen to. In this sense, although the track remains forthright in nature, it nonetheless lacks the hard-edged, extreme directness of Crass and Discharge, instead taking advantage of Subversa's distinct vocals to provide melody and decipherable lyrics.

If one could argue that 'Persons Unknown' retains a forthrightness that remains within the punk rock canon, then a later track, 'Real Woman' (1984), illuminates the comical, and somewhat satirical, nature of the Poisongirls' material (track number fifteen on the accompanying disc). The mood of the track is upbeat and, similar to 'Persons Unknown', the lyrics are easily intelligible. However, unlike the previous track, 'Real Woman' adheres to a clear verse/chorus structure. Further, what is particularly distinct – and an aspect that was an anathema within the anarcho-scene at this time – is that the track includes a keyboard, providing an underlying 'comical' melodic fragment within the overall musical texture. As such, although the lyrics remain as forthright as 'Persons Unknown', there is a sense that the group are using humour as a means of providing an ironic take on

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[537] Buckley, J., Duane O., Ellingham, M. & Spicer, A. (eds.)(1999) *Rock: The Rough Guide*,

conforming femininity. 'I'm not a real woman', sings Subversa, 'I don't nod my head, or preciously wait for your favours in bed'. She continues, 'I'm not a real woman, don't waggle my hips [or] shackle my lips. And I'm not a lemon, so please don't squeeze my pips'.

If 'Persons Unknown' and 'Real Woman' are characteristic of the serious and comical nature of the Poisongirls' material, then a brief examination of one last track, 'Statement' (1980), (track number sixteen on the accompanying disc) highlights the way in which their music also dealt with intense political debate. Musically sparse, 'Statement' relies predominantly upon Subversa's spitting, speech-like vocal delivery. 'I denounce the system that murders my children, I denounce the system that denies my existence, I curse the system that makes machines of my children' she pronounces. She continues, 'I reject the system that turns bodies of my own sweet flesh into caged monsters of Iron and Steel and war and turns the hands of my children into robotic claws'. Accompanying the straightforward vocals is a short and recurring, but sparse, musical fragment on the guitar, bass and drums, providing a clear sense of rhythm, as well as emphasising the forthright nature of the track. Further, 'Statement' is interjected with a solo male voice repeating the phrase 'there are no words for us, no words', as if in a church choir. As with those tracks discussed above, 'Statement' is a good example of the way in which the Poisongirls experimented with musical form and texture, so as to convey a diverse range of political and social ideals.

London: Penguin Books, p. 757.

Although I have drawn upon the eclectic style of the Poisongirls' musical material as a means of highlighting the relative artistic freedom of the newly emerging anarcho-punk scene, this does not mean that one should completely disregard the influence and impact of first wave punk. Although the debate surrounding the commercial nature of 1970s punk continues, one could argue that the subculture nevertheless opened up a new arena for musicians and artists alike to experiment with both form and content. In this sense, one could argue that although the anarcho-scene was to move away from what many saw as 'mainstream punk', the legacy of the earlier subculture can certainly be heard in some of the music produced by the later anarcho-punk movement.

Indeed, a good example of this can be seen in the music of Honey Bane, lead singer of the band Donna and the Kebabs. Subsumed under the anarcho-punk movement in that their music was released on the Crass label, the musical material is interesting in that one could argue it is a subtle mix of experimentation and first wave punk rock. Indeed, one needs only to turn to the track 'Porno Grows' (track number seventeen on the accompanying disc), a B-side from the single 'You Can Be You' (1979), to find a perfect example of this. On the one hand, the track attempts to move away from the forthright musical style of first wave punk. A piano accompanies each verse to provide aural stability and textural and melodic variation. Indeed, the vocal delivery differs between verse and chorus, with Bane's voice providing a more melodic delivery in the former to accompany the piano.

On the other hand, each chorus reverts back to an 'in your face' musical style, reminiscent of the band Siouxsie and the Banshees. Indeed, one needs only to turn to the Banshees' material such as that on *The Scream* (1978) for instance, to find the similarity between the two artists. In this sense, 'Porno Grows' is not a straight-forward 'punk rock' track as such, but instead uses an almost conjunct musical style – seemingly drawing upon the music of the Banshees – to provide a complex musical texture. The track constantly shifts between the melodic and the forthright, between the easy-listening – almost spoken – verse and the shouted 'in your face' chorus.

As such, one could argue that the anarcho-punk scene did not altogether disregard the music and ideas of first wave punk. The lyrical content of 'Porno Grows' certainly remains more poignant than first wave punk. Whereas the Pistols were singing of the Queen and the unemployment line, Bane sings of 'brothel babies', 'paedophile lovers' and 'masochists [that] take all the lash'. Yet one could argue that the musical material itself remains within the canonic legacy of first wave punk. Although forthright in nature, the lyrics are intelligible, there is a clear verse/chorus structure and an obvious sense of harmonic progression.

If the Poisongirls and Donna and the Kebabs are two bands that show a sense of musical experimentation from the legacy of first wave punk into the 1980s (and the emergence of anarcho-punk), then the second part of this discussion will concentrate on the way in which the anarcho-scene itself began to build a legacy of its own. Indeed, if those bands previously discussed had taken ideas and

musical styles from first wave punk, then we can also turn to a number of bands who appropriated and expanded upon the musical legacy of the 'original' anarcho-punk bands discussed in chapter three. Apart from the Subhumans/Culture Shock and Dick Lucas's contribution to the anarcho-punk scene, I have predominantly focussed upon the *emergence* of the musical stylistics of the subculture. In this sense, I wish to briefly explore a number of bands that took on the musical mantle of Crass and Discharge and continued the trend throughout the rest of the 1980s.

The first of these is Conflict. Already noted above for the way in which they fused together the ideals of anarchism, direct action and an overtly political lyrical content, Conflict are arguably one of the most important anarcho-bands to have emerged in the early 1980s outside of Crass, Discharge and the Subhumans. In particular, three albums of that decade, *It's Time to See Who's Who* (1982), *Increase the Pressure* (1984) and *The Ungovernable Force* (1985) are long, unrestrained rants against all things Established, including the police, government, vivisectionists, first wave punk, heavy metal music celebrities and nuclear war. Further, if Conflict had taken over the political ideals of anarchism espoused by Crass, then they also appropriated their musical style.

For an example of this, one needs only to turn to a track such as 'Increase the Pressure' (track number eighteen on the accompanying disc), from the album *Increase the Pressure*. As with much of the music of Crass, the track does not adhere to a verse/chorus structure, but instead relies upon two vocalists running through a number of different political ideas and messages at a great pace.

Indeed, the track is extremely fast, and the vocalists often have problems fitting syntax into rhythmic spaces and harmonic progressions. Surprisingly however, the lyrics are distinct and decipherable, perhaps highlighting the way in which the music itself often remains second to the importance and primacy of the political message within the anarcho-scene.

Yet what is most apparent is the forthright nature of the track. The guitar plays a simple repetitious chordal progression throughout, and the drums a simple back beat on two and four that seems to stabilise the rhythmic and vocal intensity of the track. The vocals are spat towards the listener at an unrelenting pace with the lyrical content jumping from message to message, idea to idea. 'Well bollocks to them all, keep smashing at the wall', they sing, 'pile the pressure on and government will fall'. From here lyrical content switches towards musical/political protest. 'But it takes more than music and more than words to recreate a nation that's controlled by hoards (sic) of police', they continue, 'it's the same old racket with the same old songs. Well it's the same fucking system and it still stands strong'.

'Increase the Pressure' epitomises the way in which Conflict used a particular Crass-like musical style throughout the 1980s. Obviously, there are exceptions. 'Bullshit Broadcast' on *It's Time to See Who's Who* for instance, is built upon a clear verse/chorus structure with a short guitar solo, whilst the final track on *The Ungovernable Force*, 'To Be Continued' is a slow melodic track with a softly sung female vocalist and piano. 'Do I stand alone again in my endless search for freedom?', she sings, continuing with 'as I step into their darkness....in my

hopeless chase for freedom'. Yet Conflict has appropriated the long, rant-like musical style of Crass: the fast, spat vocals, the relentless, rhythmic intensity and the constantly changing lyrical content dealing with issues such as governmental abuses of power, first wave punk and even the philosophising of the growing anarcho-scene itself.

As with the discussion of the Poisongirls and Donna and the Kebabs, I do not wish to analyse the music and political ideals of Conflict in detail. Instead, I merely wish to highlight the way in which the anarcho-scene became a 'space' for a diverse mix of musical styles and political thought and debate. Whether it be a conscious move away from first wave punk, an appropriation of first wave punk, or indeed, in the case of Conflict a continuation of the legacy of a pivotal anarcho-punk band such as Crass. Yet, I wish to conclude this particular section with a brief analysis of another musical strand of anarcho-punk that, other than the infamy of Conflict, has been for many the defining sound of this subculture: the work of Extreme Noise Terror, Chaos UK and Sore Throat.

Formed in 1985, Extreme Noise Terror [ENT] moved towards an appropriation of the musical style of Discharge in the same vein that Conflict had with Crass. Already mentioned above with regard to their political ideals, ENT's music was extremely forthright, aggressive and 'in your face', consisting of growling, shouted, indecipherable lyrics, a cacophony of feedback from the lead guitar and hacked away musical production and form. Tracks such as 'Use Your Mind', from the album *Holocaust in Your Head* (1988), or 'No Threat' from *Radioactive Earslaughter* (1986), a split album with the band Çhaos UK, being indicative of

their musical style. Indeed, one needs lyric sheets to decipher lyrical content, with each track running at approximately 150 bpm and the overall musical texture being subsumed beneath a feedback-based progression of guitar and bass.

Chaos UK are another example of this style. In particular, their album *Short Sharp Shock* (1984) is a barrage of musical delivery, with each track seemingly melting into each other. As with Extreme Noise Terror, the lyrics are indecipherable and the tempo extremely fast. Musical form and production – as with the work of Discharge – are diminished down to the bare minimum and there is no attempt at musical experimentation or virtuosity. Yet, the work of ENT and Chaos UK also highlight one of the most important aspects of the anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s. If Crass had heralded the emergence of a new subculture, whereby emphasis was placed upon artistic and musical freedom, then one could argue that ENT, Chaos UK and the final band in this discussion, Sore Throat, purposely took the subculture towards a new, almost farcical, direction.

Indeed, one could thus argue that these bands highlighted the way in which the anarcho-punk scene of the late 1980s was forming into a parody of what the scene had originally despised. Chapter three has already highlighted the way in which the anarcho-scene began to mould into a sense of 'fashion', a need for 'leaders' and fixed values such as the wearing of black, writing anti-Nuclear war songs and following bands such as Crass and the Subhumans. In this sense, the musical style of ENT, Chaos UK and Sore Throat seemed to throw these ideals back into the face of the anarcho-movement itself. Indeed, if one could argue

that Crass had used subtle musical parody and quotation to highlight the commercial nature and political triviality of first wave punk, then these bands used a musical mixture of comedy and brute force. Yet, the problem over these particular bands arose over the progressive nature of the musical style. If Crass had used the French National Anthem to highlight the futility of government and revolution, and the Subhumans had moved towards the inclusion of reggae and succinct political and subcultural comment with the newly formed Culture Shock, then ENT, Chaos UK and Sore Throat had nowhere to go. One could argue that their music had reached the very limit.

Indeed, it is a notion that is epitomised by the yet unexamined music of Sore Throat. The comical aspect of the music is immediately apparent when one looks to the members of the band. If punk bands in the 1970s had used false – or abbreviated – identities to evade recognition by the Job Centre, then by the late 1980s, this idea had taken on a new sense of absurdity. Chaos UK for instance, had Mower on vocals and Chaos on bass, whilst Extreme Noise Terror had Pig Killer on drums and Road Drill on guitar. As such, Sore Throat had Rancid Trout on distortion, Howard Porpoise on 'grinds' (the guitar), Bestial Vomit on 'stix' and Rawhead Rex on shouts. Accompanying the ensemble were Dave on accordion, Pete Pox on voice and guitar, and the Sore Throat Inspirational Choir, consisting of Karl, Ian and John. Yet, if the farcical identities of the band were arguably a backlash towards a growing conformity of this style of anarcho-punk, then their music is as extreme and scathing.

One needs only to turn to the album *Unhindered by Talent* (1988), a work that contains fifty-four tracks in total; or the single 'Spontaneous Musical Combustion' (1988) that runs through forty-three tracks to find evidence of this. 'We would however, like to point out that we do not practice (sic) at all', they write on the sleeve of 'Spontaneous Musical Combustion', 'and all the music (??) was made up as we went along (Punk eh?)', highlighting a sense of farce over the band and the notion of 'punk rock' as a whole. Tracks on both records are extremely short, fast, aggressive snap-shots of political and social commentaries. 'Heath' (track number nineteen on the accompanying disc), for instance, a reference to the Conservative Prime Minister of the 1970s Edward Heath, is a track that lasts for one second and consists of a vocal growl of the word 'thief'. Succinct political commentary is tackled in the track 'Eat Organic' (track number twenty on the accompanying disc), where, at a great pace the advice 'why eat meat, you know it's wrong, eat organic, if you want to live long', is conveyed. The band also provides an observation of the wider record industry in the track 'Record Collectors Are Still Pretentious Assholes', which lasts for one second and consists of the lyric 'twenty quid'. Further, the band deals with the ideas of anarchism and the notion of social co-operation between individuals, epitomised by the track 'Bonded by Booze'. 'Love and happiness, everyone together', they sing, 'we're all drinking in sunny weather'.

Although farcical and absurd, the music of Sore Throat deals with the way in which the anarcho-punk movement had itself become subsumed under the labels of 'subculture', 'fashion' and 'movement': aspects which the anarcho-scene had equally despised of in relation to the growth of first wave punk. In this sense, the

anarcho-punk scene itself had fallen victim to a fixed sense of subcultural identity, where elitism and the notion of 'lifestyle' held precedence over innovation and originality. Although the scene still exists today, with bands such as Napalm Death, Extreme Noise Terror and Conflict still touring, one could argue that the anarcho-punk scene during the latter half the 1980s had lost the fluidity of political and musical momentum that the subculture had been originally built upon. As I have previously discussed, bands such as Crass and the Subhumans had already vilified those first wave punks who wore mohican-style hair cuts as fashion-statements and who paraded their 'anarchist dissent' with snobbery. By the late 1980s however, it is apparent that the anarcho-punk scene itself had moved in that very direction. Although based upon a different set of decontextualised subcultural symbols, 'point-scoring' became as rife within the anarcho-scene as it had earlier in first wave punk. Wearing one's hair in 'dreadlocks' scored highly on the list, as did an involvement with the so-called 'Peace Convoy' and the Traveller Movement of the decade. Further, being a vegetarian, wearing black and being a member/friend of an 'anarcho-punk' band were deemed essential to being a 'member' of the now established anarcho-punk movement.

The anarcho-scene's move towards a real/phoney dichotomy of subcultural identity is by no means new. 'The distinction between originals and hangers-on is always a significant one in subcultures',[538] writes Dick Hebdige. He continues, 'different youths bring different degrees of commitment to a subculture....It can represent a major dimension in people's lives....or it can be a slight distraction, a

[538] Hebdige, D. (1994) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Routledge, p. 122.

bit of light relief from the monotonous....realities of school, home and work'.[539] Whereas anarcho-punk had originally attempted to provide a 'space' for artistic/musical/social freedom, relatively free from the constraints of first wave punk and an overly oppressive capitalist system, then one could argue that the very political nature of anarcho-punk had transformed into another fixed sense of identity. In other words, by the late 1980s, the anarcho-scene itself had moved away from its original versatility of subcultural identity towards a clear notion of 'lifestyle', incorporating the 'right' kind of clothes to wear, the 'correct' political views to air and the 'best', 'anarchist' bands to like and listen to.

This is not to say that the end of the 1980s witnessed the end of anarcho-punk, for the scene is still going strong today. Further, the criticisms surrounding the evolution of the anarcho-scene of the 1980s into a movement beset by a sense of 'fashion' and 'lifestyle' are problems that are often tackled by bands and writers when discussing the evolution of this modern day scene. Yet, what is apparent within the 1980s was the way in which the very strength of the anarcho-punk scene – the ambiguous and indefinable marriage between the political and the subcultural – became central towards its relative demise at the end of the decade. In other words, the way in which the combination of two anti-Establishment schools of thought, both of whom were built upon a fluidity and versatility of political and social thought, became solidified into a clear sense of 'subcultural lifestyle'.

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[539] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

3. The Relationship Between Punk and the 'Anarcho': Final Thoughts.

Writing in *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise* (1999), Craig O'Hara argues that, 'when it comes to choosing a political ideology, punks are primarily anarchists. There are few who promote the continuation of capitalism or communism'.[540] He continues, 'this is not to say that all punks are well read in the history and theory of anarchism, but most do share a belief found around the anarchist principles of having no official government or rulers, and valuing individual freedom and responsibility'.[541] Although I have questioned O'Hara's reading surrounding the class based structure of the punk rock scene per se (pp. 38-39), I would argue that his ideas concerning the reasons for the punk movement embracing the political ideology of anarchism do indeed stand up to scrutiny; for one could argue that O'Hara's thoughts, in particular those surrounding the social and political basis of punk from the 1970s to the present day, are especially indicative of my own musicological exploration into the birth and development of the anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s.

Throughout this thesis, I have striven to explore the ambiguous relationship between the practical and theoretical ideas/issues surrounding punk rock and anarchism. In particular, I have attempted to highlight the almost transformative essence of the two movements, raising questions over the extent to which both words – both 'labels' – lend themselves to connotations and a cluster of meanings that mutate and occasionally transform into specific identities and forms of political dissent. Indeed, one needs only to compare the move from the

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[540] O'Hara, C. (1999) *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*, Edinburgh: AK Press, p. 71.

chaotic to the corporeal, or the sartorial to the theoretical, in the comparative analyses of first wave punk and anarcho-punk above, to highlight such a transformation. Whilst on the one hand, first wave punk seemed to embody the quintessential, almost overriding dictionary definition of anarchy as being 'chaotic' or 'lawless',[542] its later counterpart, the anarcho-scene, seemed to have appropriated the *theoretical* definition of anarchy, drawing upon the idea of 'a society in which all individuals can do whatever they choose, except interfere with the ability of other individuals to do what they choose'.[543] It is a transformation reiterated by the band Crass, when interviewed for the fanzine *Flipside*. Emphasising the co-operative essence of anarchism – expounded as we have seen by bands such as Discharge and the Subhumans – Crass note that, 'anarchy is the only form of political thought that does not seek to control the individual through force'.[544] Condemning both the Left and the Right – a discursive arena that has already been covered in the previous chapter – Crass believe that 'anarchy is the rejection of that state control and represents a demand by the individual to live a life of personal choice, not one of political manipulation'.[545] They conclude, 'by refusing to be controlled you are taking your own life into your own hands, and that is, rather than the popular idea of anarchy as chaos, the start of personal order...The state of anarchy is not a chaotic bedlam where everyone is out for themselves'.[546]

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[541] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[542] A definition found in Makins, M. (ed) (1991) *Collins English Dictionary*, Glasgow: HarperCollins, p. 54.
[543] Rooum, D. (1993) *What is Anarchsim? An Introduction*, London: Freedom Press, p. 2.
[544] O'Hara, C., *op cit.*, p. 83.
[545] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[546] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

In this sense, although anarchism was at first taken as a means of mere shock value and expression of political rhetoric encompassing an eclectic mix of symbols, (such as the swastika) or imagery, (the Queen with a safety pin through her nose) it was soon transformed within certain fragments of the punk rock movement into a 'space' for a more organised form of dissent. Subsequently, anarchism was taken seriously by the newly emerging anarcho-punk scene as a means of interjecting a sense of fervent political 'self awareness' into the punk rock movement. Further, rather than simply attacking corporeal forces such as the police, government or the monarchy, anarcho-punk further saw anarchism as a means of questioning the very relations between 'members' of the so-called 'punk' movement as well as society as a whole.

Yet, if first wave punk adhered primarily to the anarchic in a sartorial sense of the word, one could argue that it was nonetheless a sufficiently ideological, free-floating concept to allow disenfranchised, alienated groups to express political and social dissatisfaction. In other words, although one could equate first wave punk with an almost rhetorical form of anarchic expression, there is evidence to suggest that it was in essence, a continuation of the subversive thread of political dissent that began with my discussion in chapter one, 'The Transformation of the Subversive: Anarchist Theory and the British Punk Rock Scene of the 1970s'. One could thus argue that ideas surrounding groups such as the Situationists, CND and the London Squatting Campaign were now re-appropriated and re-aligned into a new line of political dissent, so as to give a scathing attack on British society in the1970s. In this sense, if first wave punk was partly instrumental in continuing the thread of dissent unravelled in chapter one, then

one may conclude that the anarcho-punk scene regarded this initial wave of punk as a means – almost as a 'space' – where one could protest against the ills of society. Although criticised for the lack of theoretical understanding in terms of anarchist theory, first wave punk nonetheless provided a space where a freedom of expression and individuality was tantamount, and where the 'marginalised' members within the subculture – anarchists or otherwise – could provide a more effective protest against the capitalist system.

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