Smash the System!

Punk Anarchism as a Culture of Resistance

Jim Donaghey

Will Boisseau

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Contributor Biographies

Nathanel Amar combined his passion for amplified music and reganmian noodles by spending most of his time researching punk music in the People's Republic of China. Now working at the Taipei antenna of the French Centre for Research on Contemporary China (CEFC), he pursues another passion, niuroumian noodles and Taiwan popular music. His book on Chinese punk, *Scream for Life. L'invention d'une contre-culture en Chine populaire* was published in French in 2022. He still uses a blog to display the archives he collected, because he was born in the 1980s.

João Batista de M Bittencourt is a sociologist, professor and researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL, Brazil). He is co-ordinator at the research group LABJUVE (Laboratório das Juventudes), founder member of the REAJ network (Network of studies and research on youth actions and experiences), member of the Punk Scholars Network, and co-ordinator of PSN Brazil since 2020. He is the author of the book *Sóbrios, firmes e convictos: uma etnocartografia dos straightedges em São Paulo* (2015).

Will Boisseau burst onto the now legendary Guildford DIY punk scene in the mid 2000s where he first wondered why all the punks were eating vegan food. After learning about the connections between anarchism and animal liberation through zines, lyrics and benefit shows, he spent the next fifteen years researching the subject – even finding a university to pay him to research anarchism and animal rights for a glorious three years. Will lives in London, works as a trade unionist, and follows Leatherhead Football Club over land and sea.

Mariana Gabriela Calandra was born in Argentina in 1970, grew up during a dictatorship and witnessed the Falklands/Malvinas war. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Development Management and Policy, with a specialization in Non-Profit Organizations and Civil Society, a BA in International Relations, and another in Political Science. She has taught in various universities, worked for multilateral organisations, and was part of a

Climate Change international research network. She thinks she can speak German, English and French. But what she is really good at is defecting. She ran away from academia, employed positions and Argentina. Now she is unemployed, lives in Germany and has two kitties because all cats are beautiful.

CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective is an international network of aspiring revolutionaries that emerged from punk and other do-it-yourself networks in the 1990s. For over 25 years, they have released records, published books and journals, printed zines and posters, authored reports and analyses, and offered a wide range of other resources – all copyright free, produced and distributed by volunteer labor, without relying on external funding or market trends. Though they rarely seek public recognition for their efforts, everything they do is informed by their participation in struggles for liberation.

Ondřej Daniel is a cultural historian working at Charles University in Prague. He became aware of punk in the late 1980s as a school kid living in the Bohemian Moravian Highlands. His interest in anarchism followed around the mid 1990s and was particularly triggered by the antifascists active in the nearby town of Brno. With cultural references growing wider towards other DIY but surely punk-influenced scenes such as rave or extreme metal, his current work examines intersections of social class and popular music in contemporary Czech society.

Jim Donaghey has been punk for most of his life by now, so he might as well stick with it. Don't call him a 'punkademic', but his job is doing punk research, paid by a university. There's no dress code there – not that it makes up for the depressing, piece-by-piece dismantlement of academic collegiality by corporate mammonists, but he can wear a Police Bastard T-shirt to work if he so chooses. Jim's ongoing research is with punks and anarchists in Ireland, the Balkans and Indonesia, and his contributions to noise currently include a d-beat/anarcho band called Porphyria and a rave punk project called Them'uns.

Kevin C Dunn started listening to punk around age thirteen. In his late teens, he was hanging around the band Stevie Stiletto, who role-modelled how to construct a DIY punk scene. Since then he has played in numerous crappy

bands, started a record label, organized countless shows, run non-profit spaces and a recording studio, and produced dozens of zines. In college he developed a scholarly focus on African politics, which continues today. His books include *Inside African Politics* and *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life*. He is a regular contributor to *Razorcake* zine and his debut novel, *Vicious Is My Middle Name*, was published in 2022. His bass playing is still rudimentary at best.

Caroline K Kaltefleiter is Professor of Media Studies and Director of the Anarchist Studies Research Program at State University of New York, Cortland. A member of the Positive Force Anarchist Collective and Riot Grrrl DC, she's written numerous articles and papers on anarcha-feminism, girls' media production, and activism. Her organizing work includes Occupy Wall Street, Shut it Down NYC, and Mutual Aid projects in Upstate New York. Her article, 'Care and Crisis in David Graeber's New York: Anarcha-feminism, gift economies, and mutual aid beyond a global pandemic' appears in *Anthropological Notebooks*. The volume commemorates the work of anarchist scholar David Graeber who died in 2020.

Jay Kerr is a punk activist from the UK, a founding member of the Punk Ethics collective and long-time activist with the anti-sweatshop campaign, No Sweat. He has been involved in punk and anarchist scenes since the early 2000s, both in the UK and in Australia, where he helped organise the first Sydney Anarchist Bookfair. He has written for *Class War* in the UK and *Sedition* in Australia, as well as for a handful of mainstream publications. His current focus is on building international solidarity with sweatshop workers and kicking sweatshops out of punk.

Yannis N Kolovos studied history at the University of Athens and did his PhD at the Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology at the University of Thessaly, Greece. During the late 1980s and early 1990s he published the fanzine *B-23*, and in the 2000s worked as a staff editor at *Kathimerini* newspaper. In recent years he has been teaching history and literature at the Lyceum of Kareas in Athens and works on his post-doctoral research about the fanzine network in Greece during the 1980s and 1990s. His book about the punk rock scene of Athens has been reprinted twice (2015 and 2016).

James D Letson is a postgraduate researcher at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan. After spending his twenties as an itinerant heavy metal musician in his native Wales, life circumstances conspired to bring him to university in northern Japan. While studying, he became involved in the local punk community in Sapporo while simultaneously discovering a passion for anthropology. In combining these two pursuits, he hopes to contribute in his own small way to the ongoing growth and development of Sapporo punk. Stay Punk!! Stay Free!!

Asel Luzarraga (born in Bilbao, 1971) is a Basque writer. When he was fourteen or so, punk rock arrived in his life and he realized there was an anarchist inside him. He studied Business Studies and then Basque Philology because he wanted to write in the Basque language that Franco's dictatorship stole from his family. Since 2003 he has published thirteen novels, some have been translated into Spanish too. He has also played with some punk bands such as Punkamine and Trio Ternura, and now is working on a new project, Analgy, looking for new ways to spread the message. His writing activity brought him on a short journey into the prison system in Chile in 2010, and he's still fighting.

Christos Marneros is a Lecturer in Law at the University of Lincoln, UK, and a Visiting Lecturer in Legal Philosophy at Riga Graduate School of Law, Latvia. His research focuses on anarchic and anarchist political and philosophical thought, political theory, legal theory and continental philosophy.

Rodolfo Montes de Oca (Caracas, 1985) is a heterodox lawyer and human rights defender. During his youth he was an anarchist punk educated between the newspaper *El Libertario* and the Catholic University Andres Bello. He currently works in the organization PROVEA and is part of the Antimilitarist Network of Latin America (RAMALC/WRI), as a chronicler of social movements he has written books such as *Venezuelan Anarchism: The History of a Movement* (See Sharp Press) and *Anarchistes dans la revolte populaire de 2017 au Venezuela-Au cour de people* (Editions Du Monde Libertaire).

Antônio Carlos de Oliveira, 57 years old, father and grandfather. Anarchist, member of the Center for Social Culture of São Paulo, the Nucleus

of Libertarian Studies Carlo Aldegheri do Guarujá, and the Punk Scholars Network Brazil. Participant of the punk movement in the 1980s, author of fanzines, organizer of a public and soon digital collection on punk with 9,000 documents. Author of the books *The fanzines tell a story about punks* and *Punk, memory, history and culture*, and one about education, *Interdisciplinary practices, pedagogical projects*. History teacher at a public school, resident and worker in the distant outskirts of the city of São Paulo.

Casey Robertson is a musician, songwriter, artist, and PhD student in Humanities at York University (Canada) researching the interdisciplinary fields of sound studies and trans studies. As a writer, activist, and community organizer based in Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village, Casey is frequently involved with various equity-centred organizations, initiatives, and projects for the LGBTQ2S community of the Greater Toronto Area.

M Rizky Sasono is an Indonesian indie musician known by the name Risky Summerbee. Based in Yogyakarta, Central Java, he is also renowned for being a member of a performing arts collective, Teater Garasi/Garasi Performance Institute. During 2009-2017 he initiated and curated a music program 'Live at Teater Garasi', organised gigs for independent musicians and bands in Indonesia, and various other works that have contributed to the lively Indonesian independent music scenes. In 2017 he got lost and found himself in the US pursuing the studies of music and politics at the University of Pittsburgh.

Len Tilbürger is an enigma wrapped inside a mystery, wrapped inside a riddle. They seek him there, they seek him here, they find him with a vegan beer – that damned elusive Len Tilbürger is likely to continue with his fleeting re-emergences into the public consciousness, until every cage is empty. Accept no imitations.

Tiago de Jesus Vieira is a professor in the Department of History at State University of Goiás (UEG, Brazil). Currently he is a member of the research group NECI (Center for Studies on Cultures and Identities) and a member of Punk Scholars Network, Brazil. His PhD research, *The future of the 'no future': an*

analysis of writing about punk in Brazil and its identity constructions (1982-2010), was developed at Federal University of Mato Grosso.

Marko Vojnić is, in order of importance: proud father, anarchist, visual artist, pedagogue, punk. He has been actively exhibiting since 2002. He has curated a number of exhibitions, is the author of several book editions (mostly punk themed), is actively involved in music under the name Foreigners Everywhere, and is founder of DIY anarchist label Do It With Others Records. He is currently a lecturer at the Faculty of Textile Technology, University of Zagreb, and is a passionate supporter of the young team of the Zagreb 041 Football Club.

Maxwell Woods is a US emigrant in Chile. Having been peripherally involved in punk and activism in the United States, he became highly interested in how punk and politics overlapped in Chile. More recently, he has been involved in and written about the wave of national-scale protests in Chile during 2019-2020 that had a large anarchist element. His book on the subject, *On the Chilean Social Explosion*, is now available.
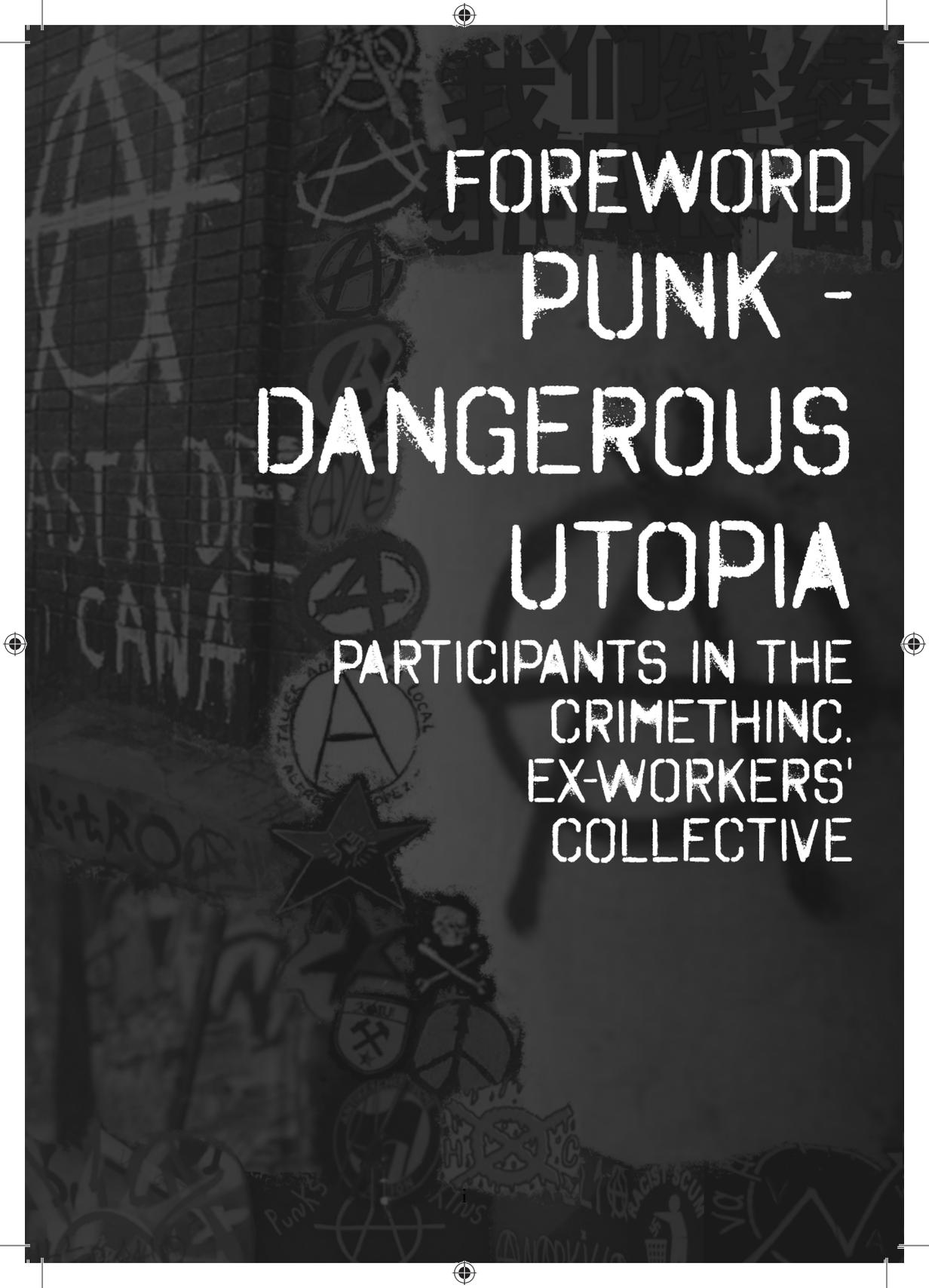
FOREWORD
PUNK –
DANGEROUS
UTOPIA

PARTICIPANTS IN THE CRIMETHINC. EX-WORKERS' COLLECTIVE

Foreword: Punk – dangerous utopia

Participants in the CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective

PUNK ROCK EQUALS ANARCHY PLUS
GUITARS AND DRUMS.
ANYTHING LESS IS JUST SUBMISSION.
(An Italian punk)

Let's imagine the ideal cultural vehicle for anarchism. It has to be defiant, obviously. It should accommodate both gleeful irony and stark courage. But let's make it affirmative, too, even if we have to go the long way round through suffering and catharsis to get there. We don't want the kind of nihilism that makes it hard to get out of bed in the morning – we want the kind that keeps people out all night causing trouble.

For starters, then, we'll set our point of departure in the creative arts: music, fashion, design, graffiti, writing, photography, petty crime. These are fundamentally affirmative even when they express anger and despair – and the start-up costs are pretty low. Put the music front and center, so literacy isn't a barrier.

Aesthetically, we'll want it raw and disruptive. Throw out all claims to expertise; make a clean sweep of the classics. At the most, we can retain a few of the innovations that the music industry stole from working-class people. Afflict the comfortable, comfort the afflicted.

Economically, if we can't unilaterally break with the capitalist mode of production, let's build-in some norms to counteract its effects: price controls ('pay no more than two quid'), a loathing of profiteering and all things corporate, a do-it-yourself ethic. Place all the emphasis on things that can't be bought. If that means an embattled discourse about 'authenticity', so be it.

This subculture has to be inclusive – and not just in the superficial sense associated with the liberal politics of representation. Rather than just

preaching to the converted, it should draw-in people from a wide range of backgrounds and politics. We want to reach the same young folks who are going to be targeted by military recruiters, and we want to reach them *first*. Sure, that will mean rubbing shoulders with a lot of people who are not anarchists – it will mean a big messy stew of different politics and conflicts and contradictions – but the goal is to *spread* anarchism, not to hide out in it. Get everyone together in a space premised on horizontality, decentralization, self-determination, reproducible models, being ungovernable, and so on and let them discover the advantages for themselves.

The most important thing is the participation of those who are poor, volatile, and angry. Not out of any misguided notion of charity, but rather because the so-called dangerous classes are usually the motor force of change from below. The self-satisfied and well-behaved lack the risk tolerance essential for making history and reinventing culture.

Picture a self-education society without instructors, ranks, or lesson plans. Teenagers will teach themselves to play drums by watching other teenagers play drums. They won't learn about politics in dusty tomes, but by publishing zines about their own experiences and corresponding with people on the other side of the planet. Every time well-known musicians perform, musicians who are just getting started will perform too. Learning won't be a distinct sphere of activity, but an organic component of every aspect of the community.

Dadaism and Surrealism were OK, but 'poetry must be written by all, not one', as Comte de Lautréamont put it. Our ideal subculture isn't a coterie of artists – it's more like a network of underclass gangs in which *everyone* has a band, a zine, or at least a criminal record. The art isn't just what's happening on the stage – it's the designs people inscribe on their jackets and shirts and bodies, the dancing and kissing and fighting and vandalism, the *atmosphere* they create together, the collective mythos of a worldwide grassroots movement. Let that mythos be contested territory – the conflict will keep people invested.

Our subculture will be Dionysian – sensual, spontaneous, *wild* – an uncontrollable geyser of raw feeling. The Apollonian (the rational, the intentional, the orderly) will follow the chaotic energy that drives this movement, not precede it. Intellectual proposals can build on adrenaline, lust, violence, and pleasure, but they can't substitute for them. So nothing

sanctimonious, nothing triumphalist or moralistic. Better a gritty romanticism that sees dignity in defeat as well as victory, an unpretentious attitude that says 'nothing human is alien to me'.

This subculture should be a space where people can learn about the politics of consent and assert their boundaries against invasive authority figures, entitled men, and other pests. At the same time, it should spread a rebel sociality that erodes the physical and emotional confines that individualize the capitalist subject. 'Our utopia is not a world in which no one ever bumps into you – it's a world in which everyone crashes into each other and it is joyous and good, in which it *means something different* when people crash into you'.

Not an anodyne utopia in which there is no fighting, but a *dangerous utopia* in which there are things worth fighting for. Not a Potemkin Village concealing the fault lines that run through society, but an arena in which you can take a stand in those conflicts on the scale of your own life. Not the anarchist

Figure i:1 – A band performing at Espaço Cultural Semente Negra, the Black Seed Cultural Center, in Peruíbe, Brazil, c. 2010s.

equivalent of the Red Pioneers – complete with doddering leadership and tedious traditions – but an open space of freedom in which each generation makes its own mistakes and charts its own path.

From this point of departure, we can pan back to an entire alternative way of living: self-organized venues and infoshops, collective housing, squatting, Food Not Bombs, reading groups, affinity groups, feminism, veganism, non-monogamy, eco-defense, militant unemployment – the sky's the limit. A worldwide network of countercultural spaces and movements and lifestyles. A chain reaction of rebellions going off like a string of fireworks encircling the globe.

Only now, with the benefit of hindsight, can we grasp how lucky we have been to participate in one of the greatest countercultural folk art movements of the past several hundred years.

Unions, hippies, punks, millennials

If there's any hope for America, it lies in a revolution, and if there's any hope for a revolution in America, it lies in getting Elvis Presley to become Che Guevara.

(Phil Ochs)

Punks is hippies.

(GISM)

Now let's situate the emergence of this counterculture historically, in the second half of the twentieth century. The powerful and rebellious labor movements of the early twentieth century had been bought off, abandoning demands for self-determination in return for higher wages, cheaper consumer goods, and more job security – the so-called Fordist Compromise, though the

same thing went by the name 'socialism' in the Eastern Bloc. Thus integrated into the self-regulation of the market, the union bureaucracy was slowly being outflanked by corporate outsourcing as capitalism transformed the entire earth into a single integrated supply chain.

Stalinism, fascism, the Second World War, two Red Scares, and the Cold War had crushed the anarchist movements of the early twentieth century, polarizing most of humanity into a binary between false freedom and false equality that boiled down to a choice between the CIA and the KGB. Those born after the Second World War grew up with no horizon for social change beyond trying to reform one side of this dichotomy or the other.

At the same time, thanks to Fordism, the baby boomers had access to a wider range of commodities than any previous generation. Corporate marketing encouraged young people to understand themselves as a distinct group with their own interests and aspirations. Mass-produced youth culture inadvertently generated the possibility of mass refusal of mainstream culture, creating new shared reference points that cut across older national, cultural, and social divisions.

Originally a working-class art form emerging from Black communities in the United States, rock music was one of the commodities that capitalists began to cultivate as a cash crop for this mass market. In this context, the success of The Beatles represented the anyone-can-make-it dream of economic mobility – but it was also an incomplete effort to appropriate and domesticate working-class youth rebellion. The fact that four ordinary Liverpudlian proletarians, availed of all the recording technology and popular attention of their entire civilization, could go from singing 'Love Me Do' in 1962 to recording the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* LP in 1967 implied a utopian possibility that exceeded anything the market could fulfill: if we *all* had such opportunities, couldn't *all of us* be artists? The lads from Liverpool, like the generation who grew up on their music, discovered they were not satisfied with the options at their disposal, even at the top of the pyramid – and the social bodies that had coalesced through shared consumer activity rebelled against the conformity and alienation of mass society.

In his book, *Do It!*, arch-yippie Jerry Rubin credited the unrest of the 1960s to this progression: 'The New Left sprang, a predestined pissed-off

child, from Elvis's gyrating pelvis'. The generation that started out rebelling against its parents' sexual repression by listening to rock'n'roll ended up occupying universities and protesting in the streets. By the time of the Woodstock festival in August 1969, this counterculture was millions strong.

Despite the anti-authoritarian spirit of these youth cultures, the resurgence of anarchism proper was limited. Anarchists established a presence in the campaign for nuclear disarmament in Britain and represented an influential minority within Students for a Democratic Society in the United States. Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, the 'street gang with an analysis', translated the Spanish anarchist concept of grupos de afinidad into the Anglophone model of affinity groups; thus equipped, they stormed the Pentagon, cut the fences at Woodstock, and brought their mimeograph machine with them when they occupied Bill Graham's rock music venue to demand a free night for the people. Yet as the decade wore on, authoritarian Marxists won power struggles within the leadership of many of the movements of the era. Like Marx's coup within the International Workingmen's Association a century earlier, these pyrrhic victories contributed to the collapse of the movements themselves.

Within the counterculture, the star system introduced its own hierarchies. At Woodstock, half a million people watched from the mud as a series of celebrities took the stage. Meanwhile, capitalists had begun incorporating hippie demands for individuality and diversity into the market. This coincided with the transition from straightforward Fordist mass production to increasingly diversified consumer goods and identities – the shift from economies of scale to economies of scope. If Beatlemania had exemplified mass culture, the emergence of metal, punk, and hip hop in the 1970s exemplified the 'post-Fordist' proliferation of subcultures.

In summer 1976 – one hundred years after the death of Mikhail Bakunin, fourteen years after the recording of 'Love Me Do', and seven years after the Woodstock festival – the Sex Pistols made their first television appearance, performing 'Anarchy in the UK', the song that became their debut single. 'Bakunin would have loved it', the television host quipped when they were done. Here it is, at the public premiere of punk proper: the proof of punk's anarchist credentials. All the attempts to water it down came after. So yes, punk was a reaction to the countercultures of the 1960s. Pistols singer Johnny

Rotten opened that television performance with a derisive phrase about Woodstock, rejecting everything self-satisfied and naïve about the hippie era – all the ways in which, in seeming to succeed, the hippies had been neutralized and assimilated.

But punk was also a continuation of those countercultures. It recapitulated the same process of radicalization that Jerry Rubin's generation had experienced – only intensified, like a bacteria that had become immune to antibiotics. From the beginning, punks took great pains to distinguish themselves from hippies; in retrospect, punk was everything hippie that couldn't be domesticated and commodified. Not festival stages, but basement shows; not tie-dyes and peace signs, but leather jackets and street fighting à la Up Against the Wall Motherfucker. What is a punk band, after all, but an affinity group with guitars? Discussing the Sex Pistols, John Lennon remarked that they were intentionally doing all the things that The Beatles' management had forbidden them to do at the outset of their commercial career.

A year after the Pistols debuted 'Anarchy in the UK', Crass (one of the first punk bands to be identified with the redundancy 'anarcho-punk') got started at a collective living project that members Penny Rimbaud and Gee Vaucher had founded in 1967. We can trace punk's pedigree through Crass directly back to the hippies, complete with the pacifism that the next generation of punks shook off.

As a part of the post-Fordist shift, music publishing and printing technology were finally becoming widely accessible to the general public. Crass was one of a new wave of do-it-yourself punk bands who released their own records. (The story goes that they had to press 5,000 copies of their debut LP because that was the minimum run that a pressing plant would produce at the time.) By self-managing the production process rather than selling themselves to a label, they were able to hijack the mystique that decades of capitalist investment and promotion had vested in the rock industry, reclaiming it for the sort of autonomous youth subcultures that had produced rock'n'roll in the first place.

At the same time, volatile globalized markets were undermining the job security of the mid twentieth century. In 1977, the children of redundant

Figure i:2 – Anarchist punks in Brazil, c. 1990s.

workers could read the writing on the wall, echoed in the lyrics of the next Sex Pistols hit: 'No future'. Punk caught on among the forerunners of today's superfluous workforce at a time when the futureless were still a bitter, isolated minority. It was the song of the canary in the coal mine. But it took decades for Fordism to collapse entirely, vanishing along with the complacent masses it had produced. It wasn't until 2007 that the Invisible Committee, in *The Coming Insurrection*, could write:

> 'The future has no future' is the wisdom of an age that, for all its appearance of perfect normalcy, has reached the level of consciousness of the first punks.

Today, in an age of widespread economic and environmental crises, pandemic, and war, when practically no one anticipates a bright future

anymore, punk has become redundant, at least as a minoritarian rejection of capitalist optimism and aesthetics.

If we don't set punk in its historical context – as a reinvention of pre-existing forms of resistance in response to particular conditions – we won't understand its strengths or the limits it reached. Considering the changes that were taking place in the labor market and consumer identity, it is not surprising that from the 1980s on, even the most doctrinaire anarcho-syndicalists were initially politicized through punk music rather than workplace organizing. Likewise, to understand why punk plateaued in the early twenty-first century, we have to recognize the ways that it anticipated and then was subsumed by the online networks, participatory models, and volatile identities of the Digital Age.

From the 1970s to the turn of the millennium, almost everyone with confrontational tendencies was effectively quarantined in a distinct subculture. But as the shift from economies of scale to economies of scope accelerated, these subcultures ceased to be discrete, long-term affiliations. Today, people stack up consumer identities like trading cards, and many subcultural identifiers last no longer than it takes to circulate a meme. It has become as difficult to isolate rebellion in particular social groups as it is to maintain a coherent revolutionary subject.

Likewise, the underground economy based in do-it-yourself networks prefigured contemporary hyper-capitalism, in which the self-management of our marketability extends into every aspect of our social lives and leisure time. Crass and their contemporaries achieved a breakthrough by using formats that had previously been inaccessible to the working class to spread subversive messages, but in the process they unwittingly pioneered and validated a new form of entrepreneurship, paving the way for less politicized entrepreneurs. All the shortcomings punks identified in the unidirectional capitalist media of the late twentieth century ('Kill your television!') inform the participatory capitalist media of our own day. Who needs to go to band practice when you can make a video on your smart phone and post it to TikTok immediately? Do it yourself!

Of course, social media platforms have hardly tamed the new generation. Continuing the process of assimilation and reinvention, today's uprisings draw on every aspect of punk that could not be domesticated, commodified, or outflanked. Riots without punk shows; black sweatshirts without patches on

them, so the police can't identify you; defiance and rebellion without anthems, without aesthetics, without hope.

If anything, we have overcorrected against the vestiges of the hippie era that persisted in the first phase of punk. When the Pistols came out, they were reacting against a subculture that involved too much art, and not enough rebellion; too much entertainment, and not enough disruption; too much optimism, and not enough reality. As we move deeper into a century that is already characterized by destruction and despair, we could do with a little more art, creativity, and optimism.

> This is one of the many reasons punk remains relevant in 2022. Today, in the anarchist movement, we sometimes miss the Dionysian spirit that characterized the hardcore punk underground at its high point: the collective, embodied experience of dangerous freedom. This is how punk can inspire us in our anarchist experiments of today and tomorrow: as a transformative outlet for rage and grief and joy, a positive model for togetherness and self-determination in our social relations, an example of how the destructive urge can also be creative. (CrimethInc., 2009)

History is not divided neatly into periods; it's more like a series of sedimentary layers comprising the present. Tonight, as you read this, a symphony orchestra is performing uptown, a jazz band is playing downtown, and a punk band is playing out in the suburbs.

Punk's not dead, I know – punk's not dead, I know it's not.

If we understand punk as an heir to longstanding traditions of resistance, this will explain its persisting importance to anarchism. While an older generation of labor-oriented radicals used to deride punks' political commitments as ephemeral, punk is much older – and stabler – than today's contemporary political organizing models; it dates from a time when subcultures still produced lasting identifications and commitments. Small wonder if many of those who still maintain the infrastructure of anarchist organizing from one year to the next are longtime punks. Punk combines the

engaging style and global networks of twenty-first-century cultural movements with the longevity of pre-internet political formations.

Figure i:3 – Punk-inspired anarchists at the May Day demonstration Bandung, 2019 (photograph by Frans Ari Prasetyo).

Coda: Testimony

My friend's punk band is playing in the backward little Southern town next to mine. The venue is a fallout shelter from the Cold War. It's called The Fallout Shelter. A police car pulls up in front of the venue and an officer gets out. While the officer is hassling the punks on the sidewalk, my friend slips across the street. He gets down on his elbows and knees, crawls behind the police car, and punctures its tire with his pocketknife.

The cop has to radio for backup. All evening, between bands, punks drink on the sidewalk and applaud ironically as the police struggle to replace the tire.

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The first week of high school, 7 Seconds plays the one club in my little town. The show ends the way every big hardcore show there does – in a massive skinhead brawl that spills out onto the main drag. I go to class the next morning with a bruise on my arm in the precise shape of a Doc Martens boot print. It marks me: I'm not part of your world.

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Over the following decade, I join a band, I start a zine, I engage in endless debates about dancing, fashion, food, and fighting. I befriend the people who work night shift at the copy shop down the street. I stay up all night photocopying zines there, strictly off the books. Somebody in Czech Republic mails me a copy of the *Kritická Situace* LP in trade for my zine. I take the LP to the listening station at the public library because I don't have a record player. I drive twelve hours to play a show attended by bruisers who have pledged to attack me on sight. I set up shows for bands. I release records.

Our band goes on tour. Night after night, people host and sometimes even feed us. We buy a van together. We travel around the country, playing self-organized venues and staying at collective houses. Overseas, we see our first giant squatted buildings, with banners hanging on the walls and movement archives and bicycle repair shops serving the neighborhood. It starts to dawn on us that we're part of something much bigger than we imagined.

It is only after three months on tour that I realize that I have shifted from thinking in the first person singular to the first person plural. We.

***

We meet the old-timers from the Crass generation. They've all got a couple decades on us; we're the youngest ones at all the shows in the UK. A member of Doom drives us around the British Isles in their van, since we're not accustomed to driving on the left side of the road.

One night, the fellow from Doom stays up late talking with a member of the Subhumans. They end up arguing about whether The Clash ruined punk by selling out to a corporate record label. I get the impression they've been having the same argument for twenty years. Still, it helps me to think of my own commitments on a longer time frame.

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Reclaim the Streets – Millions for Mumia – the National Conference on Organized Resistance – the Presidential Inauguration. During every conference, before or after every protest, there is a punk show. Not just bands, but puppet shows, performance art, radical cheerleading. Itinerant punks set up literature tables consisting entirely of Noam Chomsky books shoplifted from Barnes & Noble bookstores. Sometimes the black bloc sets out directly from the mosh pit.

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In São Paulo, I attend a demonstration against a monument celebrating 500 years of colonialism. Everyone is masked up. The punks behind us throw paint bombs at the monument and rocks at the lines of riot police in front of us. The police shoot live rounds over our heads. Afterwards, we hide out inside an açaí stand so the cops don't target us for the paint on our clothes.

A couple days later, Abuso Sonoro plays in Guarujá. The guitarist performs wearing the same mask he wore at the demonstration. A worldwide culture of resistance.

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The first time we pull up to Ungdomshuset, the squatted punk venue in Copenhagen, every window in the neighborhood is boarded up. There was some unrest here the night before, our hosts explain, because the police want to deport a man to Turkey. After the show, while we sleep in the guest room, police sit outside the building in an armored car, reciting threats over a loudspeaker to the punks standing guard on the roof.

The fourth time we visit Ungdomshuset, there are too many of us to sleep in the guest room. Instead, our hosts unfold gym mats across the length of the entire great hall. We unroll our sleeping bags and lie down in a line, thirty or more of us – the bands, the organizers, and every random traveller who doesn't have another place to stay, together under the vaulted ceiling of the building in which International Women's Day was announced in 1910. Let the earth be a common treasury for all.

Before I go to sleep, I turn to the person bedding down to my left. 'Where are you from?'

'Me? I'm from Australia', she answers. 'Where are you from?'

A year later, police raid and demolish the building in the biggest operation in Denmark since World War Two. The city riots for a week; demonstrations continue weekly for a year. Plans are in motion for thousands of people to forcibly occupy City Hall when the government relents and grants the squatters a new building.

The next time I go to Denmark with a band, we play there, at the new Ungdomshuset.

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Years later, during the Occupy movement, a new generation filters into the anarchist community in our little Southern town. They're the first ones to come in without having punk as a reference point.

'But you have to do a workshop about punk, too', Liz says to me, after a direct action training.

'A workshop? Why? Punk is just a style of music, it's not essential to this stuff', I answer. Decades of arguments about subcultural insularity have made me a little touchy on this subject.

'Maybe, but for all of you who knew each other before this, punk is like a sorority you were in, or a secret society. A bunch of references to bands we've never heard of, like a private code. It only comes up when you're socializing with each other, but … that's how people form intimacy, right? You have to let us in on it'.

***

A few years later, the anarchist student group at the local university invites us older townies to come make a presentation. I expect they want us to talk

about security culture or consensus process or the Spanish Civil War. In fact, they ask us to tell them about punk.

Roxy and I commandeer a full-length mirror from the abandoned glass factory next to my house and bring it into the classroom. We set it up facing the audience. I begin reciting a boring lecture in a button-up shirt, like a professor. While their eyes are on me, Roxy swings a baseball bat into the mirror, sending shards flying everywhere, and the d-beat kicks in.

Figure i:4 − Catharsis show at La Miroiterie, Paris, 9th of August 2013

'There − now why would we do that?' she asks them, afterwards, and their answers tell them everything they need to know about what punk is. Whatever conception you have of yourself and the world you see yourself in, smash it − whatever you consider bad luck, do it right now − and begin from there, remaking yourself and the world anew.

Figure i:5 – Amy from Nausea at a show in Tompkins Square Park, New York, 2ⁿᵈ of June 1990 (photograph by Chris Boarts Larson of *Slug and Lettuce* zine).

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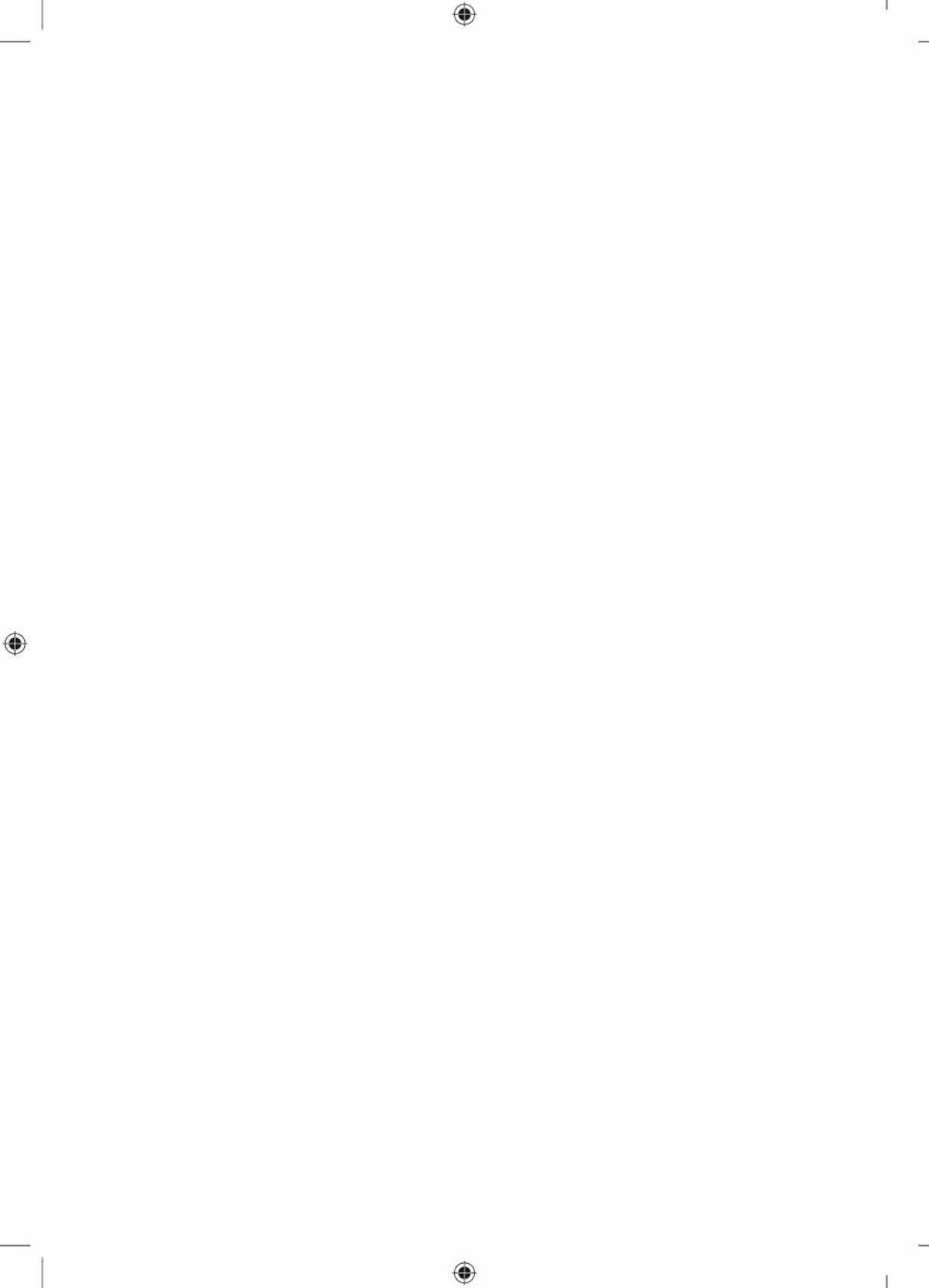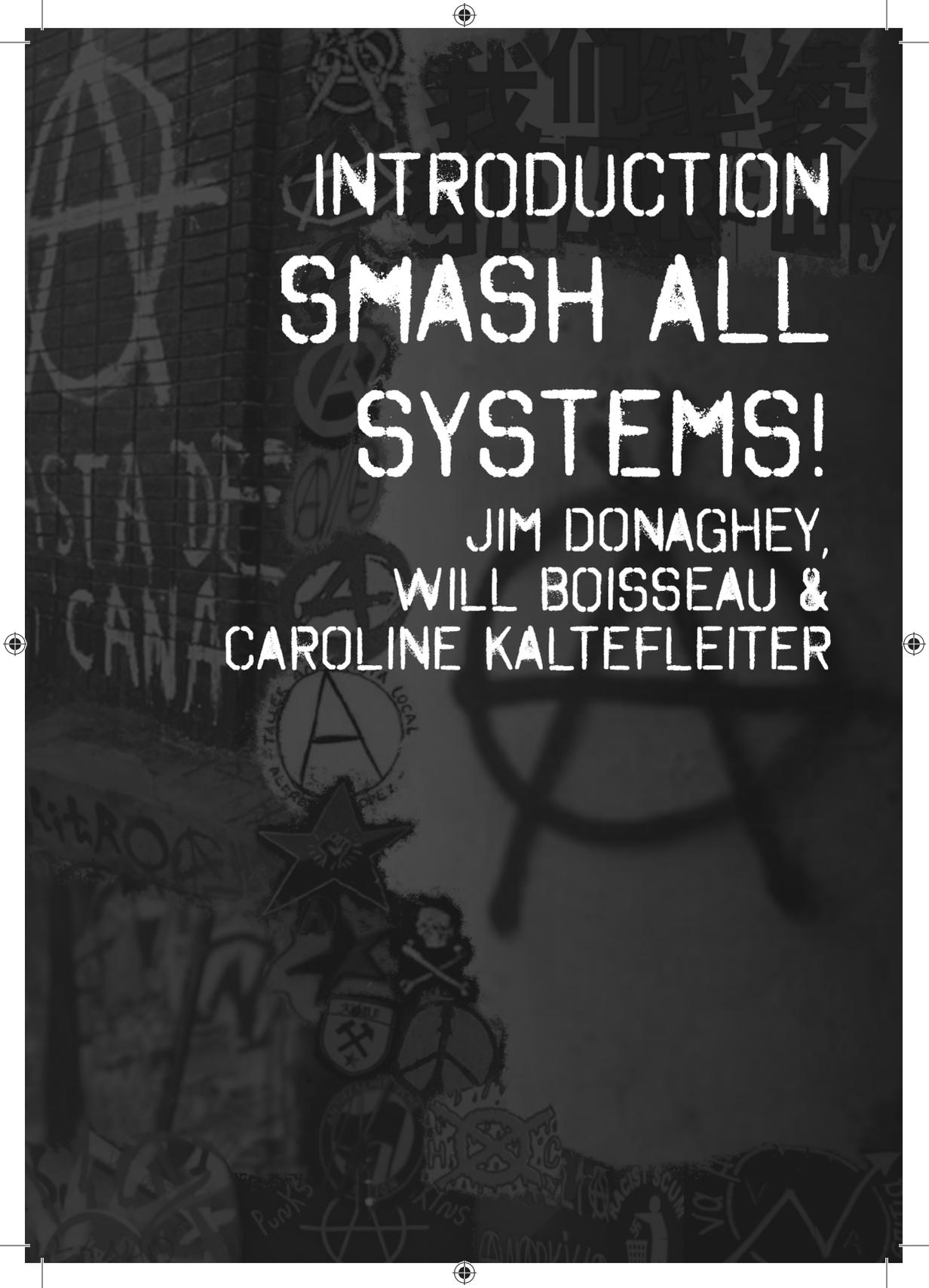
INTRODUCTION
SMASH ALL SYSTEMS!

JIM DONAGHEY, WILL BOISSEAU & CAROLINE KALTEFLEITER

Introduction: Smash All Systems!

Jim Donaghey, Will Boisseau and Caroline Kaltefleiter

The connections between punk and anarchism seem obvious to those of us who are bound up in that interrelationship. Our direct experiences shape our perspectives – for all its complications and shortcomings, we keenly appreciate punk's role as an anarchist education, an anarchist practice, and an anarchist culture. From our viewpoint, it's clearly the case that anarchism has been revitalised by punk, worldwide, (re)introducing anarchist ideas in post-authoritarian contexts in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, while dusty old anarchist movements in Western Europe and North America got a much needed kick up the arse. Ask yourself, what would the anarchist movement be like today without punk's resuscitating influence?

There are plenty of people out there who will come to the opposite conclusion, who are dismissive of punk's association with anarchism, and even see it as damaging. For example, Jesse Cohn bemoans 'punk's cultural hegemony' (that is to say 'dominance') within the anarchist movement (2014, p. 187) complaining that 'scholarly coverage of punk vastly exceeds that given to [Emile] Pouget or the Cinéma du Peuple' (2014, p. 26). He sets out to correct the record by largely ignoring punk altogether in his extensive (and otherwise very good) overview of cultures of resistance, even asserting that punk is 'culturally limited' (2014, p. 387) and aesthetically and musically inferior to his own preferred forms of art, music, poetry and theatre – echoing socially constructed distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture (2014, p. 105, p. 383). Of course, there's no accounting for taste, and no expectation that punk should be the sole expression of anarchist counter culture – a quick overview of contemporary anarchist musics would completely undermine Cohn's suggestion of punk's 'hegemony' anyway (think of all the anarchist folk, hip-hop, black metal, electronica or darkwave, for example. CrimethInc.'s foreword to our volume even describes punk as 'redundant' in the contemporary cultural landscape!). But Cohn's view of punk as a homogenous, sub-standard musical form is an unhelpful (and ill-informed) stereotype. We could immediately counter that view with an example such as the anarchist band Propagandhi, from Canada, who mutated from 1990s poppy skate punk

Figure ii:1 – Artwork from the Faintest Idea 'Cooperation Not Competition' T-shirt c. 2012.
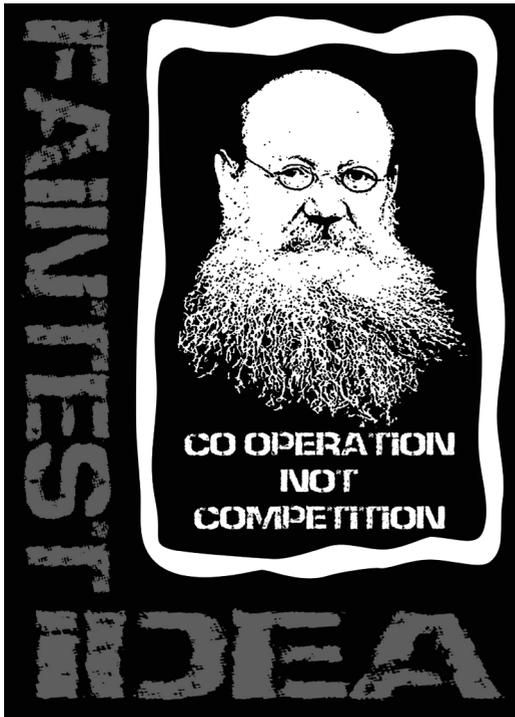
to their contemporary 'progressive thrash-metal' punk, and won the 2006 ECHO songwriting prize (see SOCAN webpage) with 'A Speculative Fiction' (2005). But we don't want to fall into the trap of holding punk music up to an oppressive artistic standard – punk music is often at its best when visceral, raw, and immediate. It is a diverse and continuously evolving genre, perhaps better understood as a multiplicity of intersecting genres. Yes, some punk is musically simplistic, sometimes highly derivative (usually intentionally so), but just because someone doesn't happen to like a particular musical style, that doesn't invalidate its wider social and political significance. Cohn suggests that punk is not a 'proper' expression of anarchist culture but, to put it frankly, none of the poetry, illustrations, music, plays, novels or films celebrated by Cohn can be argued to have been as influential as punk, however artistically virtuous they may be.

This book series has tried to avoid too much musicological framing, precisely because those analyses are so often shaped by the personal tastes and proclivities of the individual writer. We focus instead on the activist and political/cultural overlaps of anarchism and punk. But even here, more than failing to be proper culture, anarchist punk also fails to satisfy Cohn's personal definition of proper anarchism, suggesting that the growth of 'anti-organizational' varieties of anarchism such as 'primitivism and insurrectionary anarchy' is the result of (or the fault of) punk (2014, p. 388). As punks, we don't really care if you don't like our music, but to dismiss punk-associated

Figure ii:2 – Cover of the Bad Religion/Noam Chomsky split 7" (1991).
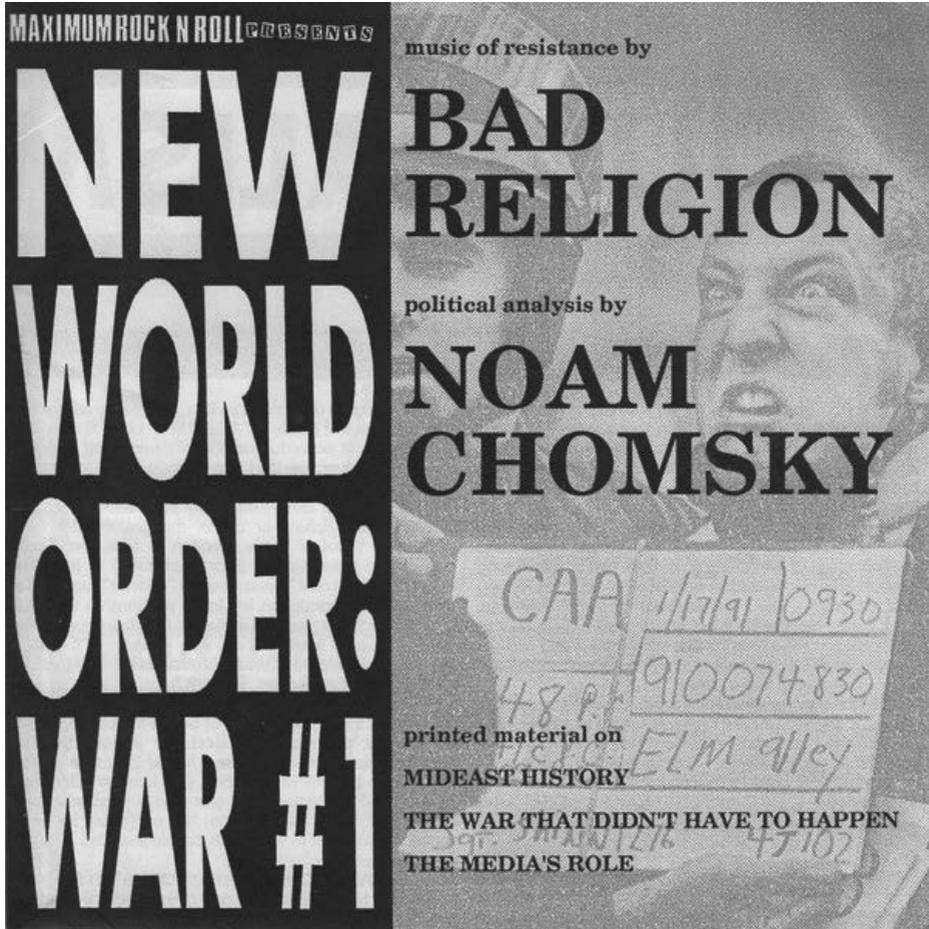
anarchists *en masse* is a much more serious assertion to make – and it occurs fairly frequently. For example, as recently as October 2021, a video essay about punk on the Anarchism Research Group's Facebook page provoked the comment: 'Bombs no[t] punk. Punk weaken[s] anarchism, there are no more names like S Christie, Nestor Machno [*sic*], G Princip, F Kaplan, Luigi Lucheni' (Luska, 2021). Maybe we shouldn't take an internet rant *too* seriously, but the underlying argument is the same – that punk is not 'proper anarchism'. Which isn't to say that the criticism is by any means a consistent one – Cohn,

above, suggests that punk leads to 'violent' forms of insurrectionism, but contrarily, Luska lists assassins and militia leaders to evidence his idea of the 'real' anarchism that punk lacks. Actually, many of these sorts of figures have, in fact, been referenced in the names of numerous punk bands, including Czolgoz (from the US, named after Leon Czolgoz, assassin of US President McKinley), Louis Lingg and the Bombs (from France, named after one of the Haymarket martyrs), and Durutti Column (from the UK, referencing the anarchist militia unit of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, albeit while misspelling 'Durruti'). Other bands have referenced classical anarchist luminaries in their music and imagery, for example, the song 'Mutual Aid' by UK ska-punk band Faintest Idea (2012) along with a T-shirt featuring the face and beard of Peter Kropotkin himself, or the T-shirt produced by US hardcore band Verse featuring Emma Goldman's famously stern expression.

But, despite these punk nods to anarchist 'icons', it can be argued that there *is* actually something distinctive about 'punk anarchism', and an iconoclastic rejection (or ignorance) of prominent historical figures and ideas is surely part of that (Donaghey, 2020). Take Crass for example, they were perhaps the first punk band to seriously invoke anarchism in their music and production processes, and their influence has been hugely significant – but even they didn't know their Bakunin from their Smirnoff or Stolichnaya (Bidge, 2020). This sense of difference is at the root of those disparaging viewpoints, muddily expressed by the likes of Cohn and Luska, and goes right back to the genesis of the punk/anarchist relationship. Matthew Worley highlights *Anarchy* magazine's accusation of Crass and Poison Girls as 'failing to recognise the need for a "collective strategy" or "revolutionary struggle"', and being '"too subjective"' and '"naïve"' (*Anarchy*, 1982a, pp. 4-5; 1982b, p. 11, in Worley, 2017, p. 168). Nick Heath, writing for another longstanding UK-based anarchist periodical, *Black Flag*, complained that the punk-inspired anarchists that emerged in the wake of Crass were 'defined by lifestyle and ultimately a form of elitism that frowned upon the mass of the working class for its failure to act' (Heath, 2006). Those 'lifestylist' complaints are drawn from another old-guard (ex-)anarchist, Murray Bookchin, whose 'unbridgeable chasm' between social anarchism and 'Lifestyle Anarchism' (1995) has been repeatedly repurposed as an attack on punk (even though Bookchin himself clearly had other targets in mind - see Donaghey, 2020).

Thankfully, this anarchist hostility to punk is far from ubiquitous. Upon hearing the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' (1976) for the first time, stalwart

anarcho-syndicalist Albert Meltzer apparently thought it was 'bloody good' (in Nawrocki, 2012, p. 64). Noam Chomsky, perhaps the foremost celebrity anarchist of the last 50 years, even provided a spoken word essay for the B-side of Bad Religion's *New World Order* EP on the MaximumRockNRoll label (1991). But, even here the linkage is less solid than it appears. Reflecting on the Bad Religion EP twenty years later, Chomsky recalled that he 'couldn't make head or tail out of [Bad Religion's] anti-war song' and had to consult a friend's fourteen-year-old daughter to decipher what it was all about (Fine, 2011). He adds a telling comment, however, noting that 'for years, the main thing that people want[ed] signed [at his public talks], all over the world, *was that record*'. Chomsky might not understand punk, but his cheerful involvement with it has gained him plenty of adherents (and that point goes for anarchist political philosophy as a whole).

So, despite its prominence, the punk/anarchist intertwinement has been repeatedly underappreciated, either through taken-for-grantedness, bemused misunderstanding, or outright hostility. Reams upon reams have been written about punk, certainly, but the tensions and nuances that are generated in the rubbing together of punk and anarchism have not often been the focus of sustained analysis. The combination of these two messy, amorphous entities is inevitably complicated, irreducible, the source of endless arguments – and that's exactly as it should be! In the last ten or fifteen years, things have started to change. More and more anarchist activists and punk participants have found themselves with the resources to write and publish things that resonate with their lived experience (as opposed to the detached musings of expert academicians). Comrades associated with the Punk Scholars Network have had a leading hand in this, and the internationalism of their Global Punk book series is an inspiration – even if the corporate/academic publishing avenue means the books are on the pricey side (see: Bestley et al., 2019; Grimes and Dines, 2020; Bestley et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Ulloa et al., 2021; Grimes et al., 2021). Across the fields of cultural history, sociology and anthropology, numerous others have been influential in their serious appreciation of the relationships between anarchism and punk – there are too many to list here, but you'll see their names peppered throughout the references in the chapters that follow (they've also written some of these chapters!). This critical reflection on punk and anarchism hasn't been limited to the shelves of anarchist bookshops, either. Activist groups like Class War in the UK and CrimethInc. in the US have offered powerful self-critiques of their own 'punk anarchist'

politics (see: Class War, 1997; CrimethInc., 2009, and the foreword to this volume). It is this tradition of auto-critique and self-reflection that we tap into with this extensive collection of chapters.

We've also been keen to see the anarchist production politics of punk put into practice in the publication of these books. Active Distribution are ideal companer@s in that regard – they congealed into existence in the Venn diagram overlap of punk and anarchism, starting out as a bootleg tape distro, before shifting into anarchist pamphlets and cheap books. Over the last 30 years or more they have consistently kept prices to an absolute minimum, partly from a punk distaste for profiting from cultural production, and partly from a practical concern to make their literature affordable for punks, and to thereby have a politicising impact.

Even the most culturally stunted (or snooty) anarcho-sceptics out there will have a hard time dismissing the depth, spread and significance of the punk/anarchist relationship in light of the richly informative and critically astute chapters we present here – and that point will be hammered home across three volumes in series. And all those of you nodding your head along with us just now, don't feel too smug. These chapters, and the series as a whole, should challenge your assumptions about the relationships between anarchism and punk. By looking at the experiences of our anarchist punk comrades around the world we get a sense of the diversity and resilience of these cultures of resistance (often generating head-scratching complexities and compromises), but we also get an insight into the core essence that cuts across the experiences of punk anarchists, wherever they are in space and time.

[To quickly clarify a point of terminology, throughout the book series the terms 'anarchist punk', 'anarchist-informed punk' and 'punk anarchism' are used. These overlap, certainly, but are perhaps distinct in their emphases: the political priorities/styles of activist groups with their roots in punk culture might be termed 'punk anarchism'; bands that explicitly espouse anarchist political philosophy and hold to do-it-yourself (DIY)/do-it-together (DIT) production politics might be called 'anarchist punk'; while bands, zines, cultural centres and other initiatives that are clearly punk and radically counter-cultural, but less singularly 'anarchist' in their politics, could be referred to as 'anarchist-informed punk' – the definition of each term is best gleaned from its context. But we do clearly distinguish between these terms and 'anarcho-punk', which we reserve for the sub-genre and musical/visual aesthetics that emerged in the UK in the 1980s in association with Crass and

related bands. If you want to read something that focuses on that specific scene, we highly recommend *The Aesthetic of Our Anger* edited by Mike Dines and Matt Worley (2016).]

Overview of the book

This book offers a snapshot of anarchist punk as a culture of resistance across the globe. The chapters are arranged geographically, and we invite readers to join us as we witness struggles against racism and colonialism in South Africa, resistance to neo-liberalism and state oppression in Latin America, resistance to police brutality and capitalism in Western, Central and Southeast Europe, struggles for equality and against patriarchy in the US, and anarchist resistance against injustice and authoritarianism in Asia.

We start in South Africa, where Kevin Dunn explores 'Punk in South Africa: Race, class, colonialism and capitalism'. As Kevin explains, South African punk has largely operated at the margins of the global punk community despite being home to one of the earliest and longest lasting punk scenes anywhere in the world. Kevin explains that punk in South Africa has been forged by race, class, colonialism and capitalism, but he offers a counterbalance to an overly optimistic claim that punk in South Africa created a multi-racial challenge to the apartheid system. Instead, Kevin provides a more nuanced and problematic picture of a diverse movement that includes significant anarchist-informed punk scenes and the more recent emergence of a Black punk scene in Soweto. Kevin's chapter includes an informative discussion of punk in post-apartheid South Africa and brings readers up to date with the impact of Covid-19 on the punk scene.

We then take a geographical and ideological journey to Latin America for Rodolfo Montes de Oca's chapter 'Kubazuela: Remembering a Caribbean anarchist punk connection between Cuba and Venezuela'. Rodolfo explains that Cuba and Venezuela share a long history of cultural and political connections, including a relationship between the historical anarchist movements in the two countries. Rodolfo explores the anarchist punk connection between these places, and presents a comprehensive picture of the groups, initiatives and publications that make up these scenes. It may be eye opening for punks in Western countries, used to resisting the capitalist state, to see our comrades in Cuba and Venezuela facing similar oppression from

socialist governments. Rodolfo strikes an optimistic tone, believing that sooner rather than later anarchists will overthrow the shackles of state socialism whilst resisting the onslaught of US imperialism.

We move down the South American continent to Brazil, with Antônio Carlos de Oliveira's chapter 'Punk Archive: collectionism, memories and resistance'. Antônio's chapter explores the process of organising an archive of documents on the punk movement. In doing so Antônio explores the connections between the DIY ethos of punk and anarchist practices, as well as discussing the relationship between younger anarchist punks and older generations of anarchists in São Paulo. The collaboration between wisdom and youth helped create an archive that celebrates the anarchist punk culture of resistance in Brazil. Antônio started his punk materials collection in 1980 and since then his collection has helped preserve the memory of the globally significant Brazilian punk scene and helped Antônio forge numerous creative and political collaborations. The chapter reminds us of the importance of commemorating our past and fighting for our future. In the words of indigenous Brazilian Sassa Tupinambá: 'Memory is the mother of identity and the grandmother of resistance'.

Staying in Brazil, João Bittencourt and Tiago Viera present their chapter 'The meanings of anarchism in Brazilian punk: A socio-historical approach'. João and Tiago's chapter offers unique reflections on the relationship between anarchism and punk identity in Brazil since the late 1970s. João and Tiago reveal the different meanings of anarchism to participants within the Brazilian punk scene, both past and present, and show how these experiences developed into a culture of daily resistance. In order to explore this culture of resistance, João and Tiago look at the historical emergence of anarchist ideas within the São Paulo punk scene, and then they consider contemporary practices of anarchist punk collectives in the Northeast of Brazil. The chapter reveals the nuances of punk identity in Brazil and the development of anarchist punk which has sustained a culture of resistance over many decades.

Mariana Gabriela Calandra guides us through the Southern Cone in her chapter 'Anarchist punk and post-left anarchism in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, 1983-1993'. Mariana argues that anarchist punk in the post-dictatorship years in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay was a post-left anarchism. Mariana explains that anarchist punks brought together insurgent, individualistic elements who might have been wary of joining structured anarchist organisations. This did not prevent the anarchist punks from

organising artists' cooperatives, circuits of independent publications, protests, solidarity actions and building internationalist alliances with punks from other countries. Between 1983 and 1993 anarchist punk brought a whole new generation of activists into anarchism, and these punks built a culture of resistance based on direct action and DIY ethics. Anarchist punks in these three countries have unique characteristics and priorities, and all have had to resist a variety of oppressing forces including the military, the police and intelligence forces.

Maxwell Wood's chapter focuses on 'The (anti-)neoliberalism of Chilean punk anarchism'. Maxwell's primary argument is that punk is a globalised culture of neoliberalism. Maxwell is not saying that punk supports neoliberalism or is complicit in its continuing global supremacy, but that global punk would not exist without neoliberalism. Maxwell argues that some of punk's anarchist politics are simultaneously a symptom and a critique of neoliberalism. For some classical anarchists, including those within the anarcho-syndicalist tradition in Chile, punk is an apolitical reflection of neoliberalism's dominance, for others punk is the reconfiguration of anarchy based on a culture of resistance that can dynamically respond to the new context of neoliberalism. Maxwell believes that punk is a globalised culture of resistance enabled by the very neoliberalism that it protests. Rather than understanding DIY punk in terms of anti-globalisation, Maxwell argues that we can understand punk as an *alternative* anarchist globalisation.

Bridging Chile and the Basque Country, Jim Donaghey interviews Asel Luzarraga in '"I'm here, and don't forget it": Punk, anarchism, repression, and resistance in the Basque Country and Chile'. Asel is a celebrated author of fiction in the Basque language and in Castilian Spanish, as well as being a punk musician and anarchist activist. While living in Chile in December 2009, Asel was arrested and charged on absurd grounds with carrying out terrorist bombings. Asel was detained for 245 days, 42 of those in prison (the remainder under house arrest), before being deported and put on the Interpol list of convicted terrorists. He has been campaigning against that conviction ever since. Asel's story is one of heroic individual resistance against the state, but the interview also discusses the wider repression that has been waged by the Chilean authorities against anarchists, and others, not least in the pre-pandemic protest movements that swept the country in late 2019 and into 2020. The interview does not just focus on anarchism in Chile, but also

considers anarchist culture in the Basque Country, and it is to Europe that we turn in the following five chapters.

In the next chapter Ondřej Daniel discusses 'State liberation or state abolition? Czech punk between anti-Communism and anarchism'. Ondřej considers the role of anarchism and anti-Communism in the Czech punk scene during the period 1986-1998, an era marked by perestroika, the dismantling of state socialism and the early postsocialist transformation. In the chapter Ondřej aims to look deeper than the traditional interest in the short period between 1989 and 1990, and we see the culture of resistance developed by anarchist punks operating in different ideological situations – state socialism and postsocialism. Ondřej also aims to explore the 'East versus West split'. Ondřej believes that the isolation of Czechoslovakia from cultural phenomena coming from the West was not absolute, and the experience and culture of punks living in an authoritarian socialist police state can be compared to punks living in other political contexts, including capitalist police states of the US and Western Europe. What punks in these different contexts share is the desire to smash the system, be it authoritarian communist or capitalist.

We turn to the Balkans in Southeast Europe where Marko Vojnić is interviewed by the venerable Len Tilbürger in 'WAR DANCE (fuck war, let's dance): Anarchism, punk, and DIY music in Croatia since the 1990s'. Marko, who runs the Croatia-based anarchist DIY label Do It With Others Records, has been involved with the anarchist-informed punk, rave, and dub scenes there for almost 30 years, through the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and, post-war, onwards into the developing DIY scenes of the twenty-first century. In the course of the interview Marko discusses punk's opposition to ethno-nationalists and contemporary fascisms, and also explores DIY culture's continued resistance against the 'globalization of taste'. The interview is imagined as a subjective review of Marko's formative years, his revelations of subcultures, and his discovery of punk and anarchist ideas, which all took place during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

We move southwards to Greece for the next two chapters. First, Christos Marneros discusses 'ΜΓΔ: The figure of the cop in the anarchic lyrics of Greek punk', asking whether punk music and (sub)culture, and in particular the Greek punk scene, is anarchistic. Christos begins by discussing the origins of the Greek punk scene and introduces the influences and reasons behind punk's emergence and its subsequent stance against the police. Christos goes

on to discuss the stance of anarchist theorists against the state's monopoly of violence, law's role in establishing this monopoly and the police's role in preserving this status quo. The core of the chapter is an analysis of anti-police lyrics in Greek punk. Finally, Christos comments on the intersection points between anarchist thought and the lyrics of Greek punk, and the latter's potential to cultivate an anarchic ethos and culture of resistance against police oppression.

The second chapter focusing on anarchist punk in Greece comes from Yannis N Kolovos and is titled: '"We spread the black flag around us": The punk scene and the anarchist movement in Athens (late 1970s-2010)'. Yannis explores the interaction between the punk scene in Athens and the anarchist (or 'anti-authoritarian' or 'antagonistic') movement in Greece. Yannis discusses the creation of common autonomous zones, police harassment as a common experience, the creation of publications, and the (self-)financing of the anarchist movement. Ultimately, he argues, the anarchist punks in Athens formed a culture of resistance that included a new political discourse and way of life.

We then jump to the western fringe of Europe, to the UK, where Jay Kerr reflects on 'The anarchist ethics of punk: The Punk Ethics campaign group in the UK'. Jay believes that if there is a set of ethics that underpins punk, then it is an anarchist ethics. The chapter focuses on a punk collective in London, which Jay is involved in, called Punk Ethics. Punk Ethics are a loose knit group of friends who take part in a number of different actions and campaigns within the local and global punk scene. Although Punk Ethics do not self-identify explicitly as anarchists, Jay tells us that each of their campaigns and projects do resonate with aspects of anarchist theory and can be traced to similar events, campaigns and projects that have appeared throughout the history of the anarchist movement. Jay explores these themes whilst considering four key campaigns that Punk Ethics have engaged with: the BrewDog campaign (which resisted corporate appropriation of punk); the Trespass campaign (which used direct action as a means of propaganda); the Punks Against Sweatshops campaign (in which workers organised to overcome exploitation); and ongoing campaigns for international punk solidarity.

Moving back across the Atlantic Ocean, Casey Robertson's chapter discusses 'Trans-feminist punk in the United States: Collective action, activism, and a libidinal economy of noise'. Casey explores the relationship between transgender identities, political activism, and sonic practice. Casey theorises

noise to explore the binarisms of sound and gender in the American punk scene, discussing the sonic practices of trans-feminist artists such as GLOSS (Girls Living Outside Society's Shit) and the HIRS Collective and interrogating their capacities to initiate acts of intentional antagonism and to construct new spaces for the invisible and overlooked. In the chapter Casey reveals the trans-feminist artists' collective actions of political resistance towards the modern neoliberal state. Casey argues that trans-feminist artists pit themselves against commodification within punk and also illuminate the related homonormative currents which have exerted considerable effort to flatten notions of diversity and difference within contemporary LGBTQ2S communities. Through this, Casey argues, we can bear witness to a new form of sonic anarchism.

We move across the Pacific Ocean now, to Southeast Asia, where M Rizky Sasono examines 'Anarchism and democracy in Indonesia: An underground perspective'. Rizky scrutinises musical narratives that emphasise the underground as a political space that strives for democracy, particularly the processes of democratisation during the period of political reform known as 'Reformasi' in Indonesia, and the notion of democracy in the domain of DIY music production in twenty-first-century Indonesia. Through this discussion, Rizky explores the ways in which anarchism is manifested in the sphere of the underground and considers what it means to be democratic. Rizky begins by tracing underground activism against President Suharto's New Order regime in the period leading up to Reformasi and moves on to consider post-anarchism in the field of cultural production by examining a manifestation of 'audio anarchy' against the backdrop of early-twenty-first-century neoliberal Indonesia. Rizky argues that DIY production can be understood as a response to the dominance of the capitalist music industry and its power over musicians and popular tastes. In this way, DIY helps anarchist punks maintain a culture of resistance.

Northwards along the coast of East Asia, James D Letson's chapter 'AS A PUNK DANGLING FROM THE VERTICAL SOCIETY: Punk in northern Japan as a "culture of transgression"' examines the documentary history of punk and hardcore in Japan in order to highlight the specific social, cultural, and political trajectories that have shaped a punk culture of resistance which lacks the more overt political associations seen elsewhere. James draws on his ongoing participant observation, begun in 2018, within the punk and hardcore community in Sapporo, to provide an ethnographic account of the

contemporary situation on the ground. In doing so, James explores the current discursive construction of a punk culture in northern Japan as a space of heterotopia and transgression, rather than one of anarchist-inspired utopian ideology and oppositional resistance. James concludes by suggesting that however much punks may deliberately attempt to remove or exclude themselves from the so-called mainstream, it is practically impossible to ever be fully disentangled from the society (or societies) in which one lives, works, and plays.

Staying in East Asia, the final chapter in this collection focuses on anarchist punk in China, where we see once again that anarchist punks build cultures of resistance and aim to smash the system that they are confronted with. Nathanel Amar's chapter, '"Anarchy in the PRC": Anarchist practices and references in the Chinese punk movement' is based on Nathanel's involvement in the punk scene in China. He aims to show how Chinese punks, since the creation of the punk movement, have integrated several typical anarchist themes into their cultural production, and the chapter examines the extent to which anarchist ideas of autonomy and DIY have been implemented in the Chinese punk scene. The chapter begins with an analysis of how anarchist themes and discourses have been used in the texts and visual productions of the Chinese punks since the mid 1990s, and moves on to consider DIY practices and their political meaning in contemporary China. Nathanel then discusses two examples of Chinese punk counter-institutions in order to highlight how punk's use of space can be seen as radical political practice and as providing tools for resistance.

As we can see throughout these diverse and internationalist chapters, the common theme is that anarchist punks have consistently sought to SMASH THE SYSTEM, whether that system is capitalism, state socialism, authoritarian communism, the police state, patriarchy, racism, ethno-nationalism, fascism, homophobia, colonialism, neo-liberalism, or the military industrial complex. In doing so anarchist punks have built thriving and diverse cultures of resistance.

Overview of the series

This is the first volume of the Anarchism and Punk Book Project. The project began life after the 'Punk in Crisis' panels at the 2020 Anarchism Studies Network conference, when the idea for a publication emerged. The editors sent out a call for chapters, expecting to receive a handful of replies to make up a slim volume – in fact, the response to that call was overwhelming. Abstracts and chapter proposals came in from 98 people (scholars, activists and scene members) writing on diverse topics, reassuring us that our ideas resonated incredibly widely with comrades all over the world, and that there was an energy and urgency to address this issue. It soon became clear that this was going to be a multi-volume work rather than the one book we had initially planned. Comrades also responded to our call by offering to help in various ways - people translated our call for contributions into multiple languages (which meant that we were able to create a truly international series), others helped by designing cover art, doing substantial translation of chapters, interviewing us on their podcasts and radio shows, even releasing a song to raise funds, with many more comrades chipping in to help cover the costs of the project via a CrowdFunding campaign.

Smash the System!: Punk Anarchism as a Culture of Resistance is the first volume of the initial three volume set. We have arranged the other volumes thematically – full details and publication dates are still in the works at the time that this book goes to print, but we can sketch an idea of those later books already. The second volume of the collection will be *DIY or Die!: Anarchism, Punk, and the Do-It-Together Ethic in Cultural Production and Autonomous Spaces*. Once again the book will take an internationalist approach and consider a variety of themes associated with anarchist punk, emphasising DIY production and punk spaces. We have chapters on squatting and queer punk; the anarchist practice of being in a punk band; anarchist punk centres, squatted social centres and autonomous spaces; punk radio shows, fanzines and anarchist book fairs. Other themes include DIY spaces as utopias, skateboarding and skate punk, hip hop's 'punk moment', cyberpunk, sport, and performance art.

The third volume of the project will focus on *Anarchism and Punk in Action: Iteration, Prefiguration, and Politicisation*. This volume will consider punk as an example of 'anarchy in action', to borrow Colin Ward's famous book title (1973). These discussions of anarchist punk again feature a strong

internationalist emphasis, including various scenes around the world, such as Greece, the United States, Indonesia, Portugal, the Netherlands, Argentina, the United Kingdom and China. Chapters consider anarchist punk and mutual aid in times of crisis: the crises of capitalism, of environmental collapse, and of coronavirus. Other examples of punk as anarchism in action include (anti-)religiosity, anti-fascist activism, animal liberation, and gender resistance strategies. The volume includes some personal reflections of what anarchism and punk means to the authors, and it is sure to be an inspiring and informative collection.

We hope that these three books prompt debate, reflection and enjoyment from anarchist punks across the globe. People in anarchist punk scenes around the world will have other insights that they wish to share – this is a collaborative and evolving project, and the editors are very open to the possibility of further volumes if anarchist punks (or interested others) want to respond to the chapters and themes raised in this series. We are also hoping that the project will lead to conferences, book tours, talks, gigs/shows/concerts and other activist projects. The editors welcome your involvement and would love to hear from readers.

Contact us at anarchismandpunk@riseup.net

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CHAPTER ONE
PUNK IN SOUTH AFRICA:
RACE, CLASS COLONIALISM & CAPITALISM
KEVIN C DUNN

Chapter One: Punk in South Africa: Race, class, colonialism and capitalism

Kevin C Dunn

South Africa can claim to be home to one of the earliest punk scenes outside of Britain or America. Yet, for most of its history, South African punk has largely operated at the margins of the global community. Before the emergence of punk scenes in Asia, Latin America or even Eastern Europe, punks in South Africa had formed bands, printed zines, and established active scenes. But their location at the bottom of the African continent, where few Western punk bands ventured on tour, contributed to a certain sense of isolation and autonomy. It is fair to say most Westerners were ignorant of the rich history of punk in South Africa, and it has garnered relatively little scholarly attention. At least that was the case before the release of the documentary *Punk in Africa* (Jones and Maas, 2011), which charts the rise of punk in the port city of Durban to its evolution across the country and into neighboring countries such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Despite its numerous virtues, the documentary is problematic in several aspects, particularly the lack of evidence to support the claim that punk created a multi-racial challenge to the apartheid system, especially as the first non-white punk does not appear until late in the film. The ongoing story of punk in South Africa is a little more nuanced and problematic than the one presented in the documentary.

Every country's punk scene has its own unique context and character. This is undoubtedly true for South Africa, where punk has been forged by race, class, colonialism and capitalism. Though by no means definitive, this contribution offers a slight corrective to the *Punk in Africa* narrative, while also filling in many of the gaps, including a more sustained discussion of punk in post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter will also pay attention to the small, but significant anarchist-informed punk scenes that existed within the larger South African punk

community. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an overview of contemporary punk, noting the failure of the African National Congress (ANC) to keep its promise for radical change, the continuing impact of Covid-19, and the emergence of a Black punk scene in Soweto.

The first wave, 1977-1994: Punk arrives in apartheid South Africa

There were numerous socio-economic forces that influenced the development of early punk in South Africa. Obviously, the most significant was the apartheid system which structured most aspects of everyday life throughout the country. Apartheid was the institutionalized system of racial segregation and white supremacy that was established in 1948 when the Afrikaner (white South Africans predominantly of Dutch descent) National Party gained power. The system created a legal structure of social stratification and economic exploitation aimed at entrenching the privileged position of the country's white minority. The apartheid system entailed armed repression, geographical displacement and separation, gross social and economic inequity, the militarization of South African society, and the promotion of conservative Christian cultural values.

For most Black South Africans, particularly the youth, everyday life in the late 1970s was characterized by harsh poverty and institutionalized racism overseen by an omnipotent police state. Resistance to the apartheid regime was led by the outlawed ANC with the struggle becoming increasingly militant by the 1970s and 1980s, which induced greater state repression. In June 1976, as the Sex Pistols were beginning to play shows outside of London, Black students in the Soweto township outside of Johannesburg were protesting the forced imposition of instruction in the Afrikaans language. On the 16th of June, police opened fire on a large group of protesting students, killing 200-700 students, sparking further outrage and protests in what is now referred to as the Soweto Uprising (and commemorated as the public holiday, Youth Day).

While most white South African youths – of both English and Afrikaans descent – undoubtedly enjoyed enormous privilege relative to Black youths, there were a number of socio-economic factors unique to them that influenced the development of punk in South Africa. First, the economy of South Africa entered an era of decline in the 1970s. While the formal economy had enjoyed significant growth during the previous decade, declining gold output and the global oil crisis led to a significant decline which limited economic opportunities for many white South African youths (Jones and Inggs, 1999). At the same time, white social life continued to be dominated by the stifling conservativism of the various Christian denominations, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, regarded as the 'official religion' of the ruling National Party. And white South African youths were conscripted into the South African army.

Facing what it regarded as an onslaught of Communism from newly independent neighboring African nations, the South African government portrayed itself as a last bastion of freedom and white supremacy on the continent. In addition to the South African army's role in maintaining the domestic apartheid system by employing military force (alongside the South African police), the army was used to maintain quasi-colonial control over other neighboring South West Africa (today Namibia) in addition to a number of foreign interventions against neighboring states. Compulsory military service was introduced in 1967 with the advent of the so-called South African Border War, which originally pitted the South African Defense Forces (SADF) against the South West Africans People's Organization (SWAPO). Originally service was for nine months, but by the mid 1970s that was extended to two years. This was brought on by South Africa's 1975 invasion of neighboring Angola and the decision in 1976 to deploy SADF forces into the townships (Grundlingh, 2004, p. 489). Thus, white South African youths both endured and participated in the further militarization of their society. Conscription and complicity in apartheid's violence was a source of resentment and discontent amongst many white South African youths who would find their voice via punk.
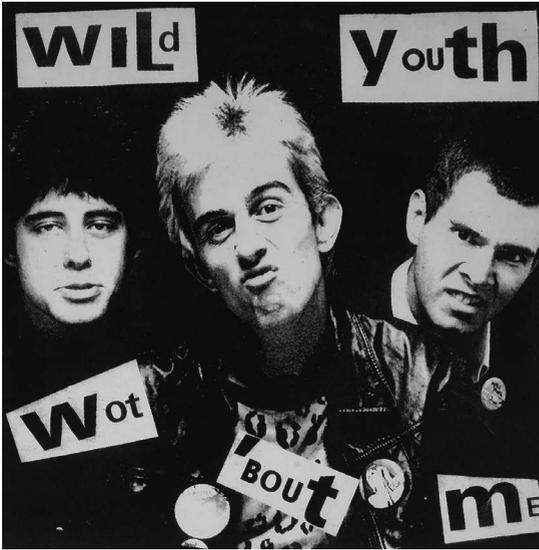
Arguably, there were a few musical predecessors for punk in South Africa. For example, in the early 1970s the Johannesburg rock band Suck displayed confrontational, political and anti-status quo elements that certainly give it proto-punk credibility. But it is generally regarded that the first 'true' South African punk band was Wild Youth (not to be confused with the Irish indie-pop band of the same name), which formed in Durban in 1978. Fronted by Michael Flek, the band took their name from the 1977 Generation X song and was both inspired by, and was a reaction to, the UK punk scene. This dichotomy is captured in their song 'Wot 'Bout Me' (1979), which apes British punk bands such as Subway Sect and The Clash, but in which they claim not to want to hear about Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious and Joe Strummer, but want to 'talk about me'. In fact, Wild Youth evolved from the band Fourth Reich, which Flek formed after visiting the UK in 1977 and witnessing The Clash and Sham 69 in concert. Yet, it would be a mistake to characterize Wild Youth and other bands in the emerging Durban punk scene in terms of mimicry. Like many early punk bands elsewhere, the influence of British (and, to a lesser extent, American) bands was apparent, but blended with styles and lyrical content that drew from the uniquely local context. Speaking to a local newspaper in 1978, Flek asserted:

> Obviously we can't identify with the dole queue. We'd be hypocrites if we did identify with them. Because we aren't poor. But we can identify with boredom and the sort of things that get

on your nerves that the punks sing about – police getting you down and this sort of thing. (In de Jongh, 2013, p. 64)

Reminiscing much later about band's formation and the scene it engendered, Flek argues that they were responding to their 'boring, mundane existence' that permeated Durban and South Africa at the time: 'If you were interested in anything artistic, it [South Africa] was a wasteland of nothingness. We were giving people what they didn't have otherwise' (in Jones and Maas, 2011).

Durban soon developed a viable punk scene in the late 1970s, grounded in such bands as Wild Youth, Gay Marines, Contaminators, and Leopard, an all-women punk band.

Why punk first developed in Durban likely has much to do with historical circumstances, such as Flek travelling to the UK in 1977, attending punk gigs, and forming his own band upon return. Others have noted that as South Africa's largest port, the city was more culturally cosmopolitan than most other South African cities. Moreover, the liberal tradition of the University of Natal has also been cited as a contributing factor in the development of a punk scene. As Santi de Jongh has observed, '[t]hese were university students from the white, urban, middle-class of the ruling minority, not disenfranchised or marginalized youths' (2013, p. 64). It is worth noting that while some of the more prominent bands came from middle class backgrounds, a large proportion of the punk scene was, and remains, from the working class.

Small punk scenes developed in other cities around South Africa in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s. The Safari Suits emerged in Cape Town, while Corporal Punishment was formed in Springs, to the east of Johannesburg. These two bands, along with Wild Youth and Leopard (and solo acts Bill Flynn and Roger Lucey), were featured on the influential compilation album *Six of the Best*, released by WEA Records in 1979. In Durban, further bands included Dead Babies, The Gents, Anti-Heroes, and Le Metro Trois. These scenes were not entirely autonomous – as the bands toured across the country they created

networks between the emerging scenes. As Steve Moni of Safari Suits recalls:

> The way we sort of created this strange culture that we developed individually in different parts of the country – we weren't connected by internet or by anything – it was more or less some sort of bush telegraph where we heard that someone was doing something over there and we'd meet up at these gigs from time to time. (In Jones and Maas, 2011)

Punk offered a striking critique of South African society that was not in existence beforehand. As Michael Flek recalls:

> I think what punk did do in South Africa, it was the first step in changing the way young people thought, and it made them question every aspect of life and society and art. They questioned things like politics. They questioned religion. They questioned what they should wear, what they should think. (In Jones and Maas, 2011)

Steve Moni claimed, '[i]t made people think. People weren't used to thinking. People were used to being told what to think and waiting for permission' (in Jones and Maas, 2011). Given tight media censorship within the repressive apartheid state, punk represented an overt challenge and critique of the status quo.

But it would be a mistake to overstate its revolutionary nature. By and large, the early punk scenes that emerged were exclusively white. And while Afrikaners were definitely involved in the scenes, the language of punk – in both songs and zines – was pronouncedly English. Most punk venues were restricted to whites only, given existing apartheid laws. That said, several punk bands such as Wild Youth performed at non-white venues and public spaces in a direct challenge to state-sanctioned racial segregation.

Those familiar with the anarcho-punk scenes emerging at this time in the UK and Europe would be hard pressed to identify anything equally recognizable in the South African context. Of course, there were numerous symbolic utilizations of the circle-A logo and rhetorical

deployment of anarchy in songs and flyers. But these were often employed for shock effect and, if anything, indicated a vague desire to replace the white supremacist apartheid regime with a more equitable social order. There were exceptions, such as Durban's Power Age which tended to articulate explicit anarchist sensibilities. They were also more explicitly DIY in their ethos, self-financing their own releases and producing their own zine. Yet even their 1985 EP *Resist to Survive/Stop Apartheid* featured naïve forgive-and-forget liberal sentiments in the lyrics such as 'Stop this racial hatred, let's forget the past, unite for the future'. To be fair, white South African punks encountered a significant amount of police harassment and intimidation. At their first gig, a member of Power Age was arrested because the police did not like his pink

Figure 1:2 – Cover of Power Age's *Backlash* EP (1987).

mohawk. Police raiding and smashing up gigs was not uncommon, as was regular police surveillance.

By the late 1980s, it was clear that shifts were occurring in South African society. In 1985, the South African government declared a State of Emergency while simultaneously introducing weak reforms in what were, in hindsight, desperate attempts to retain power as the apartheid system entered its dying decade. International pressure and isolation increased, as domestic protests and resistance gained strength, particularly after the 1983 forming of the United Democratic Front (UDF), an umbrella organization of civil society organizations opposed to apartheid.

While the political landscape was in flux, so too was the punk scene in South Africa. In fact, there are two ways to read the development of South African punk in the late 1980s. One reading suggests that existing punk scenes stagnated and/or faded into obscurity, as did similar scenes in Europe and North America. Participants got older, got jobs, started families and drifted away from the scenes. Other musical genres emerged and media attention shifted away. In the UK, a vibrant anarcho-punk scene emerged in the early 1980s (Glasper, 2006) and American punk, shaped by emerging hardcore scenes, fragmented and went underground (Hurchalla, 2005). But in South Africa, similar evolutionary changes failed to take root. Rather, an argument can be made that South African punk stagnated by the late 1980s with only a few diehard bands plugging along. Perhaps the two most significant bands during this time were Power Age and Screaming Foetus, both out of Durban and driven by long-time members of the punk scene in that city. Sonically, these bands combined elements of UK77 sounds with aspects of crust and hardcore. But it was a common complaint at the time to bemoan the 'death' of South African punk and the marginalization of the few existing 'true' punk scenes.

Yet, there is another narrative of South African punk that differs greatly from the stagnation story. This is one that focuses on the ways in which a new, more inclusive and innovative scene emerged. Inclusive in terms of both race and gender, and innovative in terms of incorporating a wide range of musical influences, particularly from the townships. For example, National Wake, the country's first multi-racial punk band was

formed in Johannesburg by Ivan Kadey and the brothers Gary and Punka Khoza, who were joined by Steve Moni, formerly of the Safari Suits. While clearly informed by punk, National Wake incorporated elements of reggae, funk, ska and African rhythms, making them markedly different sonically from the earlier first-wave punk bands. Other bands were also emerging that explicitly combined punk with musical styles more prominent in the townships, such as the Kalahari Surfers and The Genuines. The Kalahari Surfers was comprised of Warrick Sony, who brought in other musicians whenever he needed. Sony had been turned onto punk in the 1970s when his father returned from a trip to the UK with tapes from The Clash and the Sex Pistols. As the Kalahari Surfers, Sony infused punk with African rhythms, funk and ska, along with explicit political commentary that attracted anger from the authorities. Their 1989 *Bigger Than Jesus* LP was banned until it was re-named *Beachbomb*. The Genuines, from Cape Town, also played a fusion of punk, jazz, funk and ska. Both bands were on South Africa's Shifty Records Label that Sony helped to run. Though not exclusively a punk label, Shifty was an explicitly anti-apartheid independent label.

An argument can be made that these developments in the 1980s reflected an evolution in which South African punk came into its own. Most notably, bands and audiences became multi-racial. Not surprisingly, the inclusion of non-whites had an impact both on the musical style and lyrical content of South African punk. Bands moved beyond emulating British bands such as The Clash and Sex Pistols to include musical styles popular in the townships, from reggae and ska to funk and jazz. Of course, many of these musical elements had been present in the earliest UK punk scenes, but the inclusion of African rhythms and lyrics explicitly reflecting their own reality meant that a uniquely South African sound and style emerged. As Warrick Sony recalls, '[t]he most important thing about punk was writing and singing songs about your own reality' (in Jones and Maas, 2011). The political implications of South African punk were notable given it offered participants tools to challenge the racist status quo, both in terms of its lyrical content and social practices. As Ivan Kadey of the National Wake recalls, '[i]t wasn't a simple thing to do. It was life during war time. You were crossing borders and boundaries' (in Jones and Maas,

2011). Yet, it would be quite a stretch to argue that the South African punk scenes represented an organized challenge to the state in the ways it arguably did in places elsewhere.

The second wave, post-1994: Punk in the Rainbow Nation

In 1989, PW Botha suffered a stroke and was forced to resign as Prime Minister – a position he had held for over two decades, while leading the National Party. During the 1980s, he initiated a number of tepid reforms to the apartheid system aimed at preserving the privileged position of the white minority. These reforms had the effect of further inflaming domestic political violence and international pressure, while also fueling resistance amongst the Afrikaner community, whom Botha infamously warned needed to 'adapt or die'. By the end of the decade, South Africa had one of the weakest economies in the world, a dramatic reversal from its position a few decades earlier.

Botha was replaced by the conservative FW de Klerk who surprised many observers by quickly accelerating the dismantling of the apartheid system. On the 11th of February 1990, jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela was released from prison. The following month, South West Africa became the independent country of Namibia. The following year, much of the apartheid legislation was repealed. In 1992, after facing a backlash by right-wing opposition, de Klerk announced a whites-only referendum on whether negotiations between the government and the ANC should continue. A substantial majority backed the negotiations, which eventually resulted in the holding of a general election with universal suffrage on the 27th of April 1994. The ANC won the majority of votes and on the 10th of May, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the new President of South Africa under the newly adopted multi-colored flag of what Mandela referred to as the new 'rainbow nation'.

It is worth noting that 1994 also marked a significant development for punk. While 1991 is sometimes referred to as the 'year punk broke' (Markey, 1992) because of the prior success of Sonic Youth's *Goo*

(1990) and Nirvana's *Nevermind* (1991), it can be argued that 1994 was more significant in raising punk's international status and global reach. Consider that during that year Green Day released *Dookie*, Bad Religion released *Stranger Than Fiction*, The Offspring released *Smash*, NOFX released *Punk in Drublic*, and Rancid released *Let's Go*. The convergence of the end of the Cold War, the opening of new global markets (including South Africa), the advent of easily portable CDs, and the increased reach of the globalized/globalizing corporate media industry, meant that these releases were able to circulate widely, spawning the development of new punk scenes across the globe (Dunn, 2016).

From the mid-to-late 1990s, a number of new punk scenes emerged in South Africa. Whereas the first wave of South African punk bands had been directly influenced by UK punk bands, this second wave took their cues from American pop-punk bands, particularly those associated with Epitaph Records. Which is not to imply either wave was derivative. Just as the earlier South African bands interpreted their influences through their own local contexts and struggles, so too did the second wave. Granted, some bands' emulation of the American pop-punk sound and pose was a little odd, such as when Johannesburg's Tweak sang about their 'House Party' (2003) being raided by the FBI after the neighbors called 911 (Americanisms that have no relevance in the South African context).

Such exceptions aside, most of these new bands incorporated Epitaph-inspired pop-punk music with African rhythms and township-infused ska flavorings, developing what might be considered a distinct South African sound. The result was perhaps best personified by bands such as Fuzigish and Hog Hoggidy Hog. Hog Hoggidy Hog formed in 1995 in Cape Town, with Fuzigish forming in Johannesburg a few years later. Both were instrumental in creating ska-punk scenes in their representative communities and influencing the development of other scenes across the country. George Bacon, vocalist for Hog Hoggidy Hog, recalls:

In the early '90s, it was still kind of the old South Africa. You couldn't just go to the record store and buy a punk CD. It was all completely underground. People would make zines and read

about this stuff and the scene was growing. In those days, there would be like a pop-punk band, a Crass-punk band, and a ska band and they'd play in the same venue. It was really cool because everyone came to support it. It was such a small scene. (In Jones and Maas, 2011)

By the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, the scene had grown, largely driven by the success of Fuzigish and Hog Hoggidy Hog, as well as Leek, ATBU, New World Inside, My Latest Ex, Sibling Rivalry, and The Rudimentals.

The context for South African punk had changed dramatically after 1994. While the first wave was understandably shaped by the apartheid system, punk took on a different tenor in the early years of democracy. The promise of the democratic Rainbow Nation had not yet lost its luster, and explicit political messaging largely took the backseat to the celebratory sounds of ska/pop-punk. In Durban, the punk scene continued to be shaped by existing surfing and skateboarding cultures, further elevating the influence of bands associated with Epitaph and Fat Wreck Chords record labels. Arguably, this second wave of punk had a farther reach across the country than did the first wave, in part because of changing technologies, fewer media restrictions, and the commercial mainstreaming of pop-punk. While Fuzigish and Hog Hoggidy Hog inspired the popularity of ska-infused pop-punk, punk scenes were also developing in parts of South Africa far-removed from the traditionally dominant cities of Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. For example, a punk scene emerged in the mid 2000s in Bloemfontein, driven largely by the punk zine *The Obscenely Loud* and a related festival called Obscenefest. As Murray Stassen, one of the participants in the scene, reflects 'Obscenefest helped lift the city's underground scene out of obscurity, and in spite of working with almost no budget and a complete lack of experience, that small, initial idea helped promote a shared sense of cultural identity and a voice for the voiceless' (Stassen, 2013). Stassen also observed that for many in the scene, punk helped them to articulate and put into practice alternative ways of being in the

new South Africa, whether of being white, black, Afrikaans, male, and so forth.

As the Bloemfontein scene indicates, hardcore came into increased prominence by the 2000s. Sonically and stylistically, South African hardcore was largely indistinguishable from the American hardcore that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly coming from Boston and New York City (Blush, 2001). Perhaps the most successful and influential of the South African hardcore bands was Bloodlines Ltd., which formed in Johannesburg in 2005. Besides the lyrical content, there was very little that distinguished South African hardcore as being uniquely South African. Moreover, there were several small sub-genres that emerged in South African hardcore scenes, including straight-edge and Christian hardcore, as well as bands and fans that displayed homophobic and racist undertones, if not outright right-wing neo-Nazi tendencies. As Rob Minnaar recalls, '[t]hese were white kids who became really reactionary towards what was going on in the country. They could feel their power slipping with their parents and everything. There was a lot of racist, almost rightwing kind of punk bands coming on at the time' (interview with the author, 2021).

While the first wave of punk was often characterized by a shared critique of the apartheid system, this second wave reflected the ambiguities and contradictions of life in the Rainbow Nation. Many have criticized the lack of political engagement within this second wave of South African punk. For example, Roderick MacLeod has argued:

I think one of the great things about the genre is that you can use it as a tool to interrogate your own position in a place. In doing that as a white person in South Africa, you can question your own sort of inherent power that you have in a situation because of all the years of inequality, economic discrimination, and racial discrimination. You get given this soft power that other people in this country don't have. I think all of the punk that I was exposed to in late '90s and early 2000s never seemed to interrogate any power dynamics, which is the whole point of punk rock music, right? It's not simply just to piss people off or simply just to go have a good time. It's supposed to be

commentary. But it never actually got to that next step of interrogating: 'How does someone in this country feel about me being a privileged person? How am I complicit in those power dynamics?' There's some really powerful stuff that could have been tapped into, but I'm not sure it was. You can even see it in [the documentary] *Punk in Africa*. It gets very thin when it starts talking about post-1994. Some really solid stuff in the '80s, particularly late '80s, and then it just seems like kids having a good time. I can't think of a band that did that successfully in South Africa in terms of the position of white South Africans in the Rainbow Nation, or what it was like to be a South African in post-1994. (Interview with the author, 2021)

Certainly the shadow of the apartheid system still loomed large across daily life. For some, punk offered an escapist avenue to avoid the critical reflection suggested by MacLeod. But for others, punk offered a way of articulating new, post-apartheid identities. For such white South Africans, this meant grappling with the powerful legacies of race, class and gender forged during the apartheid era, but now thrown into question. This was particularly true for young Afrikaners, who continued to be associated with an apartheid system that they were too young to have had any part of. Up to this point, the dominant language of South African punk had been English, even if its participants were Xhosa, Zulu or Afrikaans. Because of that, the emergence of Fokofpolisiekar represented a significant development for South African punk.

Fokofpolisiekar formed in 2003 with the explicit goal of being a punk band that sang in Afrikaans. As guitarist Johnny de Ridder recalls, 'I thought, "Is anyone making cool music in Afrikaans?" If you wanted to be cool you had to make music in English' (in Little, 2009). Singing in Afrikaans was a provocative move and was done in part to shock the deeply conservative Afrikaans culture, as was the choice of the band's name, which translates to 'Fuck off police car'. But the band was also an attempt to challenge the stereotypes of Afrikaner identity that were dominant at that time, which often centered around a conservative, conformist identification with masculinity, Christianity and racism. As

de Ridder recalls, '[w]e were kind of in between this whole thing. We were too young to really understand what apartheid was about, but too old to be part of the people that know nothing about it' (in Little, 2009).

Given their explicit critique of conservative Afrikaans culture and the Dutch Reformed Church (and organized religion in general), it is no surprise that Fokofpolisiekar generated an angry backlash from segments of the Afrikaner media and the Church. They were regularly harassed and physically assaulted on numerous occasions. They gained national notoriety when the drummer autographed a fan's wallet with the words 'fok god' ('fuck god'). At the same time, they enjoyed tremendous popularity. They had the first Afrikaans song to ever be played on a national English language radio station. They were popular with both English and Afrikaans youth, yet Afrikaner audiences particularly responded positively to their critique of the stifling, conservative Afrikaans culture, but also their pride in being and speaking Afrikaans. To a significant degree, Fokofpolisiekar contributed to creating an alternative way of being Afrikaner within the post-apartheid Rainbow Nation. In her examination of Afrikaans punk, Annie Klooper writes:

> Fokofpolisiekar was the first commercially successful punk rock band in Afrikaans becoming one of the many voices (and speaking to) a youth who had to find their marks in a transitional phase of a country with a problematic history. The sometimes angry lyrics, dripping with underlying themes of nihilism and uncertainty, advocated purification or regeneration by means of destruction, as in the songs 'Destroy yourself' ('vernietig jouself') and 'Burn South Africa' ('Brand Suid-Afrika'). As the same time, it gave a liminal Afrikaner youth, longing to shout their frustrations from the rooftops, something to relate to. (Klooper, 2011)

Fokofpolisiekar went on hiatus in 2007, but still remain the most influential Afrikaans punk band in South Africa.

Anarchist punk in post-apartheid South Africa

Attention needs to be paid to the small but energetic anarchist punk scene that developed post-apartheid. In Johannesburg, bands such as Outrage, Gross Misconduct, ContraCapital, The Terrorists, Solitary Confinement, and Hasten The Storm helped develop an anarchist punk scene, while in Cape Town, Sleeping At The Popes was probably the most influential anarchist punk band on the scene. The scene reflected a range of musical styles and was largely united through its ethical and political coherence, rather than sonic similarities. The South African anarchist punk scenes also produced several zines. In the 1990s, these zines included *Crisis S.A.* (1989-90), *Sound Action* (1991-92) and *Anarchy Again* (1995), each of which involved the participation of Robert Poulter and Ernesto Marques. Marques actively worked to connect South African scenes with the larger international anarchist punk community (de Jongh, 2013).

The early 2000s saw the rise of other anarchist punk zines, such as *Libertarian Offensive* (2004-07). The opening editorial of the first issue provides insight into the state of South African anarchist punk at the time:

> Libertarian Offensive was created with a three-fold objective in mind. Firstly, to inform and educate people within the local punk scene, and hopefully other sub-cultures of rebellion, about the social and political conditions in South Africa ten years into so-called liberation, and to give ideas and examples as to how people who actually give a shit can get actively involved to bring about change. Secondly, to promote and spread awareness about the DIY punk scenes in South Africa internationally, developing and broadening the international underground/DIY network and hopefully, through promoting international DIY bands locally, make it viable for them to visit South Africa. And finally, a desperate attempt to break the fucking isolation of being one of the very, very few politically active punks in a
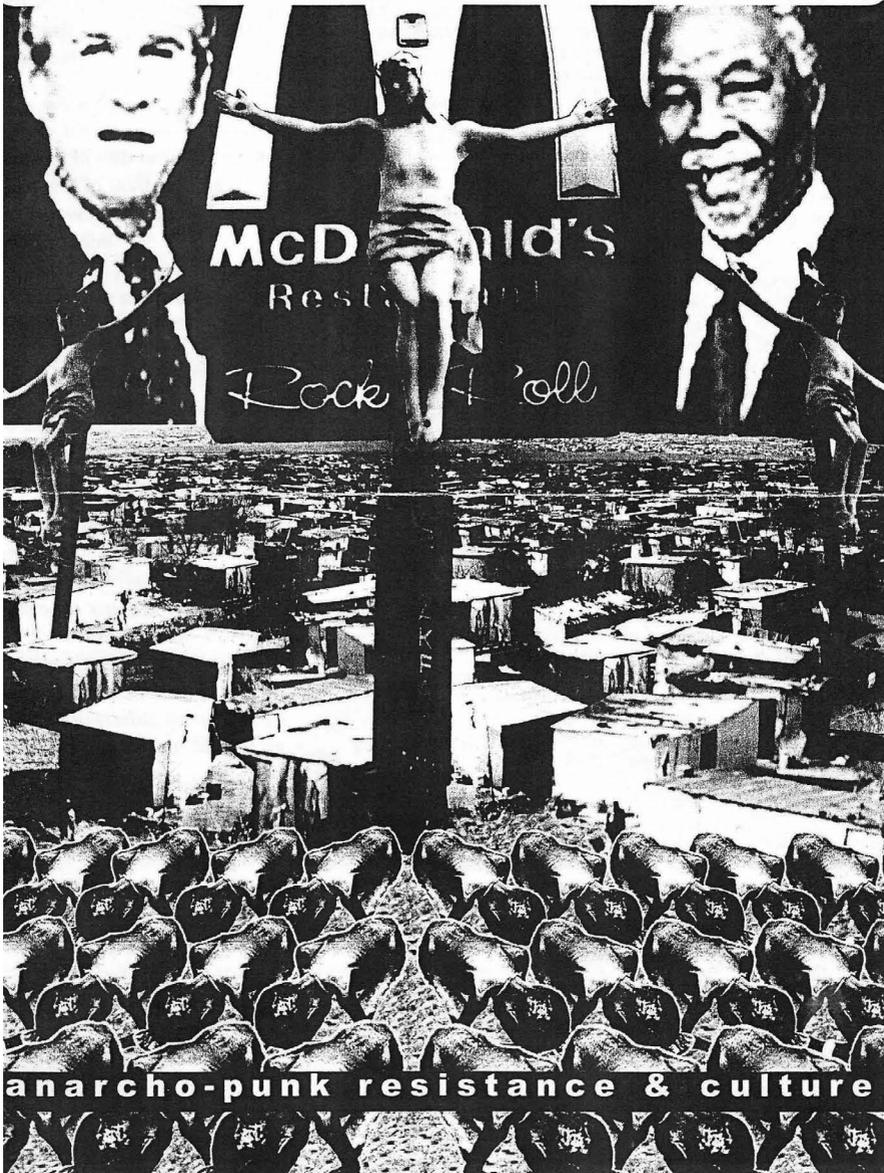
Figure 1:3 – Cover of *Libertarian Offensive*, no. 1 (September, 2004).

country that is not only systematically oppressing its own people, but also plays a huge role in perpetuating the ongoing political and economic crises throughout the continent. (*Libertarian Offensive*, 2004, p. 2)

According to Jonathan Payn, an active member of various anarchist punk bands in the early 2000s, the small anarchist punk community in Johannesburg got traction through organizing shows that brought together a range of punk genres, from crust to hardcore and pop-punk:

It was initially a fringe in the broader punk scene, but because we organized a lot of shows, got a bit more respect or traction. There might have been one or two more anarchopunk bands at a show, and we would play with the other hardcore and punk bands that shared some of the values. Quite a few people became vegan around that time, which was influenced by this group of anarchopunks. (Interview with the author, 2021)

This observation reflects an identification of South African anarchist punks scenes with what Murray Bookchin dismissively called 'lifestyle anarchism'.

In his influential work *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, Bookchin argued that anarchism long contained a tension between contradictory positions: a 'personalistic commitment to individual *autonomy* and a collectivist commitment to social *freedom*' (1995, p. 4; emphasis in original). During much of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the former was marginalized by mass socialist workers' movements throughout industrial societies. But during the late twentieth century, Bookchin argues, Western anarchism has been dominated by the spread of individualist anarchism, which he derisively dismissed as 'lifestyle anarchism'. For Bookchin, radical change can only be realized through old fashioned struggle and collectivism. He dismissed lifestyle anarchism as escapist and ultimately ineffectual. As he argues:

The bourgeoisie has nothing whatever to fear from such lifestyle declamations. With its aversion for institutions, mass-based organizations, its largely subcultural orientation, its moral decadence, its celebration of transience, and its rejection of programs, this kind of narcissistic anarchism is socially innocuous, often merely a safety valve for discontent toward the prevailing social order. (1995, p. 25)

For Bookchin, the dichotomy between social anarchism and lifestyle anarchism is an unbridgeable divide with the latter eroding the former. I won't rehearse the critiques and defenses of Bookchin (see Dunn, 2016, pp. 217-221), but will merely note the familiar tension within many anarchist punk scenes between lifestyle anarchists and those more focused on political action and organization.

Most South African anarchist punks have been caricatured as lifestyle anarchists, with an affinity for individualistic autonomy over collective organizing. Core aspects of anarchist punk have tended to be an embrace of veganism and commitment to animal rights. That said, there were numerous anarchist punks involved in collective organization. Moreover, the rise of the small anarchist punk scenes in South Africa corresponded with the emergence of a larger anarchist community in post-apartheid South Africa, and these developments were not unrelated.

While largely absent or subsumed by the larger Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) during the apartheid era, small anarchist collectives emerged in the 1990s, primarily in Durban and Johannesburg. The Anarchist Revolutionary Movement (ARM) was formed in 1993, but was replaced two years later by the larger Workers' Solidarity Federation (WSF). A few years later, the WSF split into two collectives: the Bikasha Media Collective and Zabalaza Books. In 2003, these two collectives, along with several other anarchist groups across South Africa, formed the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF), which was reconstituted as the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front a few years later. ZACF was focused primarily on advancing 'new social movements' in South Africa in the wake of what many regarded as the failures of the ANC, its corruption and embrace of economic

neoliberalism (Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front, 2021). In particular, it was involved in struggles over land and privatization, and was very active in the AntiPrivatization Forum.

A number of members of ZACF had been involved in South African punk scenes. Some had left the punk scenes, often disillusioned by the perceived prevalence of lifestyle anarchism, to become more involved in collective social movements. Others, who remained active in the punk community, bristled at what they regarded as the 'anarcho-Bolshevism' of the WSF and ZACF. A contested term that originally referred to the Russian anarchists who supported the Bolshevik Party during the Russian Revolution, this label was used in this context as a pejorative insult meant to critique a range of activities, from doctrine rigidity to authoritarian tendencies more broadly. Reflecting on this tension, one of the participants who tried to bridge the divisions, recalls:

> There were a couple that kept their foot in each door, in each camp, but they didn't often collaborate. If they were demos and things like that, then both camps would go along, but besides that, there was a little bit of hostility, not much collaboration. Most of anarchopunk certainly wouldn't spend their Saturday morning after a gig on Friday night in a workshop about anarchist theory or history or something like that. A lot of the organized anarchists, except for the young ones like me, wouldn't spend the Friday nights at a punk rock show getting drunk when they had a workshop the next morning. (Interview with the author, 2021)

Aside from the seemingly inevitable internal tensions within anarchist collectives, the South African anarchist punk scene also had to contend with the growing presence of a confrontational hardcore scene, some elements of which were homophobic, misogynist and racist. Jonathan Payn, an active participant and organizer in the first decade of the twenty-first century, recalls:

> Around that time (2005-10), the toughguy hardcore scene started to gain more traction and grow. It was a violent, really

macho, chauvinistic kind of scene. We wouldn't do gigs with them. There were some bands that we used to play with that would, and they pulled bigger crowds. Anarchopunks, we started having very small shows with two or three bands, and smaller crowds. (Interview with the author, 2021)

There was no developed infrastructure, so they relied on organizing gigs in bars and restaurants. Skate parks were (and are) an important venue for holding punk shows, such as Thrashers in Pretoria. Gigs at public spaces could often attract antagonistic elements, and several members of the (anarchist) punk scenes recollect numerous physical altercations with right-wing hardcore crews. And while anarchist groups working through ZACF were relatively successful in bridging race and class divides, creating multi-racial coalitions around privatization, land rights, electrification and so on, the anarchist punk scenes were predominantly the domain of middle and working class whites. As Rob Minnaar recalls:

When I was in Johannesburg from mid '90s to 2009, I knew exactly two African guys in all that time who considered themselves anarchists and punk. We felt at the time that Africans just weren't into heavy rock music. They just weren't into punk. They were the rebels who were expressing themselves somewhere else like in Hip Hop or Kwaito or something like that. This wasn't a music form or something that they were into. (Interview with the author, 2021)

As Shaun Richards, of the We Did This Collective (also known as We Did This Records), pointedly observes, '[t]here are plenty of gigs where the only Black or people of color at the venue are the people cleaning up your bottles and glasses that you broke on stage' (interview with the author, 2021).

Punk in today's South Africa: the continuing relevance of race, class and capitalism

Life in South Africa in recent years has seen significant developments. Chief among those has been the continued economic crises associated with the country's troubled adherence to economic neoliberalism, the rampant corruption scandals under the Zuma presidency which further tarnished the ANC's reputation and led to his replacement by Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many observers have commented on the decreased relevance of punk in South Africa, as it has largely ceased being a source of political critique. Roderick MacLeod articulates this view with his observation:

> For me, punk became a style of music in South Africa and not so much an actual vehicle for being radical about politics or being revolutionary about thought. You have bands in South Africa that speak to authority and the way that they discuss political corruption, genderbased violence, systemic inequality, and things like that. There are bands doing that, but they do not sound like punk bands. There's other genres that are being critical of society right now and bearing that torch for now, rather than aggressive guitardriven punk rock music. (Interview with the author, 2021)

Shaun Richards notes that, '[t]heir politics are often avoiding all politics. In a sense, by avoiding all politics and being party bands, the scene is more inclusive' (interview with the author, 2021).

To be certain, at the time of writing, there is no coherent punk scene in South Africa. Rather, there are numerous, fragmented sub-genres operating largely at the margins and within the underground, with a few of the aforementioned pop-punk bands enjoying mainstream success. There are numerous folk-punk, garage-punk, and DIY-focused indie rock bands operating, the likes of which include such notable bands as Julia Robert, Loose Ends, Runaway Nuns, Apocalypse Later, Make-Overs, Sloppy Folk, Deadly Bites, Monday Morning Justice, All These Wasted Nuts, Caution Boy, The Shabs, and Goat Throne.

One of the most significant recent developments has been the emergence of all-Black punk bands in and around Soweto. This scene emerged around 2011 when the Skate Society Soweto group was founded (Claassens, 2017). From this emerged the Soweto Rock Revolution, driven by such bands as Brainwreck, The Brother Moves On, Death at the Party, Shameless and TCIYF. Given punk's lengthy history in a country where almost 80% of the population are Black, the emergence of all-Black punk bands should not be that remarkable. But until very recently South African punk has largely remained the domain of white people, with many multi-racial bands, but almost no entirely non-white bands.

At the forefront of the Soweto punk scene has been TCIYF, which stands for The Cum In Your Face. Though they were clearly named to provoke a reaction, the band has largely adopted the more benign acronym. Roderick MacLeod notes the irony – and racist hypocrisy – in this, observing: 'If you're a white band in South Africa, you're allowed to call your band Fokofpolisiekar, but you can't call your band The Cum in Your Face if you're a bunch of black guys' (interview with the author, 2021).

Thulasizwe Nkosi, guitarist for TCIYF, has asserted: 'Punk chose us. It's a calling. The generation before us was very weak. I don't know what the government did with them – what they put in the water. We're doing a better job' (in Mahr, 2017). Mbusi Zulu, one of the founders of Skate Society Soweto, claims: 'We are rebelling against the system: going to work every day, walking up, running after the bus. There's so much more you can do' (in Mahr, 2017). Some have noted this revolutionary stance is at odds with the motto of the Soweto Rock Revolution posted on their Facebook page, which claims: 'No politics, no hatred and no bullshit'. Indeed, some have noted that the Soweto punk scene is more typified by skating and partying as opposed to offering political and social commentary.

Yet, the mere emergence of the Soweto punk scene is noteworthy, not least of all because of the significant corporate interest it has inspired. Rather quickly, corporate sponsorship of the Soweto punk scene emerged. Red Bull has sponsored TCIYF, as has the American-based Afropunk Festival, which held its first musical festival in Africa in

2017. Further corporate sponsorship has come from Vans and Converse. TCIYF have been featured on corporate billboards as the apparent novelty of Black punk bands has been exploited by commercial interests. Shaun Richards observes, '[u]nfortunately the last few Soweto Rock Revolution shows have been a white invasion of Soweto, as the sponsors and corporate interests had made it difficult for the Soweto scene to represent itself there' (We Did This, in Dumpies, 2020). Richards notes that a certain narrative of the Soweto scene has emerged, largely to serve corporate interests. And bands such as TCIYF 'have been curated in a more palatable way' (interview with the author, 2021).

Pre-pandemic, these developments were causing significant tensions within the South African punk community, including a falling out between the Skate Society Soweto and Soweto Rock Revolution. It is also worth mentioning that TCIYF have not been the only South African punk band charged with 'selling-out' and commercialization. Five years after announcing their hiatus, Folkofpolisiekar began performing and releasing new material in 2012. Two years later, they capitalized on their notoriety by marketing their own craft beer, Fokof Lager. In 2018, they opened Fokof Bar in Pretoria, which markets itself as '[t]he official home of South African rock band Fokofpolisiekar and their premium lager, Fokof Lager' (Fokof Bar, 2021). Once representing a beacon for disaffected Afrikaner youth suffering under the weight of apartheid's history and stultifying societal norms, Fokofpolisiekar has become a marketing brand unto itself.

Finally, it is too early to discern what the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be on the country in general and the DIY music scenes in particular. But several interviewees noted the closure of many pre-existing venues and independent music stores. Live music virtually came to a halt and, for many, the musical communities of all genres have stagnated. In mid 2021, just as another major increase in Covid cases across South Africa emerged, Shaun Richards noted, '[c]urrently, there's nothing; everything's closing down. I don't know what things are going to be like if stuff goes back to normal' (interview with the author, 2021).

The pandemic has also had a profound impact on the already fragmented anarchist punk communities in South Africa, as debates over government restrictions and public health concerns became further sources of tension and debate. Like elsewhere, anarchist punks disagreed on the extent to which they should accept mask mandates, social distancing, and lockdown measures. For some, the government's response to the pandemic was another example of state authoritarianism, with some interviewees embracing conspiracy theories questioning the validity of the pandemic. For others, the pandemic represented a serious public health threat that required collective action and individual responsibility. At least one South African anarchist punk band publicly split up over internal debates regarding Covid-19 and vaccines. These debates were not unique to South Africa, but have been echoed across anarchist communities, and larger society, around the globe. However, within the anarchist punk community, they have merely exacerbated pre-existing tensions and divisions around age, gender, class and race, and the degree to which some disavow the expertise of government health officials.

Regardless of how Covid-19 impacts the country, South African punk will continue to struggle with issues related to race, class, colonialism and capitalism. Despite the increased prominence of multi-racial bands and the non-white Soweto scene, punk is still seen as a predominantly white domain. As one active participant, MacLeod, observed:

It's definitely a white-dominated genre. Anyone who tells you any different is absolutely delusional. It shouldn't be, but it's just how it is. Even the DIY punk stuff, as well, it is definitely overwhelmingly white. Especially when you consider the demographics of the country, it becomes even more crazy that there's this many all-white punk bands. The audience can be a little bit different, but it is still definitely predominantly white people in the audience. (Interview with the author, 2021)

Corporate interest in the few non-white punk bands continues to complicate the scene. Finally, genre-fragmentation and continuing

integration of other musical styles continues to make the boundaries of South African punk a source of debate and contestation.

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CHAPTER TWO
KUBAZUELA:
REMEMBERING A CARIBBEAN ANARCHIST PUNK CONNECTION BETWEEN CUBA & VENEZUELA (WITH RUM BUT WITHOUT COCA-COLA)

RODOLFO MONTES DE OCA

Chapter Two: Kubazuela: Remembering a Caribbean anarchist punk connection between Cuba and Venezuela ('with rum but without Coca-Cola')

Rodolfo Montes de Oca

Translated by Luke Ray Di Marco Campbell

Siempre de lado y lado,
Sientes los regaños y los ataques,
La vieja de derecha me pide que me calle,
El activista de izquierda me acusa de ser de la CIA.

[Always side-by-side,]
[You feel the nagging and attacks,]
[The old right-wing woman tells me to shut up,]
[Left-wing activist accuses me of being CIA.]

('Aquí no hay revolución' ['There is no revolution here'] by
A//narcolepsia, 2007)

La única manera, es nuestro grito,
Defender a los obreros, es el anarquismo,
Derribar al capital y al fascismo,
Dejar de lado el comunismo.

[The only way, is our cry,]
[Defending the workers is anarchism,]
[Bring down capital and fascism,]
[Get rid of communism.]

('Union Proletaria' by Eztafilokoko, 2015)

Since time immemorial, the Caribbean Sea has been a geographical space of exchange. The Indigenous Kalinagos, Guanajatabeyes, Ciboney, and Taíno peoples moved through its territories during the pre-Hispanic period (prior to 1492), and these connections were accentuated throughout the colonies, whilst the subsequent independence upheavals gave way to the states of Cuba and Venezuela as republics. During the period of European migration at the beginning of the twentieth century, many anarchist workers arrived in Cuba. From there, they travelled to the mainland of South America and onwards to the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay), meaning that Venezuela was for a long time a place of passage for many libertarians. There are further historical connections between Cuba and Venezuela, indeed, at times, the two nation states have experienced parallel - arguably, rival - trajectories. Cuba underwent a Marxist-Leninist-oriented revolution in 1959, and, in the same year, the long-running social-democratic transformative process began in Venezuela. In the 1960s, Venezuela became a refuge for Cuban islanders fleeing the Stalinist purges of the Castro brothers, Fidel and Raúl, who arrested and imprisoned members of the Asociación Libertaria Cubana (ALC – Cuban Libertarian Association)* and suppressed publications such as *Solidaridad Gastronómica*. Santiago Cobo fled the island and made contact with Iberian exiles associated with the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT – National Confederation of Labour), later arriving in the city of Maiquetía, not far from the Venezuelan capital, Caracas. At the time of his arrival, a branch of Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA – International Anti-Fascist Solidarity) was operating in the capital. They provided support and aided Cobo's transfer to the United States, where he came into contact with other survivors and founded the Movimiento Libertario Cubano en el Exilio (MLC-E – Cuban Libertarian Movement in Exile), which, from Miami in the US,

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* The anarchists who were arrested, tortured or executed by Castroism included Alberto García, José Acenas, Sandalio Torres, Luis and Suria Linsuaín, Isidro Moscú, Antonio Degas, Placido Méndez, José Álvarez Micheltorena, Victoriano Hernández, Francisco Aguirre, Raúl Negrín, Eusebio Otero, Augusto Sánchez, Rolando Tamargo, Sebastián Aguilar and Ventura Suárez.

coordinated collective efforts to denounce Castroism. However, the group were operating in adverse circumstances due to the global left's sympathies towards 'revolutionary Cuba' after armed invasion attempts by the United States, especially the Bay of Pigs debacle (1961), and the wider isolation policy implemented by the US government. Venezuela was no exception to such sympathies and the youth wing of the Partido Comunista y del Movimiento de Izquierda Radical (MIR – Communist Party and the Radical Left Movement) led an insurrectionary movement, joining guerrilla groups, directly inspired by the tactics of the Cuban revolutionaries in the Sierra Maestra mountains.

It is also important to note that support for Cuba in Venezuela was dominant within cultural circles, where rock music was not accepted because it was considered a pitiyanqui musical genre (drawn from the French 'petite' and the US term 'yankee'). Indeed, the expulsions of hippie musicians from the Central University of Venezuela were celebrated. This coincided with the stigmatisation of 'pre-criminal social dangerousness' in Cuba – Fidel Castro derided hippies as 'elvispreslianos' (fans of Elvis Presley), 'feminoids' (a derogatory term), 'tight trousers' and 'bums' (in VideosQBA, 2015). The Cuban regime meted out two-year prison sentences for a first offence of 'pre-criminal social dangerousness', and, for repeat offenders, a further six years behind bars. This draconian regulation had a Venezuelan counterpart, the Vagrancy Act, which included prison sentences for attitudes that the police perceived as pre-criminal. Consequently, many young people were arrested and taken to the El Dorado Penitentiary Centre, simply for wearing sandals, having long hair, or floral shirts.

As Cuba nationalised its economy and began exporting its revolutionary model to Latin America and Africa, Venezuela experienced a bonanza period of wealth (benefiting from its 1973 oil nationalisation) that later began to crumble in the 1980s following the Black Friday of 1983 – an economic event that quickly devalued the Venezuelan bolívar against the US dollar, leading to a decline in the quality of life for many Venezuelans. Punk arrived at around the same time and took root amongst the youth during the 1980s. Young people who had the means to travel were able to experience other cultures. England, Spain, the US and Italy were the most common destinations;

places where the children of businessmen, senior executives and professionals were nourished by emerging musical trends. The turning point came in 1989, during Carlos Andrés Pérez's second government (1989-1993). While Cuba was experiencing austerity during the 'Special Period' economic crisis that resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union, Venezuela witnessed an urban revolt against the macroeconomic restructuring imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that had increased the cost of gasoline and public transportation. The wave of protests that commenced in February 1989 became known as 'El Caracazo' – a four-day period that resulted in 276 civilian deaths, the militarisation of the country's main cities, and the destruction of numerous commercial establishments. After this date, punk became politicised in the heat of repression and raids.

That same year, 'official Cuban culture' began to crack. In an improvised cultural centre close to a government building, rockers, punks and other outsiders – those who did not fit in with the aesthetics of the militant political left – began to congregate, rebranding the space as El Patio de María [Maria's Patio]. The venue became a gathering point for the frikis (derived from the English, 'freak'). These pioneers were labelled by government supporters as violent, drug-using, imperialist-aligned youths who engaged in deviant sexual behaviour. Arrests, beatings, and raids were common for those facing such accusations. In Venezuela, punks were similarly persecuted by the sifrinos (upper class snobs), and the punks were also met with police aggression and arbitrary arrests. This atmosphere of hostility, together with the social collapse and widespread poverty in Venezuela, resulted in the radicalisation of the first punks. There was a direct connection between anarchist groups and the first punk gangs – in the 1980s, the Colectivo de Acción Libertaria (CAL – Libertarian Action Collective), publisher of the earliest editions of the newspaper *El Libertario*, connected Iberian anarchist immigrants who had participated in the Spanish Civil War with the first generation of punks. Among those Iberians were Emilio Tesoro and Antonio Serrano, who were important reference points for, and collaborators with, the punk scene – they were even known as the 'anarcopunk grandparents' until their deaths in 2003 and 2008, respectively.

After the El Caracazo protest wave, and well into the 1990s, the first music linking the ideas of the avant-garde with the accelerated notes of hardcore emerged through bands such as Allanamiento Moral and Oktavo Pasajero, who participated with the publication *Correo A*. These bands established a fanzine circuit, including *La Insumisión*, *La Gazeta*, *Autogestión*, *Combate*, and *Antitodo*, and became involved in the protests after the Caracazo between 1992 and 1993. The Central University of Venezuela served as the epicentre of their activities, which included setting-up a vegetarian canteen named Kai-Kashí. During those years, repression was constant. The bass player of Allanamiento Moral, Julio 'Colmillo' Rojas, was arrested and imprisoned for participating in violent demonstrations. José Gregorio 'Flecha' Romero was murdered by the police in 1992 (Montes de Oca, 2020). This political current was connected to the Grupo de Editores Alternativos (GEA – Alternative Editors Group) which ran a kiosk in the centre of Barquisimeto city where they promoted independent publications and supported an artistic and musical scene. The fanzines and periodicals included *¿Qué hay de nuevo viejo*, *El Caleidoscopio*, *El Provo*, *Caput Juves*, *Vía Subterránea*, *SOS*, and *Mentes Abiertas*. They also hosted a radio programme called *Countercultural Resistance*. Running parallel to this was a majority of groups in Venezuela who supported the Cuban revolution, with bands and collectives operating on the Radical Rock Circuit, including Víctimas de la Democracia, Odio que?, En Contra, Deskarriados, Primero Venezuela, and 27F who were part of the Marxist-Leninist Colectivo Rajatavla. Other Marxist groups such as Bandera Roja, Desobediencia Popular, and Causa R maintained an anti-imperialist discourse and expressed sympathies with the coup attempts by the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 of the 4th February and 27th November 1992 led by Hugo Chávez. They were frequently celebrated in concerts where members shouted slogans such as 'Cuba sí, yanquis no' ['Cuba yes, Yankees no']. But the first punk wave in Venezuela experienced setbacks in 1993, coinciding with the departure of Carlos Andrés Pérez from the presidency on embezzlement charges. That year, the kiosk in Barquisimeto and the Kai-Kashí restaurant were set on fire, yet it proved impossible to determine who was responsible. *Correo A* also

ceased publication and the bands broke up for various reasons, many of them due to personal differences.

While all this was going on in Venezuela, mass disenchantment with the revolutionary process was spreading in Cuba. The 'Special Period' crisis led to the massive exodus of de balseros (literally 'rafters'). It was at this time that the first punk bands were formed, such as Rotura, in which Ernesto 'Che' Guevara's grandson Canek Sánchez Guevara played, and later groups such as VIH, Detenidos, and Eskoria. Following the state repression of the Maleconazo uprising of the 5th of August 1994 against the Castro regime, which was a product of hunger and lack of supplies after the fall of the Soviet bloc, frikis began to be admitted to the Sanatorio de Pinar del Río, a health institute established by the government for Cubans diagnosed with HIV. Punks and metalheads, disgusted by government repression, came to perceive these establishments as sanctuaries where they could exist away from persecution. As such, many decided to deliberately become infected in order to become confined, at the cost of their health – a form of protest against the society that rejected them. William Álvarez, lead singer of Eskoria, became infected with HIV to avoid compulsory military service. Others included Amaury Triana and Pedro Sainzen, both members of the band VIH, as well as Papo La Bala, one of the central figures of the early Cuban punk scene. La Bala is understood to have been one of the first to infect himself through injecting HIV-positive blood. Those who did not enter the Sanatorio continued to frequent Park G on Los Presidentes Avenue in Havana, where a 'zone of tolerance' was won by the frikis following repeated repression. Here, they could meet and exchange the few cassettes, fanzines, or records that reached Cuba. These were also the years when the state began to co-opt the island's emerging rock and punk culture, facilitating concerts and trying – in vain – to make them public servants of the Instituto de la Cultura [Institute of Culture].

In Venezuela in 1994-1995 the punk scene began to rearticulate itself, following the previous setbacks, and this emerging generation was the first that defined itself as 'anarcopunk', with bands such as Apatia-no, Renuencia, Risas, Crisis Política, Los Dolares, and Doña Maldad. Together, they linked up with new initiatives such as the Comisión de

Relaciones Anarquistas (CRA – Anarchist Relations Commission), who took on the task of resuming the publication of *El Libertario* on a bimonthly basis. These groups were coordinating their activities amidst a complex context of political transition. The rise of Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez was accompanied by a militant society whose main reference point became the Cuban revolution, but the anarchist punks of Venezuela were not seduced by the siren songs. Although music and libertarian propaganda occupied much of their energy and focus, these groups also connected with their communities and resistance movements, such as the campaigns for conscientious objection against compulsory military service, opposition to the exploitation of minerals in the Imataca Forest Reserve, mobilisations against the privatisation of universities, and the dismantling of the Brazil-Venezuela power line – an issue that harmed the Indigenous Amazonian peoples.

Some of the initiatives in existence between 1995 and 2001 included punk anarchist DIY labels such as Noseke Records, Descontento Records and Subsuelo Insurgente in Caracas which also engaged in propaganda efforts, cultural meetings and concert organisation (the Siempre Rebelde Distro in Barquisimeto combined this approach with a 'people power' and platformist analysis). There was also a large number of punk anarchist zines, such as *Apatiarlos*, *Alcornoque Subterráneo*, *Realidad Hundida*, *La Sedición* (all from Caracas), *Adoquín* (from Barquisimeto) and *Axioma* (from Cúa). These initiatives can be described as 'punk anarchist', denoting organisations composed exclusively of people who came from the punk music scene and assumed its aesthetics in the activities they carried out, focused mainly on cultural development (other overlapping initiatives at this time include the anarcha-feminist zines *Amor Libre* and *El Libertino Insurgente*, and the 'classical' anarchist zine *Regeneración*, all from Caracas).

Cultural activities, 'anarcopunk days' (meetings where forums and concerts were held along with the distribution of materials), producing publications, and other music-related material were some of the activities carried out by this first generation of anarchist punks. However, by engaging with popular social movements, they inevitably encountered groups, collectives, and tendencies that supported the Castros' government in Cuba. 'Revolutionary Cuba' held a strong

attraction amongst nearly all Venezuelan dissident groups. The epic of the bearded men, the anti-imperialist rhetoric, and their support for Latin American guerrilla struggles made it seem like a sanctuary for all those who fought for the dispossessed. Like many other young people, I had the opportunity to visit Cuba with my father – any illusion of a transformational reference point was shattered in three days. I observed the contradiction between propaganda and reality: a system of benefits for tourists to the detriment of locals; long supply queues, but lobster and wine for the elite; a deteriorating city; sexual exploitation of young people; the lack of sugar in a sugar-exporting country; alongside cynicism from the islanders and open mockery of their rulers. What I didn't know at the time, however, was that I would be witness to the replication of this situation in Venezuela some years later.

In 1998, after multiple electoral and military campaigns, Hugo Chávez was elected as president and the pro-Cuban Marxist movement that had been developing in Venezuela since 1959 took power. His first measure was to convene a Constituent Assembly to shape a new Constitution including a series of progressive measures that were celebrated by society as a whole. Changes included recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities, conscientious objection, gender equality for publicly elected positions, mediation as a peaceful mechanism to resolving conflict, and a recall referendum to remove rulers from power. During these years, the first inter-state collaborations between Venezuela and Cuba also began to emerge, something that had not occurred since 1962 when Cuba was expelled from the Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA – Organisation of American States) for its support of guerrilla groups. These new cooperation agreements brought about exchange of goods and services, helping to revive Cuba's crisis-stricken economy, and also established new security cooperation agreements. The polarisation of Venezuelan society in the wake of Chávez's election has been akin to a Cold War, with zones of influence between governments and opponents, demonstrations and counter-marches, and the hardening of antagonistic discourse between sides. It is within this framework of tension that our history is being written.

'The first law of anarchists is to be optimistic'

(Frank Fernández)

Sweeping legislation on agrarian issues and on oil and gas led to a series of social mobilisations and protests in Venezuela that culminated in the coup of the 11th of April 2002, and Hugo Chávez's return to power just two days later. This allowed him to purge the armed forces of his adversaries and consolidate his close allies. It was in this period of turmoil that I arrived in Miami, in the US, to study English, concurrent with the first wave of Venezuelan emigration, with the Caracas oligarchy taking shelter in Pequeña Habana [Little Havana] in Miami. In a city known for anti-Castroism and Republican conservatism, being an anarchist punk (or punk anarchist) was a misunderstood and, at times, risky existence. In that context of uprootedness, I had the opportunity to meet the last pre-Castro Cuban anarchists – a trio of septuagenarians, whose main spokesperson was the writer Frank Fernández. With them, I shared endless afternoons, surrounded by coffee with brandy, and smoking cigars. We talked of how the hope of 1959 had been betrayed by the Communist Party, how these three anarchists were expelled from Cuba, their journey of exile in a country that saw them as Martians, the publications that were smuggled onto the island wrapped in cleaning supplies and food, and the hope generated amongst the Cuban people by the Cuban government. We also discussed the hope generated amongst the people by the embryonic anarcho-syndicalist collective that existed in Cuba in the 1980s known as the Grupo Zapata, now presumed to be imprisoned. This trio was part of the MLC-E that in the 1980s edited the magazine *Guángara Libertaria* alongside younger people like Gustavo Rodríguez (member of the Love and Rage Federation), Luis Prat, and Canek Sánchez Guevara (formerly of the Cuban punk band Rotura, and Che Guevara's grandson). For years, they faced unfounded accusations, such as those by Daniel Cohn-Bendit who accused them of being CIA agents. After six months of living with and learning from the Cubans, I returned to Venezuela, which, at the time, was a pressure cooker. Before leaving, old Frank, glass of rum in hand, told me, 'Venezuela will be like Cuba, so

Figure 2:1 – Punks in Lisa, Cuba after a concert (photograph courtesy of the band Eztafilokoko).

when you think that all is lost, remember that the first law of anarchists is to be optimistic'. His words reverberated in my head for years to come and became a kind of creed to work through what was coming.

While I had been in the US, the polarisation of Venezuelan society had been accentuated. The coup attempt was followed by a military uprising in a public square and a two-month oil strike, which led to youth mobilisations and a weariness among young people who did not feel part of either of the two political camps. In my backpack I brought, among other things, an interview with Frank Fernández and a couple of souvenir photos which were published in *El Libertario*. The editorial collective of *El Libertario* had taken the decision to remain autonomous from the statist left but also from the social-democratic opposition, calling for a 'third direction' – anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist – to

resolve the situation the nation was going through. It was in this context of confrontation that the first anarchist punk generation gave way to a second one involving bands such as Los Druppies, Causa y Efecto, Skalofríos, Devalua2, Kolumpio Bankito, Artillería, Consecuencia D!, Detestables, Alerta, Eskoria Sozial, Falta Respeto, Atake al $istema, Dissensiön, Mala Kondukta, A//narcolepsia, Contrapoder, Trifulka, Mistabal, D-sobediencia, Acción en Contra, La Revuelta, Migra, and Piel y Hüesos.

They channelled their anti-authoritarian impulses through their art in very adverse and challenging circumstances – this situation forced them to build their own spaces, which was already the anarchist punk

Figure 2:2 – Concert in 2004 by the band Doña Maldad against the exploitation of coal in the Sierra de Perija (photograph courtesy of *El Libertario*).

tendency. Some of the punk anarchist initiatives created between 2001 and 2009 were DIY labels including Cabeza de Vaca Records and La Bruja Records (from Caracas), Ovejas Negras (from Tucacas), La Migra Records (from Puerto Cumarebo), Cría Cuervo Records (from Mérida), Toche Records (from San Cristóbal) and Valencia Rebelde (from Valencia). The activities of these labels also included 'cultural days' and wider propaganda efforts, similar to the activism of La Libertaria in Biscucuy, the Centro de Estudios Ácratas (CEA) in Mérida, Colectivo Radical Autónomo Morfo Azul (CRAMA) in Maracaibo-Sierra de Perija, Unidad Autónoma Libertaria (UAL) and Asociación de Jóvenes Anarquistas Unidos (AJAU), both in Maracay, and Cruz Negra Anarquista Venezuela, Colectivo Rache and Columna Insurreccionalista de Payasos Anarquistas (CIPA), all in Caracas. Other activist and propaganda groups included Colectivo Autónomo

Amanecer Anarquista (CA3), Colectivo Ácrata Libertario (CAL), Samizdat and Bicipunks CCS, all from Caracas, Red Anarco-Comunista (RAC) in Margarita, and Juventud Ácrata contra el Poder in Punto Fijo. The Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios (CESL), associated with *El Libertario* functioned as a social centre in Caracas, with Revolución Ácrata carrying out squatting actions. Some of the zines of the time were *Esbozine* and *Fanzine La Resistencia* in Caracas, and *Q-ka-racha* in Maturín, as well as the Venezuela-wide website Sala de Noticias Anarcopunk. (Other overlapping initiatives indluded Indubio Pro Reo prisoner support and the Contrapoder website for the wider non-statist political left).

This explosion of initiatives also coincided with the growing politicisation of Venezuelan society. Some young people looked to anarchist punk as a way of breaking with the polarisation they witnessed

Figure 2:4 – Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios (CESL) in Sarria, Caracas on the 7th of September 2005 (photograph courtesy of *El Libertario*).

Figure 2:5 − Cover of the newspaper *El Libertario*, January/February 2003, after the oil strike of December 2002, when Venezuelan society was polarised between pro-government and anti-government sides. Venezuelan anarchism has always defied this polarisation calling them 'two sides of the same coin' and opting for an autonomous third way.

at home. The massification of internet access made it possible to engage with new information sources and allowed people to connect via e-mail, enabling the formation of coordination groups such as CooperActiva, the Unión de Colectivos Alternativos (UCA – Union of Alternative Collectives) in Zulia, and Red Anarcopunk (RANA – Anarchopunk Network) in Caracas. Every weekend between 2001 and 2007 concerts were held in different parts of Venezuela, ranging from house parties, to bars, to sports fields. This reactivation also coincided with the launch of a website called Caracaspunk.com (now defunct), which showcased all the bands and initiatives related to punk in Venezuela. Although there was already some previous experience from the first wave, something to note during this period is that anarchist punks began to connect with, and form part of, grassroots social movements. Inspired to a large extent

Figure 2:6 – Concert during the fifth 'Anarcopunk day' held at the Alejandro Otero Museum in Caracas, May 2005. The band is either Kolumpio or Bankito (photograph courtesy of *El Libertario*).

by the anti-globalisation movement, they began to link up and denounce the coal mining industries in the Sierra de Perija, they supported the Pemon people to demand the return of the Kueka stone, they partnered with animal liberation and vegan groups, as well as showing solidarity with political prisoners in Venezuela and other parts of the world. Despite lacking established infrastructure, anarchist punk was a training school for future social activists; the self-management of events, independent production, non-commercial exchange, and support networks foreshadowed the new world they wanted to build and undoubtedly encouraged them to be more ambitious in their projects. The counter-summits against the multilateral organisations in Prague (2000), Genoa (2001), Gothenburg (2001), Cancún (2003) and Mar del Plata (2005) were on everyone's minds. It was time for Caracas to also have its place in the books about anti-globalist resistance.

The Cuban-Venezuelan meeting of 2005 (paths connect)

Chávez survived a recall referendum in 2004, and Venezuela became a kind of international sanctuary for global left activists and groups, and the Cuba-Venezuela political affinity was cemented. This also strengthened the bonds of friendship between the anarchists of both countries, whose fate remained ignored by the bulk of the world's anti-capitalist tendencies. In their flaunting of 'revolutionary tourism', authors like Michael Albert and Noam Chomsky ignored the warnings about authoritarian drift and the co-optation of social movements by the state (see Albert, 2005; Alberola, 2009). The Movimiento Libertario Cubano (MLC) in Cuba and *El Libertario* in Venezuela maintained their position against the course of socialism *and* the neoliberal free market.

In 2005, the government of Hugo Chávez, who enjoyed the approval of much of the anti-globalisation movement, called for the attendance of progressives, left-wing representatives, and radical activists at the World Social Forum in Caracas from the 24th to the 29th

January 2006. This call was met with a counteroffer by *El Libertario* and the anarchist punk contingent who announced the Foro Social Alternativo (FSA – Alternative Social Forum) for the same dates. Their proposal was supported by Earth First, War Resisters' International, and the MLC-E. Over the following months, without funds but with clear motivation, the logistics were arranged to receive activists from numerous countries (including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, the US, France, Russia, and Uruguay). The anarchist punk generation was fully involved in the support and execution of the Forum, managing the main headquarters, running the distribution table, coordinating transport, and in the organisation of the exhibitions and discussions. A week before the formal start of activities, the guests began to arrive, including three members of the MLC-E who had not seen each other in person for a decade – Frank Fernández, Luis Pratt and Gustavo Rodríguez, affectionately nicknamed as 'Los Solidarios'. They were joined by Rafael Sposito, better known by the pseudonym Daniel Barret, a Uruguayan who wrote the pamphlet *Cuba, el Socialismo y la Libertad: Una visión desde el anarquismo* [*Cuba, Socialism and Liberty: An Anarchist View*] (2004), in which he made a scathing anarchist critique of the Marxist-Leninist system on the island. The FSA meeting was decisive for many involved in that it was agreed that there would be future support for Cuban anarchism. This was the first time that different generations from various parts of the world had met with the Cubans and witnessed their reality – a reality that was beginning to be resembled by Venezuela. The state's own World Social Forum enjoyed a large budget, with no expense spared in the provision of hotels for delegates, and entertainment such as parties and live concerts. For the first time, the anarchist punks saw what the co-optation of the punk music scene by the state meant. Bands such as Ska-p, Reincidentes, Boikot, and Vantroi, among others, performed at concerts in Plaza Venezuela, bought and paid for by Chavismo. The FSA was undoubtedly the most ambitious gamble of the Venezuelan anarchist movement. The ability to organise horizontally, to capture national and international attention, and to contest the public space against a government that had just won an overwhelming electoral majority was an enormous task.

Figure 2:7 – Gorki Águila, vocalist of Porno para Ricardo with some young punks.

The Cubans' visit to the FSA coincided with the premiere of Benito Zambrano's film *Habana Blues* (2005), which became popular in Caracas thanks to pirate distribution by street vendors. Also at this time, Gorki Águila, singer with the Cuban rock band Porno para Ricardo, was imprisoned for almost three years and accused on multiple occasions of 'pre-criminal social dangerousness'. This irreverent band mocked the symbols of the Cuban revolution, singing songs that advocated individual freedom and anti-statism (Porno para Ricardo, 2008). This resulted in the classification of their songs as Anti-Castro Rock, and they remain associated with the Latin American anarchist punk scene (Uzcategui, 2008), despite the band's members claiming not to adhere to any ideology or movement (Movimiento Libertario Cubano, 2008). Information was also coming in from other bands in Cuba who were suffering censorship, such as Barrio Adentro, who managed to record a demo with the suggestive title *Condenado* [*Condemned*] (2007). The commitment of Venezuelan anarchists to any kind of dissidence in

Cuba was re-confirmed at a concert in the Raúl Leoni Library in Caracas, when Rafael Uzcátegui took the microphone in the middle of the pogo to demand justice for the shooting of Lorenzo Copello Castillo, Bárbaro Sevilla García, and Jorge Luis Martínez Isaad, three Cubans who had hijacked a boat to flee the island but became stranded a few kilometres from the shore.

The FSA was followed by a further wave of 'revolutionary tourism' as anti-system groups and many so-called 'anarchists' – particularly Iberians – came to Venezuela to see for themselves what was happening in the country. Oftentimes, however, these tourists failed to display meaningful allyship, instead taking advantage of the devalued currency (to the detriment of locals), and pursuing beaches and landscapes, cheap vices and titillation. The syndrome of colonisation suffered by Cuba during the Cold War was repeated. During this period, many bands visited Venezuela, such as Czolgosz (US), Desarme (Colombia), Plaine Crasse (France), Zuschanden (Germany), Sabot (US), Llorando en el Desierto (Spain), Tropiezo (Puerto Rico), GERK (Argentina), Coche Bomba (France), Mentenguerra (Spain), Punkora (Chile), and Rebelión (Colombia). The international interest in Venezuela from the international left revived the discussion of Cuba in anarchist groups, leading to the publication of press releases and the organisation in France of the Grupo de Apoyo a los Libertarios y Sindicalistas Independiente en Cuba (GALSIC – Group for the Support of Libertarians and Independent Syndicalists in Cuba), with the participation of Spanish libertarian militant and veteran of the anti-Franco struggle Octavio Alberola. The group published a bulletin and, together with the MLC-E, began to contact and coordinate activists on the island. This later became known as the Taller Libertario Alfredo López (TLAL – Alfredo López Libertarian Workshop), formed by Mario Castillo, Dimitri Prieto, Isbel Díaz, Jorge Luis Alemán, Jimmy Roque, and Otari Oliva, among others. With precarious access to the internet, they timidly but determinedly began to organise activities together with the Observatorio Crítico Cubano [Cuban Critical Observatory], a coordinating body that brought together all the communitarian or progressive currents opposed to Castroism. From the outset, *El Libertario* in Venezuela maintained correspondence with this

new group, however, on several occasions, the correspondence was returned with a stamp of non-admission. Within this framework of activism and thanks to cooperation agreements between Cuba and Venezuela, Mario Castillo from TLAL in Cuba was able to visit Caracas – the first in-person contact between Venezuelan anarchists and post-revolutionary Cuban-born anarchists. They shared first-hand information about censorship and the transition process on the island that followed the departure of Fidel Castro from the presidency and the accession of his brother, Raúl. It was also an opportunity to hear about how 50 years of supposed Marxist political and cultural dominance was beginning to crack, and to learn about the flourishing cultural movements on the island which went beyond the punk scene. It was the first time we heard about the underground rappers Los Aldeanos and how rap was becoming a tool to make visible the contradictions of the Cuban system by denouncing the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Mario seemed like a time-traveller talking to us about the transformations on the island, describing how it was beginning to resemble the mainland, as if he knew what was going to happen. After a week, loaded with hygiene items and some household appliances, he left amidst hugs and promises to keep in touch. Just before passing through the security point, he looked at us and said, 'happy to have been in Cubazuela'.

The downfall and rise of Kubazuela begins

By 2007, Hugo Chávez began his second presidential term, amassing 62.84% of the votes counted, which gave him considerable legitimacy. This is when talk of twenty-first-century socialism began, with its Castro-esque slogan 'Patria, Socialismo o Muerte' ['Homeland, Socialism or Death'] and the unification of all pro-government forces as the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV – United Socialist Party of Venezuela). With support from congress and regional governments leaning in his favour, Chávez launched a reform of the constitution, proposing indefinite re-election of the presidency, deregulation of labour relations (the supposedly socialist state was behaving like a capitalist one), and the militarisation of society. It also

argued for strengthening the state's extractive fossil fuel policy. This coincided with the emergence of a new anti-government student movement in response to the closure of Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), and the mobilisations of anti-capitalist platforms such as Insurgentes (of which *El Libertario* was a part) resulted in some anarchist punks becoming allied to the student protests with the intention of participating in the demonstrations and distributing anarchist

propaganda in the universities, but maintaining a distance from their social democratic or conservative approaches. During one of these events at the School of Social Work at the Central University of Venezuela, Gerardo Olivares, close to the anarchist punk scene, was shot and wounded during skirmishes between demonstrators and pro-government activists. Although the constitutional reform was rejected by referendum in December 2007, the government implemented it via a constitutional amendment a year later, thereby establishing indefinite re-election for all elected positions, marginalising alternatives or any hope of renewal in politics.

By this time, 'alternative culture' had already been co-opted by the state. Cultural expressions closely related to punk were being promoted by and sponsored by the government, including the opening of cultural centres like Tiuna El Fuerte in Caracas, the encouragement of graffiti,

establishing television stations like Avila TV, and free mega-concerts like those offered by Manu Chao and Emir Kusturica. All of this was made possible by the oil bonanza, which allowed the government to create their own propaganda of youth rebellion. Simultaneously, 'the scene' began to experience urban violence firsthand. In 2009, Giovanny 'Yanni' Conte (a member of bands such as Skalofrios, Khaos and Drömdead) was murdered while hanging out with other young people in a park in Caracas. His body bore several stab wounds. That same night, six other young punks were wounded, including two members of the band Apatía-No (Jhonny Castro and Erickson D'Larche). Conte's death was followed a year later by the murder of Luis 'Rachel' Chirinos of the band 7 Balazos, close to the anarchist punk movement, who was stabbed seven times. In Cuba, the same tragic fate befell Williams Fabián Álvarez, a member of the band Eskoria, who was murdered after a concert in 2010. Álvarez was a key figure in Cuba's punk rock scene, and his band, formed in 1994, was one of the longest-lived in his community. Although police investigations were carried out in all three cases, the perpetrators were never identified in any of the deaths. It was during this period of unrest that the second generation of Venezuelan anarchist punks began to emigrate to Mexico, throughout the Southern Cone, and across Europe. This strategy of 'balseros del aire' [air rafters] was a ticket to gentler lands, where merely wearing a badge would not be dangerous. Parallel to this, the accelerated decomposition of the Venezuelan economy began, coinciding with the energy crisis and the fall of commodity prices on the international market. The price of oil, Venezuela's main and, realistically, only export product, fell on the market as a result of the end of the war in Iraq. A considerable decline in the quality of life of Venezuelans began – economic controls tightened, products began to disappear from the shelves, electricity blackouts and shortages of drinking water for urban dwellers became commonplace. This increase in poverty reactivated the anti-government protests, and the state called upon frequent military advice from the 'Kubazuela', as the cooperation between the two states was jokingly called. The security apparatus of the two countries merged during this period, with joint monitoring of internal dissidence and cooperative dismantling of any kind of opposition. In 2012, Hugo Chávez was

Figure 2:10 – Concert titled 'Reconstructing the Scene', 29th January 2010, held at the Goethe Institute, organised by the bands Apatia-No, Doña Maldad, Renuencia, and Dissension (photograph courtesy of Renier Ravelo).

Figure 2:11 – Concert by the anarchist punk band Inzulto in Los Teques during the 2012 visit of the French band Coche Bomba to Venezuela (photograph courtesy of Inzulto).

Figure 2:12 – Caracas Anarchist Meeting of 2013, with attendees from Caracas, El Zulia, Los Teques, Anzoátegui, Lara and Merida – this meeting witnessed the formation of the (ephemeral) Anarchist Network of Venezuela.

elected to the presidency for a fourth time. On this occasion, the margin was reduced to just 12.1%, but he died soon after in 2013. The subsequent election brought the development of Venezuelan socialism to a halt when Nicolás Maduro, Chávez's vice-president, was elected by a narrow margin of only 1%.

these years, new bands maintained the sound of resistance in Venezuela, such as BETOE, Genocidio, MxDxH, 100 grados, Läs Tripäs, Atröz Ciudad, Etapöntök, Aurea, Ek Balam, Dxnny Glxver, Veedü, Amör, and Carakaos. Concurrent collectives and initiatives that were also engaged in resistance culture between 2009 and 2014 included: Quimera Negra, Oveja Negras and Visión Libertaria in Caracas, Gargantas Libertarias in Valles del Tuy, the CAIA (with their

Figure 2:13 – Graffiti in Ciudad Bolivar, 22nd March 2013, that reads 'Anarcopunx against the state. No Maduro – No Capriles. Autonomy and self-management. (A)// (E)' (photograph courtesy of the band BETOE).

Figure 2:14 – Flyer of the Taller Libertario Alfredo López distributed in Havana in 2012 (photograph courtesy of Taller Libertario Alfredo López).
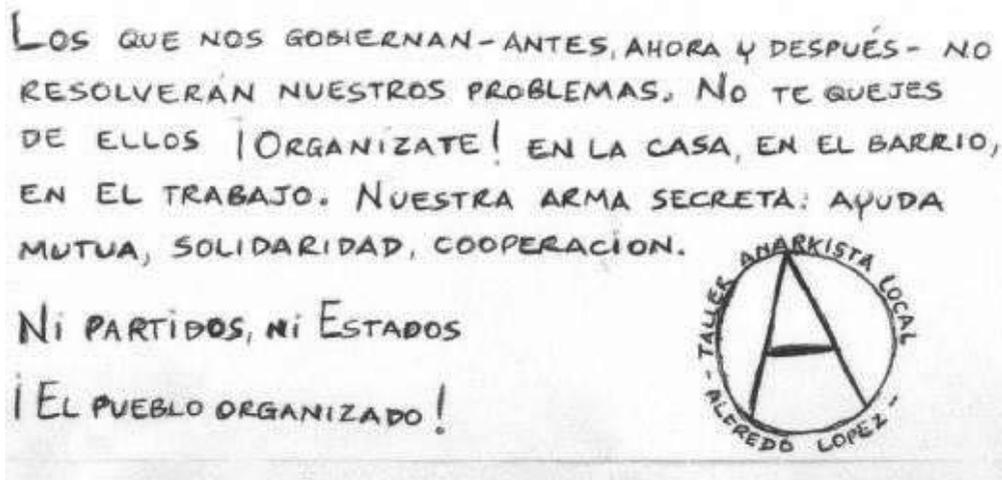
associated fanzine Todos en Llamas) in Guarenas, and the Biblioteca Móvil La Soledad mobile library in Caracas and Mérida. Thre were also DIY labels such as La Hormiga (from Los Teques), Existencia Muerta Records (from El Tigre) and Kaos DIYstro y Records (from Ciudad Bolívar), as well as zines including Doderline from Caracas and the punk anarcha-feminist zine Subversión Vaginal from Ciudad Bolívar.

As the Venezuelan anarchist punk movement entered the 2010s, it endured a significant decline in the number of ongoing initiatives including those established many years prior. Of the 'old guard', only La Libertaria and El Libertario survived, albeit precariously. The latter was still in print thanks to the efforts of six people who, unsuccessfully, sought to rekindle the flame of discontent. These initiatives gave life to the Red Anarquista de Venezuela (RAV – Anarchist Network of Venezuela), hastily created and then disintegrated in 2013. The increase in poverty and the precariousness of life did not translate into the rise of left-wing or revolutionary anti-capitalist groups. In general, the population identified state policies as a form of communism that was detrimental to its development, so although social protest increased, it manifested in other forms. Anarchist or progressive slogans were absent from these protests.

In 2014, the death of an actress and the attempted rape of a student in Mérida sparked a period of protests demanding that the state assume its responsibility, but the campaign was rapidly capitalised upon by the social-democratic opposition party Voluntad Popular [Popular Will] under an insurrectionary strategy known as 'La Salida' [The Exit]. The resulting street violence across several cities, involving barricades and confrontations between demonstrators and security forces, led to raids, arbitrary arrests, accusations of torture, and the deaths of 43 protesters. In that same month, El Libertario printed its final edition before becoming an online publication. The head of the Venezuelan anarchist press, which had been published bimonthly for twenty years, uninterruptedly, was dying in the midst of the uproar. These events were followed by a murky three-year period of increased state repression of popular movements. The Operativos de Liberación del Pueblo (OLP - People's Liberation Operations), formed under the guise of fighting

crime, precipitated forced evictions and the recording of 505 police executions. The situation was compounded by the worst period of shortages of household goods ever experienced in the country, with enormous queues to buy food and hygiene products, teams of people searching for leftovers in rubbish bags, forcing the emigration of Venezuelans across the Colombian border, often on foot. For the few anarchist punks who were still in Venezuela, being optimistic seemed divorced from their lived reality.

The apocalyptic panorama in Venezuela contrasted with what Cuba experienced during those years. Largely as a result of the support provided from the mainland, the island enjoyed a renewal in the international arena with its incorporation into the Rio Group

Figure 2:15 – Assembly at the ABRA Social and Libertarian Centre in Havana, Cuba in 2018 (photograph courtesy of Taller Libertario Alfredo López).

association of Latin America and Caribbean countries, and participation in the Fifth Summit of the Americas of April 2009, which allowed it access to financing, credit and foreign investment. This also paved the way for the thawing of diplomatic relations with the US and a new period for Cubans, including a commercial reactivation between Havana and Florida. The exiled Cuban diaspora were able to make return visits and send supplies, foreign currency and foodstuffs to relatives on the island. This even allowed anarchist punk propaganda and literature to circulate more easily, and members of the US-based Federación Anarquista Rosa Negra [Black Rose Anarchist Federation] visited the island. During these years, several bands made up the Cuban punk music scene, including Rezaka, Punk Floyd, Pólvora Soxial, Pikadura, Los Piratas, Krisis, Katarziz, Kaos, Gatillo, Asko, Arrabio, and Adictox – all of which mixed fast-paced punk riffs with lyrics of protest and mockery of the precarious living conditions of Cubans. During these years of economic openness, the Taller Libertario Alfredo López (TLAL), which continued to carry out propaganda and agitation work, was able to go on an information tour of Europe, which led them to connect with other libertarian groups. They also opened a social centre in the capital, Havana, which they called the Centro Social y Biblioteca Libertaria-ABRA [Libertarian Social Centre and Library-ABRA], which became a meeting point for left dissidents, anarchists, ecologists, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. This allowed them to collaborate and participate in the international meeting held in the Dominican Republic that birthed the Federación Anarquista de Centro-America y el Caribe (FACC – Anarchist Federation of Central America and the Caribbean) where three currents of Cuban anarchism combined – the historical anarchism of yesteryear (Frank Fernández), that of the island migrants in the US (Lisette Arocha), and those born and raised in revolution (Dimitri Prieto). Parallel to this, in the city of Lisa in Cuba, new anarchist punk bands such as Eztafilokoko and Rewelta Anarkista emerged, largely inspired by the precursor band Eskoria, creating a scene they called Punk Radikal Kubano (PRK - Cuban Radical Punk). In addition to organising concerts, publishing material, and living true to their libertarian ideals, these groups tried to open a social centre, Proyecto SociaLiza. But this punk scene was met

with repression – concerts were cancelled, premises raided, two people who went by the nicknames of Kaballo and Kacho were arrested. In seven years, six scene members were stabbed by unidentified individuals. The nicknames of the victims, who were badly injured, but not killed, were Hitler Punk, Karloz Rewelta, Pucho Eztafilokoko, Gazpacho, Pingon, and Livan Eztafilokoko. This experience revealed the true intentions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba - more economic openness would be allowed, but this would not mean greater freedoms in the medium term. This was made explicit during

Figure 2:16 – Eztafilokoko concert on the 15th of March 2019 in Lisa, Cuba (photograph courtesy of Wevanz, vocalist of the band).

the inauguration of Miguel Díaz-Canel as president and first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, when he presented himself as a figure of 'continuity'. Indeed, in his first speech, he advised that 'Cuban foreign policy will remain unchanged and Cuba will not make concessions or accept conditionalities' (Periódico Cubano, 2018).

Figure 2:17 – Activists of the Punk Radikal Kubano (PRK) scene, including bands such as Eztafilokoko and Rewelta Anarkista.

¡A las barricadas! [To the barricades!]

The elections for the national parliament of December 2015 illustrated that the people of Venezuela were fed up, handing the social-democratic and conservative opposition an overwhelming majority and putting the Kubazuela administration in a tight spot. A 'clash of powers' followed, until April 2017, with the national congress and the presidency contesting power. This culminated in the Supreme Court of Justice issuing two sentences that suppressed the legislative powers of Congress, to the advantage of the presidency. This sparked mass social unrest in Venezuela with mobilisations taking place in 23 of the country's 24 states. A total of 6,729 demonstrations occurred, involving 56 daily protests. There were 1,313 attacks against government offices or

neighbourhoods, while the police attacked residential areas where the rebels were protesting or hiding, with 124 people killed, more than 4,000 injured, and 609 civilians prosecuted via military tribunals. This upheaval was expressed primarily through non-governmental institutions, into which the few anarchist punks still living in Venezuela tried to integrate. During this period, only a few bands remained active in the small scene, such as Warsystem, Tukuka Zakayama, Vomito, and Akabatrapos. Anarchist initiatives were also scarce, fanzines practically disappeared, with the exception of *Arrechate* and *Contra la Fanzine* (of which only one issue was published due to the high cost of printed paper), and the online blogs *Garganta Libertaria* and *El Libertario* were maintained in a sporadic manner. Nevertheless, a handful of activists who had their formative experiences in the anarchist punk scene became closely involved in the Rebelión Popular, collaborating in the mobilisations. Some of them participated in community defence groups, fighting the arbitrary actions of the security forces that were taking place in Venezuela, before making a significant contribution to groups that rose up against the state during that year. But Kubazuela's response wasn't long coming. With advice from the experienced dictatorship of Cuba, they set about repressing the social movements in Venezuela and establishing terror among the population. Several young anarchists were arrested and then released, while others, like Gianni Scovino, were beaten and tortured by riot police – as filmed by a member of the public. As this took place, there was absolute silence and little solidarity from the international anarchist 'movement'. As had happened with the Cubans, their Venezuelan counterparts were abandoned, left to their own devices as others bought into the eternal Cuban revolutionary fantasy. The defeat of the Rebelión Popular was a moment of rupture for the remaining anarchist punks in Venezuela, precipitating their exile – Bogotá, Colombia, became their last refuge. Almost six million Venezuelans crossed the border on foot in the following years.

With the defeat weighing upon my shoulders and marked by the violence I had experienced, I sought refuge in the US for a couple of months, returning to Florida. I was unable to reconnect with Frank Fernández due to his advanced age, but I was able to meet with Lisette Arocha and Otari Oliva, as well as other Cuban-Americans, with whom

I evaluated what had happened. During these meetings the following conclusions were reached:

1. Kubazuela is a fact. The process of colonisation and the transfer of domination expertise from one elite to the other is concrete, meaning that the survival of one government is intrinsically dependent on the other.

2. The Venezuelan 'Periodo Especial' (similar to the 'Special Period' in Cuba, with shortages of food and other products, alongside civil and political restrictions) has reached its endpoint. Hunger as a method of control generated an adverse reaction amongst the population, encouraging the rebellion. Economic sanctions were imposed by the US after the Rebelión Popular in 2018, aggravating the difficult living conditions. Cuba was in the process of opening up and was succeeding; Venezuela would experience the same in the future. The 'mixed model' of places such as China and Vietnam would be imposed, combining strong political and social control while allowing free enterprise and foreign capital investment, within a framework of economic liberalisation.

3. We are alone, and, 60 years later, the bulk of the 'progressive' or left-wing forces consider us reactionary.

4. The use of classical anarchist iconography says little or nothing to the people who suffer from a system of exclusion. We must look for other references, even if it is ultimately towards the same transformation.

5. The world is split between two binary poles and this is transferred to the anarchist movement. For many minds, it is impossible to be autonomous or to have a different option to the binary poles of power.

With more doubts than answers and with the constant danger of being a victim of repression, I returned to a Venezuela that was healing from the wounds caused in 2017. The Rebelión Popular was followed by a process of multiplication of community initiatives, leading to a kind of community 'anarchisation', which no longer expected anything from the state, but sought by its own means to try to solve the problems of food, housing, culture and basic services, in a manifestation of the principle of 'mutual aid' elaborated by Kropotkin (1902). 'The first law is to be

optimistic' – something of that hope, which Cuban anarchism instilled in me, began to flourish. This new reality was followed by new scenarios in Venezuela, including the fraudulent elections of 2018, the dual presidential election of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guido in 2019, the protests of January of that year, the general blackout that affected the entire country, the attempt to bring in humanitarian aid through Colombia and Brazil, the failed coup of Operación Libertad, and a stagnation in national politics; to which Covid-19 and the freezing of social relations as a result of the quarantine can now be added. Nonetheless, community initiatives continued to strengthen, with the re-establishment in 2020 of feminist and LGBTIQ+ groups in Venezuela, as well as widespread use of online networking technology to train, to denounce, to connect with other regional initiatives, and to prepare for the eventual lifting of Covid restrictions.

Siempre renace la esperanza
[Hope is always reborn]

The medium-term ravages of the Covid-19 quarantine – confinement and the digitalisation of social dynamics – did not prevent communities from mobilising to demand justice. In the US, Chile, Colombia and Myanmar a new cycle of global disobedience awoke. Each of these countries boasts a long history of protests, but the concurrent mobilisation in Cuba is an unusual addition to this list – such events have not seen since before the triumph of the Castros. The fall in tourism as a result of Covid-19, new economic sanctions by the Trump-led US administration, coupled with a stagnation in the flow of the US dollar to Cuba, produced a wave of unrest among the youth that was radicalised by the arrest of several members of the San Isidro cultural movement. The protests reached a climax between the 11th and 17th of July 2021, and the spontaneous demonstrations, with a decentralised leadership and demands for humanitarian aid, captured worldwide attention.

Figure 2:18 Anarchist punks and redskins protesting in Havana during the Cuban spring from the 11th to 17th of July 2021 (photograph courtesy of the band Eztafilokoko).

Anarchism is a cyclical current. It bursts and disappears in time, as happens periodically, and the Caribbean is no exception. In the midst of chaos, communiqués from Cuban anarchist groups began to appear on the internet where they spoke of the 'end of the social enchantment of the revolution' (Taller Libertario Alfredo López, 2021). Some managed to conduct an interview with CrimethInc., in which they claimed to be like the dolphin, 'up to our necks in the water and always laughing' (CrimethInc., 2021). But the Cuban Spring, like the Venezuelan Spring, was rapidly crushed by state violence. Due to censorship on the island, it is difficult to know the exact number of people arrested, assaulted, persecuted or wounded. We only know that there have been 187 forced disappearances – demonstrators whose whereabouts are unknown at the time of writing this chapter. It is too early to see what impact the protests will have in the medium term; whether this initial momentum can be channelled into new structures that will strengthen the island's oppositional community initiatives, as happened in Venezuela, remains to be seen.

Due to the co-option of leftist symbology by the Kubazuela governments, it is very likely that anarchism and punk have changed forever in the Caribbean, evolving towards new forms of assembly via horizontalism in which activities are self-managed, with equal gender representation, and where responsibilities are shared. There is an entrenched perpetual distrust of power and its multiple forms of oppression, as culture asserts itself as a means to achieve change. References to Spain 1936, May 1968 in France, anarcopunk, anti-globalisation, and the red-and-black flags may be left behind forever. But that ever-present rebelliousness, in new and unexpected forms, springs up and will continue to occur in both Cuba and Venezuela; the natural impulse towards freedom is an established part of both peoples' anthropology. After years of government control, social conflicts and hunger, the communities, especially in the popular sectors of Venezuela, continue to organize through autonomy and self-management in organisations like La Guarura, Comadres Purpuras or Labo Ciudadano. Some punk bands such as Akabatrapos, Tukuka Zakayama, 7 Balazos or Agente Extraño maintain an oppositional and rebellious attitude against all kinds of authority. We can be sure of one thing about Kubazuela –

that sooner, rather than later, we will toast to a free Cuba and Venezuela, with rum but without Coca-Cola.

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CHAPTER THREE
PUNK ARCHIVE:
COLLECTIONISM, MEMORIES & RESISTANCE IN BRAZIL (1979-2000)

ANTÔNIO CARLOS DE OLIVEIRA

Chapter Three: Punk archive: Collectionism, memories and resistance in Brazil (1979-2000)

Antônio Carlos de Oliveira

This chapter explores the process of organizing an archive of documents on the punk movement, from collectionism to the self-taught and self-managed practices used for this organization. It explores how the do-it-yourself ethos of the punk movement merges with anarchist practices, and how the relationship with the generations of older anarchists in the city of São Paulo was of fundamental importance for this learning, achievement and even its public availability today.

Punk in Brazil dates back to the 1970s and, as a cultural and social movement, it has an intense production of different types of materials, including a large variety of printed publications and records. This movement was the subject of countless reports in the mainstream print and television press, and in the first decade of its existence it was portrayed mainly in an exotic, backward, reactionary way, as permeated by violence against the population – it was compared to garbage and sewage, among other things. In addition, it was treated as an imitation of movements from other countries where punks had a reason for being and existing, and therefore it was seen as a meaningless movement in Brazil. When drawing a parallel with the anarchism of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, we will see that the Brazilian bourgeois press also used similar criticisms to attack anarchist thought.

When studying the punk movement in Brazil, we find that at the beginning of the movement the actions of a small part of the scene led to confusion about how punk should be defined. They saw themselves as apolitical, neutral, part of a solely musical and behavioral movement, among other possible definitions. As a result, they reproduced much of the mistaken stereotypes created by the mainstream press at that time (see also Bittencourt and Vieira's chapter in this volume). In the movement's composition, we find a youth who are children of the

working class, in its overwhelming majority, inhabitants of the outskirts of large, medium or small Brazilian cities – young people who were often expelled and excluded from school for not adapting to traditional forms of teaching or for having to work in order to contribute to the family income. Thus, these young people were outside the formal schooling system and had to face the harsh social reality of economic exclusion.

Young people from the punk movement educated themselves through textual, visual and sound production practices – practices which confronted the dominant and pervasive culture of capitalist society. Punk culture was a result of their political-social action. At the same time, punks began a dialogue with wider society to challenge the initial stigmatized stereotypes of punks in the mainstream media. This non-hierarchical and non-institutional movement carried out this production individually or in small collectives that reflected on what it is to be punk and reflected on the society in which it operates. The produced material circulated through the hands of people seeking out different points of view about punk and the multiple themes it addresses. This search in itself is part of an affirmation process, the material strengthens the understanding of what 'being punk' is in a dynamic way, because people can only be punk by their involvement in punk scenes, and punks have been reflective about their actions.

It is also worth noting that the movement seeks to use the tools it has at its disposal, for example: music as a form of entertainment *and* protest; the shows and meetings as places of exchange of experiences of the punks' lived realities. Another fundamental element to understand the movement are fanzines, understood as a way of recording and reflecting on what it is to be punk, and to be in a capitalist, underdeveloped country where a significant part of society is excluded from access to basic consumer goods and participation in political life. Fanzine production is also an instrument of self-taught learning since it is where punks reflect on their reality and think about how to transform it. Punks often collect fanzines and records. In this case, materials that reveal much of their political and cultural orientations. However, over time, they often distance themselves from the movement until they lose contact with it and what once had great relevance is forgotten in a box

or folder in their home or their parents' home, and then it is discarded or lost due to lack of care because it 'no longer has value'.

Preserving this production is a way of keeping and recording many of the processes that punk went through in its journey of emotional and intellectual maturation, its affirmation as a relevant movement for youth culture and for social movements. It is also a way to preserve memory as a form of resistance against the narratives produced by the dominant class which understands this youth as alienated, depoliticized and unprepared. Based on these assumptions, the need to organize an 'archive' about the punk movement arises, as part of this concern to keep, catalog, organize and make available to the public a large amount of diverse material, so that other narratives and memories about punk in Brazil are created.

This chapter begins with some discussions on the difference between collectionism, collection and archive. It is common to misuse the expression 'archive', a set of collections, for what is actually one collection, that is, a variety of different documents of the same group or social movement. Next, I explain my trajectory as a beginner in collectionism, commenting on the reasons for making this collection, a process with similarities to the experiences of other punks, according to several conversations I've had over the years.

Having been part of the movement allowed me a perception of the different types of documents produced – in this specific case, my choice was for the entirety of the collection to be printed materials. To organize the collection, it was necessary to seek training. As a regular at the Centro de Cultura Social de São Paulo (CCS – Center for Social Culture of São Paulo), an anarchist place, I experienced an environment that emphasized self-teaching. The self-taught experience of anarchists and the generous contributions of those who worked in archives and anarchist libraries, were fundamental for this learning – for instance I read manuals produced by people who worked in archives and anarchist libraries. These experiences, and the lessons learned from anarchism and its self-teaching, made the punks' do-it-yourself ethos more meaningful, especially after I watched Professor Valverde's lecture 'Pedagogia Libertária e o Autodidatismo' ['Libertarian Pedagogy and self-teaching'] and then read his doctoral thesis (Valverde, 1996).

Whether from the experience in producing fanzines or from the experience with anarchists, I conclude that much of what I learned in punk I took into my work in formal school education, and to my other work with young people in socially vulnerable situations, and to all my research, academic or not. Thus, I reaffirm that I have developed a lot as a self-taught person, a political pedagogical form of education based on solidarity and carried out in mutual teaching and learning.

This text is very autobiographical, since the 'memories' of the punk experience are closely associated with anarchist learning, with the experiences of libertarian spaces such as the CCS, and to the continuity of this process, to which the academic dimension has brought other elements for reflection and research on the punk movement, and topics relevant to anarchism and to school and social education. For an amateur, and as someone self-taught in the subject, it was an interesting and important learning experience. Later I realized something curious, that this learning was not very different from my lived experience at home. My father, a metalworker, was very organized, and my mother, a housekeeper, was somewhat compulsive with cleanliness and organization, and it was the same with my paternal grandparents who lived next to us.

Collectionism, collection or archive?

When I started talking to Simone Silva Fernandes, a documentary technician from the Centro de Documentação e Informação Científica (CEDIC – Documentation and Scientific Information Center), which is an archive in the Pontifícia Universidade Católica of São Paulo (PUC-SP – Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo), I realized how subtly she tried to correct the inaccuracy of some of the terms that I used. Simone Fernandes defined that it was not an archive, but a compilation, a collection – the archive is the institution that receives the collections. Initially it was supposed to be an archive about punks, made available at the CCS, however, at CEDIC, it became a different proposal, and it became a compilation, a collection.

The CCS was founded in 1933 as an outcome of anarchist workers' actions in the unions – they wanted to develop educational and cultural activities among workers and in popular environments. As early as 1934, they were at the forefront of a major mobilization against the 'Brazilian Integralists', the name adopted by fascists in Brazil. It culminated in a shootout that took place in the city center of São Paulo, at Sé Square, the event is known as the 'flock of green chickens' in allusion to the color of the fascists' shirts. The CCS closed under the fascist dictatorship of President Getúlio Vargas from 1937 until 1945, and again in 1969 under the military civil dictatorship. It reopened in 1985 and since then it has always had the participation of some punks who were very active in publicizing CCS activities among other punks. Until approximately 1991, the CCS in São Paulo and the one in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which today is the Centro de Estudos Libertários Ideal Peres (CELIP – Center for Libertarian Studies Ideal Peres), were the only anarchist places open to the public in Brazil. CELIP honors in its name the anarchist comrade Ideal Peres, a doctor who died in 1995 aged 70 (Ferrua, 2013). Among its anarchist and social studies activities are lectures, debates, courses, exhibitions and soirées, it has a library, an archive on anarchism, and a bookstore.

The CCS regarded the material on punk, which has close links with anarchism, as part of this archive on anarchism. When studying the punk movement, we realize that it has always been a great promoter of anarchism through its productions, which is why I understood the CCS as a very logical choice to keep this memory. I started attending the CCS in 1985. The first time I was there the speakers included professor Aziz Simão, one of the first to do research on the revolutionary (anarchist) trade unionist movement in Brazil at the university, and professor Maurício Tragtenberg, self-taught autonomist, who researched heterodox Marxists and revolutionary syndicalism. Both were members and lecturers at the CCS since 1940. In December of that year we held a meeting to request use of the place for a punk meeting (Centro de Cultura Social, 1985). In 1987, I participated in a panel discussion titled 'Cycle: Culture, Counter Culture and Alternative Culture' with longtime CCS frequenter Gurgel, of the fanzine *NCP – Núcleo de Consciência Punk* [*Nucleus of Punk Awareness*] in Itaim Paulista

neighborhood, and Falcão from the band Excomungados (Oliveira, 2015). Then I contacted the CCS secretary, comrade Jaime Cubero, shoemaker and retired archivist at *Journal do Brasil*, an anarchist activist who died in 1998, at the age of 72 (Cubero, 2015). I asked him for the contact of the fellow Italian anarchist Carlo Aldegheri (Cubero, 1987), a combatant in the Spanish Civil War (Aldegheri and Aldegheri, 2017), who, with his insight, destroyed many of my teenage beliefs about revolution and the punk movement itself (Oliveira, 2015). I can say that Aldegheri was a very important person for my understanding of many aspects of history and anarchism (Oliveira, 1995).

Why make this collection?

I have had several collections such as sticker albums, comic books, magazines, books and so on. Initially, the material on punk was just another collection, until the day when Zuleide, an art teacher at the Cidade de Osaka Municipal School, where I attended the seventh and eighth grades of elementary school, said: 'Starting today we are going to have some debates on important issues, make a circle. Carlos, why don't you start explaining what punk is?' I realized that there was no answer to many of the questions, I needed to know more and the little material I had already collected seemed to have increased significance. The question then is, what is the objective when making any kind of collection? I found this to be the most common definition: collecting is the process of acquiring and owning things in an active, selective and passionate way. For most collectors, collecting means satisfaction, an impulse in the search for beauty or the desire to preserve history (Farina et al., 2006, pp. 3-4). It is a fact that for many people the act of collecting can become a compulsion, usually associated with some type of behavior which is harmful to their physical and mental health. I understand this relation, but that is not what we are going to deal with here.

Collecting has a specific classification and typology, the ones I most identify with are:

1. Self-attributed activity: it is based on a personal desire that manifests itself, that makes sense to the personality and that cares to characterize a differentiation of the individual in relation to social groups. Something that will enrich their education or allow them to have positive values. Due to personal character, this behavior can be long lasting.

2. Social collecting: the collection is initiated by pressure from social groups. The activity occurs with social pressure as a way of accepting the individual in a group, to be recognized in the group. The continuity and existence of the collection are directly linked to the individual's permanence in the respective social group of reference (Farina et al., 2006, p. 6).

According to the authors referenced here, the typology presented is far from definitive, and there may be an overlap of the types.

Collecting and self-teaching

An important concept for anarchists is *direct action*, which means that interested people must act directly on problems. Thereby, from a *self-managed* organizational practice, without the interference of non-involved third parties, based on the principle of *mutual aid* and *solidarity*, a change in common daily practice is achieved (Cubero, 2015). In this sense, another fundamental aspect is that of the *libertarian pedagogy* advocated by anarchists, wherein self-teaching gains a prominent role. As defined by Antonio Valverde (1996, pp. 204-212), the act of learning for oneself is largely the result of *mutual teaching* with a very clear objective of a very precise political-ideological aspect; the political-intellectual emancipation of the proletariat. The action of organizing this 'archive' is based on the principle of self-education. I note that when I started collecting I was a fifteen-year-old young man, and even after becoming more mature at university I still had no knowledge about the organization of this type of 'archive'. I define myself as self-taught in the subject. I admit that it was difficult to think through the logicistics of organizing the collection. At first, I used a catalog folder, then

another and another, and then came the plastic folders, and then the file boxes. When I started thinking about systematizing the 'archive' I was already at university.

In the spirit of mutual aid, I received many contributions, for example, from the old CCS activist Jaime Cubero, and from Antônio Martinez, an anarchist comrade, factory worker and CCS librarian, who died in 1998, aged 83 (Morel, 2002). I also had help from my teachers at PUC-SP and from CEDIC itself. In the search for information on how to organize the collection, I wrote to and then talked with professor Yara Aun Khoury (Oliveira, 1992; Khoury, 1992), CEDIC's coordinator, who put me in touch with the historiographer Viviane Tessitore who worked at CEDIC and provided the material on how to organize collections. I also contacted professors such as Maurício Tragtenberg (Oliveira, 1990a), who had been professor Marcia Regina Costa's supervisor, whose thesis was published as *Carecas do Subúrbio − caminhos do nomadismo moderno* [*Skinheads from Suburbia − paths of modern nomadism*] (Costa, 1993).

Using the guidelines received, I began to identify a specific logic in the studied material that punks had produced − fanzines, posters, pamphlets, meeting minutes and so on. I separated everything by type and in chronological order from the oldest to the most recent. I knew it would be difficult to review the different types of documents or cite the many references that each document brought. In the initial phase, still in the plastic folders (made of polypropylene plastic with flaps and elastic), I used index cards, made notes relevant to the document such as title, date, number, place of publication, author, size, number of pages, a brief summary of the document, and so on. Due to the increase in the volume of the material, financial difficulties, and lack of personal availability, it was not possible to continue the work in that way, so I started typing the basic information on sheets of paper, such as the box number where the document was, title, date, number, place of publication and author. The description list of the documents in this collection is 140 pages long with more than 9,000 listed documents, of which 1,160 are fanzines.

Do-it-yourself! Self-teaching and anarchism

In a gesture of solidarity, fellow punks promptly donated their materials, which allowed this 'archive' to expand. Most of them came from an anarchist companion, Moésio Rebouças, who published the bulletin *Agência de Notícias Anarquistas* [*Anarchist News Agency*] from the city of Cubatão, and from Gurgel of the *NCP* zine, and then afterwards from China of the band Excomungados. Other people collaborated, but with smaller volumes and often through the process of material exchange, a common practice among punks and anarchists. One of the common characteristics for those who made fanzines, like me, is the desire to publicize their material. This was the case with my own productions: *Anti Sistema* numbers 1 and 2 in 1984, and 3 and 4 in 1985 (*Anti Sistema*, 1985); and the 1986 fanzine *Aborto imediato para o renascer de um novo espermatozoide* [*Immediate abortion for the rebirth of a new sperm*] numbers 1, 2 and 3, produced with my friend and neighbor, punk and anarchist comrade Edivaldo Vieira da Silva (now a social sciences PhD and professor at PUC-SP). This mutual aid collaboration is also a common aspect for anarchists who wish to disseminate the ideas and practices of anarchism mainly by example and by action.

Throughout the process, I talked to and exchanged many correspondences with the punks who donated their materials to the 'archive' such as Gurgel (Oliveira, 1993; Gurgel, 1994) and others like Josimas Ramos (n.d.) from the band Execradores who is nowadays involved in the project Cultive Resistência [Cultivate Resistance], which is part of the website No Gods No Masters. They were aware of the project from its beginning. The same was done with the anarchists, especially those from the CCS with whom, in addition to talking to formalize this partnership, I made a written request later (Oliveira, 1990b). In 1998, I talked to some people, including Moésio Rebouças and Renato Ramos from the CELIP of Rio de Janeiro, about the desire to buy a computer and a scanner (Oliveira 1998a; 1998b) to digitize all the material and distribute it through floppy disks (the main form of data storage at the time), but it was not possible due to financial difficulties.

As for the work itself (separating, organizing, listing), I sporadically had the collaboration of my companions, daughters, punks or anarchists who frequented my home. However, at one point this work became too heavy, so I decided in 2000 to forward the 'archive' to the CCS. When I finished the work, I wrote a document listing all the material in the 'archive' and sent it along with a disk to 50 addresses in São Paulo and other states in Brazil, to punk groups, anarchist punks, comrades like Paulo Victor Carrão (at the Centro de Cultura Social, 1998) from the city of Juiz de Fora, anarchist groups such as the CELIP of Rio de Janeiro (Oliveria, 2000), university professors, such as Maurício Tragtenberg (Centro de Cultura Social, 1998) and Gurgel (2001), among others.

For the collector, detachment is a problem

In 1993 I had the experience of taking the part of the collection that I had already organized to the CCS, something that could fit in four or five large folders. Some punks wanted to see the material, I agreed and warned them to take care to put everything back in its place. I know it was not on purpose, but when they left everything was mixed up. I was very sad – after all, there was a lot of work and dedication of many people involved in the whole process. In this experience of taking the documents to the CCS, I found out that there is a certain difficulty in detaching from the collection, and I learned that this is a common trait for many collectors. Problems in distributing the collection items after death are significant for the collector, they worry about who they will leave or donate the collection to (Farina et al., 2006, p. 8). The initial idea was that, as a CCS 'archive', I would work with it or that they would always have one person or more interested in looking after its organization, maintenance and preservation, as well as continuing to expand it. I had personal reasons for wanting to transfer the archive to the CCS, but I had some difficulties in communicating with them, so I decided to send the collection to CEDIC, the archive in PUC-SP mentioned earlier. When I published my first book Os fanzines contam uma história sobre os Punks [Fanzines tell a story about the Punks]

(Oliveira, 2005), someone from the Northeast region of Brazil, based on what he said he had heard from third parties, accused me of having sold the 'archive'. I sent him a copy of the CEDIC documents and it was all clarified, but it was a very painful episode. A few years later I started going to CEDIC and gradually digitizing much of what I was interested in. I noticed that some of the material had water damage and later I learnt that during the CEDIC move from the PUC building, the collection had been left outside on a rainy night by the contractor.

Do-it-yourself, self-teaching and memory

Punk is the school and the fanzine is the booklet made by the student himself. (Renato Lauris Jr – anarchist, teacher and author of fanzines, including *Sobrevidas* [*Survivals*])

On the 15th of August 1992, the CCS received professor Edgar De Decca, who spoke at the lecture 'Memory and Citizenship', from the series 'Strike of 1917', on its 75th anniversary. I transcribed it, along with several other lectures, completing four notebooks which are also in the CCS archive. But, before professor de Decca started his lecture, Jaime Cubero informed those present: 'Look, we are going to lose the place of memory', referring to the high rent of the property where the CCS headquarters was, which could even take the CCS to its closure, since the owner showed little interest in negotiating. After that, de Decca asked how many years the archive had been in existence, because, he said, it was through the places of memory that we create group identity and identity in relation to our past. The loss of these places also meant losing the space where memory could survive. De Decca argued that we are what we are because of our senses (touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight); it is through our body that we can be in this world, in this space. Moving our body, we move all our organic matter, which through a nervous system takes stimuli to our brain, the body produces chemicals, which produces memory. Then he said that if we thought about what we were, we would see that we are matter capable of externalizing, and when that occurs we have the reflection that is the place of memory. We

are what we are because we reflect, reflection is the place of knowledge, of the capacity for everything to be achieved by ourselves – if we lose our memory we also lose our dimension of subject and our own being.

In the modern world, in the midst of the fourth Industrial Revolution, we live what Bauman (2007) calls liquid life – that is to say, everything is very fluid. The modern world is hardly appropriate to constitute itself as a solid place for the preservation of memory, an agitated, fragmented and extremely elusive world. With the constant rationalization of production processes, the implementation of increasingly technological working methods and highly automated production, a significant portion of workers are more alienated than ever. These individuals do not have, nor do capitalists want them to have, the necessary training to face the new challenges of this postmodern world. We are, at different levels, technological illiterates.

As workers, anarchists have always fought so that through self-management the working class would have control of the entire production process, from planning to execution, and the forms of commercialization or exchanges of the production – that's where their power is.

DIY has become an important part of the anarchist punk tradition. The do-it-yourself ethos (Pereira, 2006, p. 56; Teixeira, 2007, p. 35) is a very important concept in the punk movement. As Mark Perry of *Sniffin' Glue* said: 'don't be satisfied with what I'm writing, go out and do it yourself' (as cited in Bivar, 1982, p. 55). In other words, do not be satisfied or consume ready-made culture, produce it yourself. This is to resume those principles of control of your production process, it is like saying YOU ARE ABLE - do it yourself. Doing it yourself breaks with the consumerist logic of capitalism, beyond producing your own music, band, concerts, fanzines, clothing, props and so on, it is also self-managing your own culture. In other words it is cultural production influenced by principles of direct action – that is, performed by those directly interested, without the interference of third parties. These are principles dear to anarchism (Cubero, 2015, p. 45; Joyeux, 1992). It is also the clearest representation of self-teaching, of learning for yourself from mutual teaching. It is learning to do, by doing. It is learning to be, by being.

Learning for yourself, doing it for yourself

This has been the trajectory of many punks. Many of them actually learned to write by making fanzines, and reading takes on a political meaning here, because far beyond understanding the symbols it is the action of reading the world and its contradictions. Moreover, it is through the production of the fanzine, from its making to its distribution, and the exchange of fanzines, correspondence and so on, that they understand the dimension of direct action and self-management of the production process.

In my case, in addition to all this, it was from the collection of punk movement materials that I began to realize the meaning of this learning – the need to share this knowledge made me immerse myself in do-it-yourself self-teaching as a form of self-management. And when punks produce their culture, they are producing memories, which, among other forms, can be represented by all this material in the 'archive'. When these materials come into contact with our senses, they make us reflect, make us evoke events in our life – not as pure memory or nostalgia, but as reflections.

Therefore, as a conclusion ...

In order to show the value of the archive, throughout this chapter I referenced documents that are part of the archive. I hope that I have also managed to demonstrate the great diversity of the archive.

I started my punk materials collection in 1980, when Paulinho of the Punkids punk group, who had been my classmate in the seventh grade and is one of the punks in the neighborhood where I live, gave me a photocopy of the report 'The "Punkids" from New York' by *Psiu!* magazine, then in 1981 I bought my first fanzine, *Factor Zero*, at the Punk Rock Discos store. Undoubtedly, this collection led me to a certain specialization about the objects I collected, as it facilitated my introduction into the highly reflective political and pedagogical universe that is anarchism, which in turn allowed my access to academic knowledge. Unfortunately, academic knowledge is still very averse to

anarchism and not easily accessible to most workers. I often repeat that the punk movement was my first university and the CCS was the second, in fact, social movements also educate.

Initially, I had no idea that this collection would create conditions to preserve the memory of one of the most important youth movements that emerged in the 1970s. Nor how much it would impact my personal development. Nor that it would make it easier for others to access this culture. Unfortunately, it is still common to see little appreciation of culture (not just punk) and places of memory, we always hear people say that the material was lost, damaged, or simply that it was a juvenile thing and no longer matters. There are other people and groups that keep collections organized, two important examples are the Centro de Cultura Social Vila Dalva [Center for Social Culture Vila Dalva], an anarchist punk initiative focusing on discussions on afro-indigenous issues, and Casa Punk [Punk House], a distributor of punk materials, music studio, and independent label, which has been active since 1999.

I have worked together with João Augusto Neves, a historian, teacher at Escola Técnica Estadual Pedro Ferreira Alves (a State Technical School) and doctoral student at Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP – State University of Campinas), so that soon we can make all these collections virtually available (and João will have a chapter about punk in São Paulo in a subsequent volume of this book series). One of the platforms we will use is the Edgard Leuenroth Archive (AEL) website (Leuenroth was a typographer, anarcho-syndicalist, newspaper editor, director, and author of anarchist books. He died in 1968, aged 87). Another online platform is the Acervo Punk [Punk Collection] that we are developing. Finally, it will also be available via online public platforms, with the partnership of Punk Scholars Network – Brazil.

40 years have passed since this collection began. The collection made publications possible, and facilitated moments of conversation with other people also interested in the same themes. The collection facilitated a peculiar learning, not only mine, but also of many punks, both men and women, including anarchists who are working in the movement and who also lived this diversity that made it possible for different generations of punk and anarchist people to live together. I

close this text with the words of comrade Sassa Tupinambá (Tupinambás are indigenous peoples who inhabit the coastal region of Brazil): 'Memory is the mother of identity and the grandmother of resistance'.

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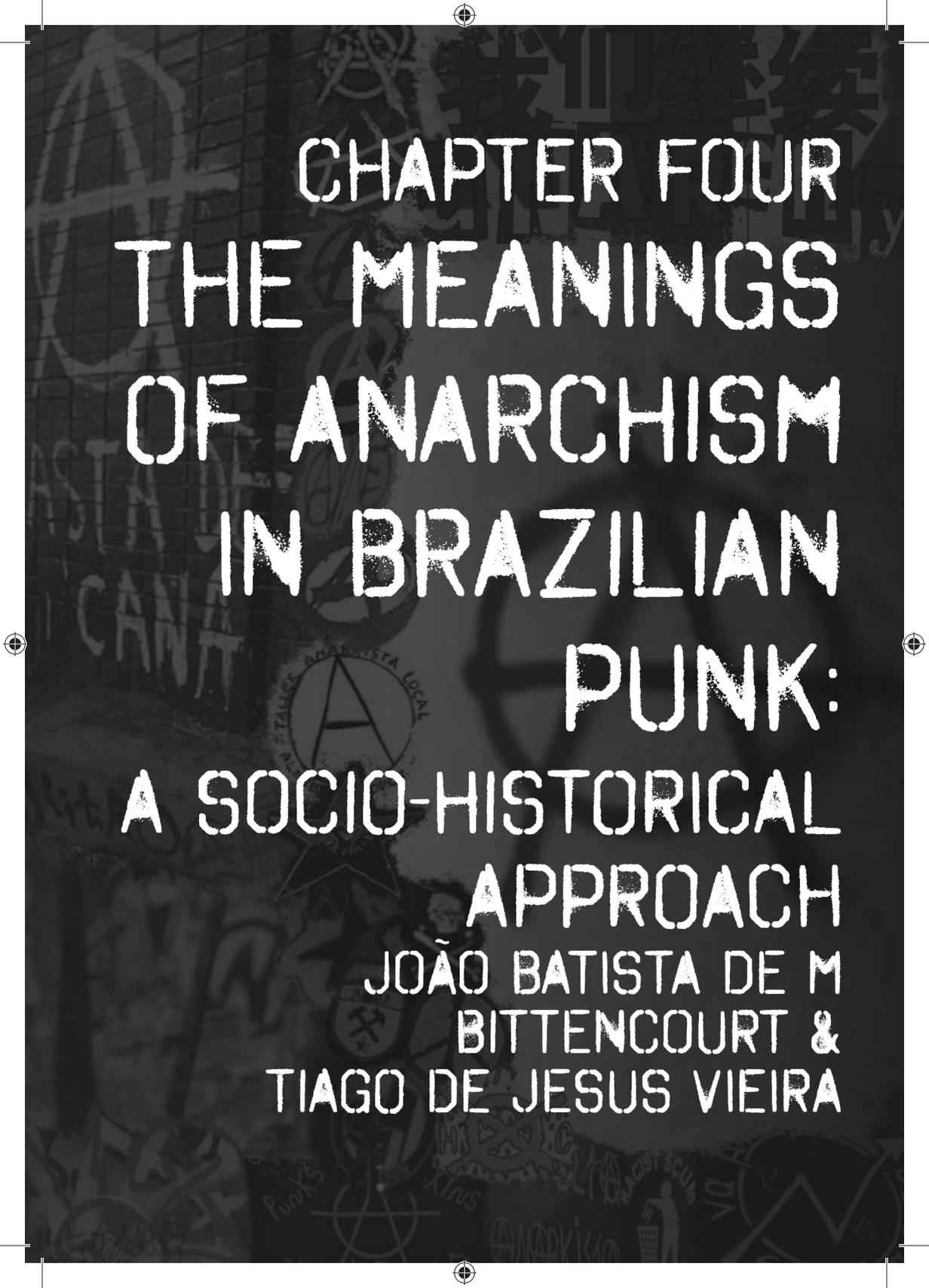
CHAPTER FOUR
THE MEANINGS OF ANARCHISM IN BRAZILIAN PUNK:
A SOCIO-HISTORICAL APPROACH

JOÃO BATISTA DE M BITTENCOURT &
TIAGO DE JESUS VIEIRA

Chapter Four: The meanings of anarchism in Brazilian punk: A socio-historical approach

João Batista de M Bittencourt and Tiago de Jesus Vieira

This chapter offers a few reflections on the relationship between anarchism and punk identity in Brazil since the late 1970s. As a philosophical movement, anarchism has significantly influenced the punk lifestyle throughout the world, perceived either as a self-destructive nihilism or as part of a political ideology and culture linked to autonomy. In Brazil, the punk youth has appropriated several different concepts over the decades. At first, anarchist ideas were a synonym of subversion and transgression – being an anarchist meant going against everything and everyone, from Christian morality to political Parties. Such ideas went through a gradual politicization that culminated in anarchist punk collectives (termed 'anarcopunk' in Brazilian Portuguese) committed to associativism and the criticism of the many forms of oppression.

Our goal is to present the different meanings of anarchism elaborated by individuals within the Brazilian punk scene, in the past and now, showing how some of these experiences developed in a culture of daily resistance. This specific idea of resistance involves a group of everyday tactics and strategies adopted by the oppressed aiming to oppose the dominant groups – performances and clothing styles were part of the language of these contesting narratives seeking to break the status quo. To capture how this gathering of ideas was received, appropriated and resignified, we firstly consider the emergence of anarchist ideas within the punk scene, mainly in the greater São Paulo region. Then, in the second part, we consider the contemporary practices relevant to this anarchist/punk relationship, taking as a reference some of the anarchist punk collectives in the Northeast of Brazil.

This analysis not only reveals the development of the anarchist punk posture but also explores the nuances of punk identity formation

in Brazil, which has been marked by several tensions. The sources used include Brazilian literature on the topic, as well as written, oral and graphic productions made by the punks themselves.

A brief history of punk identities in Brazil

Punk was first mentioned in Brazil in the late 1970s, when magazines and newspapers (such as *POP* and *Isto É*) began discussing the movement, normally in a generic, superficial way. But these sparse accounts and the ideas they contained, along with a small number of punk records, formed punk's entry into the country. Soon a legion of young punks embraced the idea. Even though it was an imported phenomenon, part of this acceptance was because the movement allowed the youth from the lower classes in society to express themselves (Bivar, 1982). The punk scene was more intense in the greater São Paulo area, where the do-it-yourself ideal sparked the emergence of different conceptions of punk. The emerging punk scene created a sense of unrestricted belonging, where all were welcome, but because there was limited information about punk ideas and records, scenes developed in different ways across the country, based on local peculiarities.

The first years of the punk experience in Brazil have been described as a sort of ideological chaos (Caiafa, 1985), due to the plurality of references evoked by those who identified as punks. Overall, punk was seen only as a vague combination of ideas, normally representing something dirty, rotten, and aggressive, with a scruffy aesthetic to reflect this performative violence (Pedroso and Souza, 1983). The identities that emerged from this unclear conception of punk were based on looks or attitudes that sought to break with established norms – though they were not equally embraced by all punks. One of the few noticeable characteristics in this first moment was the increase in violence. For these subjects, being punk was above all to challenge the established order through an aggressive performance against various forms of authority. This was also expressed through territorial conflicts between distinct punk groups from various regions in the city. Both forms of aggression, visual and physical, were part of a perspective of

confronting the world. Punk then grew into wider categories of behaviors. In the context of military dictatorship, it gave the opportunity to autonomously express anger against the national context of violence, unemployment, and poverty (Pedroso and Souza, 1983). Linked to this was the notable lack of entertainment venues for poor young people. Not surprisingly the São Paulo neighborhood of Vila Carolina would become the main hub for punk-inspired bands, like Condutores de Cadáver, Inocentes, Restos de Nada, and Cólera (for more on these bands see João Neves's chapter in the following volume in this series).

Since its arrival, and with the exception of a few specific cases, the punk scene in Brazil presented itself as a collective identity for suburban youth, but adherence to this identity did not demand any homogeneity. On the contrary, it was a phenomenon founded on individual potential, making the construction of a homogeneous identity extremely complex. This context of plural identites and the increase in violence caused inter-scene conflicts between different types and groups of punks. These disputes were initially mediated by punk gangs, micro-collectivities with a variable number of members (some punk gangs had ten members, others had 200 members) whose purpose was to ensure cohesion and legitimize their identity. For this, gangs had their own names, symbols, and dialects (Pedroso and Souza, 1983). They co-existed in the punk milieu of São Paulo and the ABC Paulista region in the first half of the 1980s and were involved in constant and intense clashes.

In 1982, The Beginning of the End of the World festival awakened greater attention by the Brazilian press towards punk, which was now constantly portrayed on television and in newspapers as a youth phenomenon based on violence and Nazism. This recurrent accusation was due to the use of the swastika by the punks, but, as Janice Caiafa (1985) points out, at least in Rio de Janeiro, the use of Nazi symbols had no correlation with far right or fascist ideology. In contrast to this popular conception of punk, from that year onwards the punks in São Paulo started a slow process of searching for union and cohesion, spreading the notion of a punk movement. From this standpoint, they began to direct efforts to eradicate postures seen by them as undesirable, such as the indiscriminate aggressiveness and the use of the swastika

(Costa, 1993). While these definitions were not acknowledged by a certain portion of the punks, there was a strong adherence by those residing in the city of São Paulo when they realized that a consensus-based union allowed for collective strengthening. Even though there was no clear direction to be followed, in a way, a new phase in punk began in the city (Pedroso and Souza, 1983). This was understood as a process of 'ideological mutation' (Sousa, 2002), and occurred from 1983 to 1989, a period that, among other things, was marked by the slow and gradual assimilation of anarchist ideology into the punk scene.

Although divisions in the punk scene in São Paulo never ceased, greater cohesion in actions was noticeable as behaviors started to be influenced by some external ideological element. Thus, at that time, despite some groups assuming an attitude of total indifference to politics, there was a strengthening of the groups that sought to become politically active, taking anarchism as a starting point for the ideological support of their actions (Sousa, 2002). This greater collectivization of attitudes even contributed to the weakening of the punk gangs across a large part of São Paulo. This 'adherence' to anarchism did not attract everyone in the same way, with resistance on the part of some punks who remained faithful to what they defined as 'original representations' (Pedroso and Souza, 1983). This happened especially because a large portion of the punks were kids between fourteen and eighteen years old who were not very clear about political issues (Oliveira, 2006). The punks in the ABC (the traditional industrial region) in the state of São Paulo were supposedly the ones with the greatest resistance to accepting anarchism or any other ideology determining their behavior, staying faithful to the original attitude that had placed gangs at the center of their identity (Pedroso and Souza, 1983; Costa, 1993). Amidst this disparity in the ways of questioning identity between punks from the city of São Paulo (city punks) and punks from the ABC Paulista, a regional rivalry was fostered. This triggered a moment in the history of Brazilian punk called Punk War, marked by the widespread confrontation between punks from these two regions. On one side, the brawls, more intense between 1983 and 1985, were justified by the inability of the city punks to reconcile with the punks from the ABC, as they considered the latter to have a harmful

attitude structured on violence and the organization of gangs. On the side of the ABC punks, hostility towards the other group was a consequence of the attempts of the city punks to standardize the lifestyle and control the territory, especially the meeting points and venues (Pedroso and Souza, 1983). Even though there was no winner in this war of identities, the union and collective identity proposed by punks presented better conditions for punk to spread beyond the metropolitan region of São Paulo. In this way, the incorporation of anarchism into the punk repertoire increasingly spread to the point where it soon provided the rise of the anarchist punk (or 'anarcopunk') philosophy. This, in turn, was seen as a way to create opportunities and bring anarchist ideas to the center of the debate (Kemp, 1993).

Regardless of the rise of the Movimento Anarco Punk (MAP – Anarchist Punk Movement), it is worth noting that a series of divisions among punks in the greater São Paulo was still evident after the Punk War. As a result, new collectives appeared in the second half of the 1980s, more short-lived and numerous, overcoming the prerogative of the gang but still holding ideological divergences. Prominent examples include Irmandade Punk [Punk Brotherhood], SP-Punk, Ação & Anarquia [Action & Anarchy], Devastação Punk [Punk Devastation], in addition to the MAP (Kemp, 1993). The constituent elements of the MAP collectivity were based, above all, on the need for differentiation from the traditional punks (Kemp, 1993). They sought to assert their identity around nonviolence, emphasizing the seriousness and strictness of their meetings to prevent them from being seen by society as mere party goers without any purpose. This stance, which became more prevalent after 1985, also brought a new political dimension to the São Paulo punk milieu, gaining notoriety for the boycott of multinationals and the 'null vote' campaign encouraging people to spoil their ballot papers at elections (in protest to mandatory voting), as well as the aforementioned union of punks (Oliveira, 2007). The reopening of the Centro de Cultura Social (CCS – Center of Social Culture) in 1985, which had been closed during the military dictatorship, was decisive for the political development of many young punks. This space helped to proliferate anarchist culture to a younger audience, either by promoting numerous debates or by providing a source of information through its

rich library (see Oliveira's chapter in this volume). In this way, the emergence of the MAP was a turning point in the history of Brazilian punk because it managed to create unity around a political position. The identity formation previously supported by a strong aesthetic and territorial foundation began to meet political and philosophical assumptions rooted in anarchism.

Although the organizations around the MAP were formed especially in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, it did not take long for collectivities with such ideas to begin in cities across the Brazilian Northeast. In the aftermath of the military dictatorship, there was a latent need in the region for collective organization, especially considering the fragile socio-economic situation at the time, with monthly inflation reaching 140%. This necessity of organization and resistance was very present in the youth – and this was evident to the Brazilian punks (CrimethInc., 2021). This is essential for understanding the development of punk in Brazil – for the first time there was an organized project aiming to connect punks from different regions around the same ideal. Prior to this, the influence was markedly musical and aesthetic. One of the fundamental points emphasized by anarchist punks was that music and visuals are not a substitute for anarchist ideas and ideals. From this perspective, punks who formed bands and signed with record labels were viewed with suspicion, as well as those who assimilated globalized aesthetic codes with no major political concerns. The impression given was that there were two parallel punk worlds in São Paulo: one formed by the music scene in which well-known bands such as Cólera, Inocentes, Ratos de Porão, and Garotos Podres participated; and another formed by anarchist punks who opposed the professionalization of the movement and defended anonymity and politicization as tactics of resistance against recuperation by the market. Along these lines, Billy Wolf Gangz, also known as Valo Velho, an anarchist punk who was intimately involved with the creation of the MAP in São Paulo, made the following statement:

As anarcopunks, we never accepted the professional side of underground music and, in the years between 1984 and 1994 there was no band that could represent us in music. Some even

tried and I confess they did some really fun things in the scene … anarchist punk bands should be unknown to the public. (Gangz, 2019, p. 29)

Despite the autobiographical tone of the excerpt, it is clear that the author seeks to minimize the personal character of his speech, instead emphasizing the movement as a whole. Although identity-based clashes, such as the one mentioned, specifically refer to the reality of punks in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, some of these dilemmas also occurred in other regions of the country. However, the expansion of the anarchist punk experience throughout Brazil inevitably revealed some peculiarities caused by this relationship with regionalism. In this sense, to explore some of these particularities, special attention will be given to the Northeast region of Brazil from here on.

Anarchist punk experiences in the Northeast region

To consider the development of anarchist punk cells beyond São Paulo, we analyze here some experiences from cities in northeastern Brazil. The choice of this region is important because it counters representations that diminish the experiences of the Northeast as 'backward' and 'underdeveloped' compared to other regions in the country. There are indications of an anarchist punk movement in the Northeast region since the early 1980s, through bands, collectives, and events held in different capitals (Maia, 2015). This suggests that there was no significant delay after the initial experiences in the Southeast region. The correlation between punk, anarchism and youth is key here. As soon as punk landed on Brazilian soil, it was seen as a musical and cultural movement produced by young people from Europe (especially the British) and the United States. At a time when the internet did not exist, information came primarily from TV shows and magazines, which at times presented punk as a countercultural movement embraced by deviant kids, and at other times as the newest cultural sensation of the

youth, stressing the energetic music and the striking look of mohawks, heavy makeup, and leather jackets. These were the initial perceptions seized upon by young people in different parts of the country, although regional inequalities regarding the production and circulation of punk records and the tough economic situation prevented these ideas from spreading uniformly. Thus, punk was at first taken by young people as a musical movement within rock, commanded by the success of New Wave and Brazilian Rock. The television broadcast of the first Rock in Rio festival, in 1985, was also an important milestone for the popularization of heavy rock among young people in the Northeast. The festival introduced hard rock and heavy metal groups like Whitesnake, AC/DC, Iron Maiden, and Ozzy Osbourne to a Brazilian audience, and this was the case for many people who subsequently got into punk as well. In this eclectic scenario, the first punk bands began to form − some of the bands that paved the way for the development of the punk scene in the Northeast were: Homicídio Cultural, Jesus Bastardos, Dever de Classe (from Salvador-Bahia); SS-20, Câmbio Negro, Moral Violenta, Realidade Encoberta (from Recife-Pernambuco); Epilepsia (from Penedo-Alagoas); Karne Krua, Condenados (from Aracaju-Sergipe); Restos Mortais (from João Pessoa-Paraíba); Devastação, O.R.$.A (from Natal-Rio Grande do Norte); Estado Mórbido, Repressão X, Resistência Desarmada (from Fortaleza-Ceará); Gritos Absurdos, Verminose (from Teresina-Piauí); Nutrição Zero, SL Kaos (from São Luis-Maranhão).

Bands that recognized themselves as anarchist punks only came later, specifically in the late 1980s (Maia, 2015). As happened in São Paulo and other cities in Brazil, the politicization of the punk scene and the proximity to anarchism was not immediate. The formation of gangs was gradually replaced by a militancy that prioritizes the creation of libertarian sociabilities and the struggles against the castrating policies of the state. During this period, the first anarchist punk collectives and the first events also began to organize around a common libertarian project. Accordingly, even before the MAP emerged in São Paulo, anarchist punk cells had already surfaced in the Northeast, such as Consciência Libertária-Rio Grande do Norte, Grupo de ação libertária -Paraíba, Grupo Anarquista de Aracaju-Sergipe, Núcleo de Consciência

Libertária-Ceará, União Libertária do Maranhão, and Grupo de estudos anarquistas-Piauí. Later, some of these groups decided to adopt the name MAP, adding the abbreviation of their respective states to it, thus giving rise to Movimento Anarco Punk-BA, Movimento Anarco Punk-CE, Movimento Anarco Punk-AL, and Movimento Anarco Punk-Rio Grande do Norte.

An important aspect in the relationship between punk and anarchism in the Northeast concerns the conflict between supporters from different groups. These conflicts were not about physical violence but rather disputes on ideas dating back to the roots of anarchism in northeastern Brazil in the early-twentieth century, with the struggles of workers and the constitution of associations and unions. However, despite its involvement with the working class, the movement has always been strongly intellectualized, with many adherents coming from the literate layers of the population. Most anarchist groups and collectives in the country had an academic bias and were made up of historians, journalists, philosophers, and graduated professionals from other areas, which in some respects ended up promoting a distancing from the less educated population. Nevertheless, anarchist punks stressed the practical, rather than theoretical, nature of anarchism. This caused tensions to arise in different cities. An emblematic case occurred in the city of João Pessoa, Paraíba, where some anarchist punks felt dissatisfied with the overly theoretical attitude of certain anarchists who avoided participating in marches and protests. The anarchist punks, on the other hand, were perceived by some anarchists as lacking theoretical foundation and often acting impulsively (Bastos, 2005). As a result, some anarchists attempted to establish restrictions on the participation of anarchist punks in the Confederação Operária Brasileira committee (the first trade union center in Brazil, founded in 1908), a fact that generated discontent from both sides and led to the migration of people from the anarchist collective of João Pessoa into the local MAP (Maia, 2015).

In this environment, there were also conflicts between anarchist punks and the so-called pessimistic punks, a phenomenon that was known as the 'war of postures' (Bastos, 2005). This tension involved, on one side, those more politicized and committed to the anarchist cause and, on the other, those who experienced punk as an aesthetic and

individualized transgression. These frictions may have been imported from the scene in São Paulo (Bastos, 2005) and replicated in some northeastern cities, especially in the early 1990s. Clashes with headbangers were another side of this dynamic as they too were perceived by punks as 'alienated' people exclusively concerned with music and visuals. In capitals such as Maceió and Teresina, though, these conflicts were practically non-existent, since headbangers and punks helped each other construct an underground music scene, sharing stages, and in some cases, even musical instruments.

The principles defended by anarchist punk collectives in the Northeast did not differ much from those discussed in other regions of the country and the globe, which shows how such experiences came from a larger context of a culture of resistance. As a rule, the anarchist punks in the region acted through the distribution of printed materials, especially informative leaflets marked by critical content, direct language, and a militant character, as can be seen in the excerpt below, taken from a leaflet of the Núcleo Coletivo de Consciência Libertária [Collective Nucleus of Libertarian Consciousness] of the city of Fortaleza (Ceará) from June 1992:

> On September 7, the day that celebrates Brazil's false independence, we from the Nucleus, along with the Movimento Anarquista Libertário, Movimento Anarco Punk, and other popular movements, waged a bombardment of ideas and struggles against compulsory military service and its abusive spending on weapons purchased with the sweat of the people only to repress their own … Once again, we expose the cowards for what they are, since following the demonstration we were stopped by the police tactical unit and the military police …

Despite the existence of zines and pamphlets referring to the general situation, anarchist punks in northeastern Brazil, as a rule, mobilized around issues of a local nature, in solidarity with the struggles of other groups or collectives. Protests against the increase in bus fares, support for workers' strikes, and squatting were prominent forms of activism. This remarkable role as a social movement, and the wider

experience in the Northeast, reflects the lived experience of anarchist punk communities in all Brazilian regions over the decades.

Final considerations

The experiences of anarchist punks in the Northeast, and across the entire Brazilian territory, were not formed from an unambiguous trajectory anchored to an idealized past with a grandiose 'founding landmark'. On the contrary, the path to the collective identity of anarchist punks in Brazil was marked by several tensions, ranging from the initial opposition by punks faithful to the 'original proposal', to the troubled relationship with the anarchists themselves, who were seen as too theoretical. The trajectory followed by the anarchist punk collectives is fundamental for understanding the punk identity in Brazil. The collective agency inspired by anarchist ideas allowed punks from different regions in the country to go beyond the musical and/or aesthetic experience.

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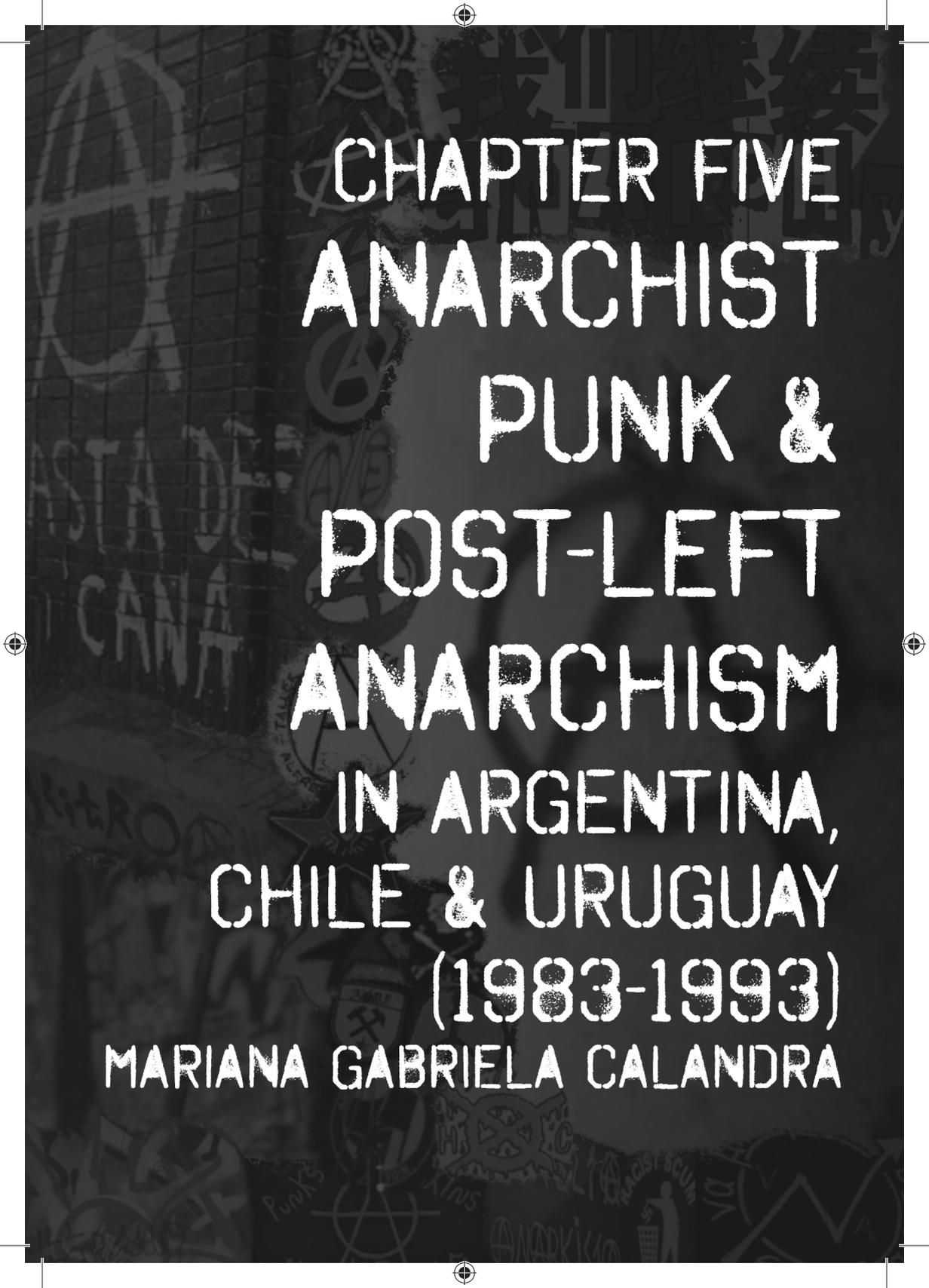
CHAPTER FIVE

ANARCHIST PUNK & POST-LEFT ANARCHISM IN ARGENTINA, CHILE & URUGUAY (1983-1993)

MARIANA GABRIELA CALANDRA

Chapter Five: Anarchist punk and post-left anarchism in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay (1983-1993)

Mariana Gabriela Calandra

During the early years of the post-dictatorships in the Southern Cone (covering Argentina, Chile and Uruguay), punk was critical for the renewal of the anarchist movement. Punk injected anarchy into young people and young people into anarchism. A key issue for the entry of the new generation into the anarchist movement was the state's combination of old and new repressive norms and practices. The anarchist punks were among the first to point out and fight against the legal framework and repression of the new order. In this struggle, which unfolded between the 1980s and 1990s, anarchist punks launched direct actions against the state and capital, equally rejecting the organisational forms of Chilean armed leftist organisations whose members had evolved towards anarchism, and the Especifismo platformism of the Rio de la Plata region of the 1960s and 1970s. (Especifismo refers to one of the main forms of activism championed by the FAU (Federación Anarquista Uruguaya [Anarchist Federation of Uruguay]), revolving around the need to use anarchist praxis to build autonomous mass social movements.)

This chapter argues that anarchist punk in the post-dictatorships of the Southern Cone was a post-left anarchism. The common characteristic of punk and anarchist practices is direct action. Anarchist punk brought together the most insurgent, individualistic elements, who were wary of joining or creating structured organisations. This did not prevent them from organising artists' cooperatives, circuits of independent publications, protests, encampments, attacks, solidarity with prisoners, and a renewed internationalism among young people from neighbouring countries who had been educated by the dictatorships in the border warfare hypothesis. For example, in Chile it was taught in school that Argentina stole Patagonia, in Argentina that

Chile appropriated the Strait of Magellan, half of the Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego and Western Patagonia. The same was true between Argentina and Brazil, Brazil and Uruguay, and so on.

This study relies on primary and secondary sources of information including online sites and anarchist punk social networks, as well as face-to-face and mostly telephone interviews (because the research was conducted during the Covid-19 lockdown period). The research covers the end of the dictatorship and the first democratic administration in Argentina 1983-1989, Uruguay 1985-1989 and Chile 1989-1993.

In the next section we will provide some definitions necessary to address the debate around anarchism, punk subculture and post-left anarchism. Subsequently we will address cases. Finally, some conclusions are presented.

Some definitions

For the purposes of this analysis, we understand anarchism as a movement in two senses: as an assortment of ideological, theoretical and tactical tendencies (Rossineri, 2011); and, in direct relation to this, as a decentralised, diverse and constantly evolving network that provides communication and active solidarity between different nodes of social struggle (Gordon, 2005). To support this definition, we can recall the Centro Ibérico in London, run by anarchists, where in addition to making music the anarchist punks actively participated and collaborated with exiles from Franco's dictatorship who had set up a Black Cross headquarters there (Peligro, 2021). In the case of the Centro Ibérico, as with anarchism in general, we see a decentralised network and diversity of tactics that are used to build a culture of resistance to fight the centralisation and homogeny of state and capital.

As a decentralised, internationalist, anti-war, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist network, anarchism positions itself as a project that dissolves the nation-state, which, for its part, implements repressive strategies to suppress anarchism. According to Fernández Gómez (2017) it was not until the period between the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 that states managed to impose their nationalism

upon workers' identity, which until then had contested with anarchist internationalism. While the left ended up embracing the state project, anarchism remained faithful to the internationalist principle. Anarchist internationalism, as extreme opposition to the nation-state, circumvents borders and rejects wars because through them the power of the state is affirmed and expanded (Cappelletti, 2010).

The military is rejected by anarchists, both because of its role in sustaining the state and the ruling class, and because its foundation in obedience and coercion is the archetype of the state itself. López (2019) understands the FAU experience as a deliberate exercise in theory for political practice rooted in concrete contexts historically and socially situated in the Latin American region. With its connection to the Cuban Revolution, Especifismo platformism favoured the professionalisation of struggle, that is to say, its mediatisation (quasi-hierarchisation by the introduction of intervening, mediating, levels of authority) by a specialised body. Because of its use in urban guerrilla warfare, the Especifismo platform was associated with the Marxist left, from which it took on a Latin Americanist profile and nationalist positions. Especifismo platformism seeks to influence social struggles through an organisation of national scope with tactical and theoretical/ideological unity dictated by a Libertarian Political Organisation. This division is a central aspect that differentiates post-left anarchism from left anarchism (Landstreicher, 2009). In this sense, the Especifismo platformist tendency proposes the institution of a separate, hierarchical and centralised body, generally called the Anarchist or Libertarian Political Organisation, in charge of making substantive decisions to bring about change through its previously defined programme. Consequently, the struggle is no longer born out of the desires, needs and dreams of the exploited, oppressed, dominated and dispossessed trying to re-appropriate their lives, but out of a programme that is imposed on them and to which they must subordinate their individual lives and struggles (Landstreicher, 2009; McQuinn, 2009). Hence, platformism demands that all actions be authorised by the organisation which in turn condemns and rejects action based on individual responsibility (Black, 2017).

We argue that anarchist punk is a re-appropriation of life, a return to self-management, to anti-hierarchy, after the mediatisation (quasi-

hierarchisation) of the leftist experiences of the 1970s. Instead of accusing anarchist punk of 'appropriation of certain elements of anarchist doctrine' (Petra, 2001, 2015; Cuello and Disalvo, 2020), we prefer to speak of concurrency of ideas and practices between like-minded people whose common denominator is direct action based on free association – free association based on affinity, which is the opposite of party affiliation. Affinity itself implies the connection of the multiple, the recognition of differences and the ways in which these can be combined (Colson, 2007), 'so that in this way we understand each other and by understanding each other, we get to know each other, and by getting to know each other the possibility of doing something together develops', as Bonanno proposes (2013, p. 47).

We dispute the idea that anarchist punk is a lifestyle anarchism (Cuello and Disalvo, 2020; Petra, 2001, 2015). Agreeing with Black (2015), Ibáñez (2014), Davis (2010), Landstreicher (2009), and McQuinn (2009), we understand that the dichotomy of lifestyle anarchism and social anarchism, devised by Bookchin (1995), presents more difficulties than clarity for approaching the analysis of anarchism in general and anarchist punk in particular. In relation to the cases, we do not find that 'issues of lifestyle' replace social and revolutionary action (Bookchin, 1995), nor do we observe that anarchist punk departs from the revolutionary imaginary, nor from the confrontation with the state as Petra argues (2001, 2015). Quite the contrary, we observe that in the post-dictatorship period the anarchist punk tendency re-actualised the conflict with a constant confrontation against the state, capitalism, and religious and party institutions (Cosso, 2012). Along these lines, we agree with Ibáñez (2014) for whom the classic revolutionary imagination of generalised insurrection was replaced by one of continuous and immediate revolution, lived in the destruction of devices of domination, in the effort to block power and in the creation of spaces radically alien to capitalism. Self-management, a word and concept of anarchist origin, is fundamental to the creation of such spaces. This concept has separated the anarchist conception of socialism from the Marxist one since the First International (Cappelletti, 2010). We also agree with the approach of Collinao Ponce (2014), for whom anarchist ideas are included in the ideological repertoire of the punk subculture. Do-it-

yourself (DIY) and self-management are analogous in that they involve unmediated decision-making and execution. In this framework, DIY is a dual strategy of confrontation that delegitimises the system while constructing alternatives (Gordon, 2005).

Post-dictatorship in the Southern Cone

Argentina, Chile and Uruguay suffered dictatorships almost in parallel. Under the sponsorship of the United States from 1975 onwards, Operation Condor operated – a regional coordination to kidnap, torture, assassinate and disappear people across national borders. This did not prevent each nation-state also developing border conflicts with its neighbours. The relations of the Southern Cone countries were negatively affected by a history and political culture that sought to maintain and increase mutual distrust. In fact, in 1978, Argentina and Chile almost went to war. Finally, although it did not appear among the Argentine military's conflict scenarios (Buchrucker, 1991), in 1982 Argentina launched the South Atlantic war, the loss of which marked the end of its dictatorship and the beginning of a Latin American 'wave of democratisation'. It is important to note that the change of regime and the first post-dictatorship administration in the Argentine and Uruguayan cases were still framed within the bipolar world of the Cold War. The Chilean case, on the other hand, was later, and there the resurgence of anarchism and the spread of anarchist punk occurred against the background of worldwide protests against the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism.

Argentina

Background of local anarchism

Between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the Argentine anarchist movement had the most impressive presence in

Latin America (Barret, 2011). Both the anarcho-syndicalism of the Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA – Argentinian Regional Worker's Federation) and later the Federación Anarco Comunista Argentina [Argentinian Anarcho-Communist Federation] became reference points for anarchists in neighbouring countries. However, anarchist influence was reduced in the wake of the Russian revolution, the increasing repression of trade unionism, and then, at the local level, the Uriburu dictatorship (1930-1932) and the associated repression and exile. Subsequently, the co-optation of the labour movement (1943-1955), its bureaucratisation, and the continuous persecution of

Figure 5:1 – Cadáveres de niñxs [Corpses of children] performing during Rebelion Rock Festival, Avellaneda Provincia de Buenos Aires, in 1990 (photogaph by Luis Alacran).

Figure 5:2 – Marcelo Weissel, singer of Cadáveres de niñxs [Corpses of children], protesting in 1988 against McDonald's in Florida Street, Buenos Aires city, with a banner made by Pat Pietrafesa (also a member of Corpses of Children). (Photo courtesy of the Pat Pietrafesa Archive).

anarcho-syndicalism under Peronism resulted in its decline.

By the 1970s, the Especifismo platformism of the Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU), with its syndicalist and armed deployment, was a highly influential tendency in the region. Linked to the FAU, a short-lived clandestine organisation with trade union activities, named Resistencia Libertaria [Libertarian Resistance], was formed in Argentina – its members were almost all were exterminated by state terrorism (1974-1983).

The dictatorship's handover of power

The Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983) committed crimes against humanity with the support of political parties, the judiciary, the Church and the media. Defeat in the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war against Great Britain and economic instability resulted in the regime's inability to sustain itself politically. Those who had supported repression abandoned the government and denounced it when its crimes received international condemnation (Franco, 2015). Between 1979 and 1983, the Church and political parties demanded information from the military about the disappeared, although they did not insist on trials for these crimes. The military never provided the information and reaffirmed their conviction about what had been done in the 'Final Document' of 1983. The political Parties, which until then had been willing to negotiate some form of impunity, abandoned the military who granted themselves amnesty through the Pacification Law.

The president elected in 1983 annulled this law, decreed the trial of the military juntas, created the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, and reformed the Code of Military Justice. The military did not passively accept these resolutions, provoking three uprisings. The first took place at Easter 1987, when a military intelligence operative refused to plead guilty and, together with other military officers, demanded a halt to the trials. The second uprising, in January 1988, began when another military officer refused to acknowledge the military tribunal, and the third, in December 1988, when some 45 elite officers of the Naval Prefecture looted an arsenal of

weapons and gained the support of military officers seeking a general and unrestricted amnesty.

The government encountered less resistance with the criminal prosecution of the 'terrorist leaders' of the armed organisations that acted in the 1970s. It also left political prisoners in captivity, both to prevent a potential military rejection followed by destabilisation, and to deactivate the reappearance of insurrectionary groups. In the same vein, exiles who returned to the country with pending cases for terrorism or crimes against national security were imprisoned, confirming the parameters and processes opened during the dictatorship, with the exception of the Peronists of the right-wing terrorist group Triple A, whose crimes went unpunished.

There were no armed political groups operating in Argentina in the post-dictatorship period, with the exception of the strange adventure of the January 1989 takeover of the Tablada Regiment, when the Movimiento Todos por la Patria [All for the Fatherland Movement] faked a military uprising to provoke a popular insurrection on the model of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. In any case, the new regime redefined the role of the armed forces with a categorical demarcation of competences between external and internal security tasks, making it an atypical case in Latin America (Franco, 2015).

Despite these changes, the police, who had participated in the task forces of state terrorism, not only suffered no consequences but also retained broad powers to detain and abuse people through police edicts and background investigations. Police edicts were disciplining rules, usually drafted by a commissioner, which functioned as a punitive system parallel to the civil code. Detention for background investigations allowed the police to lock people up at their discretion and for indeterminate periods of time after 'razzias' (localised control operations that included arrests, transfers, raids and searches of large numbers of people).

Anarchist punk and anarchism

Young people who had been part of the punk subculture since the military dictatorship became targets of the razzias, background investigations and edicts. Notably, testimonies in the literature indicate that repression was harsher under democracy than under dictatorship (Pietrafesa, 2013, cited in Cuello and Disalvo, 2020). In this climate, young punks associated themselves with anarchism, created independent record labels and cooperatives, organised festivals and protests, and took part in direct action together with other actors affected by the post-dictatorship order, such as sexual dissidents and sex workers. One of the means for the proliferation of punk were fanzines such as *Resistencia* (1984) and *¿Quien Sirve a la Causa del Kaos?* [*Who Serves the Cause of Kaos?*] (1986-1987). *Resistencia* was edited by Patricia Pietrafesa, who was also a founder member of many bands, including Cadáveres de Niños [Corpses of Children] and She Devils. Lingux, a fellow punk, introduced Pietrafesa to Stirner´s readings (Droghei, 2018) and together they founded the band Anarquía, un Sentimiento Incontrolable [Anarchy, an Uncontrollable Sentiment]. Both were identified in the scene as 'library punks' [punks de biblioteca] or anarcho-pacifists. *¿Quien Sirve a la Causa del Kaos?* was produced by Pietrafesa alongside co-editor Nadal and columnist Gamexane, both of whom were members of the band Todos Tus Muertos [All Your Dead]. These publications were organs for propaganda and resistance in the struggle against police edicts, disseminating legal advice on how to confront them and making visible how the razzias operated. The fanzines were disseminated mostly in the fairs held in public parks, while the gigs and encounters carried out during the fairs functioned as intervention into the public space.

In 1985 Pietrafesa and Mónica Vidal, singer of Antihéroes [Antiheroes], formed Juventudes Rebeldes [Rebel Youth], an informal grouping that played a prominent role between 1985 and 1986 in the organisation of the anti-police marches and in protests against the visit of Pope John Paul II. The first march against the police, in mid 1985, consisted of a sit-in in front of Congress demanding the repeal of police edicts and an end to background investigations, and was attended by anarchists, punks, gay activists from the Argentine Homosexual

Community, and sex workers. The second march, organised at the end of the year, was attended by more than a hundred metalheads, goths, punks and others. The marchers handed out leaflets and repeated the sit-in in front of Congress. Then they marched to the Obelisco Column, on the mast of which they raised the black anarchist flag. Heavy repression resulted in numerous people being arrested, many of whom were held for up to 30 days for carrying anarchist materials, a fact that was used to hold them responsible for the graffiti around the Metropolitan Cathedral. In the police station where they were detained, some punks were interrogated by the Secretaría de Inteligencia del Estado (SIDE – Secretariat of Intelligence, created in 1946 by Perón). In May 1986, the third march against background investigations and police abuse was called. Unlike the first march, this one had less impact on public opinion and the media. An array of about 50 punks, heavy metallers, goths, feminists, gay activists and sex workers disrupted traffic near the Congress and, surrounded by a hostile social climate, marched while mocking the police. Again, heavy repression resulted in numerous arrests. Finally, the fourth demonstration was held in Plaza Italia on the 13th of December 1986, on the occasion of Police Day. Juventudes Rebeldes and the fanzines *Diarrea Mental* [*Mental Diarrhoea*], *La Furia II* [*The Fury II*], *Commando Mugriento* [*Dirty Commando*] and *¿Quién Sirve a la Causa del Kaos?* carried out activity to raise awareness and disseminated anti-repressive legal advice against police abuse. However, after these experiences, the organisers felt that police violence against the subculture had become naturalised and that the tactic of occupying public space had not yielded the expected results (Cuello and Disalvo, 2020). Therefore, although there were no arrests, people became disheartened about the success of the punk festivals as a site of resistance.

In the same year Pietrafesa and Gary from the band Mutantes del Caos [Chaos Mutants] founded the first co-operative of independent musicians in Argentina, the Cooperativa Independiente de Bandas Punk [Independent Co-operative of Punk Bands], which promoted numerous punk festivals. Also in 1986, the Coordinadora de Grupos Alternativos [Coordination of Alternative Groups] was founded – the group aimed to make repression visible. The group was made up of Juventudes

Rebeldes, ex-members of the Grupo de Acción Gay [Gay Action Group], the Movimiento Marginal [Marginal Movement], street art groups such as Fife and Autogestión [Fuck and Self-Management] and El Bolo Alimenticio [The Alimentary Bolus] (both of which were part of the Federación Libertaria Argentina [Argentine Libertarian Federation]), along with other graffiti and artistic initiatives. Together they organised the Pagan March, the immediate forerunner of the March against the visit of John Paul II organised by Comisión de Repudio al Papa (CRAP – Commission for the Repudiation of the Pope). Both demonstrations ended in raids with undercover police and unmarked vehicles – akin to the task forces of state terrorism during the dictatorship – provoking reactions that the media used to justify further police violence.

In addition to its confrontations with the state, anarchist punk generated and strengthened internationalism by creating a network of information and mutual learning. The zine *MaximumRocknRoll*, which covered punk scenes internationally, published local correspondences and spread information about other anarchist punk experiences in the region. In addition, through the zine's mail section, readers started a network of pen pals. This experience was the forerunner of the international punk mail network which, before the internet, operated as an underground channel of information about bands, scenes, direct actions and tactical knowledge, which prefigured insurgent scenarios or, as they were defined, 'global instigation' (Cosso, 2008; Cuello and Disalvo, 2020). From these contacts, actions such as Stop the City (1986) and the International Day Against McDonald's (1988) were co-ordinated, both actions inspired by recent initiatives in London. Originally, Stop the City protests were organised between 1983 and 1984 by punks, anarchists, anti-nuclear, anti-war and gay, women's and animal liberation activists against Britain's military-industrial complex. The campaign consisted of blockades of the City of London (London's financial district), attacks on fur shops and fast food outlets, vandalism of locks and phone lines, alongside punk shows to raise funds. Paren la Ciudad! [Stop the City!] in its Rio de la Plata version took place during the night of the 29th of April and the early hours of the 30th of April 1986. At that time, more than 25 schools and factories in the northern

(wealthy) zone were dobbed with slogans against education, political power and discrimination. The anarchist punks vandalised locks, patriotic monuments, squares, churches, a cardinal's residence, museums, and laboratories experimenting on animals. Finally, they changed the name of Ramon Falcon Street, named after a police officer who repressed workers' strikes at the beginning of the twentieth century, to Simon Radowitzky Street, after an immigrant anarchist working class hero.

Through the postal networks, fanzines were disseminated with information on animal liberation struggles, eco-activism, the plundering of the region and the spread of inequality and misery. Prominent among these materials was a translation of a manifesto by London Greenpeace (a London-based anarchist organisation, not linked to Greenpeace International) which organised four actions between 1983 and 1984. Under the heading *What's Wrong With McDonald's?* (The London Greenpeace Group, 1986), their famous pamphlet denounced the multinational for its polluting packaging, unhealthy food, cruelty to animals, and the company's hostility towards trade unions. Years later, in October 1988, with an argument that also included a rejection of imperialism, the anarchist punks organised a demonstration and leafleted in the Argentine capital in front of the first multinational junk food outlet to be set up in the country.

Uruguay

Background of local anarchism

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the anarchist-oriented Federación Obrera Regional Uruguaya (FORU – Uruguayan Regional Workers' Federation) was the majority tendency in the country's workers' movement. The Russian revolution provoked a schism in FORU from which the Unión Sindical Uruguaya [Uruguayan Trade Union] emerged. In the 1920s a Uruguayan Anarchist Federation was founded, which brought together specific groups but did not achieve permanence. More successful was the Juventudes Libertarias [Libertarian Youth], created in 1938, which, together with the publication *Voluntad* [*Will*], autonomous syndicalism and the Ateneo Libre (a grassroots cultural and self-educational initiative) in the working-class neighbourhoods of Montevideo, organised the Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU) in 1956. The FAU had a strong connection with the Latin American left, which caused a break with classical anarcho-syndicalism. The FAU said that anarcho-syndicalists had neglected politics and focused merely on the social struggle (López, 2019). Due mainly to differences over the Cuban revolution, the FAU split in 1963. Two groupings emerged from this split, the Alianza Libertaria Uruguaya [Uruguayan Libertarian Alliance], oriented towards the preservation of anarchist identity, and the grouping that continued as FAU, which was more prominent in trade union activism and urban guerrilla practices. In support of the social struggle, the FAU was able to carry out military actions such as sabotage, expropriations, kidnappings of businessmen, and armed support for strikes and factory occupations. In 1967, in the face of the strong social mobilisation against regressive policies, the government outlawed the FAU together with six other left-wing organisations. In this context, the FAU advanced towards armed struggle and in 1968 organised a mass membership front, the Resistencia Obrero Estudiantil (ROE – Student Worker Resistance), and an armed apparatus, the Organización Popular Revolucionaria – 33 Orientales (OPR-33) as it became known after the

Figure 5:3 – Cadáveres Ilustres with Andy Adler on guitar at the Arte en La Lona festival, 23rd of April 1988 (photograph by Marcel Lostau).

16th of July 1969, when the OPR appropriated the flag of the 33 Orientales, Uruguay's national emblem. In 1970 the FAU began theorising about libertarian political organisation. However, the 1973 coup d'état implemented counter-insurgency tactics that in a few months exterminated a good part of the OPR-33. In 1975, in an attempt at a combination between anarchism and Marxism, some FAU militants exiled in Argentina created the Partido de la Victoria del Pueblo (PVP – Party for the Victory of the People). By 1976, with the military coup in Argentina and the coordination of Operation Condor, FAU-PVP militants were almost entirely exterminated, and by the end of the Uruguayan dictatorship in 1985 FAU activity was almost invisible and anarchist presence was generally limited to small clandestine or exiled groups (Barret, 2011).

The dictatorship's handover of power

Through pacts and pressure, the Uruguayan dictatorship (1973-1985) established a post-dictatorship civil-military regime, or 'guarded' democracy, in which the armed forces retained important shares of power (Pérez Lema, 2020). In 1980, the dictatorship organised a constitutional plebiscite to replace the current constitution and give itself legitimacy. The proposal was rejected by the population, triggering a long process of negotiations with the political parties that ended in 1986 with a parliamentary amnesty, imposed by military pressure. This legislation also created the General Directorate of Defence Information, a military intelligence office dedicated to espionage, which also infiltrated events in the punk scene. At the same time, with the release of political prisoners, by 1985 most of the armed left-wing political groups had joined the democratic game by abandoning the armed struggle. However, the National Security Council and the dictatorship's state of insurrection were retained until 1986.

In order to avoid the possible investigation of the dictatorship, the election of the high command of the armed forces was restricted. In the same vein, the secrecy of parliamentary investigations was violated by transferring the files of questioned military personnel to the military justice system. Finally, while the armed forces began to carry out community and public tasks, the prison system was expanded. The government preserved the dictatorship's decree which enabled the police to continue to carry out raids and detain people for background investigations, and continue the state's repressive policies. As in Argentina, the police took advantage of this decree of the dictatorship to carry out massive raids at meetings of youth subcultures and gay discos. In addition to this legal framework, the instructions given by the Security Directorate of the Police Headquarters to police officers resulted in hundreds of young people being abused and confined in police stations, culminating in the reopening of La Tablada prison, a former detention and torture centre of the dictatorship.

Figure 5:4 – The band Post-Coito (photograph from the archive of the TV show *Blister*, produced by Gabriel Peveroni on the TV Ciudad channel). Post-Coito were members La Cooperativa del Molino, along with other bands such as Clandestino, Orgasmo Rosa, Sádica and Las Tumbas. The cooperative existed from the end of 1987 until 1988 at the Molino de Pérez, in the Malvín neighborhood, where young people met every Saturday afternoon to play music.

Anarchist punk and anarchism

After the split that led the FAU to turn into a political Party in 1975, in 1986 it was reconstituted as the FAU but incorporating new challenges such as the reformulation of the concept of class, the creation of popular fronts of oppressed classes, support for feminist organisations, support for the occupation of land, and continuity of the struggle against the prison system by including common prisoners in the struggle for human rights. Despite these changes, the FAU was perceived by young people as just another apparatus of the conventional political

system, a limiting space, with its bureaucratic methods of roundtables, congresses, alliances and agreements (Pérez Lema, 2020). Precisely because it was outside this leftist repertoire, the punk subculture attracted young people.

At the end of 1986, in parallel to the passing of the Expiry Law, the punk subculture began to emerge. At that time, a group of activists linked to the FAU but opposed to platformism broke away and formed Taller A [Workshop A]. While in the FAU new activists joined the existing bureaucratic organisation, Taller A, on the other hand, explored the creation of an open space where proposals could be put forward and deployed (Pérez Lema, 2020). This gave rise to the magazine *Alter*, which brought together two generations of anarchists with an editorial line opposed to the formation of an anarchist political organisation, a structuring feature of platformism. In the early 1990s, the experience led to the creation of A Espacio [A Space], where the anarchist punk current linked up with anarchists of earlier generations. In this place, supported by the older anarchists, there was a meeting space and a library. As well as playing music and socialising, they met there to study and discuss politics and current affairs.

The case of Uruguay is interesting because of the relevance of the different artistic expressions drawing inspiration from the Dada movement to attack the post-dictatorship order. A paradigmatic example was Cabaret Voltaire, which began as a performative event in 1986, emulating the Zurich experience of 1916, and deployed outside the commercial circuit. In the second edition of the Cabaret, in 1987, an attempt was made to give continuity to the experience by forming a cooperative where the members, some of them members of punk bands, performed all kinds of tasks. As a result, the Voltaire generated anarchist punk expressions that had a strong impact in the 1990s. Within the framework of these coincidences, punk bands linked to anarchism formed the Cooperativa del Molino [Mill Cooperative] in 1987, where punks and heavy metallers (classic opponents) worked together. The band Clandestino, a member of the cooperative, shook the political and cultural foundations of the post-dictatorship period when in 1988, during the Parque Rock-Dó festival, the vocalist Esteban de Armas insulted congressmen and the military from the stage,

extending his expletives to the whole of democracy, which earned him three months in prison. The Cooperativa del Molino was the direct forerunner of the Cooperativa de Acción Organizada [Organised Action Cooperative], which was very active in organising festivals in the 1990s. While this concurrency of like-minded people was taking place, the left labelled the anarchist punk phenomenon as cultural imperialism (Pérez Lema, 2020).

In relation to public space, the Villa Biarritz fair was one of the most popular meeting places for young people in the post-dictatorship period. With regret, Pérez Lema (2020) highlights the repressive framework in which these open-air subcultural expressions took place. Always under the threat of razzia, the fair offered underground publications, contacts, and more-or-less informal post-punk, metal and new wave concerts attended by young people from different neighbourhoods of Montevideo. The Coordinadora de Teatro Barrial [Neighbourhood Theatre Coordination], came into being in 1980, evolving into the Red de Teatro Barrial [Neighbourhood Theatre Network] in 1987, which included more than 30 groups that later formed the Movimiento Anti-Razzia [Anti-Razzia Movement]. In 1988, these groups organised the festival Arte en la Lona [Art on Canvas] at the Palermo Boxing Club, which exhibited video art, performance poetry, dance, puppets, mime, candombe (folk dance), metal bands and punk. It was there that the Red de Teatro Barrial formed an Anti-Razzia Brigade to present their play *Razziol X* (a parody of the razzias). The play was premiered at the Arte en la Lona festival and then performed in secondary schools in Montevideo. After its second performance, three members of the cast were arrested. Despite the censorship, at the end of 1988, under the slogan 'Basta de Razzias' ['No more razzias'], a meeting was held in Rivera Park with rock bands, theatre, mime, puppets and videos made by young people, denouncing the repression. As a result of these actions, in 1989 the Anti-Razzias Coordinating Committee and the Camp Libertad, La Otra Historia [Freedom Camp, The Other Story] were formed. The Coordinadora de Grupos en contra de las Razzias [Coordination of Groups against Razzias] grew at bonfires, rondas (casual social gatherings) and ollas populares (pot lucks) where young people from the Sindicato Único

Revolucionario de Muchachos de la Esquina [Single Revolutionary Union of Corner Boys], the Termas [Thermal baths] group, the Red de Teatro Barrial, Homosexuales Unidos [Homosexuals United], Asociación de Meretrices del Uruguay [Association of Sex Workers of Uruguay], women's groups, youth collectives linked to FAU and other political groups, students from the Federación de Estudiantes Segundarios [Secondary Students' Federation], and punk crews all came together. This network of autonomous groups, which included gays, transvestites, punks, metalheads and others abused by the new democracy, created new forms of struggle against the state (Pérez Lema, 2020). One example was the so-called March of the Torches, which in July 1989 brought together almost 20,000 people against the repression of the youth, a topic that reached the public agenda due to its scandalous proportions. In August, a new march was called to repudiate the repression. While the Red de Teatro Barrial performed and the victims of the razzias gave their testimonies, the idea of organising a camp was born.

The Anti-Razzia Movement and the Coordinating Committee broadened the concept of human rights from political prisoners to those referred to, mainly by the left, as common prisoners (Pérez Lema, 2020). In September, the Anti-Razzias Coordinating Committee organised an encampment in the city of Libertad to denounce the human rights violations that had occurred in Libertad prison, which had almost doubled its prison population compared to the dictatorship, when it only held political prisoners. The state mounted a major operation with assault vehicles along the road between Libertad and Montevideo. The organisers' original idea was to set up on a high spot near the prison and light torches at night so that the prisoners could see them. But the plan fell through, with police repression deepening internal divisions between those who wanted to give the event a class feeling and those who were interested in a Woodstock-style experience.

Figure 5:5 − Marcelo Villarroel singing with D-LINKIR, in Santiago de Chile, 2006.

Figure 5:6 − Marcelo Villarroel singing with D-LINKIR, in Santiago de Chile, 2006.

Chile

Background of local anarchism

Chilean anarchism evolved from the mutualist and Tolstoyan influences of the late-nineteenth century to anarcho-syndicalist practices linked to the great strikes of the early-twentieth century. In its beginnings, the anarchist movement was modestly sized and was influenced by areas with more anarchist immigrants, especially from Argentina (Quiroga Venegas, 2005). Although a minority, the libertarian sectors of the Federación Obrera [Workers' Federation] came to organise themselves as the Federación Obrera Regional de Chile [Regional Workers' Federation of Chile]. In any case, the anarcho-syndicalist influence declined due to the repression waged by the Ibáñez dictatorship from 1931 onwards. According to Barret (2011), from then until the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, anarchism in Chile maintained an attenuated presence.

The dictatorship's handover of power

The Pinochet dictatorship was recognised for the economic restructuring that turned Chile into the neoliberal model for the region (see also Woods' chapter in this volume). Another peculiarity of the Chilean case was the presence of armed groups in the 1980s and 1990s. These organisations maintained a strategy of aggressive confrontation against the dictatorship, which included the presence of armed militias along with specialised detachments. In 1988, in the framework of a transition agreed with the military authorities, a plebiscite was organised to decide whether the dictatorship would continue. The revolutionary movements hoped that in the face of an unfavourable result, the dictatorship would refuse to give up power, which would be followed by a mass uprising. But, according to Guerra Guajardo (2015), the armed groups had no planned strategy for the military's recognition of the failure at the polls. In this framework, the supporters of the

Concertación – a coalition of left, centre-left and centrist political parties that governed Chile from 1990 to 2010 – reached agreement with the right and the military to guarantee social demobilisation, dismantling the organisations that had fought against the dictatorship. The Concertación feared any instability that would prevent progress on its governmental programme. In 1991, during the Patricio Aylwin administration, the 'Pinocheques' scandal broke out, wherein cheques had been paid by the army to buy shares in a fake company created by the eldest son of Pinochet. When the government demanded Pinochet's resignation, he responded by quartering the army, under the pretext of security. In 1993, the judicial investigation was reactivated, summoning eight officers to testify. Pinochet responded with a movement of troops (paratroopers in combat clothes, with blackened faces) that surrounded the Ministry of Defense building on the 28th of May, 1993, in what was called 'El Boinazo' ['The Berets movement']. Defenders of the Pinochet regime were present in the armed forces as well as in the political parties and in Congress where they would veto any threat to the status quo. Any attempt to mobilise was labeled dangerous to democracy and Pinochet remained de facto, and in law, commander-in-chief of the army until 1998, and was made 'Senator for life' thereafter. In 2000 Pinochet faced a process of desafuero [parliamentary impeachment] based on the execution of political prisoners by the so called 'Caravana de la Muerte' ['Caravan of Death'], a special group appointed by him to torture political prisoners with indescribable cruelty, kill them, and bury them in unmarked graves. Although he was finally stripped of his immunity as Senator, the proceedings were dismissed on grounds of senile dementia in 2002. There has been no justice for violation of human rights under the dictatorship in Chilean society.

According to Guerra Guajardo (2015), the repressive effectiveness of democracy was greater than that of the dictatorship in disrupting the networks of sympathisers of armed groups and breaking up the community or collective identity by combining counter-insurgency tactics with social propaganda. The state created new conditions for those who stopped participating in the insurgency, and the category of the 'renovados' ['renewed'] appeared, meaning those who had a revolutionary past but were now vying for positions in public office. The

left contributed to the isolation by branding as 'descolgados' ['layabouts'] those armed groups that in the post-dictatorship period opted for bank robbery as a means of subsistence. The new notion of 'citizen security' redefined crime as the internal enemy, a category in which revolutionary groups were included. The legal framework combined the anti-terrorist law, the double prosecutions by the civil and military justice systems of the dictatorship, and a post-dictatorship law on repentance and compensated confessions. In practice, this meant the re-incorporation into the democratic project of those who, having fought against the dictatorship, had now turned against their comrades who were still fighting. This legislation was applied by the Directorate of Public Security and Information, created for the task of infiltration, annihilation, denunciation and re-integration of repentants. The Office, as it became known, dismantled armed groups that rejected the Concertación's commitments. The trials resulted in long sentences, and in 1994 dozens of prisoners were relocated to the Cárcel de Alta Seguridad (CAS – High Security Prison) specially opened for 'terrorist' prisoners.

Anarchist punk and anarchism

In the context of the struggle against the military dictatorship, in the mid 1980s, old anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist militants associated with the Centre for Social Studies 'Hombre y Sociedad' ['Man and Society'] published a magazine in which they strongly criticised the traditional left, and promoted self-management and workers' participation in production. The initiative dissolved when some members decided to vote in the 1988 plebiscite. The following year, anarchists of different generations formed the Coordinadora Anarquista [Anarchist Coordination] and began to participate in public events and to publish *Acción Directa* [*Direct Action*]. A key date in this initial phase was the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the 'discovery of America' in 1992, which was attended by a large punk and anarchist turnout. Quiroga Venegas (2005) and Ramírez Sanchez (2013) point to

the openness of the old anarcho-syndicalist militants in relation to these young punks with whom they formed 'La Red' ['The Network'].

While the armed groups lost the prominence they had held during the 1980s and early 1990s, the militants in prison distanced themselves from the guidelines of their Parties and instead evolved towards organisational forms with a libertarian, horizontal and autonomous tendency (Solar Dominguez, 2007). For Guerra Guajardo (2015), state repression not only failed to stop political violence, but also gave way to autonomous expressions, without Parties, which later became distinctly anarchist. In this way, in the 1990s, revolutionary political violence was restructured and became the immediate predecessor of anarchist groups. The struggle for the freedom of political prisoners gradually joined the more autonomous, libertarian tendencies and the youth of the punk subculture (Solar Domínguez, 2007; Guajardo Guerra, 2015). At the CAS, the Kolektivo Kamina Libre (KKL − Walk Free Collective) was organised which, through local music compilations, articulated an anti-prison hardcore punk current in the mid 1990s. Marcelo Villarroel, a member of the KKL and author of several texts used as lyrics by different bands and countercultural collectives, created and participated in at least three bands, the best known of which, D-LINKIR, has been in existence since 2005.

Punks and hip-hoppers politicised their discourse and practice, participated in mobilisations and protest activities and were members of the squat houses, promoting horizontal social relations, while also carrying out a series of activities for the dissemination of anarchism. In this regard, Bellei Córdova (2018) points out that in the late 1980s bands appeared whose most conspicuous characteristic was a significant hardening of an oppositional posture. Indeed, unlike the punk of the 1980s, which was directed against the dictatorship, in the 1990s, the conflict shifted to Chilean democracy and the punk scene relocated to poorer areas. For example, in the lyrics to 'El Cóndor', Fiskales Ad-Hok, an emblematic punk band born in the 1980s, criticise not only the military but also the legislative and executive powers of democracy (Fiskales Ad-Hok, 1993).

Meanwhile, in the student scene in the late 1980s, the Vanguardia Anarquista Estudiantil [Student Anarchist Vanguard] was formed,

which, through street confrontation, tried to differentiate itself from the left wing that worked for the government and neoliberalism. The Vanguardia, whose members came mainly from armed organisations in decay, differentiated itself from other organisations by its radical street fighting, the takeovers of university buildings and hunger strikes. From the dissolution of this organisation emerged Resistencia Anarquista Estudiantil (RAE – Anarchist Student Resistance), with former members of the Vanguardia joining to continue the street struggle. There was coordination for street actions between the Vanguardia and other confrontational groups. Some of them later joined 'Motor Rebelde' ['Rebel Motor'] (1994-1995), which worked with former political prisoners and incorporated elements of Marxism and anarchism, which, according to Ramírez Sánchez (2013), allowed the transfer of experiences and knowledge of street struggle from former political prisoners and hard-left militants to the emerging anarchist collectives.

At the end of 1992, students from the Universidad La República and the Universidad de Chile formed the Coordinadora Anarquista Estudiantil (CAE – Anarchist Student Coordination) for the purposes of student propaganda and agitation. CAE published the magazine *El Duende Negro* [*The Black Elf*], which after its dissolution was edited by the Luis Olea Anarchist Militia in a format inspired by punk subculture (Ramírez Sánchez, 2013). Estigma [Stigma] was another collective that emerged from the University of Chile in 1993, dedicated to theoretical issues of anarchism, agitation and street action. They linked up with Columna Negra [Black Column], a group from the Pedagogical Institute, to form the Federación Anarquista Libertaria (FAL – Libertarian Anarchist Federation). This grouping, made up of activists of different ideologies, some of them anarchists, called for propaganda by deed and armed confrontation. The actions of the FAL also focused on street protests and claimed the Vanguardia and RAE as their antecedents. From then on, the demonstrations were numerous – some sources report that 500 hooded demonstrators carried out direct actions (Ramírez Sanchez, 2013). This led to reports of infiltrators which, with the recent history of denunciations in the post-dictatorship period, generated such mistrust that the FAL was disbanded. However, former

members of FAL regrouped as the Coordinadora Revolucionaria del Pedagógico (CRP – Revolutionary Coordination of Pedagogy). This grouping, where a Marxist-Leninist and an anarchist tendency converged, reclaimed the radicalism and violence of its predecessor. The focus of all these groupings was the formation of active minorities or latent centres of confrontation in order to transit to a later period, in which social conflict would become more generalised and radicalised. In short, they gave continuity to a practice deployed during the dictatorship and which persisted in the students' collective consciousness. However, the creation of the CRP marked the beginning of a division between those who continued with the street confrontation and those who did not. The latter aspired to build a revolutionary project and adopted at the end of the 1990s logics of action mediated by (quasi-hierarchical) structures inspired by platformism.

Conclusions

The defining characteristic of punk anarchism across the Southern Cone during post-dictatorships was its shared anti-platformist and anti-political party orientation. Because of its rejection of structured organisations and emphasis on direct action practices, we argue that anarchist punk was a post-left anarchism. During the dictatorships, Marxist armed groups and Epecificismo both encouraged the structuring of organisations that mediated direct action. Especifismo in particular, with its proposal for an organisation of national scope with tactical and theoretical/ideological unity, practiced the separation between those who made decisions and those who obeyed, assimilating its organisations into a political Party. Indeed, through a vanguardist organ or Libertarian Political Organisation, Especifismo condemns and rejects action under individual responsibility. This is the central aspect that differentiates post-left anarchism from left anarchism. Additionally, the mutual rapprochement and alliances between Especifismo and Marxist armed groups re-inforced the spread of nationalism and encouraged a Latin Americanist profile. On the contrary, we argue that by taking up *genuine* anarchist practices, anarchist punk promoted not

only self-management or DIY, but also internationalism. This is why we understand anarchist punk as a coincidence or concurrence of ideas and practices among people whose common denominator was direct action based on free association. But the lack of structured organisations did not mean absence of activity and collaborative initiatives. The anarchist punks promoted marches, sabotages, ephemeral fanzine publications, along with forms of self-management that persisted over time, including cooperatives, which, with their rotation of roles and absence of hierarchies, were suitable for managing initiatives outside the commercial circuit. In short, it was a post-left anarchism because it attempted a re-appropriation of life and revolted against the hierarchy and mediatisation of leftist experiences. Regardless of the specific nuances of transition in each context, the military across the Southern Cone continued to monitor the population. In this regard, we note that the anarchist punks were the focus of state espionage in all cases.

In the case of Argentina and Uruguay, the struggle of the anarchist punks was against the police, their edicts, and the razzias in force since the dictatorship which were used to repress opponents of the new order. The Uruguayan peculiarity is its artistic slant, while the most notable feature of the Argentine case is its internationalism and links with other struggles around the world. Finally, the characteristic feature of the Chilean case is the constant student street mobilisations, which resumed the methods of struggle that had been prominent during the dictatorship.

Anarchist punk practices were replicated in all three countries outside and against the organisational structures disseminated by the left in general, and by Especifismo platformism in particular. That is why anarchist punk in Uruguay was met with rejection and lack of comprehension. On the contrary, in Argentina, where platformism had been a minority tendency, anarchist punks had a reasonably friendly reception in the historical spaces of the anarchist movement. In the case of Chile, platformism was absent and there was a connection between anarcho-syndicalists and young people from the punk subculture mobilised by the anti-prison struggle. This solidarity coincided with the armed left-wing groups which, once disarticulated and in prison, evolved towards anarchism and informality.

Finally, we would like to re-emphasise that the common feature in all three cases is the networking and the variety of a diversity of tendencies and generations of anarchists and also of other diverse expressions, individualities and collectives, marginalised and persecuted, grouped together in their affinity with the aim of attacking the post-dictatorship order.

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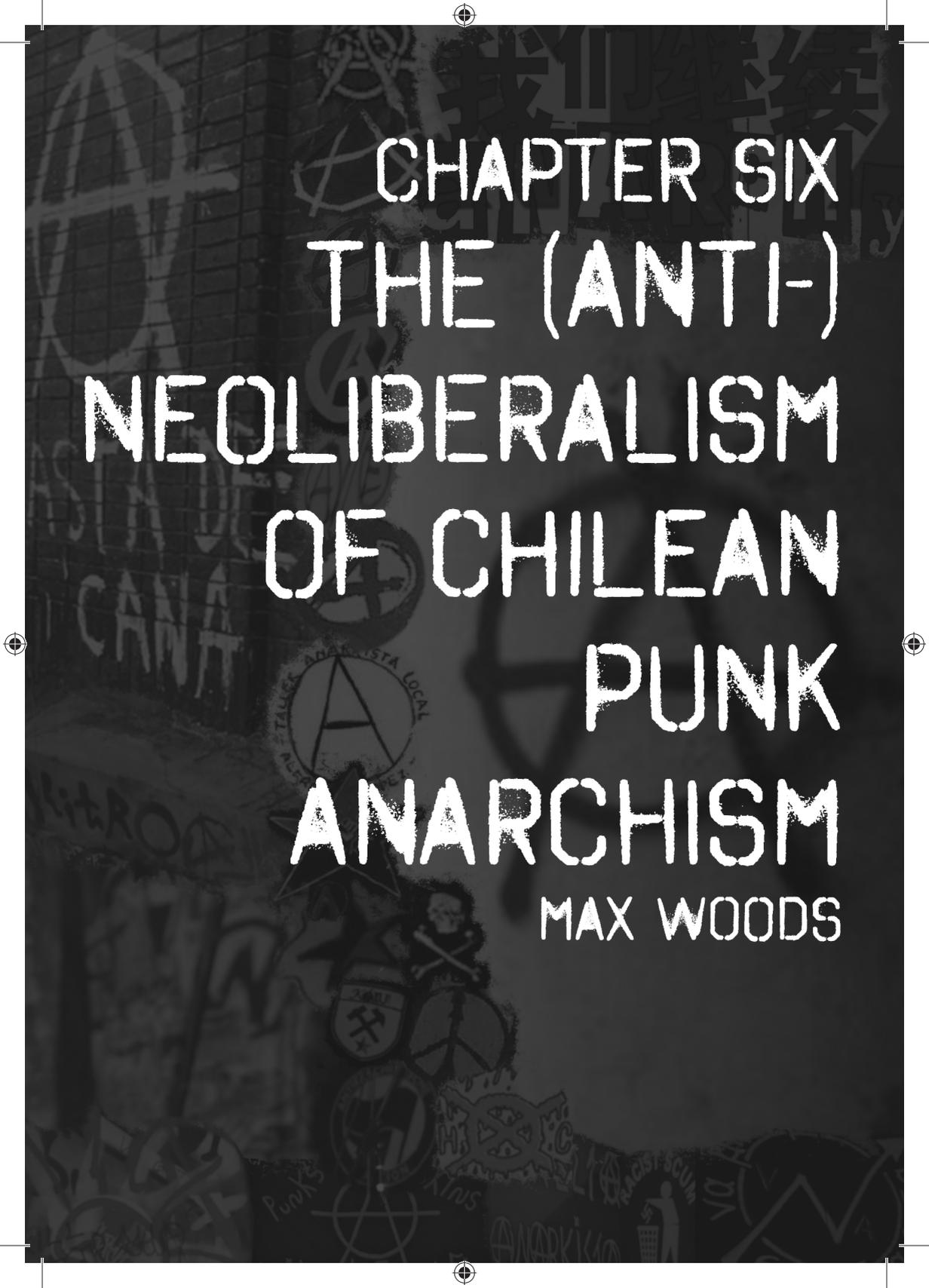
CHAPTER SIX

THE (ANTI-) NEOLIBERALISM OF CHILEAN PUNK ANARCHISM

MAX WOODS

Chapter Six: The (anti-)neoliberalism of Chilean punk anarchism

Maxwell Woods

Punk is a globalized culture of neoliberalism.* This is the primary argument of this chapter through an analysis of Chilean punk and anarchism. This is not to say that punk supports neoliberalism and is complicit in its continuing global hegemony, but it is to say that punk is enabled by the neoliberal restructuring of various political economies and socio-cultural landscapes throughout the world. Quite bluntly, global punk would not exist without neoliberalism.

A careful definition of neoliberalism is necessary since in recent years it has often been used interchangeably with 'capitalism' (as if capitalism did not exist before the 1970s), or, even worse, has been seen as a 'bad' form of capitalism that needs to be replaced with a 'good' form of capitalism. Neoliberalism is nothing more than a particular form of capitalism structured around the multi-nationalization of corporate structures, the undermining of collective projects based on solidarity and the power of working classes, and the transfer of various endeavors and tasks formerly under the purview of the State to the hands of private enterprises (though, as Arrighi's (2006) *The Long Twentieth Century* shows, these elements of neoliberalism are not entirely new). Under neoliberalism, the collective project of democratically distributing resources and regulating social relations through the instrument of the State – where the 'parliament' is seen as the public space for discussing and resolving *how* to do this – is undermined and reallocated to a decentralized and polycentric private sphere. In this way, neoliberalism redistributes to private hands some of the powers

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* I am overgeneralizing to make an impactful statement. To claim, for instance, that Soviet-era Eastern Bloc punk was a neoliberal cultural practice would be dubious at best (though it is remarkable that many of the first Eastern Bloc punks were cosmopolitans who had seen punk's emergence first hand in London). For more on global punk and its diversity see Dunn (2016) and Patton (2018).

accumulated by the State over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If neoliberalism has therefore come to often be synonymous with 'deregulation' and 'privatization', it is therefore also marked by capitalist elites weaponizing the State in order to re-direct financial power into their hands. Neoliberalism is marked by 'new forms of corporate organization and control that facilitat[e] the centralization of authority and the decentralization of production' (Clark, 2018, p. 33). Neoliberalism does not destroy or even weaken the State, but rather reconfigures 'the institutional forms of state-society relations' for the benefit of capital (Taylor, 2006, p. 7). Neoliberalism is not the recession of the State, it is capital's reorganization of the State in order to increase their economic power.

This political-economic project emerged as a material force for the first time in Chile under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1975, after one of neoliberalism's chief theorists, Milton Friedman, personally met with the dictator to convince him to transform the nation's political economy (Collier and Satter, 2004, pp. 364-65; Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, 2003). This new neoliberal political economy implemented via authoritarianism was primarily orchestrated by a group of Chilean economists referred to as the 'Chicago Boys' who had studied at the University of Chicago under the tutelage of various neoliberal ideologists (Rumié Rojo, 2019; Klein, 2007). Subsequently, this ideology quickly gained traction throughout much of the world, especially in the United States under Ronald Reagan and in the UK under Margaret Thatcher, though the foundations for such a massive reorganization of their political economies was laid throughout the 1970s.

The Chilean case points to an uncomfortable fact for many of its ideologues who celebrate the political-economic model as the liberation of the free market from the fetters of the State – neoliberalism requires the existence of a strong State with a monopoly of violence (i.e. the police) to guarantee its existence. For instance, Pinochet's use of torture to quell challenges to neoliberalism is evidence that under neoliberalism the State is actively weaponized by capital (Colectivo de Memoria Histórica, 2005). This is why postmillenial anarchists are often so insistent on defining anarchism not only as autonomy from the State but as the generation of cooperativist, self-administered, and horizontalist

social relations. An oversimplified definition of anarchy as 'anti-State' leads to confusion about processes like neoliberalization where capital's reconstitution of the State for their own benefit is often misunderstood as an attack on the State and sometimes equated with anarchism (White and Williams, 2012; Springer, 2017).

The emergence of punk in the late 1970s happened at the same time as the emergence of the political-economic project of neoliberalism. What does this mean for punk's relationship to anarchism? Is punk and its attendant political ideology of anarchism in fact a symptom of neoliberalism, or a culture of resistance against neoliberalism? To respond to this question, I want to turn to Chile, the birthplace of neoliberalism. This chapter will start with a discussion of Chile's anarchist tradition as primarily dedicated to anarcho-syndicalism, in which anarchists attempted to organize the working class of Chile outside of the institutional confines of the State in order to directly seize power for workers. Anarchism would subsequently lose influence in Chile as working-class politics came to be institutionalized in the State and the political ideology of State socialism. Following the installation of a military dictatorship in 1973 and neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s, however, this collective national project would be substantially undermined, and a globalized neoliberal marketplace grounded in access to new commodities would enable a new individualist socio-cultural landscape based on consumption. The anarchist culture of resistance articulated by Chilean punks, I suggest, is a symptom of this neoliberalization of Chilean social space. Chilean punks had little-to-nothing to do with the historical practice of anarchism in the nation, and in fact their cultural practices were largely enabled by access to punk music and fashion as part of a new global marketplace of cultural commodities.

The rise and fall of anarcho-syndicalism

Histories of leftist activism, politics, and culture in Chile tend to focus around the successes of socialist organizing starting in the late 1930s that subsequently reached its pinnacle with the democratically elected socialist administration of Salvador Allende between 1970-1973. This dominant frame of reference for Chilean leftist politics, however, has been complicated by re-evaluations of the Allende administration's frequent patriarchal politics (Franceschet, 2005, pp. 24-25), their relationship with decolonial Indigenous organizing (Correa et al., 2005), and queer cultural politics of the early 1970s (Palaversich and Allatson, 2002). According to these critiques, the common form taken by Chilean working-class politics was frequently a white heteropatriarchal working-class politics that did not adequately take into account feminist, decolonial, and queer socio-political demands.

Furthermore, leftist histories that focus especially on State-based politics have largely ignored or overlooked the importance of autonomous anarchist direct action of the early-twentieth century (Godoy Sepúlveda, 2016). According to most historical accounts, anarchism made its first appearance in Chile in the late-nineteenth century when radical working-class European immigrants imported anarchist theories and protest tactics (del Solar and Pérez, 2008). Anarchism expanded its reach especially between 1898 and 1907, only to be put on pause with the Iquique Massacre, where the Chilean government brutally murdered over 2,000 striking workers leading to a drastic diminution in radical grassroots politics in the subsequent years (Muñoz, 2013, pp. 17-19). Yet by 1917 anarchist politics had experienced a resurgence, especially with the formation of the Chilean chapter of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1919. Against the dominant history of Chilean leftist politics, historians have shown that anarchism was in fact an immensely significant political ideology and practice that still has lasting effects on Chilean politics today.

For many, the development of anarchism is directly linked to what has been called 'the social question' in Chilean history. When the

proletariat emerged as a collective subject in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the Chilean economy shifting towards a capitalist model, the Chilean State did little to respond to the needs of this new mass of destitute workers, thereby quickly making their presence a destabilizing force within the nation (Grez Toso, 2011, p. 11). As a result, when anarchism appeared in Chile its dominant form quickly became anarcho-syndicalism, insofar as its primary motivation was to organize workers who formed the foundation of this unresolved 'social question'. As Muñoz Cortés notes, the rise of anarcho-syndicalism is largely due to the fact that in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, 'the relations between capital and labor were not in general mediated by the State. The security of the work site, labor hours, collective bargaining, salaries, almost everything was governed principally by the tacit agreement between workers and businessmen' (2013, p. 44). * Anarchism in Chile quickly became defined as an anarcho-syndicalism dedicated to direct action and the autonomous organization of workers outside the confines of the State in order to directly challenge capital. By the early 1920s, an argument can be made that in some parts of Chile anarchism was the most prominent working-class ideology with, for instance, the IWW in 1920 and 1921 being 'the most powerful and contestatory labor organization' in the port city of Valparaíso (Muñoz Cortés, 2013, p. 113).

Anarchism, however, would suffer a major defeat in the 1920s with the rise of the brief dictatorship of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo (1927-1931). Ibáñez's effect in the field of anarchism would be double. First, he instituted a 'corporatist system' in the Chilean State that legalized and began to regulate the activity of labor unions. If the ostensible goal of this formalization and legalization of labor unions was to address and resolve the 'social question' by making the State the official arbitrator of labor disputes, it also served to restrict the 'revolutionary potential' of labor organizations (del Solar and Pérez, 2008, p. 50). Laws that 'prohibited associating with other unions [unrecognized by the State] for strikes and prohibited solidarity work stoppages' were designed to 'control and end the independence of the

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* All translations mine unless otherwise noted in the bibliography.

worker movement' (Muñoz Cortés, 2013, p. 51). As a result, working-class politics largely became incorporated into the State, leading to the general tendency of Chilean politics over the next 50 years for social tensions to be settled 'through interventionist methods that led to the establishment and subsequent expansion of new state institutions' (Taylor, 2006, p. 16). Anarchism based in autonomous working-class politics and direct action was thereby marginalized by a politics more and more dedicated to resolving social problems from within the State.

This shift had the secondary effect on leftist organizing of privileging socialist politics that was comfortable attaching itself to the State, and by the 1930s State socialism was on its way to becoming the 'official' voice of leftist radicalism. When this State-based and developmentalist leftist agenda took power in the late 1930s – and largely held power until 1973 – instead of pushing back against the criminalization of autonomous working-class politics, they continued the tendency to enforce the regulation of working-class politics from within State apparatuses (del Solar and Pérez, 2008, p. 54). Over the next decades, anarchism largely lost any wide influence within Chile.

The culture of the rise of socialism

As a result, the common form taken by leftist politics in Chile was a socialism dedicated to forming a strong centralized State that could develop the nation from the bottom up. This grassroots national developmentalist mentality would be most clearly expressed via the famous nationalizations of industries starting in the 1950s (Caputo and Galarce, 2011a). The overall idea of this nationalizing project was to seize control of various industries, place them in the hands of Chilean citizens, and then resolve how they should be directed and how revenue should be distributed via democratic decision-making processes within the State.

Such a political agenda required the attendant *cultural* project of unifying the nation around a shared identity. This was primarily the work of Chilean literature during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries up until 1973, to integrate various discrete and diverse communities and

cultures into a singular Chilean nation that could then be regulated and developed by the nation-State (Subercaseaux, 2007; Moreiras, 2001, 2016). If this was largely an elitist project in which the ruling class of Chile sought to create the image of a homogeneous and harmonious community, one that was in fact a top-down collective orchestrated and controlled by a select powerful cadre (Subercaseaux, 2007), there was an associated bottom-up articulation of this national culture starting in the wake of the Ibáñez dictatorship. Within this process of forming a grassroots national culture, popular music played a central role starting in the 1940s when the folk musician, Violeta Parra, started collecting and writing songs based on folklore from across the Chilean geopolitical space, effectively initiating a new grassroots national musical movement that sought to challenge the culture of the ruling class (Contreras Román, 2016).

This development of a grassroots folk music tradition would be complicated in the early 1960s with the arrival of a new musical influence from abroad: rock'n'roll. Early Chilean rock music was categorized under the genre of 'The Chilean New Wave' [La nueva ola chilena], the first attempt to form a national Chilean version of US- and UK-originating rock'n'roll. As Fabio Salas Zúñiga summarizes, this music largely ignored social and political issues, being primarily a music of 'entertainment and nothing more' (2003, p. 33), but was important insofar as it generated 'the tacit acceptance that Rock existed and could live among us [Chileans]' (2003, p. 31). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, this foreign influence was incorporated into the folk music tradition catalyzed by Violeta Parra and others to form what has come to be the most influential Chilean popular music movement to date – the New Chilean Song. With major groups like Illapu, Inti-Illimani, and Quilapayún, in addition to artists like Víctor Jara and Patricio Manns, the New Chilean Song was a development of the popular national culture based in the folk music tradition with a deep dedication to social and political issues of the country, but integrated the aesthetic advancements of rock music in order to create a novel popular musical culture that quickly gained massive popularity across the nation.

The music of the New Chilean Song quickly became the soundtrack to the rise of Salvador Allende. Quilapayún's protest

anthem, 'The People United Will Never Be Defeated' ['El pueblo unido jamás será vencido'], for instance, was written in support of the Allende presidency. For Salas Zúñiga, the New Chilean Song 'was the magic, the energetic sensation of that historic moment where the consciousness of the epic situation transformed us into protagonists of [Latin] American space, a sentiment of solidarity that ran through all of us' (2003, p. 69). In sum, by the early 1970s, a grassroots music of resistance based in the Chilean folk tradition had integrated the influence of North Atlantic rock music in support of the national project of socialism. If Allende was pushing through the socialist policy agenda, the New Chilean Song was its heart and soul, providing the cultural cohesion that enabled and legitimized that political program.

If anarchism's decline is in large part due to the repressive measures of the Ibáñez dictatorship and the subsequent shift in Chilean politics towards resolving social tensions from within the national State (rather than direct action), its growing insignificance was also due to its inability to overcome the increasingly coherent and popular cultural foundation of the State socialist project (i.e. the popular musical movement of the New Chilean Song). For instance, although there is a long tradition of anarchist theater in Chile, it has been critiqued for being overly didactic and for failing to take into account the aesthetic advancements offered by a quickly globalizing culture industry (Grez Toso, 2011; Rojo, 2008; Pereira Poza, 2005). Socialism in part succeeded precisely because it was able to effectively integrate these cultural and aesthetic advancements into a coherent grassroots culture of resistance that enabled its political vision.

The fall of socialism and the rise of neoliberalism

This politico-cultural story of the rise and fall of anarchism and the rise of State socialism simultaneous with the emergence of the New Chilean Song would meet a bitter end in 1973 with the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet. In the wake of the military taking control of the country, cultural and political leftist leaders would either be forced into exile or brutally executed or tortured. For nearly a decade, Chile would subsequently live under what came to be known as a 'cultural blackout', with little intellectual or cultural production (Donoso Fritz, 2013). It was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that some spaces opened up for cultural experimentation.

Yet by this time a major transformation had occurred within the Chilean political-economic landscape. Starting in 1975, the Pinochet dictatorship instituted a series of reforms that catalyzed the neoliberalization of the country's political-economic foundations. Central to these reformations was the re-privatization of the multiple industries that had been nationalized prior to the coup and opening them up for foreign direct investment, a tendency in the Chilean economy that exists to this day. As a result of this neoliberal revolution, nearly 500 previously state-owned companies were denationalized and there was a 'substantial increase in labor exploitation … enabled by the destruction and repression of workers' unions and political organization' (Caputo and Galarce, 2011b, p. 201). As Ximena de la Barra summarizes, the previous socialist developmentalism was replaced by a neoliberalism 'determined to undermine genuine solidarity-based regional integration in favor of the plunder of Latin American natural resources via FTAs [Free Trade Agreements] with the United States, by IIRSA [Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure of South America], and by the Association Agreements with the European Union' (2011, p. 5).

Neoliberalization was experienced in the field of culture as well. As Salas Zúñiga (2003) has documented, the early years of the dictatorship

witnessed the quick dismantling of the internal national music infrastructure that had supported the New Chilean Song in addition to the elimination of the leading voices of the movement. With the marked lessening – though never the disappearance – of political repression during the 1980s combined with a new globalized neoliberal marketplace, however, new musical scenes started to emerge. The new cultural landscape proper to neoliberalism was organized around 'modern techniques of commercialization and marketing of cultural goods' (Salas Zúñiga, 2003, p. 105) in addition to embedding Chilean culture in globalized flows of cultural commodities. This tendency towards the commercialization of culture dominated the 1980s, leading to a 'transnationalization of music and culture' in Chile (Salas Zúñiga, 2003, pp. 106, 109). In the end, Salas Zúñiga concludes pessimistically, popular music stopped conceiving of itself as a movement and accepted the logic of commercialization (2003, p. 182).

If this neoliberal shift had upended the progressive national culture of the previous era of Chilean popular music, it also led to the introduction of exciting new genres from the North Atlantic, most notably new wave, post-punk, and punk. This culture quickly became a mode of cultural expression of rebellious youths from more privileged classes who were looking abroad for visions of liberation that they perceived as lacking in Chile at that moment. With the formation of bands like the Pinochet Boys, DADA, Los Prisioneros (although their categorization as punk or post-punk is often contested), and Los Índice de Desempleo [Unemployment Index] punk began to take form in the 1980s, and by 1986 the 'First Punk Festival' of Chile was held in the nation's capital (Canales Cabrera, 2017, 2019).

Punk therefore held a rather curious place within the socio-cultural landscape of Chile. On the one hand, the arrival of foreign cultural commodities to Chile was by no means new. Not only had rock music first arrived to Chile as a foreign commodity in the 1960s, but, dating back to the nineteenth-century, French fashion and books had been treated in a similar manner (González Errázuriz, 2003). On the other hand, looking at the particular context of 1980s Chile, the interaction with those global cultural commodities witnessed a profound transformation. Whereas aesthetic and musical elements of rock music

had been integrated into a national musical movement with the New Chilean Song, punk was being experienced as a transnational musical scene constituted by the dynamic consumption of global cultural commodities. More precisely, following Álvaro Cuadra (2003), punk seems to be an element of neoliberalism's cultural transformation of Chile from a politicized nation of active citizens towards a local market of consumers embedded in globalized flows of commodities. In contrast to the socio-political movements based on a logic of solidarity that marked much of the twentieth century, in this new neoliberal landscape 'consumerism [became] the new mode of socialization' (Cuadra, 2003, p. 14). Even political heroes, Cuadra argues, were transformed into commodities and inserted into a marketplace that functionally 'annulled hierarchies': 'like in a bazar or a magazine page, Che [Guevara] and the Simpsons, Violeta Parra and Madonna can co-exist [convivir] on the same plane of equivalence' (2003, p. 17). Within the neoliberalized landscape, *all* cultural artifacts and practices were transformed into equally exchangeable commodities: Homer Simpson is equal to Che, Violeta Parra is equal to Madonna.

The form that punk took in Chile during the 1980s, I suggest, was often related to this neoliberal reconstitution of Chilean culture. To give just one illustrating example, we can look at the 1991 song, 'Lautaro Rock and Roll', by the band Ocho Bolas (2013 [1991]). The subject of the song is how the Indigenous Mapuche community led by the warrior Lautaro resisted the invasion of Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century. Yet Ocho Bolas reimagines Lautaro as a 'rock-and-roller' who from his youth 'felt a great rhythm in his feet, mother earth provided him this gift'. As the song continues, it is 'with his people [the Mapuche] that Lautaro danced, always rock-and-roll he sang'. This process of reimagining Indigenous existence from within the language and logic of a globalized culture industry – Lautaro as a punk – is precisely the effect of neoliberalization. (For more on the Mapuche see Luzarraga and Donaghey's chapter in this volume). The mode of imagining social identities had come to be dominated by the commodity, in this case the commodity of rock music. *Punk as a culture of resistance was expressed in the language of neoliberalism.*

Chilean punk, anarchism, and the culture of neoliberalism

The dawn of neoliberalism has been associated with the broad-based depoliticization of Chilean society, with major social movements largely (though not entirely) disappearing in Chile until the 2006 student movement (Donoso and von Bülow, 2017). The neoliberal commodification of the Chilean landscape, it is argued, successfully transformed a nation of politicized citizens into a depoliticized marketplace of consumers and sellers (Cuadra, 2003). Within this theorization, punks were just one more type of consumer and seller who had embraced the individualist logic of forming an identity via the purchase and production of cultural commodities circulated in the neoliberal globalized market.

Such an interpretation is hampered by the fact that since its inception Chilean punks have intentionally and explicitly 'inserted themselves into the social conflicts' of the country (Canales Cabrera, 2017, p. 53), and that it is with the counterculture of punk that we witness the beginning of the resurgence of anarchism in Chile (del Solar and Pérez, 2008). What is notable, however, is that punk's relationship with anarchism has often been marked by a separation from the early-twentieth-century Chilean tradition of anarcho-syndicalism. As del Solar and Pérez summarize:

> If the old anarchists kept a dying movement alive for almost fifty years, they did not have the capacity to transmit it to the new generations … Yet despite this, already by 1970 a new conceptualization of the political was beginning to flourish silently, which since 1990 will be the direct heir of anarchism: the counter-culture. (2008, p. 112)

Anarchism, they argue, was regenerated in Chile partially as a result of its connection to the counter-cultural space of punk, but it was an anarchism that was largely decoupled from the long tradition of anarcho-syndicalism dating back to the nineteenth century.

So, what form did this punk anarchism take if it was not that of anarcho-syndicalism? On the one hand, many bands avoided strict connections to an affirmative political ideology, even while they were extremely politically oriented and explicitly opposed to the military dictatorship (Canales Cabrera, 2017, p. 46). If del Solar and Pérez are correct that many Chilean punk bands had 'radical, anti-system, and anarchical [anárquica] lyrics' (2008, p. 148), many avoided the specific term 'anarchist'. On the other hand, a few bands did start to explicitly identify with the concept of anarchy and anarchism, with perhaps the most famous Chilean punk band, Fiskales Ad-hok, even writing a song called, 'Anarkía y Rebelión' ['Anarchy and Rebellion'] (2008). Punk seemed to exist in an ambiguous space in which it avoided an affirmative ideological alignment – though (almost) always connected to a radical and anti-authoritarian leftist perspective – yet at the same time came to be politically categorized as a culture of resistance 'synonymous with anarchism' (del Solar and Pérez, 2008, p. 151; see also Calandra's chapter in this volume).

To understand this apparent contradiction, it will help to closely follow the politico-cultural thinking of one particular hardcore group that explicitly aligned itself with anarchy – the band Anarkia [Anarky]. Today, the history of this band is contained in anonymous blogs and online forums that follow their short initial life (1987-1990) and reunion in 2000, with intermittent activity ever since (for a brief history of the band see Rulo, 2013. Anarkia's full discography is available on their Bandcamp page). Their lyrics contain the radical anti-State, anti-capitalist, and anti-system content that is to be expected of a group explicitly named 'Anarky'. For instance, their song 'Congreso de payasos' ['Congress of Clowns'] is a critique of both left- and right-wing political projects, calling on the audience to move beyond representative, electoral, and parliamentary politics:

Payasos de derecha.
Bufones de la izquierda.
Pero todos son la misma porquería.
…

Esto no tendrá muy pronta solución.
Siempre robarán a nuestra sociedad.
Esto no tendrá muy pronta solución.
Siempre mentirán a nuestra sociedad.
…
Juegan con nosotros.
Por los simples votos.
No sigas el juego.
Mira más allá.

[Clowns on the right.]
[Jokers on the left.]
[But they're all the same trash.]
…
[This will not have a quick solution.]
[They'll always rob our society.]
[This will not have a quick solution.]
[They will always lie to our society.]
…
[They play with us.]
[Simply for the votes.]
[Don't follow their game.]
[Look beyond.]

(Anarkia, 2012)

If the general historical narrative on Chilean anarchism is correct, Anarkia is evidence that punk was part of the resurgence of radical anarchist discourse in Chilean society.

Anarkia is especially notable insofar as they were just as critical of the promises of post-dictatorship liberal democracy as they were of the dictatorship. Their demo, *Censurado*, was released in 1989 in the final days of the Pinochet dictatorship when Pinochet was voted out of power with a 1988 plebiscite and finally abandoned his post in late 1989. In their song, 'Bototos de milico' ['Soldier's boots'], Anarkia

critiques the State in general, frames that broad-based critique in terms of anarchy, and then connects that anarchy to identifying as a punk:

Es por eso que la anarquía,
Ya no quiere ni saber,
Ni de pacos ni milicos,
Ni de nadie con poder.
Ya no quiero seguir sufriendo.
Ya no quiero más gobierno.
Ya no quiero sus problemas.
Ya no quiero más sistema.
Es por eso que protesto,
Y lo hago con razón,
Pelo rojo y chaqueta.
Es por eso que soy punk.

[That's why anarchy,]
[No longer wants or knows,]
[About cops or soldiers,]
[Nor cares about anyone with power.]
[I no longer want to keep suffering.]
[I no longer want government.]
[I no longer want its problems.]
[I no longer want more system.]
[That's why I protest,]
[And I do it with reason,]
[Red hair and jacket.]
[That's why I'm punk.]

(Anarkia, 2012 [1989])

If the band's opposition to 'cops and soldiers' is a clear reference to the dictatorship and its repressive measures, they are just as insistently against any State and 'anyone with power'. What is opposed is not the

dictatorship in particular, but the State in general. In this way, the band was maintaining a typical position in the history of Chilean anarchism that has viewed the State as 'the incarnation of authoritarianism' (Grez Toso, 2007, p. 71).

Beyond this initial opposition to the dictatorship and the Chilean State in general, Anarkia also voiced an opposition to the neoliberalism that had been establishing itself since the mid 1970s. As they growl on their song, 'Odio las modas' ['I hate fashions']:

Estafas industrials.
Modas comerciales.
Modas para pobres.
Modas para ricos.
…
Nos absorben todas.
Nos envuelven.
Son para cerdos consumistas!
Deja de vivir como un hombre de masa!
Deja de vestir como un hombre masa!
Deja de actuar como un hombre masa!
Deja de pensar como un hombre masa!

[Industrial scams.]
[Commercial fashions.]
[Fashion for the poor.]
[Fashion for the rich.]
…
[They absorb us.]
[They envelop us.]
[They're for consumerist pigs!]
[Stop being like a man of the masses!]
[Stop dressing as a man of the masses!]
[Stop acting like a man of the masses!]
[Stop thinking as a man of the masses!]

(Anarkia, 2012 [1989])

Not only do they oppose the government and its various representatives, they oppose the newest neoliberal form of capitalism that enabled access to a wider network of consumer commodities (i.e. 'fashions'). The opposition to 'fashions' is code for opposition to a neoliberalized cultural landscape.

Yet there seems to be a fundamental tension contained within this opposition to fashions and neoliberalism: punk itself was a fashion made available in Chile as a consequence of the neoliberalization of the country's social landscape. That is, the donning of red hair and a leather jacket that Anarkia expresses in 'Bototos de milico' can be interpreted as the adoption of a particular fashion. Even beyond this apparent contradiction – Anarkia opposes fashion while simultaneously engaging with a fashion movement started in the North Atlantic and enabled in Chile by the neoliberalism they are protesting – there is the problem of the stated influences of the band. In an interview after their 2000 reunion, the band listed off their various influences: Accept, The Accüsed, The Exploited, The Descendents, Vangelis, Paradise Lost, My Dying Bride, Anathema, Emperor, Depeche Mode, Tori Amos, SOD, DRI, King Crimson, Dead Kennedys, and Chilean cumbia (Gaggero, not dated). The reader will note that, with the exception of Chilean cumbia, all listed influences are European or US bands. This is not in itself noteworthy. The New Chilean Song had obvious influences from outside of Chile, and there does not exist a single culture on earth that exists hermetically sealed-off from external influences. What *is* notable, however, is how Anarkia interacts with these influences. In contrast to the New Chilean Song's integration of rock music into a coherent national sound, Anarkia sees themselves as in transnational musical community with these European and US bands. Although Chilean anarchism has long been dedicated to internationalism (Grez Toso, 2007), it is difficult not to read Anarkia's alignment as enabled by neoliberalism's globalization and denationalization of Chilean popular culture – their transnational punk identity was enabled by neoliberalism

increasing access to globalized cultural commodities. In this hostile reading, Anarkia is paradoxically a cultural representative of the State-based project of neoliberalism.

Furthermore, although Anarkia seems to maintain many of the traditional foundations of Chilean anarchism – opposition to the State, opposition to capitalism, political militancy, and so on – one thing is conspicuously missing. Namely, their anarchy is defined by personal freedom rather than the tradition of organized working-class struggle within anarcho-syndicalism. They explain their conception of anarchy in that same interview:

> Gusano ['Worm', the guitarist]: Anarchy is an attitude, an attitude against the things that are making us sick and that they are doing to make this system go to shit …

> Alan [the vocalist]: Anarky [the name of the band] is with a 'k' and not with a 'ch' because we are our own anarchy, we do our style and our thought. (Gaggero, not dated)

For Anarkia, anarchism is not a collective intellectual tradition, political practice, or ideology, but is instead a highly individualized 'attitude' and way of doing one's own 'style' and 'thought'. The tradition of Chilean anarchism in terms of a collective anarcho-syndicalism is replaced by the individual or small group's capacity to form a 'style'. More polemically, anarchism had become a declaration of consumer preference. Regardless of their militant opposition to the State and the dictatorship, it seems that Anarkia had adopted the very language of neoliberalism in which, returning to Cuadra's phrasing, consumerism had become the dominant mode of socialization.

There are therefore (at least) two ways to read the cultural production of Anarkia. First, they represent the neoliberal depoliticization of anarchism. This has been a common critique of punk in Chile since it emerged in the 1980s (del Solar and Pérez, 2008). An article on 'the genesis of anarchopunk in Chile' by the Chilean anarchist, 'Tristón Tsarro', makes this case most polemically:

We [anarchists] shared [spaces] with [punks] but we didn't feel very integrated, rather we critiqued them frequently. They were many more than us; you could see punks that had on one side of their jacket a circle-A and on the other side a swastika. They thought that they were anarchists for shock effect, but nothing more profound than that. (Tsarro, 2009)

In this reading, punk anarchism's anti-fashion was itself a fashion choice – a political identity that ironically was a depoliticized element of the neoliberal marketplace that had made this cultural commodity available by importing the products of the North Atlantic culture industry. Tsarro then describes various (ineffective) attempts to politicize punk with anarchism. According to this critique of the lack of political consciousness in Chilean punk, the anarchism of Anarkia is an ideology of neoliberalism wrapped in the clothing of radicalism.

There is, however, a second way one can see this redefinition of anarchism by Anarkia – the reconceptualization of anarchism in response to the new neoliberalized socio-cultural landscape. Whereas previously anarcho-syndicalism had answered the need to autonomously organize workers for the purposes of directly seizing control of the emerging capitalist relations of production unregulated by the State, this new anarchism sought to seize control of the global distribution and circulation of cultural commodities that were enabled by neoliberalism – this new anarchism was one that could dynamically respond to the neoliberalization of Chile. In this sense, Tsarro's calls to politicize punk are mistaken – Anarkia is proposing a new anarchist culture of resistance for the neoliberal moment, and Tsarro is trying to resurrect a bygone era.

To understand this distinction, we must pay careful attention to the rhetoric in 'Odio las modas'. Here, Anarkia opposes fashion *for* the rich and fashion *for* the poor. Being a 'man of the masses', in other words, is more precisely defined as accepting and embracing fashions prepared by and for the neoliberal market. Donning red hair and a leather jacket should not be understood as the attempt to reject the global circulation of cultural commodities, but rather as the attempt to autonomously direct and articulate said circulation. Gusano's definition of anarchy as

an 'attitude' and Alan's definition as doing 'our style and our thought' is the process of configuring a contestatory identity and culture of resistance using the cultural commodities of the globalized neoliberal marketplace, not escaping said marketplace. Indeed, they were successful – the Pinochet dictatorship saw punk as an enemy of neoliberal order formed by 'delinquents' (Salas Zúñiga, 2003, p. 112). In this sense, fashion as understood by Anarkia is more precisely the top-down production and distribution of modes of personal representation that under neoliberalism became subject to the visions of a globalized culture industry, and the band, I argue, is functionally envisioning punk as the autonomous reconfiguration of the distribution of cultural commodities from the bottom up.

Postneoliberal anarchism, punk consumption, and globalization

Anarkia's work therefore functionally embodies a culture of resistance reflecting broader anarchist considerations of what has been called 'postneoliberalism'. In the past decades, anarchist challenges to neoliberalism have sprung up across the globe with a particular intensity in Latin America: Zapatista uprisings in the 1990s and 2000s, 2001 Argentinian anti-austerity protests, the Cochabamba Water War in Bolivia in 1999, the Bolivian Gas War in 2003, Spanish and Greek anti-austerity protests in 2011, the Occupy movement in 2011, and so on (Notes from Nowhere, 2003; Sitrin and Azzellini, 2014). The central question posed by these movements is: what will come after neoliberalism? Much of this discussion has rightfully focused on the alternative relations of production prefigured in these movements and their attendant communitarian anarchist politics. Argentinian workers occupying and taking control of factories, for instance, have subsequently developed close ties with neighborhood organizations in order to break their 'dependence on the dominant market' (Zibechi, 2012, p. 100). Moreover, autonomous Indigenous modes of production, distribution, and community formation in Bolivia have persisted under,

and offered concrete alternatives to, capitalism (Zibechi, 2010). In this way, the task of postneoliberal anarchism is not to imagine new utopias, but rather to amplify and empower already existing and flourishing 'diversity and difference in livelihood practices' that offer alternatives to neoliberalism (White and Williams, 2012, p. 1627).

Yet this twenty-first-century resurgence of a diverse array of autonomous livelihood practices is largely a consequence of the need for new social infrastructures following the neoliberal evisceration of State-based social protections. Autonomous organizing by Indigenous coca farmers in Bolivia starting in the 1980s, for instance, was a result of the need to develop new production and distribution networks to counter neoliberalization (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2008). And in Argentina, autonomous women-run neighborhood organizing was largely in response to the neoliberal destruction of State-based social infrastructure (Gago, 2019). Although many argue that these autonomous networks speak to political failure and are an insufficient response to social precarity, Raúl Zibechi (2010, 2012) has argued that these networks are in fact offering desirable and robust ways to organize social relations. Concrete anarchist postneoliberal futures can be found growing in the ruins of neoliberalism; they are simultaneously symptoms of and alternatives to the neoliberal dystopia in which we find ourselves today.

These anarchist discussions of postneoliberalism, however, have largely left unchecked the flipside to production: consumption. Although consumption is frequently perceived as an integral part of capitalism, it is part of any social reality. When we eat, we are consuming; when we attend a DIY punk show, we are consuming. What is needed, in other words, is a world without capitalist consumption in particular, not a world without consumption in general. Anarkia, I suggest, was trying to work through precisely such a problem: what is postneoliberal anarchist cultural consumption? In this reading, punk is not only interested in 'doing it yourself', but in constructing autonomous networks of consumption and horizontalist distribution. No longer the formation of a unified national culture, but instead the co-generation of a cultural web of artists, not only autonomously producing their own music,

painting, poetry, theory, and so on, but learning from and listening to one another.

More abstractly, Anarkia was functionally – regardless of their intent – conceiving punk as an alternative global network of anarchist cultural interchange, not as a resistance to globalization. If globalization can be understood as the top-down attempt to impose a homogeneous cultural system everywhere (Spivak, 2003), then punk as understood through my reading of Anarkia is the attempt to create an alternative bottom-up planetary culture formed by autonomous webs of cultural production and consumption. Anarkia does not propose total resistance to globalized neoliberal culture – their transnational embrace of punk from the North Atlantic demonstrates precisely this fact – they instead demand control of planetary cultural interchange outside the hands of those who create 'fashions'. In this sense, Anarkia proposed a radical global alternative to the formation of a grassroots national culture integrating foreign influences that had characterized the New Chilean Song. Quite simply, the foundation for Anarkia's punk is a group of bands and aesthetic practices from the North Atlantic, not, as is the case with the New Chilean Song, the folklore of marginalized Chilean communities.

Such internationalism has always been an intimate part of anarchism. For instance, although Peter Kropotkin is perhaps most well-known for his celebration of autonomous local production, he also argued for globally inter-related forms of social life based on the international exchange of knowledge and culture (Kinna, 2016). Perhaps the most powerful contemporary example of such international anarchist production and consumption is the continental-scale networks of autonomous small presses that now populate Latin America (Rabasa, 2019). As Magalí Rabasa eloquently demonstrates, the production, exchange, and consumption of books produced by these small presses are generating a 'new body of political theory' (2019, p. 4) that not only demonstrates 'the limits of the revolutionary potential of a state project' (2019, p. 27) but offer a new politics based on 'collectivity, dialogism, and horizontality' (2019, p. 37). Furthermore, she opens her book with a story about how those small-press books are currently available at punk shows in Mexico. By putting Anarkia in conversation with Rabasa, we

can see how punk is envisioning a postneoliberal interconnected planet based on autonomous cultural production and consumption.

Conclusion

The history of anarchism, popular music, and punk in Chile makes clear the following: some of punk's anarchist politics are simultaneously a symptom and a critique of neoliberalism. For many classical anarchists, especially within the anarcho-syndicalist tradition of Chile, punk represents an apolitical reflection of neoliberalism's dominance. Anarkia's appeals to foreign musical trends directed by multinational culture-industry corporations – without integrating them into a grassroots national culture – and their redefinition of anarchy as an 'attitude' and 'style' reflect the collapse of collective action that had defined the pre-Pinochet era and the golden years of anarchism in the early-twentieth century. For others, one might say that punk is the reconfiguration of anarchy based on a culture of resistance that can dynamically respond to the new context of neoliberalism by attempting to autonomously control and define global flows of cultural works and practices.

The broader consequences for punk anarchism are double. First, we need to move beyond the focus on local DIY that has constituted much of the discussion of punk's politics and ethics. Although this is certainly an extremely important part of punk throughout much of the globe (including Chile), my reading of Anarkia is functionally pointing to something else – punk anarchism needs to perceive itself as integrated into global flows of cultural commodity production and circulation. Punk is a globalized culture of resistance enabled by the very neoliberalism that it ostensibly protests. Indeed, despite punk's anti-corporate stance, without *NME*, Bill Grundy, EMI, Virgin Records, Polydor Records, and so on, punk would likely never have exploded in England nor had such a massive effect in the US. Rather than trying to conceive of a punk that is 'outside the direct control of corporate capitalism' (Dunn, 2016, Ch. 4, par. 2), it might behoove us to consider

that punk's cultural foundation is always already embedded in multinational capitalism.

Second, and related, punk anarchism has recently come to be understood as primarily founded on a DIY ethic that 'empowers local communities, and challenges corporate-led processes of globalization' (Dunn, 2016, Postscript, par. 3). Ignoring the obvious limitation to such a theorization – the world's first major punk band, the Sex Pistols, were a media sensation whose cultural-political activism was grounded on occupying such corporate-led processes of globalization, and nearly all originating London punks signed to corporate record labels – Chilean punk demonstrates that one articulation of punk anarchism is founded on the attempt to autonomously control the relations of the global circulation of cultural commodities, not necessarily providing local communities the tools to resist globalization. Zine networks, tape trading, independent record and clothing stores, YouTube channels, Bandcamp pages, online forums, and the like are in this sense the punk anarchist response to neoliberal globalization. Rather than understanding DIY punk in terms of anti-globalization – a frankly nonsensical position given that punk itself is a cultural agent of globalization – we can understand punk as an alternative anarchist globalization.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

I'M HERE & DON'T FORGET IT:

PUNK, ANARCHISM, REPRESSION & RESISTANCE IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY & CHILE

ASEL LUZARRAGA IN INTERVIEW WITH JIM DONAGHEY

Chapter Seven: 'I'm here, and don't forget it': Punk, anarchism, repression, and resistance in the Basque Country and Chile

Asel Luzarraga in interview with Jim Donaghey

Figure 7:1 – Basque-language author, Asel Luzarraga, on the publication of his tenth novel, *Malthusen Ezinegona* (2021) [photograpoh by Jon URBE/FOKU].

Asel Luzarraga is a celebrated author of fiction in the Basque language and has published books in Spanish too, as well as being a punk musician and anarchist activist. While living in Chile in December 2009, he was arrested and charged with carrying out terrorist bombings. Those charges were patently absurd – he wasn't even in Chile when the bombings occurred – but, on the basis of evidence planted by the police,

Asel was convicted of possession of bomb-making materials. He was detained for 255 days, 42 of those in prison (the remainder under house arrest), before being deported and put on the Interpol list of convicted terrorists. He has been campaigning against that conviction ever since. Asel's involvement in punk culture, his anarchist politics, his support of the Mapuche's land struggle, and his Basque 'nationality' were held up by the Chilean authorities as evidence of Asel's guilt. Indeed, this is in keeping with the repression that has been waged by the Chilean authorities against anarchists, and others, not least in the pre-pandemic protest movements that swept the country in late 2019 and into 2020. This interview with Asel was recorded in August 2020 for the Anarchist Studies Network's 6th International conference (Donaghey, 2020), and is enlightening in terms of the relationships between punk and anarchism, the global connections of punk and anarchist networks, and the

Figure 7:2 – The Malatesta Battalion (36th Basque militia).

Figure 7:3 – ETA logo sculpture by Felix Lininiao. [Image from Eusko Blog, 2019].

Figure 7:4 − Mapuche protest march in Chile [image credit: ekindadano.cl].

Figure 7:5 − The primera linea [first line] during the Chile protests. Note that the colourful Mapuche flags are a prominent feature [image from CrimethInc., 2020b].

repression that so many of our comrades have been targeted with in recent years.

The Basque Country, Euskal Herria, straddles the western edge of the Pyrenees mountains and has its coast along the Bay of Biscay. Part of it is now a so-called 'autonomous community' within the Spanish state, but Basque culture, identity and politics have come under repression during the last several hundred years, not least from neighbouring nation-states – Basque 'Home Rule' in France was abolished during the 1789 bourgeois revolution, and the Basques came under sustained persecution during Franco's fascist dictatorship in Spain (1939-1975). The Basque Country has a distinct cultural tradition, including a unique language that is indigenous to the area. I began by asking Asel about the connections between Basque culture, the Euskara [Basque] language, and the punk scene and anarchist movement there.

Asel: Yeah, well, I think that the connections with Basque language and culture are closer in the punk scene, or, at least, that's a more fluent and a better-known connection. In the 1980s, punk arrived to the Basque country, it was a very strong movement, so there were lots of people who got involved in the squatter movement, punk scene, punk music – there were a lot of punk bands in the Basque Country. From the very beginning, some punk bands started singing in the Basque language. At that moment there weren't even rock bands singing in Basque, or maybe just one or two. So, in fact, some of the first 'rock bands' singing in Basque were punk bands, like Hertzainak, Zarama, or later on there was Baldin Bada, Delirium Tremens, and then many others. That influence also continued into the 1990s, developing into some other music styles, even genres like nu-metal. More bands singing in Basque came later with some other styles, but it always had a big influence on that punk movement. Even today we still look to the 1980s and what that punk scene left us. Now also in Basque literature, some novels have started to appear talking about those times and that punk culture.

It's more difficult to track a similar connection between Basque language or Basque culture and anarchism, especially with regards to Basque language in fact. Because Basque anarchist history is something that stayed hidden – Basque history was stolen by the nationalist

narrative. For them, all the fighting against fascism in the 1930s was solely by those so-called 'gudaris', the Basque Nationalist Party militias. But a lot of the brigades were anarchist – there was the Bakunin Battalion and the Malatesta Battalion and some others [including the Durruti Battalion, Sacco-Vanzetti Battalion, and Isaac Puente Battalion]. Isaac Puente, who was a Basque anarchist doctor, was the first fighter killed by the fascist troops in Vitoria [the Basque political capital].

So, there was an anarchist movement here, and I've found that many of the workers in the harbour here in Bermeo at that time were anarchist as well, and there was even an anarchist commune in San Sebastián, but it's a history that was never told. Now, however, there are some historians, anarchist historians, that are trying to recover that memory.

But for me, growing up here several decades after that period of Basque anarchist history, I lived my anarchism like it was only something on a very personal level. There was no anarchism around me, those historical connections were unknown to me. At that moment, the only connection between anarchism and Basque culture was through the punk movement. The CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo [National Confederation of Labour]), the anarchist union, was starting to re-emerge after 40 years of Franco's dictatorship, but most people associated the CNT and anarchism with Catalonia or Aragón or Andalucía or Asturias, but not the Basque Country.

Funny story – you know the ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna [Basque Country and Freedom]) logo, the axe with a snake around it? That logo was a sculpture made in wood by an *anarchist* activist who ran away to the 'French' side of the Basque country, he was a refugee there. While he was living there, he used to take in Basque independence activists at his home, and he gave the wooden sculpture to those young activists as a present, and it became the ETA logo. He was Felix Likiniano, he was very loved here in the Basque culture. [ETA was a paramilitary Basque separatist group, in existence between 1968 and 2018, that was denounced by numerous western liberal states as a terrorist group].

Jim: That's a good story! So it's really only in the punk scene that you see any overlap between Basque culture and anarchism? I guess a

lot of Basque cultural activism is tied to the nationalist independence campaign. Are anarchists suspicious of Basque nationalism?

Asel: I think that one of the reasons that anarchism and Basque independentist culture don't sit very well together is because of the dominance of the CNT in the historical anarchist movement. In the 1930s they were the most important anarchist organisation, but it was a Spanish anarchist union – the CNT was always, and still is, *very* Spanish. You might call it a 'Spanish nationalist' anarchism, but this is something that they usually don't recognise. So a lot of people here felt like anarchism was connected to that Spanish point of view. I've met a lot of Basque people who feel like an anarchist within themselves, or something close to anarchism, but they think that anarchism and the anarchist movement is very Spanish, so they get more involved in the left nationalist movement. Many of them retain that anarchist point of view, but it's a strange balance sometimes inside that Basque nationalist movement.

[Asel moved to Chile in 2009, as well as spending some time in Argentina. As discussed in detail in Max Woods' chapter in this volume, Chile was something of a test bed for neoliberal economic restructuring, ushered in by Pinochet's brutal military dictatorship (1974-1990). The indigenous Mapuche people have been dispossessed and repressed since the Spanish conquests of the 1500s, but under Pinochet's Junta huge tracts of Mapuche land was taken and given to the timber industry, and the people were badly affected by state repression and the inequalities produced by the neoliberal economy. The Mapuche were described as 'terrorists' by the Pinochet regime for attempting to reclaim land that had been taken from them by the state, and this designation, and ongoing dispossession of land, has continued during the 30 years since the end of the Pinochet regime. The Mapuche language, Mapudungun, is still not officially recognised by the Chilean or Argentinean states.

I asked Asel about his involvement with solidarity activism with the Mapuche people, and how that compared with his experience of the Basque 'scene', and asked if the punk scene and anarchist movement are closely linked in Chile.]

Asel: Yeah, I found it very, very, very close – even more so than in the Basque country. In the Basque country there were some punk bands that were anarchist, but the main political connection there was with the independentist movement. In Chile I found a punk scene that reminded me a lot of the 1980s in the Basque Country. A lot of mohawks, very, very punk style, a lot of pogo dancing at concerts. But the movement there was much more connected to anarchism than it was here. I would say that it was almost completely connected, both to anarchism and also to the Mapuche struggle. There was a strong feeling of solidarity with Mapuche people.

Jim: Can you tell us a little about the struggle of the Mapuche people? Did you feel some resonance with that struggle, coming from a repressed culture yourself?

Asel: Latin American punk is very influenced by Basque punk – some of the most important Basque punk bands, for example La Polla Records or Eskobuto, they have almost mythical status in the Latin

American punk scene. When I moved to Chile, I found that when I said I was Basque a lot of people, both in the punk scene and with the Mapuche people, were like 'ah, wow, tell me about how things are there. How is the punk there, which bands are playing now?' I realise that that's maybe a very 'romantic' point of view, anarchist people in Latin America look to the Basque struggle with an overly romantic perspective – I can't agree with a lot of things they believe about all that. Maybe it's the same when we think about Mapuche people, perhaps we romanticise that struggle too?

But yes, of course – that connection is unavoidable when you start learning about the situation there. I didn't know much about Mapuche people before, when I was living here in the Basque Country. There was Fermin Muguruza, an iconic punk singer here, he had a song in Basque, 'Maputxeak', talking about Mapuche. But in fact that was my only reference when I moved there. I didn't even know that the 'Mapuche country' (Wallmapu) was between Chile and Argentina, I didn't know where Mapuche lived. I had a Chilean girlfriend, a student and a punk, who was close to the anarchist movement, and from the beginning of our relationship she told me about the Mapuche, she showed me videos of police repression and so on. So, I started to write some articles in my blog about the repression against Mapuche, and I found many parallels between repression in the Basque Country and in Mapuche country. For example, thinking of how the struggles are described by the authorities in both cases, here the Spanish government used to talk about 'the Basque problem', so the problem was the Basques; in Chile, they talk about 'the Mapuche conflict', so the conflict is because of Mapuche. It's never described as the 'colonialist conflict'.

I think this is a very natural connection to make. Also because of the language, denied language, languages that they tried to make disappear, both the Basque language and the Mapuche language. So there are many things that make you feel a lot of interest and a lot of solidarity. But there, the police repression against the Mapuche is much harder, much harder than here. It's really like a war, but on one side they have stones and on the other side they have tanks. So it's very, very hard – the authorities don't care about anything, they violently enter the communities, even with children around. It's really very dramatic.

Jim: We've seen some of that dramatic repression being waged against the recent protest movement too. That wave of protest in Chile seemed to reach something of a highpoint just before the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions came into force. How does that recent, or current, protest wave relate to your experiences there ten years ago?

Asel: Yeah, it was around the 18th of October [2019] that the protests and riots started. I think that they come from the movement that I knew there, and even from movements that started before that. But really, I wouldn't have expected such a general reaction and such big protests – I found Chilean society to be pretty conservative. The Chilean police, the carabineros, were the most valued institution in Chile at that moment. Despite their association with very repressive times, with the Pinochet regime and the dictatorship, it was a very respected institution. But, at the same time, there were a lot of protests, especially student protests. They were really the leaders of all the protests, and their anarchist movement was very involved. So, there was something there, when I was there, there was something there. Both in terms of the Mapuche struggle and the students' struggle, the protests were very violent. Part of me realised that there was something in the people that wanted to destroy everything when they went to protest. But I didn't expect it to become so huge, so general. So for me it was amazing, like, 'wow, finally. They woke up and they are fighting'.

Jim: What do you think the future prospects of that struggle are? Obviously the pandemic lockdown has changed the dynamic, but have the grievances behind the protests gone away? Have they been dealt with?

Asel: I know they are still looking for ways to protest. And of course, in all these struggles there are always different levels. There are some people working for self-organisation, horizontalism, assemblyism, direct democracy or that kind of thing. But I think that most of them are just looking for a new constitution, a referendum for a new constitution. A lot of people think that, with that, everything will be more-or-less fine.

I think that this pandemic process was used by the government to stop something that they previously had no way to stop. There were many months of unrest, with a lot of people killed, a lot of people who

lost their eyes, but despite that, people stayed in the streets protesting, and it seemed that there was no way to stop that. So I think now the government are taking advantage of this moment. For example, there were some Mapuche occupying town halls and other municipal buildings in protest (as well as some hunger strikes, very harsh hunger strikes). But now, for the first time since the protest movement took off, a 'civil right wing' movement, coordinated with the Chilean police, have forcibly removed those Mapcuhe from the town halls with sticks and stones, hitting them, while the police protect the right-wingers. And I think that the only reason they could do that is because now a lot of people must stay home – there are not so many people in the streets protesting, so the way was free for them to go against the Mapuche people.

It's interesting that during the protests a lot of people came to realise what the Mapuche people have been suffering for years. They experienced it for themselves. They realised how repression works every day for Mapuche people. There were other changes of conscience too for a lot of people in Chile. The black bloc, that 'first line' at protests

Figure 7:7 – 'Asel, Terrorista? Mesedez!' ['Asel, Terrorist? Please!']. Asel on the campaign trail with Fito Rodriguez on the 28th of February 2020 (Koldo Mitxelena, Donostia-San Sebastián).

which was usually anarchist, used to be criminalised. But now, during this protest process, that first line became like heroes. People would say, 'they are the ones who are defending the rest', this violent section is defending the peaceful protest: 'We can protest peacefully because they are there fighting there in the first line'. I hope that change of conscience persists, I hope it won't die.

Jim: Indeed! Your own campaign has had some success. In December 2019 your case was agreed to be admissible to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – as I understand it, you're the first person from somewhere outside the Americas to have a case admitted to the IACHR. Congratulations on that. What would that mean for you personally if you succeed in having that case heard? And if you're successful at the end of it, what would change?

Asel: Well, I think personally it won't change many things. I could get off the Interpol list, that would be important, to not be officially designated as a 'terrorist'. I have problems at airports, of course – the last time I went to Buenos Aires, they took me for an hour into the immigration office, until they checked that Interpol had no problems. That happens to you at any airport, and in many countries they won't let you in, because you are on the list – you are an 'international terrorist'. I am forbidden to enter Chile, I cannot go back to Chile. So, for me, that was the biggest impact, it changed my life. But, at this point, I can say that I am 'free', I am at home, I don't have police at my door waiting for me. Now, my life is pretty quiet, pretty easy, I can write everything I want to.

So, it's more of a symbolic fight against the state, against the government, to keep being a pain in the ass for them, to keep saying 'I'm here, and don't forget it'. It's more to get the victory over state repression, that symbolic victory. For me it's important not to give up that fight. But at the same time, it's not so important for me if a commission or a judge or whatever decides whether I'm 'guilty' or 'innocent', y'know? I don't believe much in those terms. Even if there was someone who really did carry out these bomb attacks, I wouldn't want that person in jail and I don't think they're guilty of anything. They can be responsible for their actions, but nothing more. So, on a personal level, I think it's not so important. Sometimes I get tired of it

all and say 'well, what am I doing this for?' But I feel it's more like a responsibility for other people. I especially think of the Mapuche people. Usually they don't have much money – well, I don't have much money either, for me this is very expensive, I don't have the money I need for this legal process, far from it. But I have more resources to engage in this process than many Mapuche fighters. The costs are huge. My lawyer will have to travel to Washington DC, fly there, stay there, and you know that he won't be paying all that from his pocket – I have to pay for that. That's one of the tricks of the system. Justice is for those who can pay for it. And it's a very long process, most people just abandon it and give up. So the campaign is more about visibility, I always try to point to the struggles beyond my own. Y'know, I have to talk about my case, that's what I'm supposed to do with this campaign, but for me it's more important to point to the situation in Chile, particularly the situation for Mapcuhe there.

Chile has a very long tradition of repression against anarchists, stretching back to the 1920s. They deported a lot of anarchists in the 1920s, and it was always on the accusation that they were 'introducing foreigner ideas into the country'. They used that same sentence in my file, that I was introducing 'foreigner' ideas to Chilean young people.

[To highlight the regularity with which this form of repression is deployed by the Chilean state, in July 2020, two anarchist activists, Monica Caballero and Francisco Solar, were arrested 'on bomb-related charges' (CrimethInc., 2020a). Monica and Francisco had been arrested twice previously on similarly spurious charges, in 2010 (in Chile) and 2013 (in Spain). They began a hunger strike on the 22nd of March 2021 'demanding the repeal of extremely punitive measures against prisoners … the release of autonomous prisoner Marcelo Villarroel [featured in Calandra's chapter in this volume] as well as the Mapuche, anarchist, and subversive prisoners' (june11.noblogs.org, 2021).]

Asel: So, I think that the point of my campaign is more to fight against that kind of fascism. But the legalistic way is not the path that I would prefer to walk, because it goes against a lot of things that I really feel, believe, and think.

Jim: What can people reading this do to support your campaign?

Asel: Sometimes it's a problem for me to ask for support, like I'm supposed to do. There are so many struggles that are more serious than mine, there are problems much bigger than mine, and we cannot materially support everything happening around the world. It's just good to know that there are people out there. They sign the supporters' list on the website, just on that personal level, and also for my family and those around me, it's good to know that there are people supporting me. That 'spiritual' support is important. But of course, if I must continue this campaign and get at the Chilean government, I also need financial support. My lawyer suggested that it could be useful to have some involvement from some kind of human rights organisation from Europe, but I am not very comfortable with that, y'know, to ask them for that support. But that's the defence strategy, uncomfortable as it is for me to move in those waters. They're approaching Basque institutions too, the Basque government, asking for help, and I'm like, 'what? That's the enemy!' It's very difficult to deal with things like that.

September 2021 update

The 2019/2020 protest movement in Chile has led directly to the rewriting of Chile's constitution (unchanged since 1980 during Pinochet's regime) – a Convention will propose a new constitution to the people of Chile in 2022. Remarkably, the May 2021 elections for the constitution Convention returned 101 'independent, centre-left and leftist candidates' out of the 155 total (Concha Bell, 2021), including 77 women (to 78 men), and 17 indigenous representatives (perhaps most notably, the Mapuche Machi Francisca, who is in prison on terrorism charges). Whether or not this process will yield any meaningful change for the people most badly affected by the neoliberal militarism of the Pinochet years and its legacy remains to be seen [in fact it did not succeed in the September 2022 referendum], but the huge impact of the protests, and the close interweaving of Mapuche (and other indigenous) struggles with the demands of those protests, is undeniably significant.

Asel continues his legal struggle against his designation as a 'terrorist' by the Chilean state. You can sign the petition to show support for Asel's campaign here: https://asel.eus/eu/join-us/

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CHAPTER EIGHT
STATE LIBERATION OR STATE ABOLITION?
CZECH PUNK BETWEEN ANTI-COMMUNISM & ANARCHISM
ONDŘEJ DANIEL

Chapter Eight: State liberation or state abolition? Czech punk between anti-Communism and anarchism

Ondřej Daniel

This chapter considers the role of anarchism and anti-Communism in the Czech punk scene during the period 1986-1998, an era marked by the Soviet sphere's 'perestroika' reforms, the dismantling of state socialism, and the early postsocialist transformation. In this sense, it aims to make a step beyond the centrality of autumn, winter and spring of 1989/1990 – the long-held, but contended, 'thick line' paradigm. According to this historical narrative, prior to the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, there was a deeply unpopular totalitarian regime which was then overthrown by a massive wave of demonstrations. (The term 'Velvet' denotes the predominantly peaceful transformations of 1989/1990 in Czechoslovakia. The dismantlement of Czechoslovakia into Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 is sometimes labelled as the Velvet Divorce). These demonstrations meant the establishing of a new regime that can be described as a clean slate. This was the shift away from the dictatorship of the Communist Party, the domination of Soviet-controlled markets and a certain cultural isolation, and towards a liberal
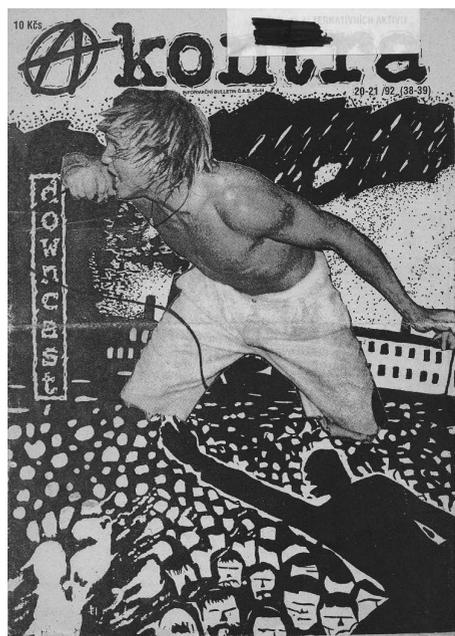

Figure 8:1 – *A-kontra*. (1992c). No. 20-21. (Courtesy of Archiv Českch a Slovenskch Subkultur [Archive of Czech and Slovak Subcultures]).

democracy, neoliberal capitalism and a deepening connection within global cultural flows. The 'thick line' refers to the idea of discontinuity between these two historical periods of state socialism and postsocialism. The nature of political, economic, social, and cultural changes in former Czechoslovakia, however, demands overcoming such a 'thick line paradigm'. Historical processes and phenomena cherished during Czech postsocialism need to be questioned in relation to the perestroika period. The attraction of Czechoslovak consumers to the newly available Western culture, with the youth at the forefront, was so strong that the accelerating cultural transfer during the perestroika period had important consequences in the early postsocialist era. For a time, the Czech lands became a relatively safe haven for many alternative-minded people coming from the West, punks included.

Simultaneously, this chapter aims to overcome another paradigm, which relates to the strict and rigid depiction of the East versus West split – this has also become a historical cliché in need of critical revision. Even if it might be problematic to liken punk experiences from either side of the Iron Curtain, the isolation of Czechoslovakia from cultural phenomena coming from the West was certainly not absolute. Raymond Patton (2018), writing about the global connections of punk in Poland, discusses in the same sentence the punk revolt against Thatcher, Reagan *and* Jaruzelski (the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party in the 1980s) – here I would also add reference to the last Czechoslovak Communist president, Gustav Husák. Similar to his peers in the West and East, Husák's post-1968 Czechoslovak regime was built on conservatism and the privatization of public life. The distinctive dominant Czechoslovak narrative of building a 'calm for work' and eradicating violence from the public sphere (in contrast to the widespread unrest during the 1980s in the United Kingdom and Poland) should not invalidate such a comparison. Neither should the abandonment of the 'East-West paradigm' neglect the shared trauma of living in a state socialist police state. On the contrary, it should enable a better understanding of such experiences by comparing them with those of their counterparts in other semi-peripheries, such as Southern Europe, the Middle East or Latin America, discussing all of these in relation to the capitalist core.

**Figure 8:2 –** *Hluboká orba.* **(1993). No. 1. (Courtesy of Punkgen.sk)**
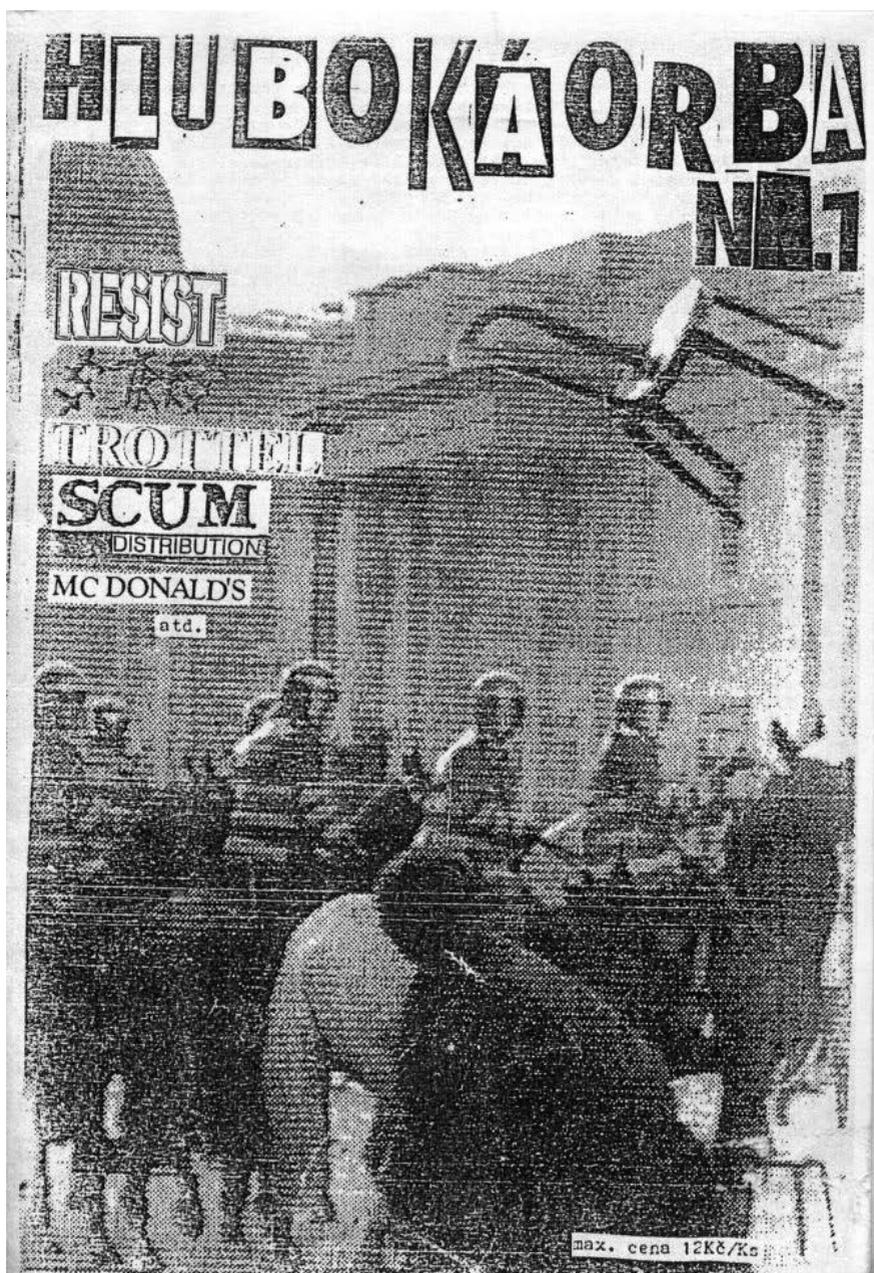
State abolition or state liberation?

I interrogate punk as a battlefield for influence between different agents and I propose to grasp it through its particular quality as an anti-system 'culture of resistance', on one hand, and through the aims of its integration into the system, on the other. With particular attention to the intersection between punk and anarchism, I will highlight the history of punk resistance while reflecting also on different attempts to use punk in a more pro-system manner. Firstly, state socialist authorities aimed to police, control, channel, and integrate punk into its system. Secondly, various anti-Communist dissident groups aimed simultaneously to strengthen their position among punks, in the context of an intergenerational alliance among the anti-Communist non-conformists. Later, punk became a terrain of dispute between the predominantly anarchist and anti-fascist activists, and those defending a more depoliticized approach to punk music and lifestyle. In both contexts, I underline the (mis-)placing of punk within a purely activist or dissident framework. In these aims, I follow the debate on politicization of punk most notably addressed by Matthew Worley (2017). According to Worley, punk's emergence in the specific socio-political climate of Britain in the second half of the 1970s exposed the main fault-lines of British society, while also serving as a political initiation for the youth generation. This politicization of youth resonated well beyond United Kingdom, including the Czech context. This wasn't necessarily an anarchist or radical politicization, however – for example, in a recent interview the director of Czech branch of the NGO Amnesty International claimed that her interest in human rights derived from her interest in punk (Sokačová, 2021). Nevertheless, the politicization of Czech youth through punk came more than a decade after the British case. The beginning of the period in question (1986-1998) coincides with the cultural détente of perestroika – different actors within the socialist state aimed to provide a controlled space for punk music, in particular through the Communist Party's youth organizations at the so-called 'Rockfests' – while the end of the period was marked by the further diversification of the Czech anarchist movement, on one hand,

Figure 8:3 − *Sračka*. (1989a). No. 3-4. (Courtesy of Punkgen.sk).

and the first 'Global Street Party' in Prague, on the other, with the consequent rise of the anti-globalization movement that meant a brand new chapter for the politicization of subcultures, including, but not limited to, punk. These twelve years were an important era that can be described as a melting pot of different meanings – often contradictory but heavily discussed and, therefore, negotiated – that laid a crucial groundwork for the periods that followed. By anchoring my research in this period of profound socioeconomic and political change, I establish a base from which to assess processes of politicization and de-politicization in the Czech punk scene over the ensuing decades.

Drawing on testimonies in local punk fanzines, the anarchist press and edited anthologies, as well as published interviews with Czech punks and related audio-visual material, I examine the intersections of punk subculture with the anarchist movement, as well as the debates on Communism and the lived experience of state socialism in Czechoslovakia. Following the debates on anarchism and communism in punk fanzines, I am building upon the work started by Matthew Worley (2020) in the British context, and followed by my dear colleagues from the Czech and Slovak Archive of Subcultures (Michela, Lomíček and Šima, 2021; *Český a slovenský archiv subkultur*). I have retrieved the full text of ten fanzine titles, some of which extend to more than one volume, from specialized online storage at Punkgen.sk, as well as from a more general file-sharing web portal at Ulož.to. These are: *Brněnská vrtule* [*Brno Propeller*], *Bulldog*, *Depresse*, *Hluboká orba* [*Digging Deep*], *Hlučná lobotomie* [*Noisy Lobotomy*], *Inflagranti*, *Oslí uši* [*Donkey Ears*], *Papagájův hlasatel* [*Parrot Voice*], *Prostějovský kráwowyni* [*Bullshit from Prostějov*], and *Sračka* [*Shit*]. While providing a diverse range, these were not, of course, all of the punk fanzines published in Czechoslovakia and its successor states in the given period, but these titles have particular relation to the topic under consideration. Similarly, when following debates about punk in the anarchist press, I have focused on just four magazines which can be labelled as anarchist but at the same time relate to the topics of punk music and lifestyle, namely: *A-Kontra*, *Autonom*, *Autonomie*, and *Svobodná mysl*. Published interviews with Czech punks are drawn from two anthologies in particular, the first gathered by Eduard Svítivý (1991) and the second by Filip Fuchs (2002). Related audio-visual material consists

of three documentaries, two of them from the period of perestroika, *Aby si lidé všimli* by Václav Kvasnička (1988) and *Největší přání 2* by Jan Špáta (1990), and a retrospective documentary which was part of larger series dedicated to popular music and subcultures, *Bigbít*, produced for Czech Television (Křístek, 2000).

Soundtrack for the era of decay

The perestroika period is best characterized as a gradual Westernization resulting from the opening-up of the Soviet bloc. In the Czechoslovak case, a careful reaction by the national authorities with regard to the situation in the Soviet centre needs to be underlined. Czechoslovak adaptation to perestroika was complicated by the many unpleasant memories of the repression of the Prague Spring of 1968 – the Czechoslovak state's split with the Soviet line, towards a reform of state socialism as 'socialism with a human face', was crushed by the invasion of Warsaw Pact military forces in August 1968. The reforms of perestroika and 'glasnost' (the Soviet Union's opening up of social debate on the state socialist regime at large) followed less than twenty years later in the late 1980s. In the traditional historical narrative, the short perestroika period of Czechoslovakia is discussed as a part of the longer so-called 'normalization period' after August 1968. Historian Kateřina Kolářová has written about the normalized boredom of this 'era of decay' – she quotes someone from a Czechoslovak movie of that time reflecting on late state socialist Czechoslovakia: 'What else can you do here except fool around?' (Kolářová, 2014). Indeed, decay and boredom were among the crucial narrative and social tropes of late-1970s British punk. In late-1980s Czechoslovakia, the non-pressure of the state-controlled economy, the enormous bureaucratic apparatus and mainly formal nature of many labour tasks, resulted in a specific cultural atmosphere that can be the best characterized in terms of grassroots and self-organized activities, perhaps similar to do-it-yourself culture in the West but without the same political content. Nevertheless, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took note of these blossoming cultural activities, and some of its organizations, such as the one

responsible for preparing the youth to become Party members, encompassed some punk activities in their overall aim to address the youth and integrate the alternative into the mainstream. This was the case with the so-called 'Rockfests' of 1986-1988, featuring new wave, punk and metal bands (Valenta, 2017).

At the same time, from a more global perspective, punk in the latter years of state socialist Czechoslovakia can also be interpreted through the lens of disengagement, as discussed in the case of Soviet counterculture (Prozorov, 2009). Hillary Pilkington's analysis of punk in contemporary Russia identifies aesthetics, resistance, and mimesis as three key factors (Golobov et al., 2014). 'Aesthetics' and 'resistance' can be understood across shared punk experiences in the global cultural (Sabin, 1999), but the 'mimesis' mimicking practices are particular to the global semi-periphery to which the former Soviet Union and its satellites can be ascribed. In Eastern Europe, notably Poland, the link between punk and radical politics can be identified to some extent in strong opposition to authority and social hierarchies (Brenk, 2019; Donaghey, 2017; Marciniak, 2015; Patton, 2018; Panek, 2014). East German punk has been studied recently by Aimar Ventsel who carefully examines the ways in which these people see the world and life as rooted in East German working-class culture (Ventsel, 2020). Despite these authors' differing foci across the context of punk in the 'second world', they all illuminate a deeply held punk anti-Communism. This is probably best documented in the context of Hungary where a documentary film featuring interviews with punks active in the 1980s focuses predominantly on this aspect of the punk experience (Chaufour, 2015). The anti-state and anti-society stance of many Hungarian punks translated into the rise of so-called 'national rock', influencing a larger mainstream nationalist scene (Kürti, 2012; Feischmidt and Pulay, 2016). While this trajectory is not totally absent in other contexts, the extent and the weight of 'national rock' in Hungary made it different to the majority of postsocialist punk experiences throughout the former Soviet bloc, and distinct from the Czech case in particular.

Czech punk as a culture of resistance

From the very outset, an 'anti-system' stance was integral to Czech adaptations of punk (sub)culture. This was expressed not only in opposition to the Communist state, with its police, army, education and psychiatric facilities, but also in attacks on the 'conformist' working class under late socialism and particularly on the Roma community, who were seen as a Communist-protected minority (this was also the case for Hungarian punks (Hammer, 2017)). As such, some punks engaged in radically anti-social acts that resembled those of the predominantly right-wing skinheads and hooligans (Fuchs, 2002; Heřmanský and Novotná, 2014). Relations between punk and the far-right are beyond the purview of this chapter (see Worley and Copsey, 2016), but Josef Smolík and Petr Novák (2019) claim that one of the first music bands to publicise the racist skinhead subculture in late-1980s Czechoslovakia was the punk rock group Hrdinové nové fronty [Heroes of the New Front], with their aestheticization of violence and crisis in the West encapsulated in their 1987 track 'Skinheadská noc' ['Skinhead night']. In early 1991, the anarchist magazine *A-Kontra* printed an interview with Peter 'Koňýk' Schredl, singer with prominent Slovak punk band Zóna A, where he made his position clear, stating that Zóna A were anarchists against Communism and its totalitarian system: 'When the Communism has fallen, we have achieved what we wanted. We have nothing to fight against now' (in *A-Kontra*, 1991a).

Meanwhile, a new and more self-reflective group of Czech punks with ties to alternative culture was voicing its opposition to fascism and moving steadily towards anarchism. This is particularly pertinent for the Olomouc-based fanzine *Sračka* that promoted political engagement in post-Velvet Revolution politics. *Sračka* warned punks against their possible merging with the mainstream liberal politics that was catalysed by the euphoria of overthrowing the Communist dictatorship. According to *Sračka*, the new capitalist regime brought with it new risks, such as the selling out of punk (*Sračka*, 1989b, cited in Michela et al., 2021, pp. 75-76). Confusingly, however, the previous issues three and four of *Sračka* of the same year (1989a) included a somewhat favourable review of a concert by the Czech racist skinhead band Orlík, alongside

reports about anarchist-associated bands like Crass and Dead Kennedys (*Sračka* 1989a, pp. 24-26). Some other punk fanzines of the early 1990s, such as *Hlučná lobotomie*, proved their green anarchist leanings by opposing nuclear energy, promoting the activities of Animal Liberation Front, and with critiques of militarism (*Hlučná lobotomie*, 1990), and the direct action tactics of radical ecologists were also put into practice in violent protests against the annual horse race in Pardubice in 1991 and 1992. There was also a handful of anarcho-communist media sources, such as *Depresse*, which focused on information about punk bands with a similar political profile such as Red Silas (*Depresse*, 1991). However, the punk/anarchist connection was not prominent in the early postsocialist years, and openly anarchist and anarchist-sympathizing bands were only a small part of the flamboyant scene. For example the punk-leaning Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP) scene in Prague, that took part in many of the non-conformist punk activities, gradually widened their distance from anarchism from 1994 onwards, fearing the politicization of skinhead style. Basing their conclusions on the SHARP zine *Bulldog*, Michela and colleagues identify a shift from the anarchist topics of radical ecology, anti-militarism, anti-fascism and anti-racism towards more style oriented, self-referencing standpoints openly hostile to some of the anarchist groups (2021, pp. 97-99).

Czech punk from state socialism to post-anarchism

Earlier, the second wave of punk in Czechoslovakia had become a battleground between perestroika and the underground. Besides the state-organized and controlled 'Rockfests' in the last years of the state socialist regime, punk was increasingly discussed in *Voknoviny* (1987-1990), a magazine linked with anti-Communist dissidence, which later fed into the nascent Czech anarchist movement. Pixová (2013) notes that socialist state-inducted debate about punk framed it as 'defected youth', and the state was particularly keen to support its position on the basis of sociological TV coverage (a prominent genre of Czechoslovak perestroika (Kvasnička, 1988; Špáta, 1990)). Sociological
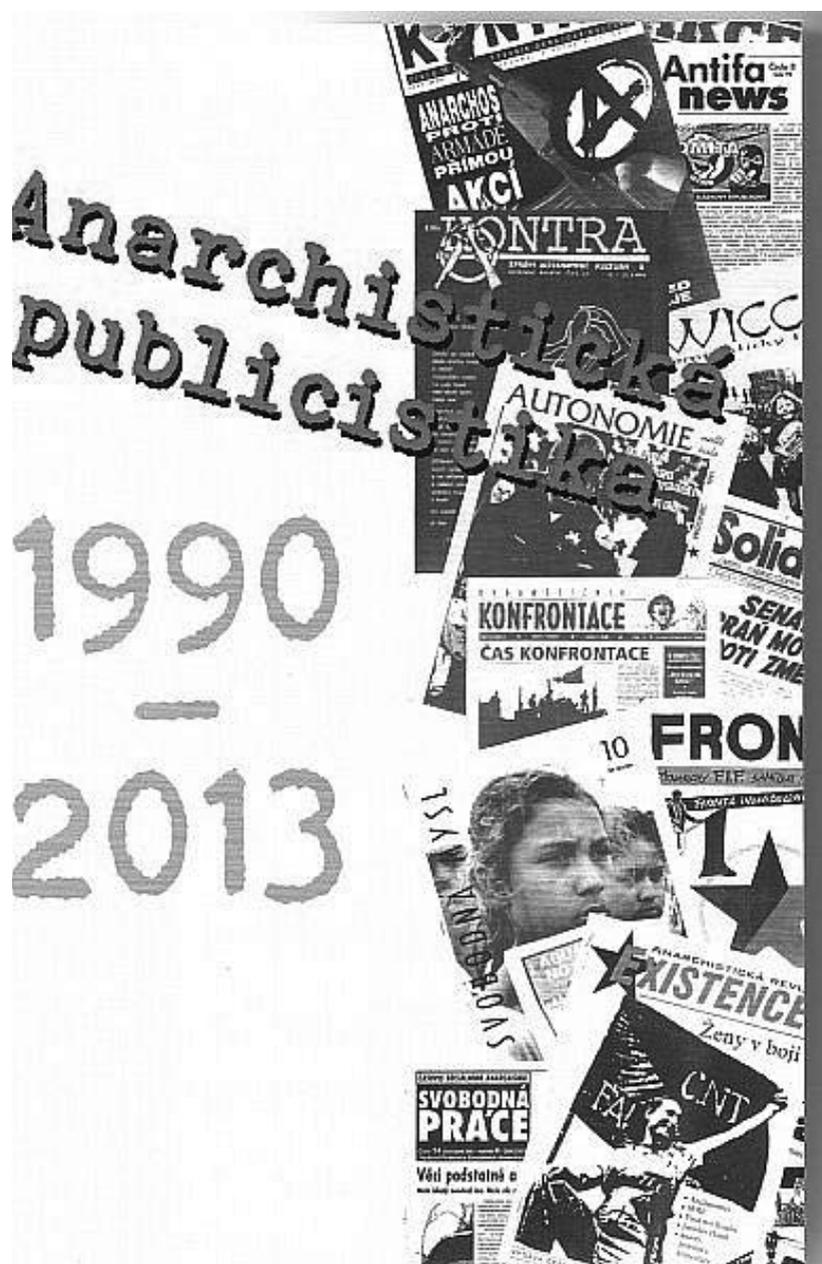
Figure 8:4 – *Anarchistická publicistika 1990-2013.* **(2014). (Courtesy of Databáze knih [Database of Books]).**

interest in punk, and its place in the specific Czechoslovak version of socialist modernity, slowly dissolved in the early 1990s with the more general turn from the society to the individual, and the neoliberal stress on changing the self, with individuals perceived as 'mini corporations' (Makovicky, 2014).

The role of punk in the early postsocialist era of the enterprising self (Asztalos Morell and Gradskova, 2018) can also be read through the context of the ideological mutations of anarchism of the 1990s. Sociologist Dana M. Williams (2018) considers the peak of anarchist activism in the 1990s to be as a result of the fall of Berlin Wall and the challenge to Marxism's credibility as a viable alternative to capitalism. Names and concepts of then-prominent anarchist authors situated on radically opposed sides of a supposed schism between so-called 'social anarchism' (Bookchin, 1995) and the theory of the 'temporary autonomous zone' (Bey, 1991) started to be reflected among certain parts of the Czech punk scene. As Jim Donaghey (2020) indicates in his study of two collectives presumed to stand on opposite sides of this often exaggerated divide, many anarchist practices in fact merged both – class *and* lifestyle politics. In the Czech case, however, at least since the late 1990s when the heyday of the intersection between Czech punk and anarchism was already over, these two dominant tendencies opposed each other and the evidence from different anarchist publications show that the schism was actively curated. By this time, different punk scenes were already diversified by genre as well as by different political emphasis, and one of the dividing lines was their relation to anarchism. Probably of most relevance to punk, as well as to anarchism, was the squatting scene, particularly in the capital city, Prague (Pixová and Novák, 2016), but present also in smaller Czech towns. After this point, the ideas of anarchism began to merge into the nascent anti-globalization movement and 'post' prefixes started to be deployed, with 'post-autonomism' and 'post-anarchism' moving further away from the 'social anarchism' label, while punk merged itself with different protest modes and lifestyle strategies (that are beyond the scope of this chapter – see Curran, 2007; Day, 2005; De Bloois, 2014; Novák and Kuřík, 2019).

Punk in anarchist magazines and anarchism in punk zines in the early 1990s

Focusing on the evidence from anarchist magazines, the relations between the growing anarchist movement and punk in the winter of 1989/1990 were organic, with the anarchist movement recruiting its sympathizers predominantly among punks and reflecting the music and lifestyle in its main media outlets (Anarchistická publicistika, 2014). This orientation was a matter of vivid debate among Czech anarchists. The first issue of *A-kontra* (1991a) was prepared together with punk-leaning co-editors, and its title page featuring an image of Sid Vicious became iconic (Sokačová and Netolický, 2006), but, according to the long-term chief editor of *A-kontra*, Jakub Polák, there were also influences other than punk in the early months of the movement. Indeed, *A-kontra*, being one of the farthest-reaching Czech anarchist magazines of the time, referred to a wide range of music cultures. From issue number two onwards (1991b), *A-kontra* printed adverts for concerts by acts as diverse as Legendary Pink Dots (experimental rock), Einstürzede Neubauten (industrial noise) and Front 242 (pioneers of Electronic Body Music), as well as new wave, reggae and afro music parties. But the relationship between punk and anarchism was also an element of the debate in *A-kontra*, with the second issue already bringing a fervent critique of the Czech punk scene, with its leanings towards alcohol and drugs, adulation of Sid Vicious, and political ignorance (illustrated by the citation of a punk proposing 'let us build a squat') (*A-kontra*, 1991b, p. 5). In addition, the editors of *A-kontra* criticized the commodification of the punk scene, accusing punk labels such as Monitor of being parasites on the punk scene (1991b, p. 8). The issue for the authors was not a punk label as such, but rather reduction of punk music and style to a merchandise to be traded by external agents – and, indeed, Monitor later became a subsidiary of corporate industry behemoths EMI in 1994. Those anarchist magazines that more openly reflected the current of social anarchism, such as *Autonom* and *Svobodná mysl*, printed only marginal references to punk, with some information about distribution networks (distros) or concerts, but concentrated their attention on topics

other than music and lifestyle. Information about police violence, the history of anarchist movement, anarchist theory or related activities across the world were published. One exception to this was *Prostějovský kráwowyni*, an openly anarchist journal with some references to hardcore punk acts, including in its fifth issue a comprehensive interview with US band Fugazi (*Prostějovský kráwowyni*, 1992).

At the same time, explicitly anarchist-punk fanzines reflected anti-authoritarian topics other than anarchism, and also discussed ecological and animal liberation movements. Brno-based *Brněnská vrtule* (1991-1992), for example, shared information about protests against animal captivity in zoos and circuses (*Brněnská vrtule*, 1991). Squatting was another key focus, and fanzines featured numerous reports about concerts organized in squats in Prague, Brno and elsewhere. Another important shared concern for many of these punk zines (and in common with the social anarchist publications such as *Autonom* and *Svobodná mysl*) was the police and police brutality (*Hluboká orba*, 1993; *Papagájův hlasatel*, 1997). This was initially transferred from global references, such as the 1992 Los Angeles riots, but the Czech experiences were referred to more often, as the protest movement gradually encountered more and more local experiences of police brutality.

Conclusion: Punk's legacy in Czech 'cultures of resistance'

This period of negotiations within and across different Czech punk scenes and anarchist groups can be considered as ending in the second half of 1990s, with important events, such as a violent police raid on the Prague club Propast in May 1996, becoming a trigger for the founding of Czech Antifascist Action retaining close associations with different anarchist groups for certain period but gradually loosing these connections over time. Subsequent political profiling of all these various currents further crystallized mutations of, on the one hand, social anarchist currents that firmly opposed 'lifestyle politics', and, on the other hand, anarchist-punk currents such as Aktivita Cabaret Voltaire.

As already stated in the introduction, with the nascence of the anti-globalization movement, punk also became one of many Czech subcultures engaged with anarchism and radical politics leaving a large reservoir of common meanings for different interactions and interrelations for the following decades. In addition, many of the Czech anti-globalization activists drew upon their own punk experiences and even if some of them turned away from punk to other lifestyles, such as hardcore or rave, punk was still deeply encoded in the DNA of the Czech 'cultures of resistance'.

The profile of Czech punk as a 'culture of resistance' was heavily influenced in terms of generations. Without wanting to oversimply it, there were two main cohorts in Czech punk in the 1990s: the older punks who started their 'punk lives' in late 1970s and 1980s, who had as an enemy the Communist regime with its rigid state apparatus – after its dismantlement there was no point in opposing the new liberal democracy that, at least for a certain period, guaranteed their cultural freedom; many younger punks were, on the contrary, more keen to rebel against capitalism and particularly its local version based on privatization of public commons and rapid creation of a new affluent class strata that eventually started to take over the state that was for certain period controlled by former dissidents. However, at the same time there was another split between, on one side, those more politically conscious punks of both generations who embraced ideals of anarchism, and, on the other, those more lifestyle-oriented punks for whom the music and style was more important and who drew their political imagination from the already-won battle against the Communists. This split between anarchist punk and beer-fuelled anti-Communist 'alkopunk' also influenced debates about politicization of Czech 'freetechno' rave scenes in the early 2000s, and it is stunning to observe how this different context actually replicated debates within punk about 'cultures of resistance'.

Acknowledgements

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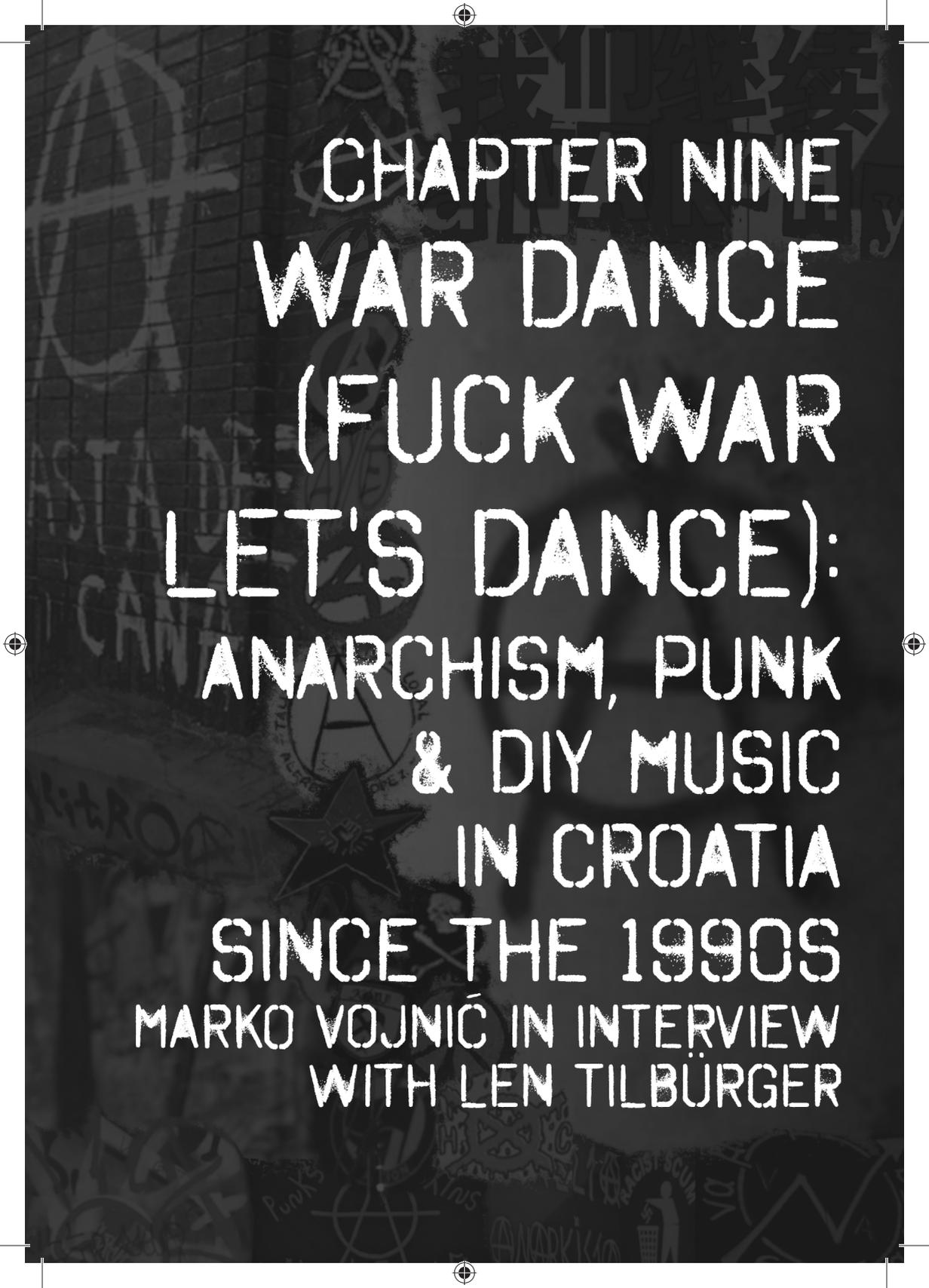
CHAPTER NINE
WAR DANCE (FUCK WAR LET'S DANCE):
ANARCHISM, PUNK & DIY MUSIC IN CROATIA SINCE THE 1990S

MARKO VOJNIĆ IN INTERVIEW WITH LEN TILBÜRGER

Chapter Nine: WAR DANCE (fuck war, let's dance): Anarchism, punk, and DIY music in Croatia since the 1990s

Marko Vojnić in interview with Len Tilbürger

> The band or the audience, there is no difference, we are all on the stage – today you are watching the band, tomorrow you have the instrument in your hand, and the guys from the band are singing with you. No stars, no audience. Of course, not everything was so ideal, but that was the idea. Nobody likes assholes. (Strpić, 2020)

Marko Vojnić runs the anarchist DIY label Do It With Others Records, based in Croatia. He has been involved with the anarchist-informed punk, rave, and dub scenes there for almost 30 years, through the bloody break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and, post-war, onwards into the developing and mutating DIY scenes of the twenty-first century. He discusses punk's opposition to ethno-nationalist belligerents and contemporary fascisms, and DIY culture's continued resistance against the 'globalization of taste'. As Marko himself puts it:

> This text is imagined as a subjective review of my formative years, my revelations of subcultures, the discovery of punk and anarchist ideas, and all this during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

> Subjective review; why? People have a great responsibility not to claim more than they can prove and therefore I hate slimy objectivity, a term that believes that everything must always make sense.

Subjective review; why? Because I still don't believe in objective history. Taking sides is not my trip. My crew has always opposed war and nationalism, and they have expressed and practiced solidarity with their strengths, abilities and skills.

Len: Tell us about your first exposure to punk.

Marko: October 1994. One of my first concerts. MDC played in the club Uljanik in Pula. The gig was fantastic, but the gig itself isn't the only thing I remember that night. The handful of people I came to the concert with, the high school crowd, were the only crowd I knew that night at the club. The very next day, walking around the city, I was saying 'hi' to people I didn't even know before, to people I saw that night at the concert with whom I connected in some way, or rather, felt a kind of belonging. Croatia was then in the war, the 'Croatian War of Independence', and we sang all night with Dave Dictor and the rest of the band:

Figure 9:1 – MDC at Uljanik Club in Pula, Croatia, 17th of October 1994 (photograph by Đani Celija).

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Don't believe what the politicians do.
Don't believe a word they say.
All they wanna do is fuck you.
Get fat on their pay.
(Millions of Dead Cops, 1982a)

I'm born to die.
I'm born to fry.
My life in a cage.
Show my outrage.
I'm misunderstood.
I did what I could.
I made my try.
I was born to die.
(Millions of Dead Cops, 1982b)

Nationalism in school, perpetrating their rule.
Lying textbooks rant their patriotic slant.
Your country's great, cry the Church and state.
And all that have died were on God's side.
(Millions of Dead Cops, 1982c)

Unlike some other punk or rock concerts I went to, accompanied by an older brother or parent, this one was special. The band didn't act like some inflated rock stars; conceited, arrogant, narcissistic, or egocentric and vain. In fact, after the concert Dave and the rest of the band hung out with us for the rest of the night. It was a revelation about a scene I read about in fanzines, about a scene where we are all equal. Try to understand me, there was no internet back then, and those fanzines were one of the few channels to spread information on the punk rock

Figure 9:2 − Poster for the 2012 Monteparadiso festival (designed by the author).

scene. You had the option to either read fanzines or to go to gigs and meet the band in person. Watching a band like MDC, which already had the status of a cult band in 1994, was not an event that we had the opportunity to experience often in Pula during those war years. To watch a concert where some punk legends are playing, we would normally have had to travel to nearby Slovenia. The atmosphere before, during, and after the concert was fantastic. I remember an absolutely filled club, but maybe it wasn't really like that. One wears rose-tinted glasses when one is reminiscing. I asked my friend Đani Celija (Pula artist and photographer) who photographed the concert to give me photos for this publication, which made me remember that evening. There's a lot of photos of the audience, but my memories of it all warped the image with ten times more people. After the concert we hung out with the band. I had the opportunity to watch MDC many times after that concert, in Pula and other cities in Croatia. But this concert stayed in my memory precisely because of that socializing and conversation (maybe a bit too much monologue by Dave). Lyrics of MDC songs, as well as most other punk bands and fanzines, served to propagate ideas in response to social situations. Most of these texts arise, not for poetic, but for political reasons. When I say 'political reasons' I mean the political philosophy of anarchism which aimed at rejecting any form of forced hierarchies and authorities. The aim to abolish a state that imposes itself, a state that is violent and unnecessarily harmful by definition. Anarchists reject the state because the state is the organization of power, with its own institutions such as the military and police (that are in fact institutions of repression) at their core. So, the state uses its citizens for wars and sends them to their deaths, sends them to kill other people, other citizens of another state. That is exactly what we were going through at that time.

Len: So punk had a direct bearing on your interest in anarchism? And you connected this to your local war-riven context?

Marko: Well, what I realized then was that I needed to be informed. About everything. Because if I wasn't informed, I would be fucked, easily. Stupidity and ignorance get you fucked up. That is why one should be informed, read not only the works of classical anarchism such as Emma Goldman, Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, but

everything else – in my case and circumstance it was mostly fanzines and pamphlets, along with books. There were also record sleeves with the lyrics of the bands that I followed and discovered.

Len: But what practical impact do those zines, pamphlets and records have? I mean, what's the 'real life' application of all that?

Marko: The possibility of choice is the practice of freedom. Anarchy is not just a utopian dream, it is very possible. Throughout history, there were a number of situations and examples that used anarchist actions and autonomous action and thus achieved harmony. Because anarchism aims at harmony. And harmony is impossible in a system where there are weak and strong. Many have written and sung about it. In Pula, in those years from 1992-1994 and on to 1998, the growth in the number of bands was huge. I don't know if I'm responding subjectively, maybe because those years are now reflected upon from the position of memory and sentiment, but every other friend had a band. Franci Blašković, 'Gori Ussi Winnetou', an artist from Pula who has more than 100 albums behind him, mostly self-released, made a compilation in 2005 in homage to people from that Pula scene, calling it *Pulski jebači apokalipse* [*Pula's apocalypse fuckers*] which contained more than twenty bands that rocked the good stuff through the late 1990s with sharp riffs and conscious lyrics (Various Artists, 2006).

Len: How did the scene develop from there, after the war?

Marko: In the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, things changed in some way, or so it seems to me. I remember more and more concerts and festivals. I remember the La Fraction concert sometime in the early 2000s. While talking to La Fraction after the concert, I realized that they did not have a MySpace page, because they despised it as a product of capitalist society. I was amazed by this situation because at that time social networks had partially replaced or taken over the role of fanzines. At least that's how it seemed to me. I didn't see anything wrong with social media, moreover I had a positive opinion of it. I could easily connect with some group from the scene from another city, country, it was easier to get music, and so on. But the attitude expressed by the members of the band La Fraction that evening intrigued me quite a bit.

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Len: So the anarchist/punk connection was primarily through this shared anti-capitalist stance?

Marko: I was no stranger to anarchist ideas in modern art more widely – I attended art high school in Pula and learned a lot about avant-garde movements from the early-twentieth century. I would point out that my professors were mostly young punks (under 30 years old) who I would even meet at gigs after school. They loved to romanticize the story around the punk scene and would regularly link the arguments of punk and anarchism in their lectures. So, this anarchism within artistic creation (whether it is the avant-garde movements of the early-twentieth century in the fine arts and literature, or examples of alternative cultures, youth cultures and subcultures) had already won my sympathy in those high school days.

One professor, today a close friend of mine, Denis Sardoz introduced me to the do-it-yourself ethic. He told me about the role of Surrealism and Dadaism in punk aesthetics. I discovered collage as a form of expression, which we later used as copy-paste for making fanzines. He brought me closer to the screen-printing technique through which we independently made posters and printed T-shirts. He showed me the stencil technique for graffiti that became the weapon we used to express our anger and dissatisfaction on the streets of the city. This is far from an example of 'art', such as oil on canvas, but in the end, what Denis wanted to teach us was that there is no division into high or low art, that it is only important to express ourselves. As an example, I can mention Banksy, who I discovered about twenty years later, one of the most famous artists of today who uses an art form that was labelled as vandalism during the 1980s and the 1990s (and still by some, even today).

Years later, I tried to propagate anarchist ideas by organizing lectures and exhibitions using various instruments and the punk subculture. One part of the audience would accept it, and the other part would sharply criticize it. Some of them despised such an approach to the scene, to punk, and argued that it was not an argument to be explored, to be given meaningful theories, but one to live by. On one wall I read an interesting graffiti by an unknown author saying 'If you used to be a punk, you were never a punk' – funny, interesting and

strictly elitist. Part of the scene can be understood from that graffiti, it is considered that if you used to be a punk (and now you are no longer) you are not part of a tribe. Then obviously it was just a whim, a fashion and you're not deeply rooted.

Len: And today of course, you're involved with the Do It With Others Record label – it's got a punk spirit, certainly, but the music you release is much more diverse than that. Can you tell us about the genesis of that initiative?

Marko: In 2017 I was invited as an artist to the Seasplash festival in Štinjan near Pula (a festival that is more-or-less oriented around reggae music and sound system culture) which that year had a thematic program, 'Punky Reggae Party' as a fusion of these two genres. Bands such as Citizen Fish, Culture Shock, Autonomads, Black Star Dub Collective, Conscious Youth, Warrior Charge Sound System and many others, who are certainly known to the esteemed readers of this book for their work, played at the festival. I became most closely associated with the crowd from England: Autonomads (a dub anarcho-punk band with roots within the Manchester squatter scene), the Black Star Dub Collective, and Conscious Youth (politically engaged dub). The sound ranged from sharp riffs, dancing ska and reggae melodies to the heavy basses of sound system, but it had a serious and sharp message throughout the lyrics. Like punk, but in a bit different aesthetic form, they criticized the political and social situations in the world. Their form of activism and anarchism is primarily felt through lyrics that, like many earlier punk bands, send a clear political message.

But that was not their only way of acting. As we connected in some way I discovered more about their fundraising campaigns for social justice organizations through their work at record labels like Woodland Records, Anxiety Attack Rekords and Pumpkin Records. They produce, mix, master and print their editions on vinyl and in digital form, making covers for their own productions relying on the do-it-yourself culture and ethics. The example of Woodland Records and Anxiety Attack Rekords who give 100% of the proceeds of their releases to charities for human, animal and environmental rights organizations has led me to think that some other movements have taken on much more anarchist practices than the punk scene.

Len: So this political dub scene was what inspired you to start Do It With Others?

Marko: I realized that the current dub scene in Europe is much more organized and engaged than punks. Maybe I'm wrong. But friends from Woodland records, Matt Martin and Billie Egan, had me thinking and inspired me to try something like that too. With their great help and support, I launched a DIY anarchist label in late 2020, appropriately named Do It With Others. DIWO Records is a label that is conceived exclusively on the basis of digital editions, and gives 100% of its earnings to social justice organizations.

Len: What's the significance of the label's name?

Marko: The DIY approach has its roots in the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, associated with their concerns about ecology and alternative education. Today it has developed into the collective concept of DIWO (do-it-with-others [often termed elsewhere as do-it-together or do-it-ourselves]). Without the help of many others I would not be able to do many things, and that name is a thank you to everyone who has helped me in my life and still does. The guys from Woodland Records, for example, regularly do mastering for releases and I occasionally raise funds through those same releases to help them with their goals. It seems to me that a different world is possible only if we join forces.

Len: And how is all that put into practice with the label?

Marko: DIWO records has had a small number of releases, of different genres from dub to anarcho-punk through to experimental electronics. Regardless of the sound, it remains close to the anarchist approach of mutual aid and support. I would like to thank all the artists who have supported our common goal, from Kodama Dub, Homegrown Sound, Jah Free, Foreigners Everywhere, Conscious Youth, Omega Tribe, Proletariat Punch, Dubar Sound, Sevna, and Penny Rimbaud. All of them gave up their fees for their own work and I played the role of a trader through the Bandcamp platform and passed on all the income for specific purposes. I don't know about you, but I know just a small number of people who would give up their copyrighted works. Many of them are more than just friends, and some

of them I haven't even met in person yet, but they have given me their trust. For example, Hugh Vivian from Omega Tribe, who immediately accepted the collaboration when I asked him and explained that together with friends from Woodland Records we were trying to raise funds for the SOS Team Kladuša – an initiative that works with migrants on the Bosnian-Croatian border.

Len: Is it still 'punk'? (Does that matter?!)

Marko: Everyone acts as they can, I think we are still fighting for a good cause. No matter how we declare ourselves, as punks, anarchists or something else. Each with their own weapon.

Len: How did growing up during the tumultuous break-up of Yugoslavia, with all the bloodshed that accompanied it, affect your political and cultural outlook?

Marko: I was born in Yugoslavia in 1980, in a system of self-governing socialism. In elementary school we learned of the atrocities of the Third Reich, as one of the worst events in the history of the twentieth century. We were taught about these atrocities so as not to make the same mistake. But in the early 1990s, the war in Yugoslavia followed. Fortunately, my city was not affected by the bombing. Being in Pula, in the west of the country, we managed to avoid the horror. But many were not so lucky, and the consequences of the war in the country formerly known as Yugoslavia is still felt to this day. Indeed, some wounds have not yet to be healed and are passed from generation to generation, many still filled with hatred and loathing.

Punk, therefore, became a refuge for a generation, a means of distracting some of us from what was happening in our country during the 1990s. And topics used by punk bands in Croatia in the 1990s, such as anarchism, anti-militarism, patriarchy, xenophobia, war and nationalist hysteria, reminded us that there are no winners in war. Everyone loses. As my city was more-or-less a safe zone during those years, hordes of refugees and displaced people poured in from all other parts of the country, those worst affected by the war. Yet, while on the one hand there was a growth of nationalism, on the other hand there was solidarity, acceptance and empathy. If we stop caring for each other, we stop being human.

Len: What was your home life like during this time?

Marko: My family belonged to the middle class and we lived in a house full of books and records. Through my father (who was once a DJ) and my brother (who is seven years older than me), I had a daily repertoire of rock'n'roll and other styles of popular music served to me on a platter since early childhood. I spent a lot of time reading and listening to a wide range of music. I will romanticize the whole story by saying that if there were no specific bands during high school, I would have fallen into the hell of enduring deception and fear. That being said, although I grew up in a home that had an ear for my needs, I felt that in early high school parental supervision and other authoritative roles began to stifle me.

Len: So, would you say that your first punk/anarchist sentiments stemmed from this youthful anti-authoritarianism?

Marko: In the introduction to the book *DIY Crass bomb: L'azione diretta nel punk* published by Agenzia X in 2010, Marco Philopat writes:

> Authority has always given me serious problems. At first there was my father, a hysterical elementary school teacher and the biggest bully in the neighbourhood. I couldn't even look him in the face. Later, the high school principal, the political leader, the employer, the policeman and the judge. I am still overwhelmed by insecurity when any form of authority comes before me … Even now in this society, as it is organized, I sometimes feel like a misfit. (Philopat, 2010)

It is with these words that I describe my condition at the time, perhaps the condition of many others. Perhaps even yours? And this feeling has been with me for the last 30 years, for I do not feel comfortable when any kind of authority is imposed on me, especially since today, as a father or professor, I do not want to practice such a thing.

Len: You mentioned MDC right at the start, but, in this rock'n'roll household, had you been exposed to other punk bands prior to that concert?

Marko: Early punk and the New Wave in Yugoslavia appeared in the late 1970s, but punk at that time encountered the same problems as the rest of rock'n'roll culture. They all became stars. I found out about this 'punk' in the late 1980s through my older brother, but I didn't get so attached to it. As a kid, listening to the Sex Pistols, the Ramones and The Clash, but not knowing English, I could only indulge in the sound and style of punk and not the poetic, lyrical one. Indeed, my first experience with subcultural movements was not related to punk but to football fan groups.

We were kids, cheering for the local football team and making banners, spraying graffiti and building plastic bucket drums with duct tape for cheering at matches. As I attended art high school, I was in charge of painting the team banner. We did all this in an abandoned house at the bottom of the street, doing everything ourselves according to the DIY principle (even though we had no idea about that term at the time). Graffiti became the main weapon used to express our anger and dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction with everything that surrounded us, including our first clashes with the police, who every now and then would try to drive us away from the streets, sidewalks, parks and other places. Although the situation in the country was rotten, there was some hedonistic pleasure in our actions. For example, my first graffiti, which still makes me extremely happy, was written in 1992 – it reads: 'The police baton is an organ for the reproduction of stars'. It still stands in the same place today.

In that ruined country various subcultural scenes that we all witnessed emerging have continued to develop. Apart from punk, grunge, sound system culture, rave culture (and the various different styles of electronic music), there were other styles within which anarchist ideas were expressed through various media – radio, TV, newspapers, fanzines and so on. In the spirit of 'enjoying everything that life has to offer', we consumed all scenes equally (at least I did), but, even though we raved until dawn, when we had to identify with a particular style, we would declare ourselves as punks. The words of Emma Goldman, 'If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution', resonated with me when I was involved in the Croatian rave scene in the 1990s – another subculture where I saw many anarchist ideas in practice. Unlike

punk, it had no problems with lyrical content (it didn't exist) meaning that there were no language barriers in appreciating the subversive elements of the music or scene.

Len: Interesting! I've usually viewed the absence of lyrics in rave music as a kind of 'lack', especially when it comes to expressing political ideas – I hadn't thought of it as removing linguistic barriers. Without wanting to be dismissive of the rave scene, let's bring it back to punk. You've mentioned several American and English bands so far, but what about local bands? Who were the main influences in your vicinity?

Marko: The first punk band that had a strong influence on me was KUD Idijoti (a local band from Pula, my hometown). KUD Idijoti were all about short, graffiti-style sentences and it seemed that their choruses could equally stand on the walls of cities or in musical form: 'fuck the war', 'fuck the system', 'the poor always get fucked', 'stupidity is indestructible', 'we're only here for the money'. Today it seems to me that, during the 1990s, KUD Idijoti were one of the few bands in Croatia that fought against everything that was happening in the country. I respected them, and I soon discovered that they had already earned a reputation for being an important band for crew members who were older than me. Moreover, with the appearance of other scenes in Croatia, such as hardcore punk and anarcho-punk, and actors who were generationally closer to me, I asked myself the question I often read about in the fanzines: 'are there even more scenes?' My punk started with KUD Idijoti, but some guys, much younger, took over the roles they created. Writing for kulturpunkt.hr, Comrade Marko Strpić wrote:

> Most of the activities were initiated by a relatively small number of people, although at the end of the decade it was not such a small number when we add it all up. Two hundred fanzines, dozens of bands, distributions, hundreds of concerts, squats ... and these numbers refer only to the area occupied by Croatia. (Strpić, 2020)

In that scene we were all equal – the band and the audience became one. My interest in punk bands, domestic and foreign, was growing. I learned English so that I could follow the scene in Europe and the rest of the world. The fanzines played a big role here, and I found more and more bands, whether newly formed, or new discoveries of old bands. Obviously, I didn't like them all, and bands that sang about beer, boredom, skateboarding and so on wouldn't really get me too excited. In addition to punk, my interest was increasingly directed towards anarchism, including self-managed workshops and squats. As I mentioned, at high school in Pula I learned a lot about avant-garde movements, and their use of anarchism seemed to me in many ways much bigger than some of the punk bands around. Yet punk had its own style, and within it evolved a sympathetic view for anarchism. I would agree with the words of Comrade Zoran Senta: 'I know what anarchism has given to punk, but I don't know what punk has given to anarchism' (Senta, 2020).

Len: Well, we can agree to disagree on that (personally, I reckon punk gave anarchism a much-needed kick up the arse at a time when it had sort of atrophied in the shadow of Marxism and under repression from authoritarian regimes all over the world). But let's dig into the ways in which punk was influenced by anarchism – it's by no means a straightforward or homogenous thing, right?

Marko: Of course, there are a lot of different types of punk (I have already mentioned the 'are there more scenes?' dilemma). Unfortunately, there are just as many interpretations of anarchism, but if 'punk is not just music and represents a cultural and political space' as Marko Strpić (2020) writes, then my personal choices were related to anarchist punk (and they remain so), and I soon turned to labels such SST Records, Dischord Records and of course Crass Records to name but a few. Not all of them were strictly 'anarchist', but I was fascinated by the collective nature of their organization. Music aside, I also thought that the cover of the record was just as important as the music. That is, both the music on the record and visual materials have always been important to me. It's maybe some kind of professional 'thing' since I'm engaged in art myself. And if you take into account the many bands that had a strong visual representation you will understand what I'm

saying: Jamie Reid for the Sex Pistols, Linder Sterling for Buzzcocks, Raymond Pettibon for Black Flag, Minutemen and Sonic Youth, and John King and Gee Voucher for Crass, amongst others. Honestly, a lot of times, I would buy the record just because of the cover and was surprised (sometimes positively, sometimes negatively) by the music on it.

Len: You mentioned Crass there, and they've been prominent in some of the releases on Do It With Others Records (Foreigners Everywhere meets Kodama Dub, 2021; Vojnić feat. Rimbaud and Libertine, 2021), as well as other collaborations with anarcho-punk bands such as Omega Tribe (2021) and Hugh Vivien (Vivian and Vojnić, plus remix by Zion Train, 2021). Do you place a particular emphasis on Crass's influence?

Marko: Crass, more than any other band seemed more like an art collective than just a punk rock band. And as far as I know, through reading interviews, they have always emphasized that they are not just a punk band as such, in terms of writing music for poetic or musical reasons, but rather a band that was created for political reasons. And evidence of this can be seen in the albums, fanzines, films and so on that they produced in response to certain social situations in Great Britain and the wider political environment. It wasn't even their plan to have this huge musical growth of the group/band – their growth was about expressing the political fervour of the time. So, this response was thus neither lyrical nor musical, but *political*. Crass argued that music was just a 'way', a channel through which they could proclaim/present/transmit their subversive action. And the ideas they propagated about peace, anti-militarism, anarchism and DIY strongly influenced me as I grew up. Thanks to them and others, a broad anarcho-punk scene that fought the nefarious attacks of the ruling culture was formed. I am of the opinion that, even today, Crass's practices reflect the current social and political atmosphere we find ourselves in. Their visionary attitude, the rejection of punk as a form of youthful rebellion within the market structures at the time (specifically within their criticism of the punk stereotype), placed them among the first to smell the danger of exploitation of the punk subculture. Today, looking at them as the core of anarchism in punk, I see their legacy in many later projects, bands and record labels – not just punk, mind you, but also across a wide

variety of musical styles and genres. Crass's active work may be over, but their story is not (see Bestley et. al., 2021).

Len: What was the reaction of the pre-existing anarchist movements in Yugoslavia and Croatia to the emergence of these punk-inspired anarchists?

Marko: It seems to me (I can't be sure) but I've come across several sources claiming that before the war there were no organized anarchist movements in Yugoslavia. [There existed various expressions of anarchism in this part of the Balkans prior to the establishment of the Yugoslav state, but from 1945 the Titoist regime repressed other political currents, with some 'opening up' after 1968. (See Indic, 1990)]. In the years before the war, only a few individuals and initial groups emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. So, the time of the war was also a new beginning (after almost 60 years) for organized resistance of anarchists (Anonymous, 2014). Part of the crowd that spread anti-militarist resistance in the 1990s were the young punks who are active on the Croatian scene today. The first initiative that comes to my mind is ZAPO – Zagrebačka anarho pacifistička organizacija [Zagreb Anarcho Pacifist Organization], created in 1991 that carried a clear message against war policies. War was a new reality full of stress, fear and death, which for a number of young people generated a desire to resist all its negative connotations.

In response to the information blockade and as a counterattack on local censors and nationalists, in 1993, ZAPO, with other anarchist groups from the former Yugoslavia, participated in publishing the newspaper *Preko zidova nacionalizma I rata* [*Over the Walls of Nationalism and War*]. In 1994, ZAPO changed its name to ZAP – Zagrebački anarhistički pokret [Zagreb Anarchist Movement], and *Preko zidova nacionalizma I rata*, along with the people from anarchist punk bands, turned to DIY music publishing and a tour of the same name. On the tours, and on the subsequent record releases, there was one Croatian and one Serbian band. Those tours had a clear political message. The first tour was done in 1997 by Bad Justice from Croatia and Totalni promašaj [Total Failure] from Serbia, and the second in 1998 by Radikalna promjena [Radical Change] from Croatia and Unutrašnji bunt [Internal Rebellion] from Serbia. On the cover of the *Preko*

Zidova ... Nacionalizama I Rata split record by Totalni Promašaj and Bad Justice (1998), it reads:

> This EP was created as a product of a joint tour of Croatian and Serbian bands, in Slovenia from December 27th '96 to January 3rd '97. This was the first organized joint tour of bands from the countries that emerged from the break-up of Yugoslavia. Thus, there was an active rampage of nationalism and propaganda in which intolerance was promoted as a positive value. One of the ways to overcome this situation was the tour, as well as several previous projects (compilation 7" *Over the walls of nationalism* – Humanita nova and a few T-shirts), and now this split 7". The tour included the following cities: Ljubljana (twice), Deskle, Ilirska Bistrica, Koper and Ormož.

The release of the single was supported by the Open Society Institute – Croatia.

This is the second record in the series Over the Walls of Nationalism and War and we are especially pleased that as a publisher we were in a position to support and in some way complete the joint engagement of these two bands. In all segments of the project Over the Walls of Nationalism and War (newsletter, T-shirts, concerts, records) it is actually an effort to establish contact on a personal level, skip, tear down or at least bypass these walls and provide alternatives to violence and intolerance that flooded these areas. Anyone who has attended the joint concerts of Bad Justice and Total Failure probably knows that this is exactly what happened. This record was created as a product of the joint work of young people who remained friends through its realization. The dialogue is open. (Totalni Promašaj and Bad Justice, 1998)

The DIY punk scene contributed an exceptional share to the anti-war, anti-militarist and anti-nationalist struggle at the time of the sad 1990s in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

Len: What other initiatives and bands were going on at that time?

Marko: The Monteparadiso Festival in Pula is one of the longest-running hardcore punk festivals in the former Yugoslavia, and probably beyond. It has been held since 1992 (under that particular name since 1993). It was named after the Italian term for the Pula neighbourhood Vidikovac, where it was held in the abandoned Austro-Hungarian fortress Fort Casoni Vecchi until 2001. After 2001 it moved to the yard of the social center Karlo Rojc in Pula. Monteparadiso was an event where we could expand and make contact with other actors in the HC punk scene. Many local bands played at the festival, but also bands from other cities and countries. As the festival grew, many cult world HC punk bands, 'punk legends', later appeared at it. You can see more about the Monteparadiso Festival in the documentary *Monteparadiso 20* (Juhas, 2012).

In the first years of the festival, an anarchist hardcore punk band called Nula [Zero] from Šibenik performed. Their cassette album *Pobjedimo laž* [*Let's win the lie*] has the status of a cultural relic. Five young people from Šibenik, then young teenagers, recorded an album at the end of 1993 in the basement of a family house, which at that time was also a shelter for the shelled town of Šibenik in the middle of the war. The lyrics on the album (Nula, 1994) propagated the ideals of freedom and anarchism, regardless of the situation. War in general can only get the worst out of an individual, but these punks fiercely opposed that. Nula is celebrating its 25th anniversary today, and the band is still active today on the Croatian scene, they are exactly part of that punk elite that opposed the 1990s nationalist ideology and spread anti-militarist resistance.

In 1996, at Monteparadiso, I watched the band Radikalna Promjena [Radical Change], an anarcho-punk band from Zagreb. Both Radikalna Promjena and Nula had a specific form of activism in their lyrics that sent clear political messages. But, this political side of the punk movement was taken over by other music scenes and movements.

Len: And when did the scene start to shift to other music genres? Was it still explicitly anarchist during this transition?

Marko: One of the founders of the band Radikalna Promjena, Domagoj Šeks (also known as DJ Kobayagi, who died tragically in 2005 in India) launched a trance music project, Tribalizer, in 2000 as part of the program of the Autonomne tvornice kulture [Autonomous Culture Factory] – ATTACK! in Zagreb. Tribalizer was a counterbalance to commercial and profit-oriented parties. Other members of Radikalna Promjena, Tomislav Vrkljan (Vrki) and Jadranko Kereković, together with Vedran Meniga from Nula formed a dub band called Radikal Dub Kolektiv in 2002, based on DIY underground ethics. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, trance and dub, alongside punk, represented new musical genres with already well-known participants who changed their sound, but not the message they spread. I personally understood it as a new sound of anarchism. Most of the participants emerged from the punk scene. You can read more about the scene around the Autonomous Culture Factory – ATTACK! in the book *Our story: 15 years of ATTACK!* (Cvek et al., 2013).

Some of the guys that led the Monteparadiso Festival started working on other festivals such as the Seasplash festival in Pula in 2003 (mostly bass, reggae, dub and similar genres). In addition, various trance festivals have appeared, such as Free Spirit and a number of other trance parties on the Adriatic coast. All these festivals, concerts, parties and events were run by more-or-less the same crowd that started from HC and anarcho-punk in the early 1990s. They had their ups and downs. Some minor quarrels were known to have happened within the collective, but I would like to proudly emphasize that most of these manifestations are still held today and passed on to younger generations who continue the tradition, and who struggle and resist against the globalization of taste.

I've mostly spoken about the scene in Pula, my hometown, and Zagreb, the city where I studied and where I live, but these are certainly not the only places where other scenes have evolved from punk to some other forms while remaining close to anarchist models and principles.

La lotta continua. [The struggle continues.]

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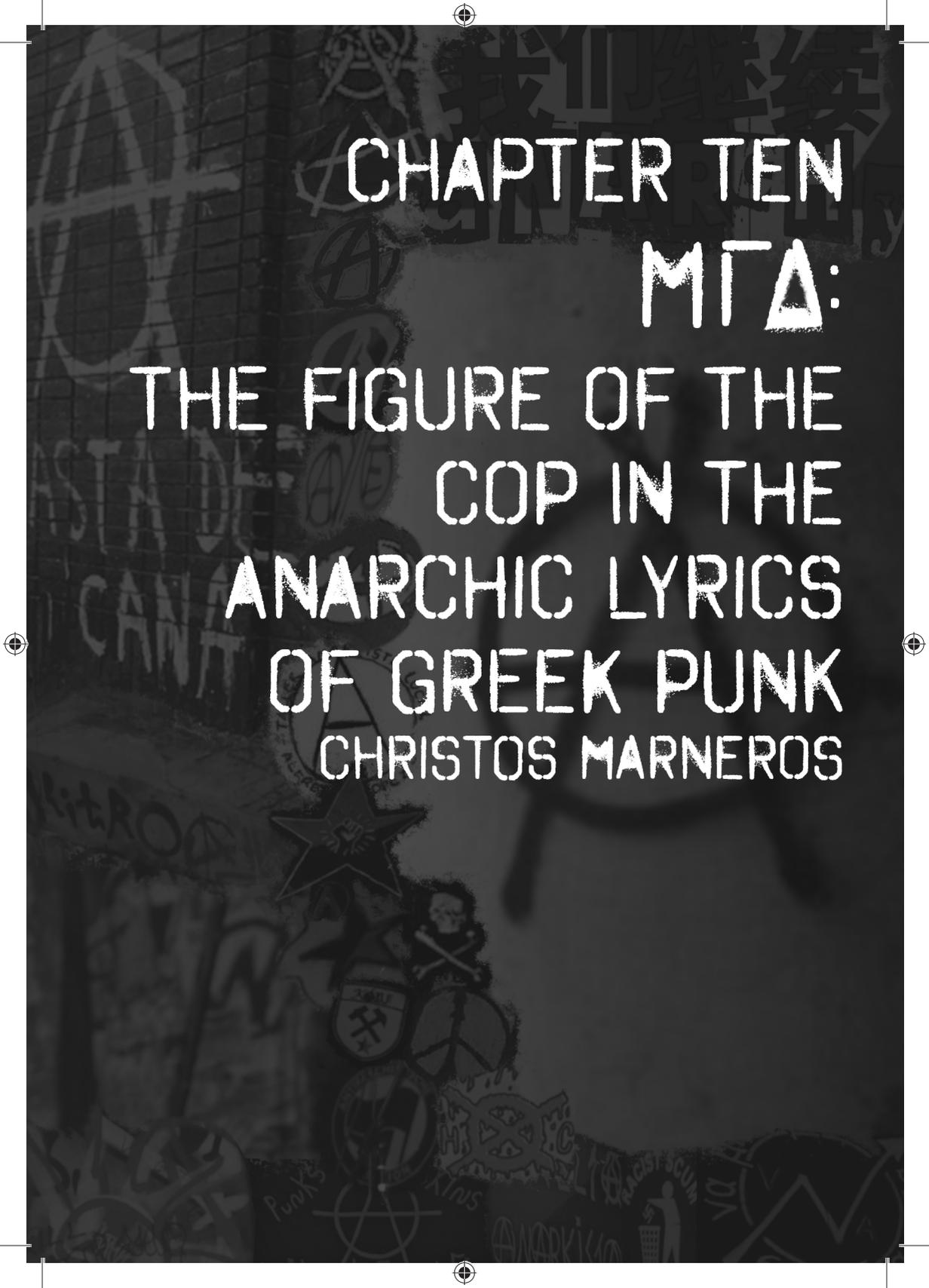
CHAPTER TEN

ΜΓΔ:

THE FIGURE OF THE COP IN THE ANARCHIC LYRICS OF GREEK PUNK

CHRISTOS MARNEROS

Chapter Ten: ΜΓΔ: The figure of the cop in the anarchic lyrics of Greek punk

Christos Marneros

Is punk music and (sub)culture anarchistic? And what about the Greek punk scene in particular? Within the international sphere there was, and perhaps still is, a clear line distinguishing punk bands and subculture from any form of theoretical or ideological position. To that extent, punks, at least those of the 'first wave', are to be situated in a position that stands beyond any form of 'ist' or 'ism' (Wetherington, 2010). As Mark Wetherington notes, 'thorough analysis reveals that the majority of the more visible bands and organisations related to the punk movement, both past and present, were not affiliated closely or genuinely with anti-establishment politics' (2010, p. 104). Taking a similar approach, in his seminal research on the Greek scene's origins from 1979 and its development until 2013, Yannis N Kolovos [Γιάννης Ν Κολοβός] explicitly distinguishes between the political stance of the punks (or better put, their anti-political stance) and the so-called politically 'mature', theoretically informed positions of anarchist circles. More precisely, when he discusses the 'demographic' composition and the different groups of people that populate(d) the Exarcheia area of Athens, he states that 'we witness the emergence of all the subjectivities, which were expressing the spirit of the subculture of the previous decades and which were, probably, formed and grounded on artistic bases, revolving around "an abstract and politically non-threatening anarchism"' (Κολοβός [Kolovos], 2013, p. 366).* This form of anarchism, as Kolovos explains, is to be distinguished from the anarchist cells of the area 'which had formed a clear and concrete political identity through which they were giving shape to a *praxeological* tactic' of resistance against the Greek nation and its pseudo-consensual, pseudo-progressive (actually ultra-conservative and reactionary) politics (2013,

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* This translation from the Greek original text and the subsequent translations of texts and lyrics are mine unless otherwise stated.

p. 366). (See also Kolovos' chapter in this volume). To explain, this praxeological mode of resistance indicates that the anarchist cells of Exarcheia were *consciously* coming together, discussing and deciding on the ways of cooperation and resistance against the state and its institutions.

Yet, despite these differences and distinctions, I would support the position that (Greek) punk subculture has 'an inextricable link' (Donaghey, 2013, p. 138) with an *anarchic ethos* of resistance against the hierarchical structures of the politics of the state and the norms of the mainstream society. With the term ethos, I want to signify a way of living that engulfs all the aspects of our existence, in the sense that it defines our modes of being, thinking and acting, including our ways of

Figure 10:1 - Cover of Γενιά του Χάους's self-titled LP (1986).

doing politics. Such an ethos is evident even in the multiple cases where punk's discourse is not directly informed by anarchistic theories, neither in the form of references to a theoretician of anarchism nor via any explicit identification with any anarchist group or school of thought. A distinction is made here between 'anarchic' and 'anarchistic' in order to distinguish between the political thought of anarchist groups, activists and thinkers (denoted here as 'anarchistic'), and the ethos of resistance cultivated by punks without necessarily belonging to an anarchist group or espousing the theories of specific anarchist thinkers, which I call 'anarchic'. Such an ethos is anarchic because it questions, disorients and

Figure 10:2 – Cover of Αντίδραση's *Ενάντια* LP (1991b).

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mocks the hierarchical structures and politics of the state and mainstream society.

An example of the strength of this connection to Greek punk subculture (and counterculture) is to be found in the lyrics of Greek punks. The themes revolve around an ethos of resistance against the suffocating conservatism of Greek society, against the authority of the state, the family, the Church, the police, and generally anything that tries to impose its oppressive, hierarchical structures upon the youth. The lyrics, then, often act as personal 'manifestos' of Greek punks, narrating their personal experiences from direct participation in anarchist collectives, involvement with anarchist political causes and occupations, and even the personal stories of punks who witnessed the repulsive face of authority as its primary victims, detailing the mass arrests and the prison cells where they experienced the savage, fascistic face of the police (Σούζας [Souzas], 2017, pp. 261-262).

In addition, and perhaps ironically, this close relationship between Greek punk and anarchy is something that was also constructed through the discourse of the dominant political forces and which was promoted by the media. This narrative tries to represent the punks, anarchists, drug users, sex workers, migrants, queers and so forth as a threat to the status quo of 'civilised' society and its values. All these groups are the usual target of the forces of repression, most often expressed by the brutal actions of the police, with arrests, beatings and in extreme cases even murder becoming a norm. The legendary punk band Genia tou Haous [Γενιά του Χάους] depicts this mainstream societal view of these groups and their ultimate construction as the 'deviant Other' in the lyrics of the song 'Koinonika Ypoprointa' [Κοινωνικά Υποπροϊόντα – 'Social By-products' or 'Social Waste'], where they directly 'address' the rotten conservatism of political powers and mainstream society:

Εσείς οι εραστές της σάπιας εξουσίας … Με ποιο δικαίωμα θα μας καταδικάσεις; Πόρνες, Πρεζάκηδες, πανκς, αναρχικοί. Θάβεις αλύπητα οποιαδήποτε ψυχή. Σκέφου όμως πως τους έφτιαξες εσύ …

[You the lovers of a rotten ruling authority … By what right will you condemn us? … Prostitutes, junkies, punks, anarchists. You mercilessly bury any soul. Think though that all these are your own making …]

(Γενιά του Χάους, 1986)

We can observe here a double-movement that forms an act and ethos of resistance against any form of archist and oppressive mentality. On the one hand, the Greek punks criticise the mainstream society that excluded them, but, at the same time, they refuse it and resist becoming part of it.

In this chapter, I want to shed more light on this anarchic ethos of resistance, which is found in the lyrics of Greek punk. To do so, I am using as my 'case study' the anti-police sentiment found in those lyrics and, more specifically, I am focusing on the depiction of the figure of the cop. The acronym ΜΓΔ in the chapter title stands for 'Μπάτσοι, Γουρούνια, Δολοφόνοι' ['Mpatsoi, Gourounia, Dolofonoi' – 'Cops, Pigs, Murderers'], a common slogan amongst Greek anarchists (and leftists) and the title of a song (and album) by the Greek punk/hardcore band Ολέθριο Ρήγμα [Olethrio Rigma] (2000). The choice of this specific category of lyrics is based on two interconnected points. Firstly, the oppressive, even fascistic, tendencies of the police were hugely influential on the writing of some of the most powerful lyrics in the scene, infused with an ethos of resistance. Secondly, the anti-police position of Greek punk lyrics is compatible with the broad opposition of anarchist groups and theoreticians against the police, the state's monopoly of violence, and law in general. As such, Greek punk and its lyrics have the potential to contribute to the anti-police discussions in anarchist circles and they can cultivate an ethos of resistance and an anarchic politics which dares to talk seriously and with a powerful directness about the police's brutal oppression.

The chapter proceeds as follows: the subsequent section discusses the origins of the Greek punk scene and highlights the influences behind its emergence and its subsequent stance against the police. Then, I discuss the stance of anarchist theorists against the state's monopoly of

violence, law's role in establishing this monopoly, and the police's role in not only preserving this status quo but expanding 'legal' violence, creating a police state and police mentality. The section thereafter offers an analysis of the anti-police lyrics of Greek punk, and the final section concludes by commenting on the intersection points between anarchist thought and the lyrics of Greek punk, discussing the latter's potential to cultivate an anarchic ethos and resistance against police oppression.

'Fight with us, a new hope'
(Αντίδραση [Antidrasi], 1991b)

The end of the 1970s was the beginning of what seemed to be a process of liberalisation of Greek society. The regime of the colonels (the junta) that ruled the country for seven years fell in 1974 and the right-wing New Democracy [Νέα Δημοκρατία] government that succeeded them (retaining a lot of remnants of the junta regime) was about to suffer a heavy defeat by the social democratic party, PASOK [Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα – Panhellenic Socialist Movement], in 1981. Many of the people who had resisted the colonels' regime became involved in the apparatus of political power or were now closely affiliated with it. This led a lot of the supposed radicals of the past to become supporters of parliamentary politics and of a so-called 'progressive' version of capitalist policies. While the vast majority of Greek society was euphoric, expecting this victory to signify the beginning of an era of progress, prosperity and the death of conservatism, a handful of teenagers sensed that there was something rotten behind this progressive façade. In response, they tried to create something new.

The period of late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the emergence of the first anarchist-anti-authoritarian cells, and the efforts to form autonomous groups of university students and workers against the worn-out structures of trade unions that remained obedient to a top-down party platform (often against the interests of those that they were supposed to protect). These young people felt sick and tired of the

disciplined programmes of the newly formed social democratic party and the hierarchical structures and pro-Soviet stance of the Greek Communist Party (ΚΚΕ – Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας). In 1974, in a demonstration of workers and students, the black flags and the anti-statist, anti-authoritarian slogans made their first dynamic appearance (Σούζας [Souzas], 2017, pp. 70-71). The demonstrators shared leaflets and communiqués denouncing the upcoming parliamentary elections (the first since the fall of the regime) as 'a political spectacle' and the politicians as 'bullshitters' trying to present themselves as the protagonists of the 1973 student Polytechnic uprising against the colonel's regime (Σούζας [Souzas], 2017, p. 71). These events were a starting point that led to the initial efforts of young anarchists and anti-authoritarians to form the first anarchist federation of Greece (Καλαμαράς [Kalamaras], 2017, p. 17).

All these conditions provided a fertile ground for the Greek punk scene to become more 'politically mature' during the 1980s. The punks started seeing their music and subculture as a rebellious response to the pseudo-consensualism amongst the political parties of the left and the right, but also against the culture of consumption, success and careerism promoted by the media. It was also a response to 'the heroes of the past' that had betrayed the cause of a radical transformation of society. The punks were mostly disappointed by the 'sell out' of the once-radical rock musicians that had by then become the favourite kids of the press and friends of the politicians (if not becoming politicians themselves). More importantly, however, punk was a response to the oppressing, dogmatic rules and morality of the state, the family, the school and the Church, and the state's monopoly of violence, as predominantly manifested by police brutality (see Vafeiadis, 2013).

The period between 1984 and 1985 was another landmark in the radicalisation of the Greek punk scene and the crystallization of its anti-police stance. In 1984, the French fascist leader of Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was invited to speak at a fascist conference taking place in the Hotel Caravel in Athens. This led to mass demonstrations that brought together thousands of anarchists and anti-authoritarians, including punks. As AG Schwarz, Tasos Sagris and Void Network note: 'In what might be the first major Greek Black Bloc, thousands of

anarchists attack[ed] the Hotel Caravel in Athens, forcing the cancellation of a far-right conference that had drawn such reactionaries as Le Pen of France' (2010, p. 7). The police response to the events showed their direct sympathy for the organizers and the speakers of the conference. In 1985 the police started 'Operation Areti' [Αρετή – 'moral virtue' or 'righteousness'] with the pretext that the area of Exarcheia was becoming ghettoised, with increased levels of crime and deviant youth causing troubles for the residents. The punks and anarchists who populated the area faced unprecedented persecution, beatings and arrests, with their 'suspicious appearances' being enough to justify the purge (Βαμβακάς and Παναγιωτόπουλος [Vamvakas and Panayiotopoulos], 2014). These encounters with police brutality, the unjustified arrests and the inhumane conditions of confinement are described in the autobiographical song, 'Τα Κελιά της Οδού Μεσογείων' ['Ta Kelia tis Odou Mesogeion' – 'The Cells of Mesogeion Street'] by the band Αδιέξοδο [Adiexodo]:

Βρέθηκες ξάφνου σ' ένα κελί και η δικογραφία σου λέει εξύβριση αρχής. Μία μέρα απομόνωση. και ύστερα με τις χειροπέδες στον εισαγγελέα. Η δίκη σου πάντα αναβάλλεται … Οι μπάτσοι σε βρίζουν σε εξευτελίζουν.

[All of a sudden you were found in a cell with the charges stating 'verbal outrage against authorities'. One day in detention and then handcuffed to the prosecutor. Your trial is always postponed … Cops are swearing at you and humiliating you.]

(Αδιέξοδο [Adiexodo], 1986b)

This particular police station was infamous as the centre of tortures during the years of the colonel's regime, highlighting, again, the continuity between the police state of the dictators and the police state of the democrats (see Καλλιβρετάκης [Kallivretakis], 2018).

In response to the purges, the first occupation of the Department of Chemistry of the University of Athens took place between the 9th and the 13th of May 1985 with the participation of anarchists and punks. The police responded in an uncommonly calm way and accepted the demands for the release of arrested participants of the events. But the same year was marked by the cold-blooded murder of the anarchist student Michalis Kaltezas [Μιχάλης Καλτεζάς] by the cop Athanasios Melistas [Αθανάσιος Μελίστας]

Figure 10:3 – Cover of Αδιέξοδο's _.38_ LP (1986).

on the 17th of November 1985 during the events for the commemoration of the student Polytechnic uprising of 1973. To add insult to injury, Melistas was sentenced to two-and-a-half years at the first court hearing but was later acquitted of the charges on appeal. The event was a 'turning point' and the 'end of illusions' for a progressive change by the socialist government of PASOK, which had won its second spell in power earlier that year (Schwarz et al., 2010, pp. 11-12). It was now evident that state authorities and the police were ready to kill. Anger and the demand for revenge against the police and society as a whole dominated the themes of punk songs. However, as we will see below, this call for revenge should be read as 'an opening' to 'a new hope' (Αντίδραση [Antidrasi], 1991b) – an anarchic way of life that demands the destruction of all the oppressive structures is the hidden message of this call for revenge. Before we arrive at that point, it is important to first examine the views of anarchists on the matter of law, the state's monopoly of violence and the police. This will enable us to draw some links between these and the way that the police and the figure of the cop are presented in the lyrics of Greek punk songs.

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Anarchists on the law and the police

The multiple anarchist groups, theoretical traditions, and schools of thought are, perhaps, united by a shared principle. That is their critique of the state's monopoly of violence and law's ability to justify and legalise the state's violence while condemning any non-state violence (that is, the sort of violence which does not serve the purposes of the state) by excluding it from the sphere of legality. The multiple Greek anarchist groups are no exception to this rule. On the contrary, due to constant 'witch hunts' and violence by the police, Greek anarchists acknowledge the institution of the police and the legal

Figure 10:4 – Alexis Grigoropoulos and Berkin Elvan memorial at the corner of Mesolongiou and Tzavella streets, Exarcheia, Athens (photograph by Christos Marneros, 24th of June 2020).

system as their most fierce enemy. While their stance against the police is not usually supported by a particular theoretical framework of anarchist thought, such views are closely related to the writings of anarchist theorists, belonging to different schools of thought (for example, in this chapter, I bring together the thought of Max Stirner, who is usually associated with individualist anarchist circles, and those of Mikhail Bakunin and Pyotr Kropotkin, who are usually associated with anarcho-communism) and which I examine below.

As Max Stirner rightly puts it, 'the state practices "violence"; the individual should not do this. State behaviour is an act of violence, and it calls its violence "legal right"; that of the individual, "crime"' (2017 [1844], p. 209). Mikhail Bakunin even suggests that the main characteristic that defines someone as an 'anarchist' is the demand for the absolute abolition of juridical law:

> In a word, we reject all legislation – privileged, licensed, official, and legal – and all authority, and influence, even though they may emanate from universal suffrage, for we are convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the vast majority in subjection to them. It is in this sense that we are really Anarchists. (1964 [1870], p. 271)

Thus, law becomes a powerful weapon in the hands of the state and authorities, enabling it to distinguish between the 'good citizens' who respect the state's monopoly of violence and the deviant subjects who question that monopoly.

But beyond being an 'unworthy hoax' that justifies and legalises the 'brutish' acts of the state (Bakunin 1964 [1870], p. 136), law also becomes an insurmountable barrier. It fetters any potential towards living a life characterised by spontaneity and revolt against state power, and, to that extent, it limits or terminates the ability of human beings to confront and resolve their everyday problems without being attached to the commands of the state. They may be 'enabled' by the law in principle, but are hindered in reality. According to Pyotr Kropotkin, people become:

> perverted by an education which from infancy seeks to kill in [them] the spirit of revolt and to develop that of submission to authority; we

are so perverted by this existence under the ferrule of a law, which regulates every event in life – our birth, our education, our development, our love, our friendship – that, if this state of things continues, we shall lose all initiative, all habit of thinking for ourselves. (1975 [1900], p. 27)

People are unable to respond, engage or *create* because they expect to receive all the answers to their problems from the archist authority of the laws of the state. So, this blind obedience to rules (in this case, to the law) becomes a habit that turns us into obedient subjects who are unable to respond to the challenges that we face in our everyday lives, even if the law does not offer us any solution, because we expect every answer by the law. In the remainder of his 'Law and Authority' essay, Kropotkin explains how we became so

Figure 10:5 – Graffiti in memory of Zak Kostopoulos/Zackie Oh! in the Exarcheia area, Athens (photograph by Christos Marneros, 1st of August 2019).

accustomed to obedience and the need for ever-expanding laws that we cannot do without them. Thus, we accept any restraint to our freedom in the name of security, in the name of avoiding a Hobbesian 'threat' of the state of nature, leading to the ultimate pacification of our social and political instincts and the degradation of our spirit of revolt.

The police have a powerful double-role in preserving but also expanding and creating anew this repressive status quo. Walter Benjamin may not ordinarily be identified as an anarchist thinker, but anarchic themes are readily apparent in his discussion of 'suspension of the law' and 'abolition of state's power' in his 'Critique of Violence' (1986 [1921], p. 300). Elsewhere in this celebrated and enigmatic essay, he makes a distinction between two kinds of violence (amongst others), namely violence which is law-making and violence which is law-preserving (Benjamin, 1986 [1921], pp. 284-287). While the law-preserving category contains violence used in order to enforce existing laws, the law-making category, in the absence or indeterminacy of existing laws, comes to introduce new laws and rules in order to fill the vacuum (Benjamin, 1986 [1921], pp. 284-287; Newman, 2016, p. 83). Yet, these two kinds of violence are often indistinguishable, or their distinctions are blurry leading to 'a kind of a spectral mixture' (Benjamin, 1986 [1921], p. 286). Benjamin suggests that the key example of the combination of these two kinds of violence in the modern state is the institution of the police.

The police use violence to enforce the laws of the state, for example, when they physically incapacitate individuals by handcuffing them. This is a situation where the institution of the police uses violence in order to *preserve* or supposedly protect the pre-existing laws of the state. There are, however, many situations where there is ambiguity as to the limits of the law – in these situations, the 'legal means' of law enforcement are non-existent or open to multiple interpretations. For example, in many situations the police are free to determine how to apply its 'legal violence' in the process of incapacitating, arresting or 'stopping and searching' someone. We have witnessed numerous times how, in the name of protecting 'the good citizens', police have brutally assaulted protesters, killed suspects, sexually and racially harassed people, using the pretext of their 'stop-and-search' powers. It is in these 'no man's land' situations that the police, acting by using *law-making violence*, become even more powerful not only as an institution but, more importantly, as a mentality, a way of thinking that engulfs the *psyche* of every citizen. To this extent, the

ever-pervasive formless presence/absence of the police is there to repress anyone and anything that questions the state's monopoly of violence, by preserving its legal violence but also via their unique ability to create new law in situations of 'indeterminacy'. This leads to complete submission and it inaugurates a 'security ideology' (Newman, 2016, p. 83) or a police mentality. The 'good citizen', living with the constant fear of becoming the Other, the deviant or the delinquent, is ever ready to overzealously support the violence of the police and law, condemning the victims as 'dangerous anarchists' or 'punks' who threaten the sacred morals of society (thus, they 'had it coming'). The Greek 'good citizens' and the media are always ready to support the police and condemn the victims. We saw that happening with the murder of Kaltezas, Alexis Grigoropoulos [Αλέξης Γρηγορόπουλος] (another teenager murdered by the cops in Exarcheia in 2008), and more recently with the broad daylight killing of queer activist and drag performer Zak Kostopoulos/ Zackie Oh! Zackie was accused of trying to rob a jewellery shop (something which was proved to be untrue – not that it matters) and she was beaten to death by a mob including the shop owner, other 'good citizens' and the cops. (For further information on Grigoroupoulos' murder see Schwarz et al., 2010. For Kostopoulos' killing see Weizman, 2019). As Stirner puts it: '[t]he people go utterly nuts, sending the police against everything that seems immoral, or even only unseemly, to it; and this popular rage for the moral protects the police institution more than the mere government could possibly protect it' (2017 [1844], p. 253). As a result, a police state is formed with the support of the citizens who simply 'do not want to get into trouble' – they hate anything and anyone that questions the status quo consensus or threatens their peaceful lives.

Greek anarchist groups, despite their multiple and different ideological influences, share this hatred of the police as the main manifestation of the state's monopoly of violence, along with the view that the police institution maintains and recreates the oppressive nature of the law. They also share the aforementioned views on how the general public, the 'good citizens', are accomplices to the police's brutality. These positions are highlighted in the political communiqués and position pamphlets of Greek anarchist groups. In these we read that anarchists 'do not fit in the society of captivity, the police checks of our identification papers, the supervision of security guards, the laws of the judges, the locked doors of prisons' (Conspiracy of Cells of Fire

Figure 10:6 – Banner produced by anarchist fans of AEK Athens FC with lyrics of '38 Χιλιοστά' by Αδιέξοδο (1986a): 'The executioners are innocent, the guilty ones are dead. Revenge!' (Photograph by Christos Marneros, 1st of August 2019).

[Συνωμοσία Πυρήνων της Φωτιάς – Synomosia Pyrinon tis Photias] 2015, p. 3; see also Loadenthal, 2017, pp. 67-85). We also read that the role of the riot police is 'to terrorise the streets every day … beat demonstrators, and [its] sole mission is the violent repression of social struggles' (Gournas, Maziotis, Roupa, imprisoned members of the 'Revolutionary Struggle' ['Επαναστατικός Αγώνας' – 'Epanastatikos Agonas'], 2010). As such, Greek anarchists, being 'at war with [such a] democracy' (Sect of Revolutionaries [Σέχτα των Επαναστατών – Sechta ton Epanastaton], 2010), aim to attack the terror of the state and its institutions by 'work[ing] towards creating more communities that celebrate self-determination, that do not welcome the police' (CrimethInc., 2021).

For anarchists, then, the only viable way out of the archist mentality of the state, its monopoly of violence and the police mentality is the total

destruction of the juridical system and law (Bakunin, 1972 [1869], p. 152). As Kropotkin characteristically writes: 'No more laws! No more judges! Liberty, equality, and practical human sympathy are the only effectual barriers we can oppose to the anti-social instincts of certain amongst us' (1975 [1900], p. 43).

As we will see in the next section, these views on the police, police state and police mentality are reflected in the lyrics of Greek punk songs. As I aim to demonstrate, the punks with their directness, vitriolic irony and humour not only manage to contribute to this anarchistic anti-police critique but take it a step further. This is because they manage to convey this message to the youth who are not necessarily actively engaged with anarchist theory and politics. Thus, punk manifests an 'educational' dimension that has the ability to politicise and cultivate an anarchic ethos.

'Kill the cop inside you'
(Αρνάκια [Arnakia], 1993)

In this section, I aim to demonstrate how the depiction of the cop in the lyrics of Greek punk is very close to the anarchistic views discussed in the previous section. In Greek punk lyrics, the cop is always depicted in a negative, oppressive manner (and justifiably so) but this figure is, nevertheless, multifaceted. The cops are 'the faithful servants of the state', they are the 'pigs and murderers' (Ολέθριο Ρήγμα [Olethrio Rigma], 2000) that beat up random people without needing an excuse, they are in a position to 'fuck up our self-esteem' (Αντίδραση [Antidrasi], 1991a), and, at the same time, they are the buffoons that 'chase stray dogs' (Panx Romana, 1999). But more importantly, this oppressing figure is able to operate freely due to Greek society's 'silence' over, or even support for, this exercise of physical and psychological violence upon the society's Others – and this is because the figure of the cop has become a part of our own 'sinister selves' (Αρνάκια [Arnakia], 1993). The figure of the cop is something that lurks inside us and there is always the potential for it to prevail, as has happened in Greek society with the triumph of a police mentality and the police state.

As discussed earlier, Kalteza's assassination was a turning point that shattered the illusion of a 'progressive, welfare state' that might end the police state of the right-wing governments and the regime of the colonels. The groups that were 'othered' by the political powers and by society as a whole knew that they were an easy target for the police's brutality. The anger of the youth and their cry for change took the form of a call for 'revenge'. However, this call should not be read as something negative, but rather as a cry for the imminent need to destroy all the rotten values of a dying society, and to create anew. This anger was encapsulated in the lyrics of the song '38 Χιλιοστά' ['38 Hiliosta' – '38 Millimetres'] by Αδιέξοδο [Adiexodo] (1986a) – the title is in reference to the gun used by Melistas to kill Kaltezas. In the song, we can observe the polarized perceptions of the cops, on the one hand by 'the good citizens' and (legal) authorities, and, on the other hand, by the punks. For the courts, the wider justice system, the media and the 'good citizens', the cops are, ironically speaking, 'innocent' because they merely performed their duty, exterminating 'the dangerous anarchist' Kaltezas who was participating in the riots – 'the executioners are innocent, the guilty dead' as the song says

Figure 10:7 – Graffiti in the Kypseli area of Athens. The graffiti refers to the death of the urban guerilla Christos Tsoutsouvis [Χρήστος Τσουτσουβής] on the 15th of May 1985 in Gyzi, Athens (photograph by Christos Marneros, 3rd of June 2021). Tsoutsouvis engaged in an exchange of fire with cops, killing three before his death. The slogan is widely used by anti-authoritarians and anarchists as a way of mocking the cops. Εκτός Ελέγχου [Ektos Eleghou] in their song 'Κανείς Δεν Είναι Αθώός' ['Nobody Is Innocent'] praise Tsoutsouvis' actions stating that 'he was right'. The song is included in the re-issue of their 1994 homonymous album, released in 2012.

(Αδιέξοδο [Adiexodo], 1986a). For Greek society's 'Others', however, the cops are 'the executioners' of young people. Yet, importantly, as the lyrics of the song state:

Δεν ήταν μόνος αυτός που πυροβόλησε είχε μαζί του κι άλλους αφανείς δήμιους. Είχε μαζί του τους ενάρετους. Είχε μαζί του τους έντιμους. Είχε μαζί του τους ηθικούς. Είχε μαζί του τους δίκαιους. Είχε μαζί του τους φιλήσυχους.

[The person who shot (the fatal bullet) was not alone. He had by his side, other self-effacing executioners. He had by his side the virtuous ones. He had by his side the honourable ones. He had by his side the moral ones. He had by his side the righteous ones. He had by his side the peaceful ones.]

(Αδιέξοδο [Adiexodo], 1986a)

With the blessings of the Greek society and the help of certain 'snitches', the cops always find the excuse that they need in order to act for the preservation of law and the protection of the 'good citizens'. Under this pretext they are, then, free to impose 'their own moral virtue', as Εκτός Ελέγχου [Ektos Eleghou – Out of Control] ironically note in their homonymous song (1994). Of course, the cops' imposition of moral virtue is achieved by the sound of 'music of the batons striking down on [random] heads' and by arresting any they can get their hands on in order to 'justify next month's salary' (Εκτός Ελέγχου, 1994).

In this gloomy situation, the punks' message becomes clear. There is nobody and nothing that can fight for a change in society. All the promises by the self-proclaimed 'messiahs' are hollow. If we want real change, we must do anything that is possible to get rid of those in positions of power, to get rid of the dominant archist mentality (Αντίδραση [Antidrasi], 1991b). This mentality is 'rotten' (Αντίδραση [Antidrasi], 1991b) because it hierarchises beings and creates the 'deviant Other' who must accept the pseudo-consensus promoted by these 'messiahs' or be exterminated. But resistance and the cultivation of a new, anarchic way of life is a difficult enterprise and the punks seem to be aware of that, as evident in their lyrics – nevertheless, they are not

ready to accept that this is impossible. The difficulty lies in the fact that the state's police mentality has become a part of ourselves, engulfing every aspect of our psyche. As such, as Αρνάκια [Arnakia] state, we need to 'kill the cop inside us before it is too late' (1993).

Conclusion: intersecting points between anarchism and Greek punk

It should be evident by now that Greek punk's lack of direct reference to an anarchist theoretical framework or close affiliations with anarchist groups does nothing to render their anarchic ethos of resistance lesser than 'mature' anarchist politics. On the contrary, Greek punk has a lot to offer in the fight against the archist mentality of power, and the dogmatism and conservatism that prevail in our societies. This is manifested by the shared ideas, aims and ethos of anarchism and punk's anarchy (that is, punk's fundamental opposition to any form of hierarchy). Greek anarchists and Greek punks, while keeping their distinct identities intact and without trying to assimilate one another, often fight together for multiple causes and against old and new threats. Recently, in the context of mutual aid and cooperation, anarchists and punks have collaborated in the organization of gigs and other events in order to inform against the fatalistic, neoliberal agenda, and to oppose the emerging fascism in Greek politics and the growing 'fascisisation' of Greek society. They have also been supporting anarchist political prisoners by bringing bands together to generate financial assistance for the trial expenses (see, for example, the Firefund campaign by the anarchist collective Masovka [Μασόβκα], where multiple punk bands, but also antifascist black metal bands, such as Yovel, contributed parts of their Bandcamp earnings in April 2021) and raising funds to help those who are in a dire position as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Against this backdrop, the Facebook page 'Greek Punk / Crust / HC and more' has been very active. In August 2021 they brought together 120 bands from all around the globe to release the online compilation *Punk Means Solidarity* (Various, 2021) to support the needs of those affected (humans and animals) by the devastating fires in Greece.

In this chapter, my aim was to demonstrate these intersections by highlighting the very similar views of, and shared opposition to, the state's monopoly of violence, especially as manifested by police brutality and the generation of a police mentality that 'haunts' society and ourselves. As discussed, both anarchists and Greek punks recognise that the role of the police is not to protect but rather to preserve and extend the oppression of the state. Furthermore, anarchists and Greek punks both make the important point that the police is not merely an institution, but rather a mentality. Thus, the 'good citizens' are accomplices to police beatings and murders, as observed by both Stirner in his writings and by Αδιέξοδο [Adiexodo] in their songs. More importantly, both anarchists, of multiple 'trends', different ideological and organisational tactics (from individualist, syndicalist, anarcho-communist groups and so on) *and* punks believe that radical change is the only viable solution to escape this repressive police mentality. This change must be radical because it demands the total abolition and dissolution of the state, law and the police – as can be seen in the writings of Kropotkin and Bakunin *and* in the lyrics of punk songs by Αντίδραση [Antidrasi], Αρνάκια [Arnakia] and others. Its radicality also lies in not shying away from pointing the finger towards ourselves and the 'cop' that lurks inside. The directness, sharpness, irony and humour of Greek punk lyrics can cultivate an anarchic ethos of resistance which dares to talk seriously about the abolition of the police, not only as an institution but also as an oppressive figure.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

WE SPREAD THE BLACK FLAG AROUND US:

THE PUNK SCENE & THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN ATHENS (LATE 1970S-2010)

YANNIS N KOLOVOS

Chapter Eleven: 'We spread the black flag around us': The punk scene and the anarchist movement in Athens (late 1970s-2010)

Yannis N Kolovos

In memory of Giorgos Tourkovassilis (1944-2021).

Punk has been connected with anarchism in various and diverse ways, both at the level of music genre and for individual scene participants. I will analyze the interaction between the punk scene in Athens and the anarchist (or 'anti-authoritarian' or 'antagonistic') movement in Greece from the very first appearance of punks in Athens and up to 2010. It's important to note that there is a rejection of the self-definition 'anarchist' by a lot of groups that constitute the 'movement'. During the 1980s and the 1990s the terms 'libertarian' and 'anti-authoritarian' were in common use. From the 2000s to the present, the term 'antagonistic' (or contrarious) as a self-descriptive term has been used. I chose 2010 as an endpoint because, with the country's descent into an unprecedented vortex due to the economic crisis, it would be very difficult, especially for a historian, to find reliable data and to present anything more than a merely journalistic narrative.

As research material I used 28 recorded life stories of members of the punk scene in Athens and eight recorded life stories of members of the related independent/alternative rock scene. 'Scene' is a complicated term but my definition is the following: It is a common cover, encompassing the musicians and the audience, but also the interactions between them, the places where they gather, the infrastructure they use (venues and halls for gigs on a permanent or temporary basis, fanzines, record labels), and it is the level at which the members of the scene themselves control the process of production. I also include the meanings given to the objects, the practices, the gestures, and the rituals that determine the identities of the members. In addition, 'scene' means the 'communion', the diffusion and reception of these meanings inside and outside the scene, and, consequently, the way in which punks

experience their identity as a community and individually. The life stories were recorded between September 2009 and July 2010 and were part of my research on the punk scene in Athens (Kolovos, 2013). The life story as a 'directed' and creative narrative allows for the emergence of the cultural behavior, the visions of the world, the common interpretation of the facts, and the role of the individual in the historical process (Abrams, 2016, pp. 62-63; Passerini, 1998, p. 102). In addition to the life stories, I used data from participatory observation, a huge personal archive of fanzines, and the records and demo tapes I have in my collection (Kolovos and Souzas, 2020; Kolovos, 2015, pp. 605-618).

The research topics focused on: the interactions between the anarchist movement and the punk scene; the creation of common autonomous zones; police harassment as a common experience; the creation of publications; the (self-)financing of the anarchist movement; and the contribution of the punk

Figure 11:1 – The punks at Plaka. The band Genia Tou Chaous and a fan in front of Sofita club, c. 1982 (photograph by Giorgos Tourkovassilis).

subculture in the formation of a new political language that gets beyond 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' (Hebdige, 1988, pp. 141-143) and evolves into a political discourse and way of life.

The emergence and consolidation of Athenian punk

Plaka is the oldest district of Athens, situated at the foot of the rock of the Acropolis. In 1979, Plaka was a real slum and the hotspot of the local subcultures and marginal tribes – 'freaks', 'punks', 'hooligans' amongst transvestites and backpackers (Constas, 1973; Kolovos, 2015, pp. 147-161). As interviewee Louis recalled:

> I remember all these places in Plaka, the clubs and the pubs. It was Aretousa [club] and later the Skylab. It was the spot we had been gathering and listening to our music. We met another group of punks from [the district of] Zografou and [from the district of] Patisia. It was a network that had been widening. I'm talking about the beginning, that was 1981, 1982. (Interview with the author, 2010)

All the informants who had been hanging around in Plaka had similar stories to tell – the fashion boutique Remember (the local equivalent to McLaren and Westwood's Sex at King's Road, London), small concert halls like Sofita and Skylab, discos such as Mad where 'new wave' music was played, rock pubs and small clubs like Ledra, Aris and, later, Tiffany's were gathering a diverse crowd of early heavy metal fans, old fashion rockers, hippie-style freaks and, of course, teenagers dressed in punk and post-punk clothes.

In order to declare their presence, the punks had to be differentiated from the other subcultural tribes. And this was not only a matter of style – the short haircuts against the long haired 'mop', the extremely tight pants against the bell-bottom jeans, the army boots against the sandals. But, as some narrators remember, police harassment was the main problem that disturbed life in Plaka (see also Marneros' chapter in this volume). That came in response to the main desire of the teenage punks – to generate shock effect in order to

underline their existence (Laing, 1985, pp. 76-81; Donaghey, 2013, pp. 144-149) and to mock the petty bourgeois aesthetics of the post-dictatorship Greece that was trying to integrate with the consumerist world of the Western democracies. Louis remembered that:

it was pretty difficult to hang around with that … attitude, that kind of … image, let's say. It was very common to get involved in a fight, there was so much bullying. Of course the cops were involved in that kind of harassment. I can remember in Aretousa club, when my band had done a gig, there were all these police trucks, closing the street so that nobody could leave. And they started to take the crowd to the local police station to 'verify their ID' [which was a common means of police harassment]. They had taken everyone to the station! But that did not bother us. We were thinking that we had done what we wanted to do. We had expressed what we had to express! And each time it became more powerful! (Interview with the author, 2010)

But the story written in the bars and pubs of Plaka was curtailed. A 'regeneration plan' for Plaka, implemented in 1983, removed those businesses (and consequently activities and people) that did not match the 'historical character' of the old traditional Athenian district. It was the first case of urban gentrification in Greece. The punks lost the bohemian environment and infrastructure where they could exist with relative security. The area had provided protection for teenage punks; they found refuge from the gaze of the conventional Other (or police officers) in a wider group of 'weirdos' that prevailed throughout the area (Tsagaratos, 2001, pp. 24-28; Anagnostopoulos, 1984).

After their departure from Plaka, and for a period of two or three years, the punk group followed a nomadic trajectory that ended in Exarcheia, the only region of Athens that shared Plaka's uninhibited characteristics. The district of Exarcheia is very near the Polytechnic School, the hotspot of the resistance against the dictatorship that had been in power from 1967 to 1974. One of the main factors that contributed to the fall of the dictatorship was the uprising of the students of Athens, and its violent repression, on the 17th of November 1973, at the Polytechnic School. For this reason the area still

carries a proud historical legacy of struggle, resistance and political disobedience.

The first public presence of anarchists in post-World War Two Greece was recorded during the occupation of the Polytechnic, in November 1973. Since then, there has been a continuous presence both through the publication of books, magazines and newspapers and through involvement in activist mobilizations in universities (such as the occupation of university buildings in 1978) or on the anniversaries of the Polytechnic uprising in which the organizations of the left played a major role. The next decade saw the continuous presence of anarchists in protest marches, with the emblematic event being the anarchist-initiated riots outside the Caravel Hotel on the 4th of December 1984, which was hosting a meeting of the European Right with the participation of the far-right Member of the European Parliament, Jean-Marie Le Pen (Souzas, 2015, p. 94; Kalamaras, 2013, pp. 30-35).

In the mid 1980s Exarcheia housed bars, offices of left-wing political organizations, publishing houses, and hangouts for artists and intellectuals. As such, those youngsters who were attracted by the rhetoric and action of the so-called 'anti-authoritarian' milieu gathered there. The pre-existing political groups saw in the punks an incomprehensible voice, but also one that was authentically unconventional and subversive. The anarchist newspaper *Arena* presented the punk subculture as an 'attempt to overthrow the status quo' and the young punks as 'untouchables of the Greek society' (*Arena*, 1985, p. 10). A similar picture of young people as victims of society and potential agents of insurrection was presented in the anti-authoritarian press (Kolovos, 2015, pp. 191-195). In other words, there was an emotional identification that allowed a lot of room for mutual approach. The same emotional identification existed on the part of both the extra-parliamentary left and the region-centered artistic counterculture, but in these cases remained at the level of one-sided sympathy to punks with no further approaches (Papadogiannis, 2010, pp. 322-333. For more on counterculture in 1970s Greece, see Malliaris, 2012).

However, a new urban regeneration plan was to be implemented and this concerned the area of Exarcheia (Tsagaratos, 2001, pp. 32-55; Souzas, 2015, pp. 89-91). On the 14th of September 1984, a report in the popular newspaper *Ethnos* was titled 'And now the Sioux [tribe]. Exarcheia: After drugs and anarchists here come the punks with shaved heads!' (Lampsa, 1984). In time, the moral panic instigated by the media was intensified with the launch

Figure 11:2 – A snapshot from the riot that followed the visit of the American Secretary of State George Shultz to Athens, March 1986. Some of the rioters were punks! (Photograph by Yorgos Nikolaidis).

of a massive police operation named 'Virtue', which aimed to 'cleanse' the area of the 'anti-social' elements it hosted. Operation Virtue provoked a reaction from the young people who frequented Exarcheia. In fact, an attempt by a group of punks to organize a protest concert in the Polytechnic School ended in a massive riot. It was 'the night of the punks' as 'the incident has been recorded in collective memory' (Souzas, 2015, p. 94).

Between 1984 and 1985 Exarcheia was in a 'state of war', with continuous hit and run attacks against the police forces patrolling the area (Ios, 2007; Kalamaras, 2013, pp. 28-36). The events culminated tragically with the murder of fifteen-year-old Michalis Kaltezas by a police officer on Stournari Street in 1985, exactly on the twelfth anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising.

'For us, the incident with Kaltezas was a catalyst, it changed the lives of many people', Dina, one of the interviewees, remembered (interview with the author, 2010). From then on, participation in the activities of the 'Exarcheia milieu' was considered necessary and became part of the values of each individual punk, although their political training was meager – as Spyros put it:

> We knew nothing about politics, we didn't know what anarchy was, we had no theoretical background! Nothing! We had not read even a page of Bakunin's writings, no way! We didn't have a clue, we were completely ignorant! (Interview with the author, 2010)

On the other hand, the mobilization against repression gave a new dimension to what a punk should do – to move from the shock effect mentality to front line activism. We can compare what Spyros recalled and the 'report' from *Too Much Risky Business*, a local punk zine of the time:

> Cars were passing by the square in Exarcheia and we stuck our heads through the open windows and we were scaring them! They saw us with this mohawk haircut and said 'Jesus, what kind of monster is this?' (Interview with the author, 2010)

Hey punk! The police put their finger in your ass but you stay home tonight because there is a riot outside. I see you with your brilliant spiky hair, coming to the gigs, pushing the others and shouting. You look too tough and I'm thinking 'he's so fearless'! But when the time comes to clash with the cops you are not present. You like to listen to music and drink beers with your friends but when the time comes to fight, you go home until the riots are over … Nevertheless, in every riot, there are always punks on the front lines and it is those punks who always retreat last. (Anomymous, 1986, p. 19)

The formation of a radical oppositional identity transcends the initial punk 'shock tactic' and, from the representation of the punks as carriers of symbolic 'danger and allure', a 'far more coherent and consistent anarchism emerged' (Donaghey, 2013, pp. 144-149, p. 169).

The invisible hinterland of Exarcheia and the ambitions of the punk scene

Απλώνουμε γύρω μας τη μαύρη σημαία.
Αφήστε ήσυχη τη νεολαία.
Μέσα από το κόμμα σου και τις παρατάξεις.
Ο ρατσισμός το μόνο που έχεις ν' αντιτάξεις.
Εσείς οι εραστές της σάπιας εξουσίας.
Εμείς οι βιαστές της απάθειας κι ησυχίας.
Με ποιο δικαίωμα θα μας καταδικάσεις;
…
Πόρνες, πρεζάκηδες, πανκς, αναρχικοί.
Θάβεις αλύπητα οποιαδήποτε ψυχή.
Σκέψου όμως πως τους έφτιαξες εσύ.
Και η παραφροσύνη βασίλεψε στη γη.

[We spread the black flag around us.]

[Leave the youth alone.]

[Through your (political) Parties and factions.]

[Racism is all you have to oppose.]

[You, lovers of rotten power.]

[We, the rapists of apathy and silence.]

[By what right will you condemn us?]

…

[Prostitutes, junkies, punks, anarchists.]

[You will mercilessly bury any free soul.]

[But think that you create them.]

[And insanity reigned on earth.]

(Genia tou Chaous, 1986)

In the song 'Koinonika Ipoproionta' ['Social byproducts'], above, the punk band Genia tou Chaous [Chaos Generation] characterize the image that young people had formed for themselves and society. The punks and anarchists are a part of the constellation of marginals that the rotten political system tries to extinguish. They are the scapegoats of society.

Due to the turbulent course of Greece's history, marked by the Civil War (1946-1949) and the Dictatorship (1967-1974), a political consensus began to be built during the 'Metapolitefsi' period after the fall of the military junta, and this was stabilized with PASOK's [Panhellenic Socialist Movement] rise to power. Thus, in the 1980s and 1990s, the social sphere was characterized by integration, stabilization, the organization of the welfare state, an increase in people's purchasing power, a general sense of wellbeing, and a belief in the need to rally around a plan for capitalist development and social stabilization. The media played a very important role in building the climate of consensus and unification of society, at least on a symbolic level, mediating between the

state and the citizen, supposedly representing the interests of the latter. Through newspaper pages and television images, consensus was reaffirmed on a regular basis through a mechanism of heterodetermination – a common internal enemy is formed, identified and targeted. The 'anarchists' and the 'extreme left', who refused to accept the demand for 'social peace', were one of the most convenient personifications of an anti-social 'enemy' presence (Tsoukalas, 1987, pp. 17-52; Logotheti, 2002, pp. 281-299).

What is most interesting, however, is not so much the broader historical context and the role played by these groups as a scapegoat, nor the case study of subcultural participation in the actions of the anarchist movement, but the interaction that existed and the development that grew from that interaction. Jimmis, an interviewee, described the situation in the area of Exarcheia in the mid 1980s:

I just want to tell you that in Exarcheia so many things were happening ... The Pegasus bar was originally the place where everything was learned ... You know everything ... How can I say it? It was like a tower where you could see everything that was happening in the area. (Interview with the author, 2010)

It was in these very meeting places (bars such as Pegasus, and later Phaethon, Vitovski, Allothi, Iris, Alligator, Elephant, Octana, record shops like Art Nouveau, Happening, Music Machine, Pilgrim), in a 'drunk' atmosphere, that the 'invisible networks of everyday life' were formed, a hinterland where the 'languages and grammars' of a movement began to rise (Melucci, 2002, pp. 110-111). This 'movement' was difficult to identify. It was horizontal, without visible hierarchies, it did not set any ultimate goal of seizing power, it did not address the 'masses', it did not present a clear ideological vision, nor did it act in the workplace, which means it did not include trade union demands. Colin Ward argues that active radical cultural groups (and, I would add, the individuals) do not 'fit into the framework of conventional politics' and they adopt principles of organization 'which they have learned not only from political theory but from their own experience' (Ward, 1996 [1973], pp. 137-138, cited in Donaghey, 2019, p. 446).

The actions of this movement had shifted to everyday life (or rather to the 'decolonization' of everyday life), to the field of the desire for 'spaces of

Figure 11:3 – An event marking 57 years since the beginning of the Spanish Revolution, at Villa Amalias July 1993. (Yannis N Kolovos' personal archive, photograph by Vagelis Zavos).

freedom', autonomous and insulated from the consumer standards that were increasingly diffused in the Greek society at that time. In other words, it was similar to the Autonomous movement in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s, an important aspect of which was the occupation of buildings for housing or the creation of 'social centers' (Katsiaficas, 2007, pp. 36-37, p. 379). At the same time, this undefined 'movement', housed in Exarcheia, saw no contradiction in the coexistence of a subcultural and a political identity – and, of course, music plays a major role in cultures of resistance, becoming the background from which resistance can spring (Donaghey, 2019, p. 447; Ballinger, 1995). Participating in a punk concert and clashes with the police (the so called 'bahalo' [mess]) were both often experienced in terms of a ritual. As Takis put it:

> We had sympathy for the rest of the people at Exarcheia because there were older guys, more mature than us, who had attended the movements abroad … the squatter movement, and they had transferred all those things here. Some squats started, like those at Harilaou Trikoupi Street, and later at Drosopoulou Street. To be honest, they weren't punk squats but there were always some punks involved, and from that point there was a participation of punks in such actions. (Interview with the author, 2009)

The main desire of the punk scene was to organize concerts, the basic ritual of the subculture. Without the periodic organization and performance of rituals (concerts), any scene formed around a musical subculture loses its purpose of existence. Until this point, the punk scene's ambition had been to exist through the 'temporary autonomous zones' (Bey, 1998) that were formed in the concerts (organized often in collaboration with the anti-authoritarian milieu as a benefit for prisoners and persecuted protesters, in the buildings of the nearby Polytechnic School), but it was now looking for permanent facilities for concerts. Towards the fulfilment of this goal they had contributed the know-how gained from both the domestic squatting experience (mainly of the Greek autonomes) and the experience of the wider European punk scenes' squatting movement.

At this point I should note that, for the most part, there was not much difference between the local autonomes and the anarchists, since both were

classified under the term 'o choros' [the milieu] (Metaxas, 2001; Kalamaras, 2013, p. 54), and this is what the most radical of the interviewees have in mind. For example, Takis in his comments above does not separate the Harilaou Trikoupi Street squat, mainly populated by autonomes (and the first punk squatters as well) from the anarchists at Drosopoulou Street squat. As Tsioumas argues, we can talk about a movement 'with many forms and tendencies, with differences [between the people involved] and disagreements' that 'remains a movement against capitalism and state authoritarianism' (Tsioumas, in Souzas, 2015, p. 7).

In 1989, the building of the Onassis Foundation on Amalias Avenue was occupied and, after the evacuation of the building by the special police forces, the group of squatters occupied the old Second High School for Boys at the corner of Acharnon and Heyden streets, at Victoria Square. Victoria Square was about a kilometer away from Exarcheia and the nearby area had been quite deprived. The young squatters decided to keep the initial name of the squat at Amalias Avenue. The famous Villa Amalias played a major role in the survival of the punk scene as a hangout, a temple of rituals, a center for the production of artifacts, a hub connecting with the punk scenes abroad, and a key point of inclusion in the scene – at least, that is what emerges from the life stories of all of my interviewees. As Anna exemplifies:

> If I say 'it was great' it would say very little about what was going on in Villa Amalias. It would not be enough … [laughing]. How was it? It is strange … I cannot describe it … I went there quite often, I should be able to describe it easily. How was it? … I don't know … There was a sense of camaraderie. How can I express it? Companionship? I don't know if I use the correct word … It was an open space, open to the outside world … They accepted everyone … It was inclusive … I don't think there was elitism or anything … They excluded no one. When they had a gig there was *so many* people gathered. It was the place you knew you could find all your friends and the people you knew hanging around somewhere there! (Interview with the author, 2009)

In this inclusive atmosphere, the participation, the DIY ethics, and the shaping of a culture (of resistance) created a space that was more than merely

**Figure 11:4: The Norwegian band
Stengte Dorer live at Villa Amalias,
1990. (Alex Zen's personal archive).**

**Figure 11:5 – The North Macedonian band Bernay's Propaganda
at a benefit gig for K Vox occupied social center, Polytechnic, 16th
of March 2013 (photograph by Yannis N Kolovos).**

symbolic. It was a community that promoted creativity, mutual aid, and non-alienated production of artifacts − a community that foreshadows the organization of a better society under the sounds of the playing bands! (Holtzman et al., 2007, pp. 44-45; Ballinger, 1995).

Figure 11:6 − The concert hall at Villa Amalias not long before the eviction, May 2012 (photograph by Yannis N Kolovos).

The extreme DIY ethos of the Greek punk scene

In the first years of its operation, Villa Amalias fulfilled the basic needs of the local punk scene in a similar way as social centers and squats do in other places. Some people lived there, a room was soon set up in the basement where bands rehearsed, a bar and a concert hall were set up, as well as a distro with records, demos, fanzines and books. They also bought sound equipment with the money they earned from the concerts, and for first time in their history the Athenian punks could organize gigs on their own without the bother of hiring a venue and the sound system equipment. They also had the opportunity to book bands from abroad.

Figure 11:7 – A two-day benefit event for Lelas Karagianni squat. The second day included a gig with three hardcore bands on the bill at the building of the Faculty of Law, University of Athens (photograph by Yannis N Kolovos).

In 1993, while the Athenian punk scene was going through the best phase of its history and having gained a decent place in the network of the international punk scene, the team organizing the concerts in Villa Amalias decided to exclude all bands that appeared simultaneously at commercial bars and clubs, no matter whether they were small- or large-scale enterprises. Prior to this, all the bands used to play in small clubs and bars like An Club in Exarcheia or Skiahtro (later Rock Palais) in Piraeus. The Villa Amalias crew also decided to exclude all the bands that released music with commercial record labels, including the small independents, despite this being

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common practice both in Greece and elsewhere (O'Connor, 2008). Thus, the bands that did not want to play exclusively at Villa Amalias and at benefit gigs, and the wider groups of fans around them, left the squat and the scene was divided into two parts (Souzas, 2015, pp. 295-305). It is no coincidence that all narrators describe the events with the term 'the schism'. It should be noted that the departed group of punks did not manage to create their own infrastructure and slowly degenerated. The interviewees from this side of 'the schism' admit that they gradually ceased to belong to the scene or that they maintained a rather faint, nostalgic connection with it. Yannis described the situation:

> When 'the schism' was started, the division between the bands and the squatted places … OK, initially there was a separation and I was one of those directly affected because my all friends were playing in the bands that were accused [of selling out]. It was unfair because most of these people had worked hard to organize Villa Amalias, they had supported the whole project … OK, there was a coldness in the atmosphere, but I kept in touch with the other side as well. We agreed that … we disagree! (Interview with the author, 2009)

As if that were not enough, at Villa Amalias the practice of charging admission fees for gigs came under question, and a little later the same issue was raised for the other artifacts produced by the punks. So they decided to put a box at the entrance of the concert hall, so that the audience could give a donation, not pay a specific amount, and they priced the records and the publications they produced in the same way (Villa Amalias, 2005). Stacy Thompson, who studied the financial networks of punk scenes, argues that 'punk is structured around a fundamental contradiction between an anticommercial impulse constitutive of punk and punks' necessary trafficking in the commodity market', and that as a result these underground, networked punk institutions 'are more socialized than their corporate counterparts' (Thompson, 2004, p. 81). That is, inside the subculture lie 'the seeds of a society in which collectives own the means of production and produce for non-commercial ends' (Thompson, 2004, p. 78). But, while the punk scenes of Europe and the US attempt to unite the local punk community around an independent network of economic activities (record

sales and concert organization) separate from the corporate world and the entertainment industry, in Greece the effort is to free the punk scene from the world of economy in general!

The response of the anarchist press had been ambiguous. Nikolaidis argues in the anarchist newspaper *Alpha* that this obsession with the anti-commercial ideal appears as a kind of ideology and 'a distribution of ideology, even without a price, clearly maintains the segregation and alienation, which means it belongs to the core of the commodity world, even if it claims to be its sworn enemy' (Nikolaidis, 1997, p. 5). The author implies that anti-commodity attempts remain ineffective if they are not directed against the transmitter and receiver roles, the separation between the band and its audience. Others praised the anti-commodity effort but argued that 'it could lead to a practice that perpetuates both artistic poverty and an audience of [mere] fans', and the risk of ghettoizing the movement (Hobo, 2008, p. 27) – this is a concern repeated by other scholars of cultures of resistance (Donaghey, 2019, p. 448), while others express a completely positive view (G. An., 1993). I will therefore try to explain this interesting phenomenon.

Following the unexpected commercial success of albums such as Nirvana's *Nevermind* (1991), Green Day's *Dookie* (1994), and those by other bands that had emerged from the punk scene, the major record labels tried to catch the next big hit by searching the local scenes of US cities. The same was done by the big Greek record labels after the success of the indie bands Trypes and Xylina Spathia. Punk had been a highlight in the programming of MTV and many of the newcomers to the subculture in Greece had a completely different mentality and aesthetic to the older punks. For them it was not so important to keep the scene 'underground' (Moore, 2010, pp. 114-117, pp. 142-151). After all, the whole of Greek society had changed. The petit bourgeois ethics of their parents' generation was gone – no more 'working from six in the morning to ten at night to bring food home, pay the bills and finance the education of their children', as Yorgos puts it; the new 'success story' of the consumer society that was projected in the lifestyle magazines (interview with the author, 2009). In fact, Greek society entered fully into the phase of unbridled consumerism in the 1990s.

> When to enter a fashionable club you need to be dressed in clothes
> that cost 50,000 drachmas. When to enter the club you have to be

approved by a bouncer dressed in a suit. When you have the Artisti Italiani logo as a flag. When you wonder what do I do here? When everyone discovers that there's big profit in the Greek independent music scene. When the revolution is sold in the newspaper kiosks. (*Thermokípio*, c. 1993, p. 2)

What I am arguing is that the Greek punk scene followed an extreme version of 'DIY ethics' because the wider social context had adopted an extreme model of consumerism (Bozinis, 2008, p. 448). The scene wanted to oppose this by attacking the rise of consumerist representations promoted by the media, and their indiscriminate acceptance by Greek society. In the 1990s, punks revolted not against the petty bourgeoisie but against consumerism. There were some major changes to the anarchists' agenda as well.

Punk or anarchist: that is the question!

At about the same time as the punk-specific 'schism', the wider political milieu of Exarcheia started leaving the area, forming a new nuclei in the suburbs of Athens. The mood of Exarcheia as an autonomous zone was dissolving. We can find the causes of this departure in the events of the so-called 'Polytechnic of '95'. A large group of anarchists occupied the Polytechnic on the occasion of the twenty-second anniversary of the famous 17th of November occupation and as a support action to an uprising in Korydalos prison. The invasion by the Police Counter-riot Forces (Monades Apokatastasis Taxis – MAT), with the subsequent arrest of a total of 526 people, the trials, harsh penalties, and all kinds of other pressures, was considered by many in the anti-authoritarian milieu as a hard defeat (Autodiachirizomeno Steki Ano Kato Patision, 2007; Logotheti, 2002; Kolovos, 2013, pp. 238-240. For a more optimistic point of view see Anarchiki Archeiothiki, 2011). At this juncture Villa Amalia's role changed and became more central at a symbolic level. The building was located in an area now inhabited by immigrants, while groups of neo-Nazis (mainly members and sympathizers of Chrysí Avgí [Golden Dawn]) were trying to control the urban space. There was also a need to support the squat and to defend the building

Figure 11:8 – A happening at Autodiahirizomeno Parko Navarinou, an occupied park at Exarcheia, 2012 (photograph by Yannis N Kolovos).

against the attacks by fascists, which began to intensify. However, many of those who frequented the space felt that the operation of Villa Amalias was becoming more political and less subcultural. The concerts were becoming increasingly rare. As Aris recalled:

> What was happening at the time [in the second half of the 1990s] was this: There were the musicians from the bands and there were also the publishers of the fanzines. There was direct communication between these two groups. There were also the people around … And all this was what we call 'the scene', which expressed a political discourse. The scene had formed a culture that had political characteristics, but without being identified with the anarchist milieu, which gradually happened. It's like what had happened with the

lefties – art ended up serving the purposes of politics. What had happened? In my opinion two things had happened: First the anarchist milieu made demands. They wanted to adapt the scene to ideology. This was mainly expressed by an anti-commodity logic. Then came the onslaught of alternative lifestyles and the so-called alternative press, like the *Athens Voice*. (Interview with the author, 2009)

In other cases we have examples of a clear contradiction between the desires of the punk scene and the mentality of political activism, as Eleni exemplifies:

A concert was organized at the Polytechnic by the bands themselves – Chasma, Kill The Cat and, I think, Valpourgia Nichta were on the bill … It wasn't a benefit for some political prisoners, let's say – the usual purpose of organizing concerts at the Polytechnic. They just wanted to do a gig at the Polytechnic, somewhere beyond Villa [Amalias]. And during the concert some guys, even some friends of ours, started a riot. I experienced this as if they ignored us, as if we were being invisible. They said that … there was no serious purpose to this concert! As if to say only the support of some prisoners is a serious reason for a concert to take place? (Interview with the author, 2010)

My research has shown that many who belonged to the scene exceeded their subcultural affiliation and connected in a more coherent way with political groups. The majority, however, wanted to maintain an increased degree of autonomy and individuality. Simply put, if you were to remove the music, the scene as an entity would disappear. Politics, in the traditional sense, could not be separated from the subculture, nor could the subculture be subordinated to politics. As Jimmis, one of the older punks of the scene, says:

I do not want any characterization, okay? No label on me. No punk, no anarchist, nothing. I'm Jimmis and I want people to see Jimmis when they look at me.

Elsewhere in his narration, Jimmis recalls an incident that occurred not long before the interview. As it turns out, he maintains the spirit of the early punks as defenders of marginalized groups and, of course, as *individuals* who resist state violence.

> I'm in Omonia Square and there are some cops who have caught a guy. The guy must have been a junkie but that doesn't matter. And I have the camera … Because I'm a photographer … So I pick it up and go to photograph the incident. As soon as they saw the camera, the cops calmed down. The guy was grabbed by the throat. A cop comes and asks me: 'What are you? A journalist?' … Eventually they set him free ... They would have hit the guy hard!

As Jim Donaghey argues:

> It is readily conceded that early punk lacked a coherent political ideology, but its oppositional elements are clear. Punk was repressed as a threat to the establishment and as a result punk *identified itself* as a threat to the state, the government, the police, the church, the monarchy, capitalism, and mainstream mass culture. This resistance to hierarchical domination … looks very much like a nascent anarchism. (Donaghey, 2013, p. 159)

In fact, none of the informants of this research joined the conventional political system. No one was associated with any political Party, while in key events, such as the assassination of fifteen-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos, who was shot by a cop in Exarcheia in December 2008, many took to the streets again, reliving the events that followed the assassination of fifteen-year-old Michalis Kaltezas in 1985 (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2011). Some overcame their period of unemployment during the financial crisis of the 2010s by forming a band and going to concerts. After all, they knew how to make ends meet with minimal financial means, a skill that the rest of society that had grown up at the height of the consumerist dream had lost.

Villa Amalias was evicted at the end of 2012, but the symbolic weight of this project and all that was imprinted in the memory of the informants of

this research underlines the importance that the punk scene played in the history of Athens. After all, there's no real sense in the dilemma 'punk or anarchist'. If we try to accurately describe what had been done in the context of the punk scene and the anarchist movement, we should probably emphasize that a whole constellation of dozens of social centers and other similar projects ('stekia') was created throughout the cities of Athens, Thessalonica, Volos, Kavala, Chania, Ionnina, Agrinio and other places in Greece. It was a new kind of hinterland of the movement (Autonomo Steki, 2008, pp. 5-9; Kalamaras, 2017. For a full catalogue of these projects see the Prapopoulou website). A special mention should be given to Leschi Ipogios (later known as Pirama K94) and Katarameno Syndromo (later Idrima 214), two underground self-managed venues that are still organizing gigs almost every week! These meeting points may be considered the heritage of the cohabitation between the punk scene and the anti-authoritarian milieu, empowered by the needs and desires of everyday life. It's the privatization of politics and the politicization of personal life at the same time.

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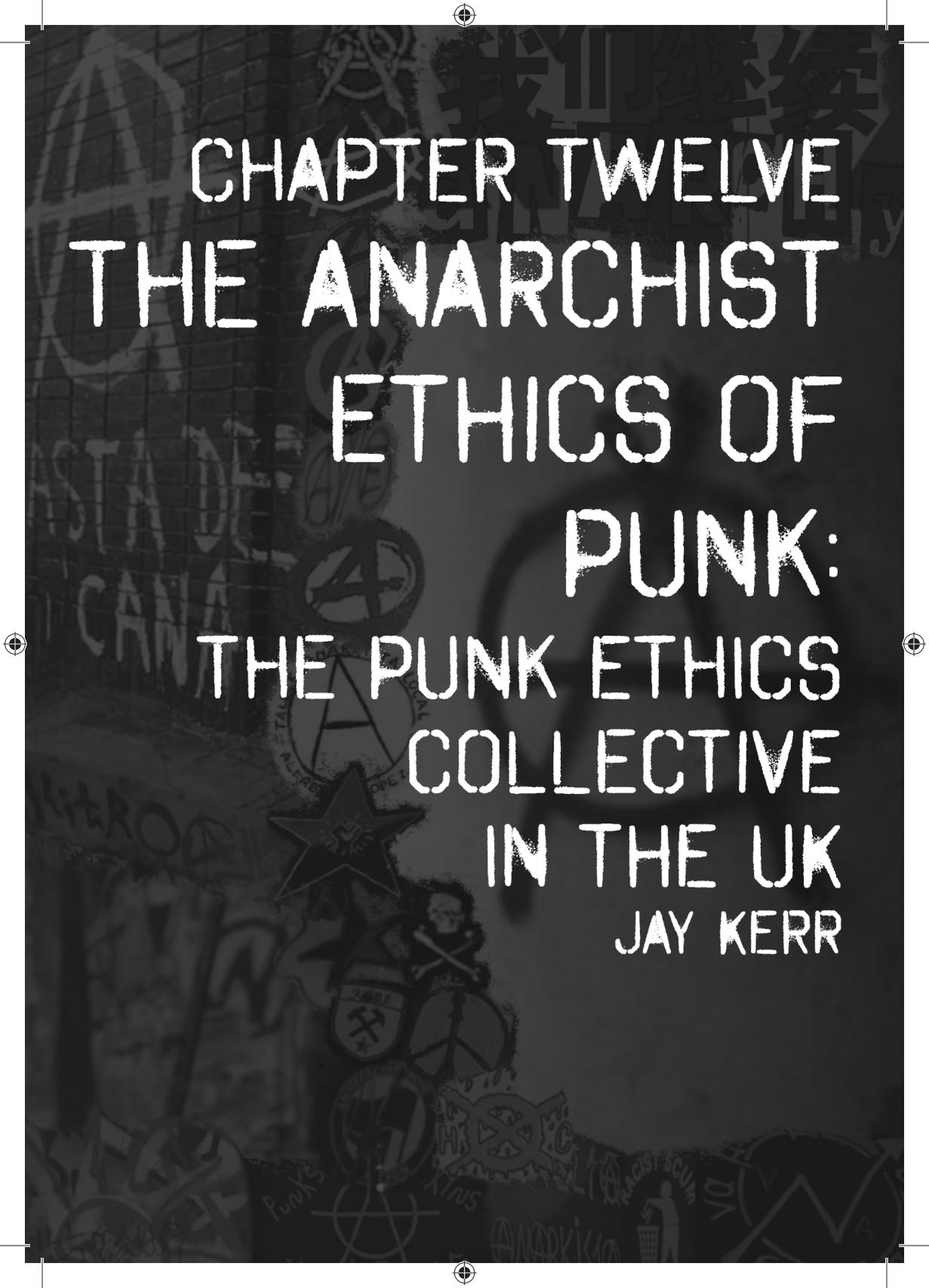
CHAPTER TWELVE

THE ANARCHIST ETHICS OF PUNK:

THE PUNK ETHICS COLLECTIVE IN THE UK

JAY KERR

Chapter Twelve: The anarchist ethics of punk: The Punk Ethics collective in the UK

Jay Kerr

If there is a set of ethics that underpins punk, then it is an *anarchist* ethics. Punk is a broad church – a movement that has evolved over four-and-a-half decades to encompass many takes on the musical form, the fashion and dress code, and the overall punk subculture. But if you look at the punk scenes that have consistently been revived and renewed with each generation, you can see strands of anarchism woven into them all. Punk is a patchwork of many different threads. Anarcho-punk is a thread that explicitly linked the political philosophy of anarchism to punk's original rebellion against mainstream society – what Johnny Rotten took as a playful lyric piquing the status quo, Crass pushed through as a core element of punk, and that has had a lasting legacy well beyond the bounds of that particular thread in the patchwork.

Let's dismiss the dehumanising ideologies of so-called 'right wing punk' and set aside commercial punk (those few instances when a punk band has been swept up in the capitalist music industry and elevated to the heights of stadium gigs and corporate sponsorship), to focus instead on the grassroots level, on the punk scenes that exist around the world. Here, we see punk in action and the activities that go into the life of a 'scene'. From benefit gigs to squatted centres, from band T-shirts to DIY record labels, punk in action has commonality around the world, a shared resistance to the status quo that manifests itself as 'punk culture'. There is an ethics at play here – moral principles that are shared by punk individuals and collectives from country to country that guide the actions that make up a punk scene, regardless of the adjectives that may be tacked on. Closer examination shows that the ethics at play and the actions that manifest them are the same as can be found historically in anarchism, both in terms of the philosophy and in action. Long before the emergence of the modern youth cultures that punk stems from, the revolutionary anarchist movement was engaged in similar activities as part of their own resistance to the status quo. The threads that make up the

patchwork of punk seem to have an anarchist ethics woven in, while the fabric itself seems to be sewn from a thread whose strand can be traced back through the history of the anarchist movement.

To explore this theory, this chapter will focus on a punk collective in London, which I am involved in, called Punk Ethics – a loose-knit group of friends who have been responsible for a number of different actions and campaigns in the local and global punk scene. Punk Ethics as a group has never identified as an anarcho-punk or 'anarchist punk' collective, and while this was not a conscious decision in the sense of being agreed at a meeting or discussed by those involved, it has led to the group avoiding preconceptions that come with the label and being able to engage with the wider punk scene. But, while not explicitly calling itself anarchist, and while involving people who would not all identify as anarchists, each of the events, campaigns and projects that Punk Ethics have coordinated do in fact resonate with aspects of anarchist theory and can be traced to similar events, campaigns and projects that have appeared throughout the history of the anarchist movement. In identifying this anarchist thread, we'll look at four main themes: a rejection of capitalist appropriation of countercultural movements; direct action as a means of propaganda; promotion of workers' organising to overcome exploitation; and organising international solidarity campaigns for individuals facing persecution. All these themes are part of a rich anarchist history, but each will be presented through the experience of a punk collective that doesn't outwardly promote anarchism, and in doing so we'll be able to identify the anarchist ethics of punk.

Rejecting corporate appropriation – the BrewDog campaign

The idea that a capitalist company would try to make money by appropriating the style of an anti-capitalist counterculture or musical subgenre is nothing new. Kropotkin, typifying the classical anarchist approach, opposed capitalism as the 'bane of present society … [a] stumbling-block in the path of intellectual and moral progress' (2012 [1906], p. 87). But, as Murray Bookchin wrote when reflecting on the (at least partially) anarchist-informed US counterculture of the 1960s: 'business, ever on the lookout for

new commercial opportunities, used bits and pieces of the counterculture to its profit' (Bookchin, 1986 [1971], p. 37). Capitalism has a way of monetising everything, and the artefacts of any counterculture – clothing, music, literature – are easy to commodify. But when that appropriation extends to taking the essence of a counterculture, the very name of it, and applying it to something else entirely, and then going even further by claiming legal ownership over it, well, then we get into a whole new territory. Any punk who first saw the beer Punk IPA on tap at their local pub reacted with either excitement or revulsion, or most likely a little of both. Beer, while not an essential ingredient, is undoubtedly a significant part of punk scenes around the world. So, to see a beer that hi-jacks the punk identity will inevitably cause an emotional reaction, all the more so when the hi-jackers abuse that identity, as was the case with the brewery, BrewDog.

It's easy to brush off BrewDog's appropriation of the term 'punk' as just another corporate attempt to make money using the status of a

Figure 12:1 – Deek from Oi Polloi at Trespass, on the beach of the River Thames 2015 (photograph by Pawel Dziurawiec).

counterculture. If you cared to dig a little deeper there is even a backstory of how the founders wanted to revolutionise the beer industry in the same way punk did with the music industry, hence the choice of the name Punk IPA for their first beer. This would all have been tolerable, perhaps, but then news broke of a legal action being taken over the word 'punk'. BrewDog had started out as an independent craft beer company that, with some slick marketing, had quickly become hugely successful, subsequently selling a multi-million-dollar stake to a US-based private equity firm, making the company worth over £1 billion. At around the same time, a music promoter in Leeds, a city in the north of England, announced they were opening a bar called Draft Punk, a cheeky play on the name of the dance band Daft Punk. They soon received a cease-and-desist letter from BrewDog's lawyers. The company that had wanted to revolutionise the beer industry, and who had appropriated the punk aesthetic for its own financial gain, was now claiming legal ownership over the word 'punk' itself. BrewDog had registered 'punk' as a trademark for food and beverages and argued that the planned Draft Punk bar in Leeds was an infringement on that trademark. The legal disputes between two capitalist enterprises are of little interest to anyone in the actual punk scene. However, what *is* of interest is the potential implication of this dispute. A billion-dollar corporation, that had effectively appropriated punk for its own commercial gain, was now attempting to stop others from using the word. Arguably, this is only a short step from becoming an attack on the punk scene itself. What is to stop a corporation sending threatening legal letters to punk promoters organising punk concerts or festivals? If BrewDog were to branch out into the music business, might it send cease-and-desist letters to independent labels putting out punk records?

What was to be done?

The reaction of most punks who heard the news of BrewDog's legal action was to scoff at these 'cheeky bastards'. Punk Ethics decided to go a little further and create a mischievous piece of activism in response. Joining forces with a few different DIY promoters across a broad spectrum of punk music, a call went out to for bands to sign an open letter – punk was sending its own (mock) cease-and-desist letter to BrewDog.

'It has recently been brought to our attention', the letter began, 'that you are claiming legal ownership of the word "punk"', before stating in no uncertain terms that 'you are not, in fact, the owners of the word "punk", we

are!' The letter's mocking tone took the moral high ground and spoke down to the punk-wannabe corporation, metaphorically tugging the cheek of BrewDog. It continued: 'Some sections of our global punk family have even welcomed you for your refreshing beer … the "no animal by-products used" went down especially well with some of our more radical brothers and sisters … but then your Equity for Punks investment portfolio did raise some eyebrows'. The letter went on to condemn the legal threats and called-out the company for becoming a bully. (Indeed, in June 2021 it emerged that the bullying tactics of BrewDog had become endemic in its workplace culture, when a group of ex-employees came together to write their own open letter to the brewery to denounce a 'culture of fear' in the company (Punks With Purpose, 2021)). In a final swipe at the very 'un-punk' nature of their actions, the Punk Ethics letter said, '[i]f you continue in this vein your punk credentials will be revoked and you will be called upon to cease and desist' (Punk Ethics, 2017). The letter was signed by over 200 punk bands, labels and promoters from around the world, from the US to Argentina, from the UK to Japan. Beyond the tongue-in-cheek tone, the fact that some of the signatories were from countries where BrewDog was not yet sold showed just how seriously punks took the appropriation of their subculture. They all knew the power of corporations and their legal teams, everywhere around the world they had all heard stories of the corporations 'fucking over the little guy'. BrewDog's legal threats against someone setting up a bar with the word punk in the name brought it all a little too close to home, and the punks decided to take action.

Let's not kid ourselves here – this wasn't a revolutionary moment, it was a sarcastic letter, but it was symbolic of the political potential inherent in punk. Everyone involved in that letter is part of a grassroots community that spans the globe. No one signed the letter because they were paid to, no one signed because they thought it would further their careers. They took action because they were moved by a community spirit and sense of solidarity when confronted with the sight of capital and the legal system being used to bully, and it was being done over a word that belongs to that global community – 'punk'. The mock legalese and appealing to the corporation to see sense might not be an anarchist act in strict terms, but it is imbued with the anti-corporate stance that DIY/grassroots punk is known for, and it is arguably the influence of anarcho-punk in the late 1970s and early 1980s that led to this stance.

Other music genres and youth subcultures are unlikely to take such an organised stand, but in the decades since the anarcho-punk heyday, the whole scene has been rooted in this rejection of the corporate takeover of their subculture. No one expects to stop individual bands, labels or promoters from riding the gravy train of the corporate music industry, though cries of 'sell out' are often heard when a band becomes more commercial, cries that are always made with a deeply felt sese of betrayal. But such blatant capitalist appropriation of punk met immediate resistance because an anarchist ethics runs through the subculture, regardless of the adjectives that might be added.

Direct action as a means of propaganda – the Trespass campaign

The rejection of corporate appropriation resonates with wider revolutionary and countercultural movements, but the tactic of direct action is firmly and specifically rooted in anarchist philosophy and practice. It is the idea of taking action into your own hands, and not waiting for permission. The do-it-yourself ethos that has been with punk since the start is a form of direct action, but it is taken even further when reacting against authority. The American anarchist, Voltairine de Cleyre wrote:

> Every person who ever had a plan to do anything, and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct actionist. (de Cleyre, 1911, n.p.)

Originally focused on encouraging workers to take action for themselves through strikes, sabotage, and boycotts (as opposed to the politicking of Parties, parliaments and voting), 'direct action' has expanded over time to include invading military bases or taking over universities, squatting in houses or occupying factories (Walter, 2002 [1969], p. 88). Punk has long had connections to the squatting movement and been associated with many of these other expressions of direct action. When Punk Ethics set up a concert on the beach of the River Thames, it was more than just a concert – it was an attempt to reclaim a public space, a direct action that in addition to its there-

and-then manifestation also highlighted the corporate takeover and gentrification of London.

It all started with a comedian. Mark Thomas, well known in the UK for his political stunts, organised a march of about 200 people along the Thames path, down the north bank from Tower Bridge to an unremarkable looking office building on St. Katherine's Way called Devon House. With the confidence of someone who has pulled these kinds of stunts for many years, Mark pressed the intercom and asked to be let in. The door buzzed and the crowd peacefully filed their way through the glass entrance and into the lobby. Some volunteers in yellow vests quickly started ushering people through the foyer and out onto the veranda, instructing everyone to take a seat. It was a well-organised feat of direct action. On a sunny, summer's day on the riverside patio of an office building looking out on Tower Bridge, an impromptu comedy gig took place. This was *Trespass*. The idea was a series of actions to reclaim public spaces from corporations and private interest groups

that had encroached on public land. Mark Thomas had found that all across the country, and especially in London, spaces owned by the public are gradually being lost to corporate ownership or private control. This particular office building had become the scene of an occupation by comedy activists because it was built on public land. As Mark explained from his makeshift stage, a bench normally used by lunching office workers, the place where they were sitting was once part of the Thames walk and was legally in public ownership, but in the late 1980s a developer was given the right to build on this section of the walk with the stipulation that the public could have access to the riverside. A courtyard was built and a small sign placed on the entrance stating that members of the public wishing to access the courtyard needed to press the intercom to be let in. Normally there would be a receptionist offering a small element of security at the entrance (no doubt discouraging the riff raff), but on this occasion the desk was empty as the crowd piled through the lobby, and whoever was on the other end of the buzzer was clearly not paying much attention when they opened the doors. The receptionist's sleepy Saturday afternoon had turned into something else entirely when they returned to their post to find the empty veranda now packed with 200 people, all sitting quietly listening to a man standing on a bench making a speech.

This act of taking over a public space inspired another piece of direct action by the punk scene. As part of Mark's set at Devon House he had talked of having a barbecue on the Thames foreshore, the beach that appears at low tide, and how the Thames beach was another example of public land that needed to be used and enjoyed as much as possible in order to keep it in public ownership. Mark closed the show by passing around cake encouraging everyone to take up their own acts of Trespass.

Bring on the punks.

A few months later, in September 2015, the Punk Ethics collective teamed up with Dissident Sound Industry Studio to set up a punk gig on the beach of the Thames and reclaim that public space in the loudest way possible. Donning high-viz vests to make easier the process of hiking a PA unit and musical equipment through the throng of tourists on the Southbank undisturbed, a stage was cobbled together from pallets and old wooden panels, before some 500 punks descended on the beach to hear the sounds of Oi Polloi and Flowers of Flesh and Blood, while Mark Thomas compered the show. 'What the ruling class forget', Mark told the crowd between bands:

is that cities are not buildings, they are the people within them. All around us our city is being taken away by corporations, all around us it is being gentrified, all around us it is being taken from us, and we have to take it back … This city was made by working people, and it has to look after its people. We've got to a stage where this has become an alien landscape to so many people that we have to fight for it blade of grass by blade of grass, paving stone by paving stone, we have to fight for it grain of sand by grain of sand. (Thomas, in Ford and Double, 2016)

The Trespass gig wasn't unique, Reclaim the Beach parties with large sound systems and inspired by the free party scene had popped up along the Thames throughout the 2000s, but it was historic. It was the first time a full, unlicensed concert had taken place on the beach of the River Thames.

Figure 12:3 – No Sweat T-shirt made in a factory set up by survivors of Rana Plaza (credit: No Sweat).

Trespass was a reclaiming of public space and it was an example of punk direct action. That day people came together and occupied a space in the centre of the largest city in the UK, an area that is surrounded by private interests and corporate investments. In the spirt of de Cleyre, we had a plan and we went and did it, without asking for permission from external authorities. It was a special moment that gave everyone there a sense of active participation in the event. The audience wasn't simply made up of passive observers of a punk gig – they were accomplices in a spontaneous protest. Songs were sung that denounced the system, speeches were made about the gentrification of our city, and for a few hours a spotlight on the issue was shone for everyone involved and witnessed too by the throng of tourists that gathered along the riverbank. What's more, the direct action of the punks became a platform for local campaigners too, as the microphone was given over to the Stop the Garden Bridge campaign. They told the crowd of an unwanted bridge planned to be built on the very spot we'd occupied, spending huge amounts of public money to destroy part of the Southbank walkway and ultimately hand over public access to corporate control, all in honour of the late Princess Diana, peddled by celebrities and corporations, and sanctioned by the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson.

The Trespass gig is another example of the anarchist ethics inherent in punk. Without being explicitly anarchist, punks took inspiration from the anarchist concept of direct action and applied it in their own way, occupying a space and organising a punk concert, which also worked as a form of protest that brought attention to the creeping loss of public space in our cities.

Workers organising to overcome exploitation – the Punks Against Sweatshops campaign

A sweatshop is modern day, or post-modern day, slavery. (Jord Samolesky (Propagandhi), in Ford and Kerr, 2019)

The *Punks Against Sweatshops* film and campaign was long overdue and has struck a chord in punk scenes across the world. In a seven-minute film, Punk Ethics pulled together voices from across the generations of punk to create a united chorus that said, 'we need to do better when it comes to our T-shirts'.

As described above, direct action is an inherently anarchist tactic, and this has been very often manifested in workers' organising (with all the provisos for the 'anti-work' strands of anarchism out there). Anarchism's connection to workers' rights movements and the sweatshop system has a long history. The word 'sweat-shop' itself is a Victorian word for a workshop or factory where the labour is *sweated out* of the worker through long hours and harsh conditions, and historically, anarchists were early participants in campaigns against this super-exploitation in workplaces. Anarchist organiser and orator Emma Goldman worked in a sweatshop when she first arrived in the US from Lithuania in the late 1800s and cut her teeth as a radical standing up to the sweatshop bosses. Her close comrade, Alexander Berkman, organised sweatshop workers in New York with the first Jewish anarchist group in the US, the Pioneers of Liberty. Similarly, in London, Rudolf Rocker organised Jewish sweatshop workers in the city's East End in the early 1900s. In his memoirs on this period, Rocker recalls anarchists organising 'public meetings to show the victims of the sweatshop system how they could improve their lot by fighting for it through the organisation of their own forces' (Rocker, 2005 [1956], p. 54). Anarchists are known to have worked in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York that burned down in 1911 in a notoriously deadly garment factory disaster. With fire escapes in the building locked by the owners to avoid unregulated breaks, workers were trapped in the inferno. 146 workers, mostly young, migrant women, died either from smoke inhalation or by jumping out of windows.

More than 100 years on, these conditions persist. In the West, as unions have won incremental gains in health and safety, wages and paid holiday, incidents like the Triangle fire are rare, but with the rise of multinational corporations, garment manufacturing has been outsourced to poorer countries in the Global South as a means to maximise profits for shareholders. In countries like Bangladesh, wages are low and working conditions are often poor. This makes the clothes much cheaper to produce but deadly factory incidents are far too common. In 2012, the Tazreen factory fire in Bangladesh killed 117 workers – when workers tried to escape, they found the emergency exits locked. In Pakistan, in 2015, a garment factory and a shoe factory in separate cities caught fire on the same day, killing a total of 289 workers. Reports of the victims found behind locked fire escapes and others jumping out of upper floor windows are reminiscent of reports from New York a

hundred years earlier. And then there was the Rana Plaza, the worst garment factory disaster in history. On the 24th of April 2013, 1,134 people were crushed to death when a multi-storey building housing several garment factories collapsed. The death toll shocked the world, and in the rubble were found the labels of Western brands. These are just some of the worst and most tragic examples. Smaller incidents, that are less deadly and therefore less newsworthy, happen in garment factories around the world. Beyond the perils of the workshops themselves, the ill treatment of workers (abuse, restricted breaks, forced overtime, sexual harassment) has been reported throughout the industry all over the world, even in Europe and the United States. Sweatshop conditions are rife throughout the garment industry.

T-shirts are a prominent aspect of punk production – every band prints their logo or their album artwork on a T-shirt and sells it at their shows to make some income. Whether it's a group of teenagers just starting out selling Tees to help build a fund for the band, or a group like Green Day selling out stadiums around the world and making millions of dollars in merch sales, every show has a stall selling band T-shirts. But the fact is that with the prevalence of unsafe conditions, low wages, and poor treatment of workers in the garment industry, it's very likely that the T-shirt that you have printed your band logo on, or bought from the merch stall at a punk show, was made in a sweatshop.

Should punks care?

Well, if we return to the conception of punk as a 'broad church' there are definitely some people in the punk scene that won't care, and there are some that might even try to argue that sweatshops are a good thing. As Alex from Wonk Unit mockingly put it in the campaign film: 'They're earning … without the sweatshops they'd be begging in the streets' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). But, as Alex soberly goes on to say: 'It doesn't matter. The fact is you're exploiting these people' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). Therein lies the root of the issue. In the film, Sara from the band Miserable Wretch, who happens to be an economist in her day job, points out that free market economics argues that people in developing countries cannot get better work than sweatshops, so they shouldn't be regulated or they could become unprofitable. In other words, better wages and safer conditions makes things more expensive, so the multi-national corporations that buy from these factories will lose money and choose to source from elsewhere. Their argument, as Sara puts it, is to 'leave

Figure 12:4 – The Rebel Riot UK tour was captured in a documentary, *No Spicy No Fun – Rebel Riot in the UK* (Bononi and Ford, 2021).
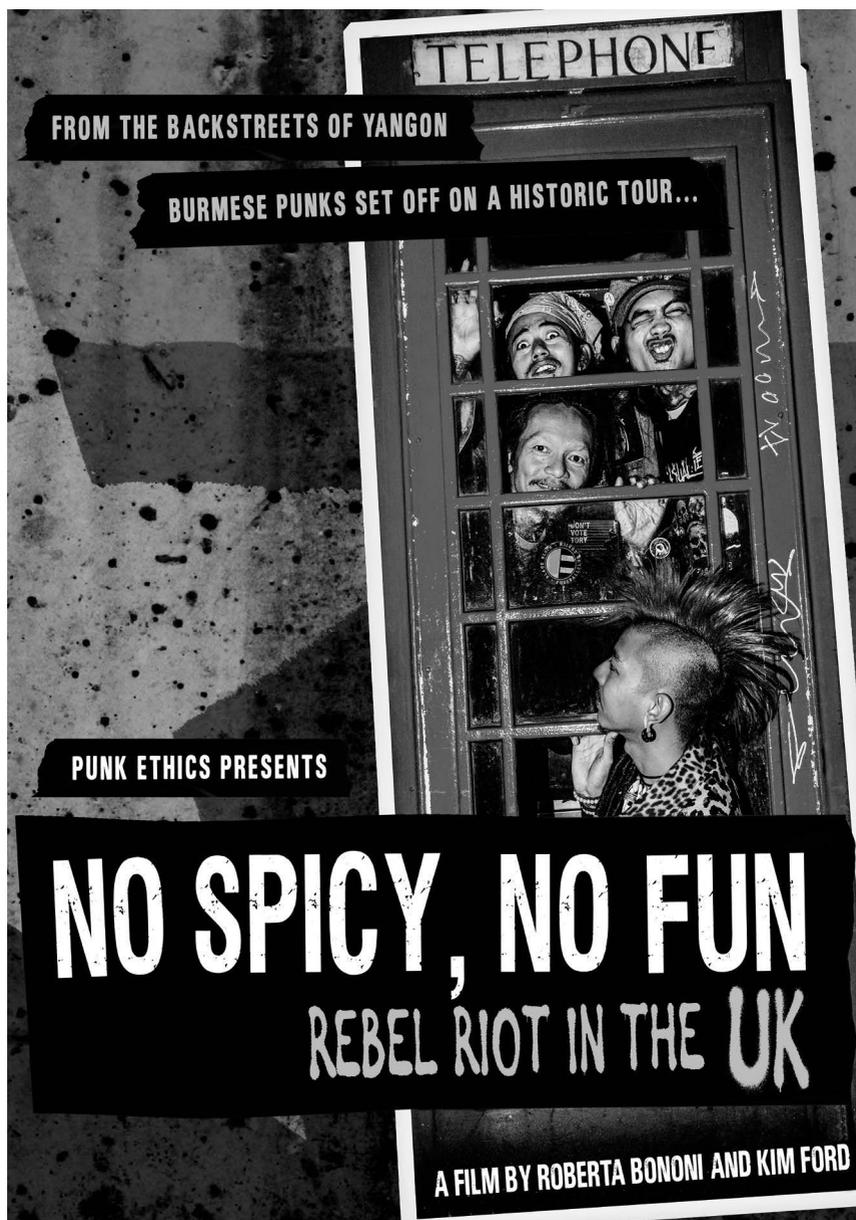
private capital to do what it does and everything will be peachy', and, regardless of the human suffering, sweatshops should continue exploiting people. But, as Sara sums up in true punk fashion, 'I think that's clearly bollocks' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019).

Whether you agree that punk has an inherently anarchist ethic or not, it is a far stretch to suggest that any punk would condone exploitation of people, and even of children, and still be able to call themselves 'punk'. Punk was born out of a rejection of society's hierarchies, a desire to stick two fingers up at the status quo, to tell your schoolteacher or your boss to fuck off! This anti-authoritarianism has permeated through punk in the song lyrics and the fashion. In the *Punks Against Sweatshops* film, Deek from Oi Polloi identifies the main problem that the campaign sought to address: 'You might have some band selling T-shirts with some slogan about workers' rights – "Fuck the Bosses, Smash Capitalism". And it's on a commercially produced T-shirt, it's a complete contradiction' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). It's not only dyed-in-the-wool anarchist punks like Oi Polloi making that point, Ren from Petrol Girls highlights the fact that most sweatshop workers are women, and so points out that 'you can't be in a feminist band and support the exploitation of women through the use of sweatshops' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). Jello Biafra says that he opposed the use of the Dead Kennedys' song 'Holiday in Cambodia' being used in a Levis advert because of their links to sweatshops: 'Can I live with myself if I'm getting money or putting my name on stuff while the people who are making it are being treated horribly?' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). In some ways it can be argued, as Ren does, that we're all 'upholding the capitalist system' and that 'the punk scene acts as its own mini-capitalist system' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019), which is absolutely true – it's impossible to live outside of the capitalist system we are all in. But, as Ren goes on to say, 'further supporting exploitation within that system is pretty bleak' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019).

So, what is the solution? There is an obvious need to source T-shirts ethically, to start putting the slogans into action and stop handing over money to the corporations responsible for workers' exploitation. However, this is a basic step, and leans into a consumerist notion that we can somehow change the world through shopping. If the film had ended on that note we'd be talking about the *liberal* ethics of punk. Instead, all the contributors came to the argument that more needed to be done, that in taking the action of

sourcing ethically, the punk scene needed to stand in solidarity with the workers who actually make the clothes as well, and that an ethical T-shirt isn't just about workers being treated nicely. 'A decent minimum wage, regulation of hours', Sara, the punk economist, stresses, 'and, really importantly, a recognition that workers have the right to organise' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). *The right to organise*. It is this that separates the punk response from liberal ideas of ethical fashion. A growing number of commercial brands are talking about sustainability, coming up with new ideas for the next eco-conscious range, but they are silent about their workers being organised. 'We're down with the unions, aren't we' affirms Alex, the Wonk Unit singer, pre-empting Ren's more pronounced view that 'unions are a really important source of power in terms of challenging the bosses' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). 'Places that are not just sweatshop-free but union as well' Jello declared (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). For the Punks Against Sweatshops campaign, the solution to the sweatshop problem is independent trade unions. The connection between the punk and trade union movements is an area worthy of further investigation, but it is a well recognised phenomenon that people who are politicised by punk often go on to take part in campaign groups for various social causes, and trade union activities are undoubtedly among them (see for example Forman, 2014; Donaghey, 2016, p. 57, pp. 194-196). In punk music there are numerous examples of pro-union punk songs, from the Angelic Upstarts rendition of the English folk song 'Blackleg Miner' (1984) or the Dropkick Murphy's countless references to union workers, such as 'Do or die' (1997) or 'Which side are you on?' (2000). The anarchist movement has a long history of involvement in trade unions. We've already referred to Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Rudolf Rocker, but on a much larger scale in France, Germany and Spain anarchist unions were a force to be reckoned with in the first half of the twentieth century. While there are important differences between the militancy of Spain's massive anarchist union of the 1910s to 1930s, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT – National Confederation of Labour) and Crass's slogan of 'Anarchy and Peace' in the late 1970s, it is not hard to follow the thread that runs from the historical anarchist movement in the time of Bakunin and Kropotkin and its eclipse in 1939, to anarchism's revival and impact on the counterculture in the 1960s, which in turn influenced the punk explosion of the 1970s, developing into an explicitly anarchist expression of punk with Crass and the bands that followed them in

the 1980s. Anarchist sentiments are still held by punks decades later, even in the new generation breaking through with bands like Petrol Girls, Miserable Wretch and countless others that may not have appeared in the film but who have joined the Punks Against Sweatshops campaign since the film's release. It is an anarchist ethics that is embedded in punk culture that, as each generation comes up, is carried with it, as each generation develops their own take on what it means to be *punk*.

The Punks Against Sweatshops campaign set out to start a conversation about where band T-shirts in the punk scene come from, questioning the hypocrisy of singing about freedom while perpetuating exploitation, and looking at how we can make a change. In this, Punk Ethics joined forces with the anti-sweatshop campaign group, No Sweat, that builds solidarity with workers groups around the world in support of sweatshop workers and sources T-shirts from a factory in Bangladesh set up by the survivors of Rana Plaza – these T-shirts fund the unions on the ground fighting sweatshop labour. Our aim was to build a movement in the global punk scene with bands actively taking a stand on the issue and helping No Sweat to build an alternative to the greenwashing 'ethical fashion' that is becoming so common. While accepting that punk bands have to sell merch to make some much needed cash to put out a new record, or even just to get the van to the next gig, Punk Ethics pushed the idea that not only can you do it ethically, but you can act in solidarity with the workers in the sweatshops where the world's clothes are being made. It is just a matter of taking action. As Deek pointed out, 'this is what all the bands are singing about, all the people who come along to the gigs are singing along and shouting for this stuff, so it's time to put our money where our mouths are' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019). Finally, Steve Ignorant summed the whole campaign up by adapting his iconic 1979 Crass song 'Do They Owe Us a Living?' to ask 'do we owe sweatshop workers a living? Of course we fucking do!' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019).

International punk solidarity

Solidarity with sweatshop workers is part of the international solidarity that is an integral part of anarchism, and equally an integral part of the global punk scene. The notion of solidarity appears constantly throughout anarchist literature and, like direct action, is an essential part of anarchist

philosophy and practice. The hugely influential Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta referred to it as the 'beacon of anarchy', placing its importance as the goal to which the whole movement strived: 'anarchy … has as its basis, its point of departure, its essential environment, *equality of conditions*; its beacon is *solidarity* and *freedom* is its method' (Malatesta, 2001 [1891], p. 48 [emphasis in original]). This beacon shines in the punk scene as well. For decades punks have looked beyond their own borders and made common cause with others around the world, both within the punk scene and across wider political movements. Solidarity is a common feature in global punk and, arguably, it all stems from the prominence of benefit gigs in punk. Unlike most musical genres, the benefit gig is a core part of the punk scene that goes back to its early days. It is not that other subcultures don't organise benefit concerts for various causes, but in punk the benefit gig holds an almost sacred role. Ask any punk about the gigs they have attended, and they will no doubt be able to think of plenty that were organised for one cause or another. Most bands cut their teeth at DIY gigs organised as benefits, many of them with an international perspective, and these sorts of gigs far outnumber for-profit gigs.

This connection to benefit gigs is rooted in the DIY production common to punk scenes. Punk bands are, more often than not, formed in scenes that are self-sustaining – the 'mini capitalist system' that Ren from Petrol Girls spoke of in the Punks Against Sweatshop film. But, in the first instance, before commercial or for-profit motives might even be considered, punks organise benefit gigs to raise money to fund some aspect of their scene: a zine that needs publishing; a compilation album that needs releasing; a venue that needs opening or supporting. The logic of the benefit gig soon carries over into supporting a political cause that people in a punk scene feel passionate about: legal funds for local activists going to court; an animal rights group that needs funds for a demo; current issues in society that punks want to support, from Ban the Bomb to Black Lives Matter. When punk scenes from other towns or other countries hear the call for solidarity, benefit gigs are then organised beyond the local context of the particular cause, nationally and internationally. This phenomenon has become an inherent part of what it means to be punk. As Sara from Miserable Wretch put it in the *Punks Against Sweatshops* film: 'the punk scene is one of the few places where I see people really caring about this kind of global, international solidarity' (in Ford and Kerr, 2019).

Punk Ethics took on this idea of international solidarity from the outset. The first event organized under the Punk Ethics name was in 2015, a screening of the film *Yangon Calling* (Dluzak and Piefke, 2012), to raise funds and awareness of the Common Street Collective in Yangon, Myanmar. On a whistle-stop trip through Burma in 2014 where I met Kyaw Kyaw and Oaker from the band The Rebel Riot, I learned of the Food Not Bombs project that their Common Street Collective had set up. These punks, in a country coming out of half a century of dictatorship, were feeding street kids and the homeless with locally sourced food, explicitly as an activist political statement of solidarity rather than charity. This was an example of punk ethics in action – this was the stuff that our nascent Punk Ethics collective was named in support of. Aside from the anarchist*ic* qualities of anti-colonial movements such as the Saya San Rebellion of 1930-1932 (sha, 1972 [1931] in Kramm, 2021) or state-evasive upland communities (Scott, 2009), anarchism as a political ideology didn't take hold in Burma until the past few decades. Western youth cultures filtered through the dictatorship's stronghold on society, and, as punk was smuggled into the country in the late 1990s, that inherent anarchist ethics came with it. This is clearly evident in the attitudes and actions of The Rebel Riot and the Common Street Collective.

On returning to the UK we set to work organising benefit gigs to support the Burmese punks and within a few years had raised almost £2,000 in support of their scene and their Food Not Bombs project. Before long we were crowdfunding to bring The Rebel Riot over for a historic tour of the UK – the first time any Burmese band, let alone a punk band, had played in the UK. The tour wasn't simply a dash around the country playing shows, it was a chance for Burmese punks to share their philosophy and their experiences with the UK's punk scenes. Included as part of every show was a screening of *My Buddha is Punk*, a film by Andreas Hartmann about the fledging Burmese punk scene back in 2012, and each screening was followed by a question-and-answer session with the band to discuss how a country with such a late-blooming punk scene had become one of the most advanced political punk movements in the world. The UK tour was as much a speaking tour as it was about the music. The participants spoke to intimate groups of punks in the library of the famous 1 in 12 Club in Bradford and in Kebele in Bristol – these anarchist social centres provided them with inspiration to take home. They spoke at major events at University of London's School of Oriental and

African Studies and at the London Anarchist Bookfair, and were even invited on to BBC Burmese to talk about their music and their solidarity work back in Yangon. It was a chance to amplify their voice in a way that is rare for any DIY punk band, and they took the opportunity to spread a message they had learned from their own international solidarity experiences with punks in Indonesia, the message of DIT – do-it-together. As Kyaw Kyaw said on stage many times in the two-week tour, 'punk has always been about DIY – do-it-yourself, but we forget that you can't do everything alone, so we bring a new message, DIT – do-it-together'. (The full story of The Rebel Riot's 2017 UK tour has been captured in a film produced by Punk Ethics (Bononi and Ford, 2021)). Kyaw Kyaw expands on the Burmese philosophy of punk elsewhere in this series of books on punk and anarchism, and at the time of writing finds himself on the front lines with his punk comrades engaged in a revolution against the military dictatorship's attempts to roll back the democratic gains made over the past decade. Yet, his message of DIT is one that encapsulates the essence of international punk solidarity: we are the underdogs, and we can only stand up for ourselves when we stand up together.

Since then, Punk Ethics has made links with other punks around the world to help support different causes, most recently in the case of Asel Luzarraga, an anarchist, punk, and author from the Basque Country who, in 2009, found himself being framed by the Chilean government on trumped up terrorism charges after publishing a blog about the struggles of the indigenous Mapuche people. You can read more about his story in his interview with Jim Donaghey in this book, but the key point to stress is the importance of building a new solidarity movement to support people like Asel, a punk who could be any one of us, and to stand with him as he takes on state power to try to clear his name. People coming together in solidarity against the state's silencing of a dissenting voice is something that can, again, be traced back to the historical anarchist movement. There are examples of anarchist groups doing fundraising activity in similar ways, and for similar reasons – fundraising to publish newspapers, for the legal defence of a comrade facing trial, or to get money to organise a demonstration about a current issue they want to support. One study on the large anarchist movement in Argentina during the 1880s reports that 'militants organised events and subscriptions to benefit the libertarian press, secular or rational schools, libraries (to found them and buy books), union societies, and even propaganda tours', as well as

fundraising for more humanitarian causes, such as 'aiding comrades injured in police crackdowns, the families of militants killed during actions, sick militants, the unemployed, prisoners, and deportees' (Suriano, 2010, p. 68). These fundraising efforts often led to the formation of solidarity committees to fight against injustice, and these regularly took on an international scope. The famous case of Sacco and Vanzetti, two anarchists who were framed for murder and armed robbery in the US in 1920 and subsequently killed by the state in 1927, became a cause that was taken up around the globe with demonstrations in cities from Buenos Aires to Moscow. In 1909 in London, thousands marched on Trafalgar Square to hear anarchists speak out against oppression by the Spanish state which had imprisoned and tortured radicals there, including the anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer who was killed by the state. In Chicago, eight anarchists were sentenced to death after being falsely convicted of bombing a labour demonstration in Haymarket Square in 1886 (four of the anarchists were killed by the state and one killed himself in jail in 1887 – they were pardoned in 1893). The solidarity movement sparked by the 'Haymarket Affair' was the inspiration for International Worker's Day that is still celebrated around the world on May Day. These traditions have passed down the generations, and, consciously or unconsciously, have permeated the global punk scene today so that thousands of people around the world use their local scene as the linchpin of international solidarity campaigns that reach out around the world.

The anarchist ethics of punk

The Punk Ethics collective has spent several years creating media, organising events, and coordinating campaigns that highlight the culture of resistance that is inherent in punk, and the key aspects of anarchism that are infused with that. We've gathered support from punk scenes near and far, whether it's a mock cease-and-desist letter to a rich corporation, gigs reclaiming public spaces, calls for international solidarity or asking punks to think about who makes their band's merch. All of these are political actions within the world of punk, taking place outside of the scope of Party politics, which have been taken up enthusiastically by punks from across the spectrum of the subculture. Here we have identified how each Punk Ethics campaign

links to an aspect of anarchist theory – anti-corporatism, direct action, workers' organising, and internationalist solidarity – and can be situated within a thread along the tradition of similar actions that date back to the early days of the anarchist movement. While punk has long been associated with anarchism in the most overt sense – whether as circle-A emblems or as concerted political ideology – we've seen that it is actually far more deeply embedded *as an ethic*.

Punk Ethics is a group that has been active in its resistance to the status quo, but we have engaged in anarchist practices without identifying as an anarchist punk group. The explicit linking of punk and anarchism has inspired many people to find out more about the anarchist tradition and has arguably helped keep those ideas alive, but, without having any objection to the anarchist label in punk, there have clearly been some advantages in *not* being labelled anarchist. The open letter to BrewDog, for instance, was in collaboration with punk promoters, notably Garageland, Take Warning and Alternative Gathering, who cover a broad spectrum of punk subgenres, and we were able to reach bands that are openly anarchist, like Subhumans, and bands that are explicitly not, like Wonk Unit. If Punk Ethics had carried the anarchist label, with all the preconceptions that come with that label, then such a broad-spectrum collaboration may not have been possible. Punk Ethics has often created political moments without being openly 'Political'. The Trespass gig is an example of this – many that attended did so because of the bands that played, it was only once there, being an active participant, that the political significance of the event became clear. The gig attendees became accomplices in a direct action. In this way, Punk Ethics has been able to inspire people politically, with anarchist ideas, without coming up against preconceived notions or prejudices that some people associate with the 'anarchist' label.

The activities of Punk Ethics are not unique in punk: the comical mock legal letter was akin to some aspects of the tabloid journalism of *Class War* and the satirical articles of *Hard Times*; the gigs reclaiming public space have their counterparts in unlicensed and squat gigs in countries around the world; in the campaign against sweatshops, Punk Ethics continues in the footsteps of punks that have gone before them in denouncing the exploitation of people in the workplace; and, as highlighted, punks have been engaging with international solidarity demonstrations for decades. The point is that these

activities, which are common to punk scenes throughout the world, are expressions of the ideas of anarchism – without the label. Punks who have no interest in the ideas of the classical anarchist thinkers, or who have never even listened to a track by Crass or Oi Polloi, willingly accept the position that punk is about standing up in solidarity with others; is about protecting workers against exploitation; should seize public space in defending their right to play music; and should object to private corporations appropriating their culture and then claiming legal ownership over the words used to describe it. The title of this chapter, 'the anarchist ethics of punk', really just started as a play on the name of the Punk Ethics collective, but each of the positions that have been identified are positions that anarchists with no sympathy for punk would make common cause with, and, conversely, are positions that punks with no interest in anarchism as a political ideology accept as an inherent part of what it means to be *punk*. Punk and anarchism have a shared 'ethics', no matter what words are used. Noam Chomsky suggests that the term 'anarchism' might fade from use in political struggles of the future but that the ideas of anarchism would persist (Democracy At Work, 2021). Perhaps the same will be true in punk. In another four decades from now, all the people from the 1970s first wave and the original 1980s anarcho-punk movement will be long gone. Punk is a culture that is reinvented by each new generation, and what we've termed here as anarchist ethics will still be found in the activities of the scenes being formed, in new strands of punk with adjectives we've yet to imagine, because threads of anarchism are everywhere woven into the patchwork of punk.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

TRANS-FEMINIST PUNK IN THE UNITED STATES: COLLECTIVE ACTION, ACTIVISM & A LIBIDINAL ECONOMY OF NOISE

CASEY ROBERTSON

Chapter Thirteen: Trans-feminist punk in the United States: Collective action, activism, and a libidinal economy of noise

Casey Robertson

This chapter explores the tripartite relationship between transgender identities, political activism, and sonic practice. In particular, this chapter employs theorizations of noise to explore a rupture in the prevalent binarisms of sound and gender in the American punk scene and its aesthetics. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as Herbert Marcuse's one-dimensional society and Jean-François Lyotard's conception of a libidinal economy, the sonic practices of trans-feminist artists such as GLOSS (Girls Living Outside Society's Shit) and the HIRS Collective are re-examined to interrogate their capacities to initiate acts of intentional antagonism to construct new spaces for the invisible and/or overlooked. Through such a trajectory, the intended goal is to reveal not only such trans-feminist artists' collective actions of political resistance towards the modern neoliberal state, but perhaps most importantly, the typically less examined yet far-reaching ramifications of their inherent situatedness outside of such socio-political structures and machinery. While such artistic practice pits itself against the increasingly one-dimensional state of commodification in the punk genre, it also probes deeper to illuminate the related homonormative currents which have exerted considerable effort to flatten notions of diversity and difference within contemporary LGBTQ2S communities. It is ultimately through this complex matrix of identity, affective flows, and a political (dis)engagement with the dynamics of the American punk genre that we can begin to bear witness upon a modern form of sonic anarchism; one which fragments itself off from previous constructions yet reveals a possibility for new formations to those previously rendered silenced, both figuratively and literally.

When discussing the transgender movement within the United States historically, we not only bear witness to a rich history of anarchistic organizing and resistance toward hegemonic structures, but also an existence which

activist Jerimarie Liesegang once argued was both radical and anarchistic, if not insurrectionary at its core (2012, p. 88). While activists such as Liesegang have articulated anarchist currents in the very embodiment of trans individuals, others such as Elis L Herman have argued that gender subversion is most effective when viewed as a tool of anarchy (2015, p. 76). Whether we examine modern examples of gender transgression, or past efforts to resist the biopolitics of normativity as structured through the project of modernity, trans individuals have consistently provided examples which could be described as a schism against the gradual co-opting of queer identities into the currents of late capitalism and its related counterpart, homonormativity. With this stated, throughout the past decade, we have witnessed a heightened exposure of trans identities within mainstream media outlets in the United States, with a slow move toward a limited (though often problematic) inclusion of trans characters into television and film. *Time* magazine even produced an article titled 'The Transgender Tipping Point' (2014). Such heightened exposure has led some to believe that a fundamental shift in public discourse has occurred. One such example comes from the philosopher, Slavoj Žižek (University of Dundee, 2019), who recently attempted to argue that transgender identities fit neatly into the structures of late capitalism, citing his rationale as an endorsement of trans rights from corporate figures Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, and Tim Cook. Despite such supposed progress of a more inclusive society for trans individuals, 2019 had the highest number of reported anti-trans hate crimes in the United States (Lang, 2020). Furthermore, much of the inclusion we hear of is very much surface level; a case of in-theory but not in-practice. As Reina Gosset, Erica A Stanley, and Joanna Burton have recently stated in the introduction to their volume on trans cultural production:

> we know that when produced within the cosmology of racial capitalism, the promise of 'positive representation' ultimately gives little support or protection to many, if not most, trans and gender non-conforming people, particularly those who are low-income and/or of color – the very people whose lives and labor constitute the ground for the figuration of this moment of visibility. (2017, p. xv)

It is against the backdrop of such complexities that this chapter will explore and highlight pathways of anarchist thought and organizing in the United States, notably through sonic acts of expression from trans individuals engaged in the punk genre of music. While it could be argued that much of the literature written upon trans issues is often visual in nature, it is important to also examine the role of the sonic and the auditory and their entangled relationship with the biopolitics of hegemony. (These key terms can be defined as follows: biopolitics – the subjectivized management of human life by regimes of governance; hegemony – political, moral and cultural domination by a ruling class.) As Robin James has argued:

> Sound frequencies, the overtone series, the limitations of the human ear, organs, hormones, chromosomes, the shape and color of bodies – these supposedly natural phenomena make it easy to appeal to nature in defining music, race, or gender, and in making normative claims about them. (2010, p. xiii)

Keeping this in mind, there are many examples of artists both past and present that could aid in a survey of considerable length, however, this chapter aims to carry out a more concentrated focus to provide an incomplete but in-depth examination through two trans-feminist punk artists, GLOSS and the HIRS Collective, both active in the United States during the past decade. It is through these transgressive acts of sonic expression that we will explore the possibility of resistance and agency through a proposed conception referred to as a libidinal economy of noise. Thus, such a discussion attempts to delve into the auditory dimension of such contexts. Considering that so much attention toward trans issues is placed upon aspects of the visual, such a shift toward the auditory dimension will allow us to begin to explore what philosopher Don Ihde has described as a decentring of the dominant tradition of visualism to search for a recovery of the richness of primary experience, whether forgotten, covered over, or simply that which yields itself not toward the visual but toward the realm of listening (2007, p. 13).

Historical foundations of trans anarchisms

When discussing the transgender movement's relationship with anarchist thought and organizing, we can trace such a politics back to the political activism of such groups as Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) which was a group formed following a 1970 sit-in at New York University to protest the cancellation of a dance sponsored by a gay organization. STAR would solidify during 1971 through the efforts of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson, and was a gender non-conforming, gay, and transgender activist organization that worked as a political collective while also addressing overlooked issues such as the need to provide support and housing for homeless queer youth and sex workers in Downtown Manhattan. Though only active in an official capacity for approximately three years, STAR has been considered not only groundbreaking in the realm of queer liberation, but also a historical model for future organizers. In addition to STAR's community work, the collective also produced documents such as a manifesto calling for an end to the widespread systemic oppression of sex workers and sexual and gender minorities, and included a final point stating:

> We want a revolutionary peoples' government, where transvestites, street people, women, homosexuals, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and all oppressed people are free, and not fucked over by this government who treat us like the scum of the earth and kills us off like flies, one by one, and throw us into jail to rot. This government who spends millions of dollars to go to the moon, and lets the poor Americans starve to death. (STAR, 1970, in Cohen, 2008, p. 37)

STAR worked from a similar standpoint to their contemporaries of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), embodying a multi-faceted understanding of liberation that was shaped by both anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements. Yet despite such significance and far-reaching influence, much of modern discourse has until recently given little attention to such collectives and alliances, often relegating them to the sidelines for more palatable assimilationist currents toward contemporary neoliberalism. As Nothing has noted, STAR without a doubt employed anarchistic tactics to empower

gender-variant people to survive in spite of the state. Nothing further states that it is because of transphobia and white supremacy, coupled with overarching assimilationist ideologies that such acts of insurrection have been erased from popular narratives (2013, pp. 3-11). Similarly, historian Roderick Ferguson has argued that the contemporary mainstreaming of queerness is a trend that also has an effect of obscuring the real and historically productive convergences between queer politics and other forms of struggle (2019, p. 19). Ferguson draws from the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse, notably through his theory of a one-dimensional society which argues that industrial resources are utilized to disqualify opposition, rendering a resultant society in which 'former antagonists' are united in an 'overriding interest in the preservation and improvement of the institutional status quo' (Marcuse, 1964, p. xlv). Through Ferguson's one-dimensional account of queerness, popular narratives such as that of Stonewall not only scrub the prior activist histories from the accounts of gender non-conforming people involved but also renders them as pre-political subjects who merely provided a stepping-stone to single-issue gay rights. It is such widespread and whitewashed narratives that truncate histories of long-standing political activism and engagement into mere fleeting momentary actions. Drawing from the accounts of Rivera, Ferguson argues 'it is more accurate to say that trans women were the intersectional linchpins between anti-racist, queer, and transgender liberations' (2019, p. 21). While this discussion focuses upon modern acts of artistic political organization amongst the trans movement, it is important to begin by emphasizing that such action is not a modern development but rather a consistent avenue of political action, sometimes working in convergent pathways with other groups, but also at many times working in divergent pathways of time and space as well. We also encounter similar challenges when examining the history of trans artists in the American punk scene. While one might assume that trans identities would find a suitable outlet of expression within the American punk scene both musically and culturally, such a correlation has been in reality a complex relationship, one not without its embodied tensions and contradictions, but also one of possibility through the cultural production of punk artists GLOSS and the HIRS Collective. It is through the affective engagement of the sonic practices of these two trans-feminist artists that I theorize the possibility of a libidinal economy of noise; a concept holding potential for not only trans identities, but

also other anarchists searching for remaining possibilities of resistance within the totalizing biopolitical structures of modern neoliberal states.

Prior to examining the cultural production of such specific artists, or even the related subcultures or politics of punk, it is important to recognize the related fragmentary nature at play. Perhaps such a challenge has been articulated by Ruud Noys, who recently stated:

> To be clear, there is no aesthetic prescription for anarchist music; any attempt to define it solely on the basis of sound or style is fruitless. Any aesthetic that is identified as 'anarchist' is immediately undercut by non-anarchist manifestations of that same aesthetic – but in an even more fundamental sense, it *shouldn't* be possible to identify an anarchist aesthetic. The musical forms, genres and scenes associated with anarchism are myriad, which is to be expected since anarchism itself is highly amorphous and ill-defined. (2020, p. 15)

In a similar manner, it is important to also avoid totalizing narratives or definitions related to discussions of gender in this context. Thus, when examining anarchistic music which lacks a concretely defined aesthetic, we should allow for a similar parallel of fluidity when discussing the work of trans artists which embody a vast heterogenous spectrum of identities and expressions. Thus, we must exercise caution when attempting to examine and explore this form of interplay with punk music in this particular discussion. In recent scholarship such an issue has been brought into focus into by Jay Szpilka (2020), who in a similar manner to Noys, has recently noted that any understanding we aim to attain of trans artists in the punk genre will also encounter similar limitations. Szpilka proposes that any mapping of such a history must uncover the artists' related punk biographies and then proceed by undertaking a related investigation of punk's fostering of dissident womanhoods (2020, p. 121). While such an approach provides a contemporary framework to examine trans artists engaged in the punk genre, we also face the challenge of effectively piecing together such histories. While it is true that trans women have been active throughout punk's history, such identities have often been either overlooked and/or misrepresented throughout past decades. Such issues pose challenges not only due to the omitted aspects of identity and expression in oral histories and publications,

but more problematically, also due to accounts and descriptions which may have unintentionally or at times even intentionally misrepresented the artists being discussed. Shifts in language and discourse related to diverse identities and expressions must also be accounted for as well. While this particular chapter has the benefit of exploring such connections within a recent historical context, it is important to be cognizant of such inherent challenges prior to proceeding. In an effort to recognize the diversity of trans artists and their cultural production, we can draw upon useful methodology from Heckert who has argued that anarchism must oppose overdetermined notions of opposites as they imply binarism which is a tool of oppression (2012, pp. 63-75). Allowing for such fluidity also reveals related fissures of possibility. As Herman argues in her article 'Transarchism', through their various crossings of cultural borders, trans individuals can expose the ambiguous nature of the state and how it acts as an unfixed collection of powered forces rather than a monolithic manifestation of power to reveal not only the significance of gender as an expression of state biopower, but also how related transgressions exert methods of resistance (2014, p. 98).

GLOSS (Girls Living Outside Society's Shit)

The first artist to be discussed in this chapter is GLOSS (Girls Living Outside Society's Shit), a trans-feminist hardcore punk band that was active in Olympia, Washington from 2014-2016. GLOSS, a five-person band, was fronted by Sadie 'Switchblade' Smith and included guitarists Jake Bison and Tannrr Hainsworth, bassist Julaya Antolin, and percussionist Corey Evans. Inspired by the emotional vulnerability of Massachusetts-based hardcore punk artists Reach the Sky and Bane, Switchblade sought to address what she viewed as a void of diversity and experience in this scene, particularly in relation to the inclusion of women, people identifying as queer, trans, the disabled, and people of color. For GLOSS, inclusion in their performance spaces would not only include feeling safe, but perhaps more significantly, also feeling welcome. With this stated, GLOSS's approach worked to alter the immediate landscape, both through the musical material produced and the dynamics of the surrounding space for performers and attendees. While the band produced only approximately fifteen minutes of recorded music in

entirety through two extended play records (EPs), their work has proved impactful through not only the thematic content of their lyrics, but also through the visceral intensity of their performative aesthetics. Both of these realms are notable in their ability to articulate often overlooked and unaddressed themes of violence saturating the day-to-day existence of trans individuals in the United States. GLOSS's first 2015 release simply titled *Demo* helped establish their relevance in articulating trans experiences with the tracks such as 'GLOSS (We're From The Future)', 'Masculine Artifice', 'Outcast Stomp', 'Lined Lips And Spiked Bats', and 'Targets Of Men'. *Demo*'s lyrical themes additionally articulated related experiences such as the cis-gaze, and the medicalization of trans bodies. The opening track 'GLOSS' would become an anthem during live performances, with Switchblade surrounded by

Figure 13:1 – Cover of GLOSS's *Trans Day of Revenge* (2016).
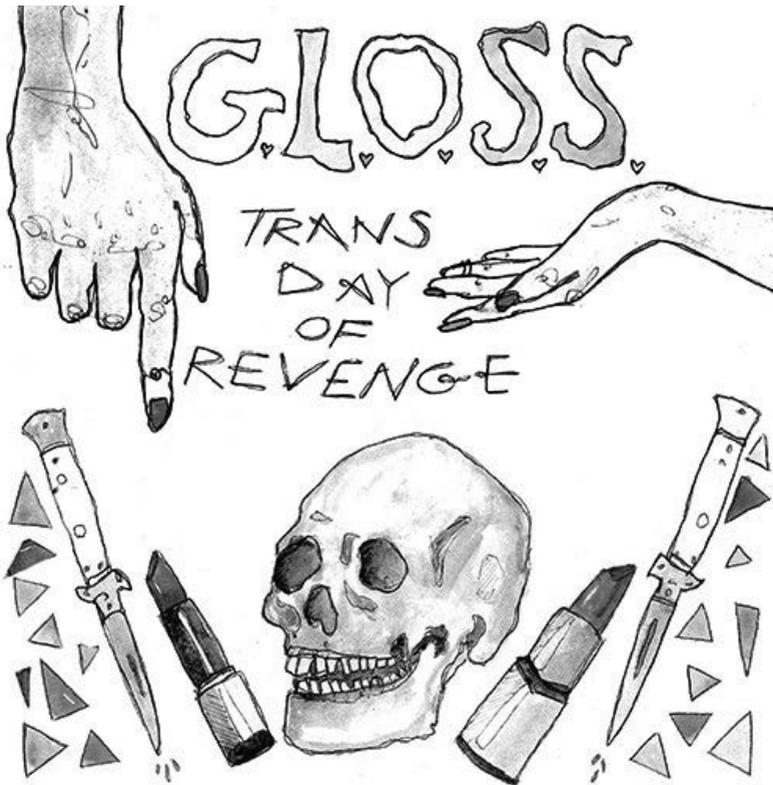
audience members collectively shouting:

> They told us we were girls.
>
> How we talk, dress, look, and cry.
>
> They told us we were girls.
>
> So we claimed our female lives.
>
> Now they tell us we aren't girls.
>
> Our femininity doesn't fit.
>
> We're fucking future girls living outside society's shit!
>
> (GLOSS, 2015)

While many bands encourage audience participation, GLOSS proved unique in this regard through their manner of engagement, notably by articulating connections to many of those listening who often felt excluded from the related music scenes. Such action was perhaps best exemplified through the lyrics from 'Outcast Stomp':

> This is for the outcasts,
>
> Rejects/girls and the queers.
>
> For the downtrodden women who have shed their last tears/for the fighters,
>
> Psychos/freaks and the femmes,
>
> For all the transgender ladies in constant transition cast out.
>
> Outcast Stomp!
>
> (GLOSS, 2015)

The success of *Demo* would quickly demonstrate the void that Switchblade saw the need to address within the punk subculture of the United States. She would later describe how *Demo* managed to resonate across fields of experience with both audiences and listeners, stating:

I consistently feel bowled over by the [positive reaction to the demo] … I have been brought to tears many times from letters, emails and conversations at our shows with other queer and trans folks who have been impacted by our songs … I think for trans women to be honest about their lives there [will] be a lot of pain and a lot of shit to dig up. Singing in GLOSS is kind of like getting to be a superhero, like weaponizing a lifetime of anguish and alienation. (Switchblade, in Berbernick, 2015)

The band would follow up with a second extended play album *Trans Day of Revenge* which was released the day after the 2016 mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The record was only six minutes and fifty-eight seconds in length yet managed to further articulate the violent realities that many trans individuals face as well as related themes such as police brutality and racism. The album's opening track titled 'Give Violence a Chance' begins with lyrics which state: 'When peace is just another word for death, it's our turn to give violence a chance!' The track confronts the inadequacies of the justice system, and demands action. GLOSS also reflects upon the one dimensionality of the queer movement in the title track 'Trans Day of Revenge', which states, 'HRC, selfish fucks/Yuppie gays threw us under the bus'. The reference to HRC refers to the Human Rights Campaign, the largest LGBTQ advocacy group and LGBTQ political lobbying organization in the United States, who in 2007 took an ambiguous stance on the 2007 Employment Non-Discrimination Act which included protections for discrimination against sexual orientation but not gender identity or expression. The track ends with the following call:

Trans day of revenge!

Trans day of revenge!

Trans day of revenge!

Black trans women,

Draped in white sheets,

Beaten to death,

Harassed by police.

Homeless elders,

Wander the streets.

Trans day of revenge.

Not as weak as we seem.

(GLOSS, 2016)

Percussionist Jake Bison reflected upon such themes in an interview, stating: 'What we do is antagonistic towards society … I'm interested in destroying society, not being tolerated by it' (Bison, 2016, in Exposito et al., 2016). GLOSS would attempt to strike a balance in live performances which would contain such themes of anger and rage, yet also maintain a welcoming and inclusive space. Such performances were often carried out in intimate settings where Switchblade would preface songs with their related stories, whether discussing pain, trauma, or political matters. For example, Switchblade opened a 2016 performance in San Jose, California requesting a moment of silence and asking the audience to repeat 'I am forgiven, I am loved … flawed, imperfect, tender, and gorgeous'.

GLOSS later attain more widespread media attention when they turned down a $50,000 recording contract from Epitaph due to the record label's association with Warner Music Group Corporation, a multinational record label conglomerate which is currently the third largest in the world (according to US and Canada market share). While technically an independent record label, Epitaph is still part of Warner's Alternative Distribution Alliance. With this stated, the band opted instead to self-release through their guitarist's label Total Negativity. Switchblade elaborated upon this decision, stating: 'While signing to a label like Epitaph would be in many ways relieving, it would probably mean the death of the feeling that so many of you have told us means so much to you … What I'm trying to say is that we don't have to jump into their world, we can create a new one' (Switchblade, in Adams, 2016). GLOSS considered the idea of integrating a radical organization into a profit-sharing model if they did sign to the label to benefit a homeless shelter, AMP in San Jose, Black Lives Matter groups, or disabled queers, but ultimately

decided to go against any pathway that would benefit corporate music. Switchblade also argued that she wanted GLOSS to be a threat to entrenched models; at the very least to be exciting. While the publicity surrounding the rejection of Epitaph led to increased visibility, GLOSS's members felt that such newly acquired notoriety began to overshadow the work of the band itself which ultimately contributed to their dissolution. Though GLOSS would no longer perform or produce records, their two extended play albums remain in circulation online through the platform Bandcamp, where any proceeds received are donated to the Interfaiths Works Emergency Overnight Shelter in Olympia, Washington. The band issued one final statement prior to disbanding, arguing: 'The punk we care about isn't supposed to be about getting big or becoming famous, it's supposed to be about challenging ourselves and each other to be better people' (GLOSS, in Hughes, 2016). While short-lived, GLOSS demonstrated the potential of trans artists to effectively channel experience to create their own space to engage in a form of DIY alternative economy which Noys has described as being organized along ethics and values distinct from the mainstream corporate/capitalist industry (2020, p. 24).

The HIRS Collective

The HIRS Collective, named after the third-person neopronoun, was formed in 2011 by vocalist Jenna Pup and guitarist Esem and has continued to expand throughout the past decade as a DIY grindcore punk collective based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Drawing from an intersectional lens, Pup has stated: 'The HIRS Collective exists to fight for, defend, and celebrate the survival of trans, queer, POC, black, women and any and all other folks who have to constantly face violence, marginalization, and oppression' (HIRS, in Rettig, 2021). After initially producing a series of releases on cassette and 7" vinyl, HIRS released a full extended play record in 2018 titled *Friends. Lovers. Favorites.* The EP was released on Get Better Records which is currently co-run by Pup, Koji, and Alex Lichtenauer. As an independent queer/trans record label, Get Better Records has been described as queer forward with an emphasis upon reversing the constant underrepresentation of the queer arts

Figure 13:2 – HIRS Collective (photograph by Farrah Skeiky).

community. The label has also released compilation records such as *A Benefit Comp to Help Pay Medical Bills for Those Activists Fighting Against Fascism and Racism* (Various Artists, 2017), and has donated Bandcamp profits to bail funds as well as Pink and Black, which is a prison abolitionist project supporting LGBTQ and HIV-positive prisoners. *Friends. Lovers. Favorites.* was unique in its manner to bring together a number of collaborations from artists such as Erica Freas (RVIVR), Marissa Paternoster (Screaming Females), Shirley Manson (Garbage), Alice Bag and Candace Hansen (Alice Bag & The Sissy Bears), Martin Crudo (Los Crudos and Limp Wrist), and Laura Jane Grace (Against Me!). While the collective's personnel are both anonymous and revolving, the thematic and aesthetics of HIRS' music are consistent, expressing the volatility of existence in late capitalism, particularly through an articulation of anti-authoritarianism. Such themes of content share a number of common arcs with the work of GLOSS (with Sadie Switchblade performing on a track), however, HIRS takes a different approach aesthetically and organizationally towards expression. The aesthetic is arguably pushed to further extremes with

less emphasis upon horizontal song structure and progression, giving more attention toward the vertical extremities of aesthetics such as volume, percussion, and vocal intensity. With this stated, HIRS additionally utilizes overdubbed sound clips dealing with violence, policing, and religion which are intelligible but often the lyrical content is pushed to limitations of performance. Notable thematic tracks include titles such as 'Wake Up Tomorrow', 'Invisible', 'Last Acrylic Nail in the Coffin', 'It's OK to Be Sad', 'It's OK to Be Sick', 'You Can't Kill Us', and 'Trans Woman Dies of Old Age'. While lyrical themes deal with anti-trans violence, racism, and police brutality, they also contain themes of survival. For example, 'Wake Up Tomorrow' states:

> You're a huge reason we are still alive.
>
> You make us want to continue to strive to be living for you, living for us.
>
> We'll care for you until we're dust.
>
> Wake up tomorrow.
>
> (HIRS, 2018)

Similarly, 'It's OK To Be Sick' proclaims:

> They say that when we're sick, we're weak. That's furthest from the truth.
>
> We're surviving. It's ok to be sad. It's ok to be sick.
>
> They say that when we're sick, we're weak. They know nothing.
>
> Please – if you have the ability – take it day by day, take care of yourself, and ask us if you need anything.
>
> (HIRS, 2018)

Such tracks are also generally very brief in duration, often consisting of approximately 30 seconds in length. Such organizational structure challenges the expectations of many listeners, even those with a familiarity of their genre.

Though one might initially believe that tracks of such length embody a certain abruptness, there is a certain aesthetic effectiveness that manages to distill the primary points of sonic expression, rendering audible more concentrated affective moments of intensity and listening engagement. At the same time, by HIRS including dozens of tracks on an extended play record, the collective manages to cover a vast territory of thematic content without extraneous aesthetic embellishments to compete with the intensity of expression.

When discussing such alternative structures of song, it may be useful to return to the theory of Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse, who was a defining early figure of the New Left and an influential figure of various 1960s

Figure 13:3 – Cover of *Friends, Lovers, Favorites* by HIRS (2018).

counter-cultural movements in the United States. Through such an effort, we can revisit Marcuse's theory of one-dimensionality in a similar fashion to Ferguson's usage discussed earlier. Prior to doing so, however, it should be noted that the extent of Marcuse's kinship with anarchism has been a topic of contention amongst certain scholars. While Marcuse never identified politically as an anarchist, certain scholars have brought forth currents of his thought that may resonate with certain aspects of anarchist politics. Maurice Cranston, for example, argued that Marcuse's optimistic belief in the possibility of a non-repressive civilization aligns him with anarchism, or more specifically within a politics of 'Anarcho-Marxism' (1972, p. 93). Furthermore, when discussing potential means for aesthetic liberation in one of his final interviews, Marcuse noted that such types of action would be best suited to begin not only with individuals, but also with small groups (in Kearney, 1977, p. 79). Responding to such types of claims, however, Douglas Kellner has stated that Marcuse was situated closer to notions of individualist revolt advocated by the artistic avant-garde and bohemia (1984, p. 279). Despite such tensions in precisely situating Marcuse's thought, it is of particular relevance to the trans artists being discussed in this context, particularly through the following passage from *One Dimensional Man*:

> underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; their life is the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions. Thus their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. (Marcuse, 1964, p. 260)

For Marcuse, one dimensional society entails not only a rise of social repression but also the creation of false needs through the integration of individuals into the system of production and consumption. At first observation, we can note the literal parallel between Marcuse's commentary and GLOSS's name (Girls Living Outside of Society's Shit), but we can also note the alternative format of HIRS' brief songs and how they present a method to resist commodification within the punk genre. With this stated, however, one could argue that the most promising potential comes from small

collectives such as HIRS through their ability to couple the non-integrated nature of trans identities with sonic expression. While the aesthetics and the content of an artist's work is without a doubt relevant, we are also inclined here to recall Tim Yohannan's statement arguing that '[i]n the long run ... what's important about punk is not the lyrics, what people say, but what they do' (in Turner, 1995, in Noys, 2020, p. 25). On a related note, it should be mentioned that other bands fronted by trans individuals also worked to breakdown hegemony to shape more inclusive scenes amongst musical subcultures during this period. For example, Lynn Breedlove of Tribe 8 was active amongst the earliest queercore bands and continues to advocate for trans causes within the San Francisco area. While Laura Jane Grace of Against Me! has been the highest profile, receiving significant media attention when coming out publicly in 2012, various other artists on smaller independent labels of related musical genres have also helped to foster greater visibility amongst their communities. One such example is Marissa Martinez of the grindcore metal band Cretin, who came out in 2008 within a very much male-dominated genre. These artists are worthy of mention to this discussion as their music explored themes of trans identity during this period which, to borrow David Graeber's description, worked to 'expose, subvert, and undermine structures of domination … in a democratic fashion' (2004, p. 7).

Collective action and affective engagement

At this point in our discussion, it is important to explore how artists such as GLOSS and the HIRS Collective connect the issues of their communities to sonic practice. With this stated, to someone witnessing the performances of artists such as GLOSS or HIRS from a peripheral standpoint, the transgressive nature of such sonic acts of expression may not seem readily apparent, however, for those with an intimate understanding of the themes at stake, such performances generate a possibility for new collective formations to unify the struggles of trans individuals and corresponding identities frequently rendered silent. Samantha Riedel of the queer e-zine *them.* has perhaps best described such a possibility during her attendance of a particular 2016 HIRS performance:

The experience is like primal scream therapy for transfeminine rage; it exorcises a ghost you didn't know was living inside you and feeds the part of your soul that's fed up with keeping your head down … there's something about submerging yourself in that pond of blast-beats and allowing the scream to permeate your body that's cleansing, even soothing. HIRS is a bloody-knuckled anthem to transfems' right to exist, bolstering our conviction to live through anything bigots can throw at us. That's an experience that stays with you for life. (2019)

Riedel's commentary is interesting as one is almost inclined to recall Emma Goldman's oft quoted remark 'If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution', but articulated through a differing trajectory. While Goldman's commentary centres around expressions of joy, Riedel's commentary evokes a different positioning which also articulates rage, though coupled with positive attributes to engage a sense of catharticism. Thus, we can witness certain parallels here, especially when Goldman proclaimed that her cause of anarchism stood for release and freedom from convention and prejudice, stating 'I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things ... I would live my beautiful ideal' (1934, p. 56). Whether we examine such examples and commentaries from the distant or recent past, such accounts bring into focus the equally important role undertaken by the listener involved. If we are to follow Ruud Noys' recent suggestion that the most directly transformative aspect of music is its ability to inspire and radicalize, we may be able to bear witness to a rare moment within contemporary American culture that has otherwise been liquidated through totalizing currents of commercialism and commodification. Though the primary experience may be both momentary and fleeting, GLOSS and HIRS have demonstrated possibilities through an establishment of alternate auditory spaces of possibility. The performance is undoubtedly important in this context, but it is crucial to not overlook the engagement of the audience, particularly through the entanglements with listening. There is often a tendency to oversimplify the act of listening, yet such a process is not one of isolation. Bearing this in mind, it is useful to take a moment to draw upon notions of reflexive artistic practice here. Drawing upon Margaret Archer's theory of reflexivity, Mary Ryan (2014) has argued that through the arts we can render visible new modes of reflective expression and corresponding

modalities that can recontextualize our social meanings, engendering new understandings of self in relation to the world, but only if constituted by action toward a reflexive approach to learning and practice. Thus, there is a potential for a powerful form of self-discovery through a performative dialog with the audience. Following Ryan we can begin to further understand such possibilities of interaction between performer, audience, and space. It is through such a matrix that she locates a potential to illuminate moments that embody reflexive expressivity that can not only change the nature of creation or performance but also simultaneously imbues a potential to enact a shift in one's ideas and life concerns (Ryan, 2014, p. 15). With this in mind, it is also important not to simplify the phenomenon of sound itself. As Steve Goodman argues, the immediate recognition of sound is only a fragment of the larger phenomena in practice as the audible is connected to several other formations with the body in a type of synaesthetic relationship that also engages tactile experience (2012, p. 47). If we combine such insights and apply them to Riedel's earlier commentary, we can begin to uncover elements of a particularly affective engagement in a collective sense. While affect theory has been defined in different ways within the field of humanities, for the sake of this discussion we will follow Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg's summary, who state:

> Affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. (2010, p. 1)

Through such a description we can begin to understand a more comprehensive and holistic sonic experience. With the creation of such spaces, GLOSS and collectives such as HIRS manage to enact a new soundscape that however small, fragmentary, and fleeting, manages to initiate a momentary rupture in the neoliberal logics which for many seems almost

inescapable in late capitalism. Here, we can witness similarities with the work of artist and sound theorist Brandon LaBelle, who examines performances which depict vulnerable bodies and the terror of systemic violence (2018, p. 51). Labelle draws upon Graeber's claim that the creative reservoir of revolutionary change comes precisely from invisible spaces. As Graeber proclaims: 'It's precisely from these invisible spaces, invisible, most of all, to power – when the potential for insurrection, and the extraordinary social creativity that seems to emerge out of nowhere in revolutionary moments, actually comes' (2004, p. 35). In this capacity, LaBelle asks provocatively: 'Might sound be deployed as a weapon by way of particular tonalities and collective vibrations, a listening activism, and the force of volume, to support a culture of radical care and compassion?' (2018, p. 9). If we are to follow LaBelle and Graeber, we can begin to recognize the power of invisibility that sound allows in this context, especially in the multiplicity of dimensions of experience to generate new possibilities.

Toward a libidinal economy of noise

At this point in our discussion, I want to now bring forth the conception of noise. At first glance such an action might seem to be both obvious and redundant, considering the many overt connections between punk aesthetics and noise articulated since its very inception so many years prior. With this stated, however, noise is very much a cultural construct, contingent upon the correspondent time and place. As musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez has stated, within a society there is rarely a consensus between what is music and what is noise, arguing that expression deemed noise tends to be disturbing, unpleasant, or both (1991, p. 48). It is true that many genres of music are loud in amplitude, however, such acts of sheer volume are not necessarily transgressive in nature against prevailing orders and discourses. In his influential work, *Noise/Music: A History*, Paul Hegarty has reflected upon this issue, pointing out the need to recognize the complexity of noise, arguing that although noise can be loud, it is much more about what is deemed to disturb (2007, p. 4). Noise as a phenomenon also extends beyond simply sound, whether through aspects of information theory, or the notion of the glitch. As Jacob Gabouray has argued, technological protocols that normalize our terms

of engagement often have wide-reaching effects, particularly on minority populations whose needs, desires, and bodies are often excluded from the norms that structure protocological assumptions (2018, p. 488). This has led those such as Gabouray to begin exploring how failure within technological practice may constitute a radical queer practice. Similar explorations have also been undertaken by Vymethoxy Redspiders (2019), a Leeds-based autistic trans artist and a member of the noise duo, Guttersnipe. In discussion on trans identity and noise she spoke of parallels between the missions of what she describes as 'truly experimental music' and radical (trans)feminisms. Redspiders, who has a background in cognitive psychology, produces work that explores the intersections of psychoacoustics, emotion, and identity. She has argued that while there are efforts to demolish essentialisms related to intersectionality, similar essentialisms related to musical and sonic expression still remain very much engrained. Furthermore, she argues that those who do attempt to break such essentialisms are typically not expressing anything that is inherently political in nature. Drawing a parallel between the harshness of trans embodiment and her music, she advocates that it is through radical sounds (noise) that we may bear witness to a potential to resist those institutions which are oppressive musically, and destroy those which are essentialist in nature. Keeping this in mind, there is a unique situatedness present here when we step back and examine the relationality between performer, audience (listener), and the affective engagement of noise through such acts of transfeminine rage. Scholars such as Marie Thompson have previously taken efforts to situate noise within an affective context, arguing 'noise is often felt as well as heard, and known through feeling' (2018, p. 11). Through such a trajectory, Thompson argues for a relational approach that prioritizes open-endedness, fluidity, transformation and plurality, situating bodies as neither autonomous or fixed formally. They are instead articulated via means of engagement with other bodies and constantly exchanging traces throughout the process.

If we are to keep such a theorization of noise in mind, it is useful to couple with the concept of a libidinal economy, first proposed by philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, and more recently revisited by scholars such as André Brock and Eva Hayward. While Lyotard's initial 1974 publication of *Économie Libidinale* (translated into English as *Libidinal Economy* (1993)) was met with controversy, described as a work of anti-theory, and even labeled by some

critics as lacking a moral compass, we can isolate useful aspects from it to develop a framework to examine the acts of sonic expression discussed so far. With this stated, in Lyotard's libidinal economy there are certain bodily phenomena or states that are essentially intangible to formal systems of measurement and classification. While such phenomena essentially slip between the cracks of exchange value in the neoliberal political economy, this does not diminish their significance, especially within the context of our current discussion. Brock has noted that while the libidinal is related to affect, it also includes phobias, desires, and articulates an emotional state; essentially connecting the whole structure of physic and emotional life (2020, p. 32). These excesses, so-to-speak, reside outside structures of stable interpretation, as Lyotard argues, 'libidinal instantiations, these little dispositifs of the retention and flow of the influxes of desire are never unequivocal and cannot give rise to a sociological reading or an unequivocal politics' (Lyotard, 1993, p. 114). Expanding upon the libidinal, Brock has added that it not only highlights the difference between discourse and practice, but additionally illuminates social imaginaries while also undergirding social realities, adding: 'It is infrastructure, invisible to our perceptions just like the materials and processes we pass by or utilize every day-until a rupture occurs' (2020, p. 11). From another lens, Eva Hayward (2017) has used aspects of a libidinal economy in her essay 'Spiderwoman'. Hayward argues that transsexuality is not about authenticity or originality, but instead reveals how bodily feeling and desire are constituted socially and spatially. Noting the political, affective, and social registers that work to produce one's body, she states that there is an emergence of a material, psychical, sensual, and social self through corporeal, spatial, and temporal processes that transfigure the lived body. Hayward connects the libidinal to what she refers to as transpositioning, stating:

Transpositioning considers how a transsexual emerges through her body's own viscosity, through the energization of corporeal limits. The transpositional is a matrix through which sensations may be drawn back through the body, to make the body feel 'familiar', even as familiarity remains ultimately unattainable … The transpositional, as Lyotard describes the libidinal body, is threaded through itself, just as it's webbed with its neighborhood. (2017, p. 249)

We can follow such articulations with our previous discussions of sonic engagement and begin to sketch out a libidinal economy of noise. Through GLOSS and HIRS' ability to sonically engage their audience through such spatial-affective experiences, we can reimagine the possibilities described earlier by both LaBelle and Graeber to utilize invisibility, corresponding power-relations, and those bodily states intangible to exchange value. Here, we can imagine a libidinal economy of noise as not only a collective abreaction (or emotional purging) of trans experience through the complex matrix of emergent affective states, but also one that also initiates a space to imagine new formations of anarchist organization. Even if only momentarily disengaging with the totalizing structures of capitalism, we can begin to see the potential of such a possibility. We might be reminded here as well of what Reina Gossett, Erica A Stanley, and Johanna Burton refer to in their work on trans cultural production as a 'trapdoor' which they describe as 'those clever contraptions that are not entrances or exits but secret passageways that take you someplace else, often someplace as yet unknown' (2017, xxiii).

Conclusion

In context, this chapter has initiated an effort to re-examine trans-feminist punk in the United States to explore new possibilities through sonic engagement and anarchism. While our discussion has only examined two of the many artists which hold promise for new forms of anarchist organization, both GLOSS and the HIRS Collective have demonstrated that sound itself is an undoubtedly viable medium of such possibility. Through GLOSS's ability to initiate new inclusive sonic spaces, and HIRS' ability to intensify and continue the tradition, we have witnessed how positive engagement is still possible within the twenty-first century punk genre and its related subcultures. Through a shift of attention to the auditory, coupled with a libidinal economy of noise, new possibilities emerge through a combination of creativity, collectivity, and spatiality. Through such action, we may hope to witness new possibilities for a generative politics yet to be fully realized.

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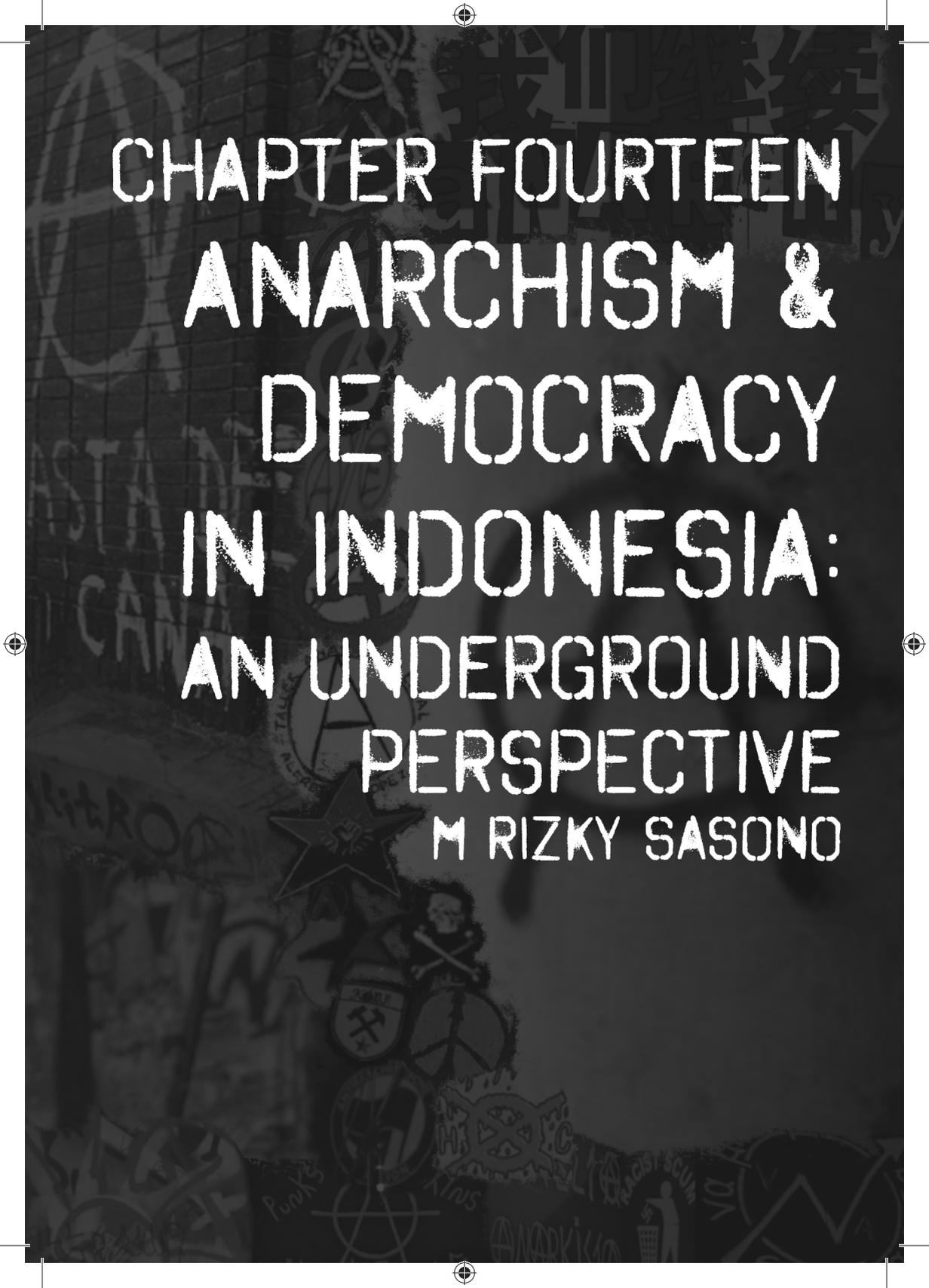
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ANARCHISM & DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA: AN UNDERGROUND PERSPECTIVE

M RIZKY SASONO

Chapter Fourteen: Anarchism and democracy in Indonesia: An underground perspective

M Rizky Sasono

This chapter scrutinizes musical narratives that emphasize the underground as a political space that strives for 'democracy', particularly the processes of democracy during the period of political reform known as Reformasi in Indonesia 1998, and the notion of democracy in the domain of do-it-yourself (DIY) music production in twenty-first-century Indonesia. These narratives illuminate the ways in which anarchism is manifested in the sphere of the underground and what it means to be democratic. I employ the term 'underground' as an overarching setting of musical cases where anarchism is identifiable. Rather than a top-down explication of anarchism and democracy, I opt for a descriptive narrative from below – accounts of those who are exponents of the underground, aesthetically and politically. Hence, the title of this chapter: 'an underground perspective'.

The first section traces underground activism against President Suharto's New Order regime in the period leading up to 'Reformasi' – music was central to resistance against the authoritarian regime. Political protests during the late-New Order (1994-1998) were characterized by the existence of underground organizations, many of which were led by student activists (Lane, 2008; Lee, 2016). However, this narrative of students as agents of change obscures the history of non-students who participated in and contributed to the escalation of pressures that forced President Suharto to resign and gave hope for democracy in Indonesia. It eliminates the participation of marginalized groups whose struggles were not limited to student-organized protests, but for whom struggle became part of their everyday lives. Here, the narratives of anarchism and democracy in the late-New Order period are focused on the underground struggles of street buskers (pengamen), as some of the most oppressed members of society.

The term 'democracy' generally revolves around power, its entitlement and how power is appointed among, or delegated to, the people. In the ideal

(representative) democracy, institutions such as the state serve the rights of its citizens, and these rights are not dependent on the policies of the current government. Despite their emphasis on rights and the state, discourses of democracy also cross over with libertarian socialist anarchism in their demand for freedom and social equality (Rooum, 2014, p. 14), though anarchists usually strive towards participatory democracy, rather than representative forms. In the case of Indonesia, however, Suharto's 'Demokrasi Pancasila' failed to serve the 'sovereignty of the people', and the 32 years of the New Order regime (1966-1998) decayed into growing feudalism and fascism (Vltchek, 2012, pp. 38-39). This highlights the anarchist critique of 'democratic' state systems whose sovereignty is, in the words of Bakunin, 'wholly fictitious' and which 'continue to serve as the instrument of thoughts, wills, and consequently interests not [their] own' (Bakunin, 1970 [1882], p. 40). To counter the mischiefs of statist or representative democracy, anarchists prioritize concepts such as horizontalism and collectivism, stressing principles of autonomy, voluntary association, self-organization, and mutual aid (Graeber, 2009, p. 105). The development brought by post-anarchists sees anarchism move beyond classical philosophy towards more practicable, grounded forms of anarchist theory (Lazaar, 2018, p. 160), and this anarchism also widens the main objective of opposing power beyond merely the state or economic power, incorporating all forms of power exercised by one group over another (May, 1994, p. 168). In moments of social upheaval, such as the protests leading to Reformasi in Indonesia, themes central to democracy and anarchism come to the fore, and, crucially, they take on particular meaning for the people in their daily lives. The example of pengamen street buskers in and around the 1998 protest movement is an interesting example of this.

The second section of this chapter revolves around post-anarchism in the field of cultural production, examining a manifestation of 'audio anarchy' against the backdrop of early-twenty-first-century neoliberal Indonesia. DIY music production can be understood as a response to the dominance of the capitalist music industry and its power over musicians and popular tastes. As such, DIY production endeavors for control over the means of production, and control over means of representation, through 'a vision of a desired society which is participatory and democratic' (Shantz, 2010, p. 164). Here, I will be focusing on Yogyakarta-based label Yes No Wave (YNW), who practice alternative forms of music production, and Senyawa, an experimental-punk

group closely associated with the label, who strive for decentralization in their DIY music production. The socio-history of YNW and Senyawa exemplifies underground values of anti-capitalism and the democratized political economy of DIY. While DIY processes of production, distribution, and consumption have been understood as counter to capitalism, not all DIY music making can be considered as anarchist (Jeppesen, 2018). In this regard, the investigation into the political economy of the musicians discussed includes, and contributes to, the idea of DIY-as-anarchism, which in Jeppesen's view must include oppositional content, aesthetic experiments, community practice, anti-hierarchical organizational structures, prefigurative processes, anti-capitalist economics, and direct action (Jeppesen, 2018, p. 207).

SPI buskers' union and the sound of democracy, 1998

This section focuses on the involvement of pengamen during the escalating Reformasi protests in Yogyakarta 1998. 'Pengamen' is an overarching term to describe street buskers in urban centers in Indonesia – anthropologist Max Richter describes pengamen as being 'like beggars … humble street musicians slinging battered colorfully decorated guitars as they roam through the city in search of spare change' (2013, p. 54). However, this is open to challenge as the word 'ngamen' is also used to describe all practices of music performances in exchange for money, not limited to a group who are economically marginalized. But, while such definitions are often incompatible with the individual trajectory of street buskers, the emphasis on economic and political marginalization is important – as anthropologist Jeremy Wallach puts it: 'pengamen represent the failure of the Indonesian government to provide economic security for all its citizens' (2008, p. 179). Pengamen, as an umbrella term of street musicians, is also qualified to indicate a certain hierarchy according to musical tropes and aesthetics. For example, street artists of seniman jalanan are considered to possess better musical skills and as having more aesthetic privilege than pengamen, who often play established songs from known artists. Another group that falls into the street buskers category are street punk kids or 'anak punk' – one component of the diverse and

ambiguous Indonesian punk scenes, alongside artists, student activists and assorted 'middle class' dropouts (Martin-Iverson, forthcoming). However, these categories are often blurred and meshed as interactions between these sub-groups of street dwellers are inevitable. This is the situation described by Ahmad 'Thole', a former pengamen who came from East Java to Yogyakarta in 1998 in search of better musical opportunities. In his early period in the new city, he dressed in the punk outfit of boots, jean jacket, and red dyed hair. However, he is reluctant to consider himself as punk, despite his active interaction with anak punk in his hometown of Surabaya, and his on-off interaction with anak punk in other East Javan cities. Suggesting the musical hierarchy, noted above, Ahmad considers himself as a street busker or pengamen to emphasize his more advanced level of musicality compared to his punk counterparts. 'I am not anak punk, but my lifestyle was', he said, pointing to his abnormal way of life spent mostly on the streets.

Aside from being labeled as a social nuisance, pengamen, beggars and, to a large extent, street vendors are susceptible to violence from the forces of authority. They are considered as disrupting security (keamanan) and order (ketertiban) and are therefore subject to oppression from the military state apparatus, specifically the troops and officers. The military under President Suharto's New Order regime held an institutionalized role and developed an ideological and legal framework to support a formal role in political affairs called the 'dual function' or dwifungsi (Kingsbury, 2003, p. 10; Elson, 2001, pp. 270-273). Dwifungsi held that the military had a 'sociopolitical' function as well as a defense function – the sociopolitical function was to serve as a watchdog over social activities, with the military monitoring every effort and activity of the people in the field of ideology, politics, and economics. Through the establishment of the Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Koordinasi Keamanan dan Ketertiban, or Kopkamtib) in 1988, the military intruded into the social lives of the people and exercised broad and loosely defined security, intelligence, and interrogation functions to identify suspected sources of threat to the state (Hill, 1994, p. 24). Military troops and officers would often be found in the same public spaces favored by pengamen, such as at bus stations, inside commuter buses and trains, in the market, or in red light districts. Under dwifungsi, the military exercised coercive control over these spaces. On an East Java inter-city bus route, for example, the military administered a curfew on buskers. If found playing

beyond certain hours, their instruments would be confiscated. As Ahmad reports, there have been accounts of pengamen's musical instruments being destroyed by military personnel, and one pengamen musician was lucky to escape being shot (interview with the author, 2019).

The conflation of the state and its security and order in New Order Indonesia is an example of state violence, and the state's disregard for the protection of the economically oppressed. For pengamen, the vulnerability of the urban poor and the oppression from the state, channeled through the military, became a subject of concern in their music scene. The anonymously written song 'Mengadu Pada Indonesia' ['Complaining to Indonesia'] depicts the state as being far removed from the ideal form of democratic society that ought to protect its citizens, and the pengamen plead to an imagined beneficent 'Indonesia' over their military's violence whose power is 'bigger than God':

Hari ini sengaja aku kepadamu Indonesiaku,
Tentang ulah aparatmu yang lupa waktu.

Oh, tentu kamu tahu.
Bayangkan ulah mereka,
Mereka sok berkuasa.
Mereka suka menyiksa.
Bahkan membunuh sudah biasa.
Aku melihat tindakan apparat.
Tembak sana tembak sini sampai ke akhirat.
Sialan (sialan) aparat tuh setan.
Kuasanya melebihi kuasanya Tuhan.

[Today I purposely complain to you my Indonesia,]
[About your troops who have forgotten about time.]

[Oh, you know that one.]
[Imagine, their behavior,]
[They are playing the authoritarian.

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[They like to torture.]
[Even killing people is normal.]

[I see troops in action.]
[They shoot here and there until (we) go heaven.]
[Damn (damn) troops are the devil.]
[Their authority is bigger than God.]

 (As sung by Ahmad 'Thole')

The song develops an anarchistic undertone through sound. This musical narrative of power and oppression by the state became a vernacular expression that was passed on among pengamen – a consensus of embodied knowledge that was familiar to the urban poor. The expression of dissatisfaction with the militarist state became a tuneful 1-3-5 musical piece whose sound was intended to be as catchy as possible, while still getting the message across. The chords and melody were simple enough to be learnt by the least skilled street musicians, even for anak punk who were deemed to be at the bottom of the musical hierarchy. As Ahmad notes, the song became a popular sarcastic depiction of state violence, sung widely by street musicians, including those under the umbrella organization of Malioboro Streetside Singing Group art communities (Kelompok pengamen Jalanan Malioboro) in Yogyakarta's city center, and the loosely organized large concentration of anak punk in Mojokerto, near Surabaya in East Java (interview with the author, 2019).

Criticism of the military was a common theme in the years leading to Reformasi. The slogan Aparat Keparat! (Fuck the Troops!), something equivalent to All Cops Are Bastards (ACAB), was often used, albeit with a lack of detailed knowledge of the systematic violence underpinning it. Some pengamen, however, were more politically aware and engaged in organizations such as the groups of street artists and buskers who call themselves Sarikat Pengamen Indonesia (Indonesia Union of Buskers), founded in September 1994 in Yogyakarta. Abbreviated as SPI, the group was born out of anger about lack of access to mainstream politics. SPI was proactive in politically educating their urban poor counterparts, including pedicab drivers, street vendors, and other people who earn their living from

the informal economy on the streets. SPI believed that social issues such as poverty and unemployment are systematic problems and the result of government policy. They were against the system and positioned themselves alongside their fellow people, or 'rakyat' – 'the common people, non-elites, the illiterate' (Anderson, 1990, p. 61), 'those who occupy the lower stratum of the political and economic structure, the poverty-stricken, marginalized, and those who have been pushed aside' (Weintraub, 2006, p. 412).

SPI's political movement was known to be affiliated with the Committee of the Peoples' Struggle for Change (Komite Perjuangan Rakyat untuk Perubahan – KPRP), an organization of leftist students (Human Rights Watch, 1998). Whereas other student pro-democracy groups were relatively elitist, KPRP was known as the radical pro-democracy group that opened-up for members other than students, such as artists, labor representatives, and groups from the urban poor, including activists from underground music communities. In the years leading to Reformasi, members of the punk communities were conspicuously engaged in activism. Groups such as the anarchist hardcore crust-punk band Blackboots, political hip-metal band Teknoshit, and the underground artists who formed the radical art collective Taring Padi in 1998, are a few punk and underground examples of those were engaged in activism at this time, notably in association with KPRP. Daru Supriyono, a punk enthusiast who traversed the punk and activist scenes, was a student at Atma Jaya University and an active participant in two renowned underground music communities in Yogyakarta, Realino Punk Community and Last Palm, and was also an active member of KPRP. As part of a larger collective circle of activists, he has helped organize labor organizations with groups such as The National Forum of Labor Struggle (Forum Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia – FNBI). The solidarity among labor activists was based on Daru's understanding that 'we are all workers' (interview with the author, 2020). For Daru and his anarchist punk community, and for their labor counterparts, the common struggle was to end the political and economic oppression carried out by Suharto's regime. As articulated Widji Thukul, a poet and activist who was declared missing in 1998, with many believing that he had likely been killed by the state: 'If an opinion is rejected without consideration, criticism is prohibited. Voices are silenced without reason … there is only one word: Resist!' (Thukul, 2014 [1986]).

From the SPI's perspective, to resist the policies that created inequities, activists needed to mobilize the people to think critically and systematically. Despite the dislike of the elite status of students, who were regarded as contributing to the problematic representations of poverty and marginalized populations, SPI reached out to students for assistance. As Ahmad recalled:

> Students did not share experiences with the 'people', and yet they had the knowledge, skills, and resources to fight systems of oppression. If the students could teach the people the knowledge and skills needed and provide resources and support, the people would have a better chance for success in their struggle. (Interview with the author, 2019)

As part of this wider network struggling for reform, the SPI buskers' union became an active political entity. They organized discussions of ideology and politics, inviting student activists to present the material in a language that urban poor participants could understand. In solidarity, they often supported protests organized by other subjugated people, such as farmers and labor organizations. Their contributions to student-led mass protests reflected their active approach to the struggle of Reformasi and their position as agents of democracy. However, their distinctive, and anarchistic, contribution was as musicians. Their musical aesthetics signified the urban poor's struggle for democracy *from below* – these embodied experiences were channeled through sound aesthetics, transforming everyday experience under military oppression to the musical sphere. Their music discloses deeper critiques of state violence carried out by the New Order regime, while presenting an aesthetic that is deeply rooted in their oppressed status as pengamen.

An example of SPI's performativity was their involvement in a three-day protest organized by different activist groups in Yogyakarta in April 1998. During the protest SPI performed four songs (audio documentation of protest, 1998), one of which was entitled 'OTB Jare Suharto' ['OTB Says Suharto'] (OTB, Organisasi Tanpa Bentuk, literally translates as 'formless organization' but is better understood as 'illegal organization'). Following the pengamen trope of 'covering' other people's music, but expertly changing the lyrics to fit the context of their everyday experience, the melody borrows from a hit song that was performed by child singer Enno Lerian, entitled 'Si Nyamuk

Nakal' ('The Naughty Mosquito'). Penned by prominent children's song writer, Papa T Bob, the song was a big hit in 1992, six years prior to the protest. SPI's presence at the protest was significant because, in this domain of students, they performed what it meant to be the oppressed urban poor. Some of the protest participants responded in familiarity to the tunes, but most applause was given to each line and its recontextualization to the struggle. Their performance was greeted with an exceptional response from other protest participants for several reasons: first, the contextuality of the lyrics; second, the aesthetics, blending the familiarity of a popular tune with unexpected content; third, the subject of performance, and its representation of the people by the people in this least-mediated (if not completely un-mediated) performance.

'OTB Jare Suharto'

Banyak sawah yang digusur,
Karena pejabat pada kolusi
Banyak buruh yang menuntut
Karena gaji tak mencukupi

Banyak buruh yang menuntut
Banyak petani demonstra
Apa rakyat cuma dianggap
sampah?

Dimanakah kebenaran?
Dimanakah keadilan?
Apa rakyat perlu turun ke jalan?

Banyak paguyuban baru
Menjelang pemilu Sembilan tujuh
Kita butuh berorganisasi
tapi kenapa diintimidasi

Dimanakah hak-asasi
Dimanakah demokrasi
Apa kami perlu ber-revolusi?

Tong Kosong Tut-Tut-Tut- Tut-Tut
Masalah Moko Harmoko
Klir-Nuklir BJ Habibie
OTB Jare Soeharto

['"Illegal Organization" says Suharto']

[(There are) so many rice fields confiscated,]
[because the bureaucrats are in collusion.]
[So many laborers are protesting,]
[because their salary is inadequate.]

[(There are) so many labors who demand,]
[(there are) so many farmers who protest.]
[Do they consider people as trash?]

[Where is virtue?]
[Where is justice?]
[Or do we need to descend to the streets?]

[(There are) so many organizations,]
[Leading to the '97 elections.]
[We need to be in an organization,]
[but why do we get intimidation?]

[Where is human rights?]
[Where is democracy?]
[Or do we need to have a revolution?]

[Empty can Tut-Tut-Tut-Tut-Tut.]
[Troubled Moko Harmoko.]
[Clear-nuclear BJ Habibie.]
[OTB (illegal organization) says Soeharto.]

(As performed by Sarikat Pengamen Indonesia)

The verses of the song describe the circumstances that generated discontent among laborers and farmers, as represented in the speeches, chants, and songs of '98 activists. Land was frequently confiscated under the state's macro-economic development program (Hill, 1994, p. 85), and labor issues were amplified after the political conspiracy that led to the death of activist Marsinah, in Sidoarjo, East Java in 1993 (Kurniasari and Krisnadi, 2014). A year later, the Centre for Indonesia Working Class Struggle (Persatuan Pekerja Buruh Indonesia – PPBI) was formed, actively demanding a living wage for workers and calling for Suharto to step down. PPBI was later declared an 'illegal organization' (OTB), and the General Secretary, Dita Indah Sari, along with a few other colleagues, was captured by the police in July 1996 (Pakpahan, 1999). The lyrics at the coda mention prominent political figures of the New Order government: Harmoko was the longtime information minister, and Suharto's loyal servant; BJ Habibie was the Research and Technology Minister, who succeeded Suharto as president in 1998; Tutut was the nickname of Suharto's daughter, Siti Hardianti Rukmana, who was appointed as a government minister in 1997. Responding to the call, the audience shouted 'Suharto' emphasizing the main perpetrator among his main political helpers.

These aesthetics, playing popular songs but changing the lyrics to fit a certain context, signified pengamen as one of the active social agents for change through their musical performances. It is a distinctive sound of democracy that differs from voices of student activists, anarchist punk bands, and other performances in the underground sphere. In the context of the student protest held at Universitas Gadjah Mada in April 1998, SPI's folky performance signifies the struggle for democracy from the bottom up. The aesthetics of pengamen were an anarchistic representation of the oppressed, in a least-mediated form.

Figure 14:1 – Protest flyers of 1998. Poster of The Military's dual function (Dwifungsi).
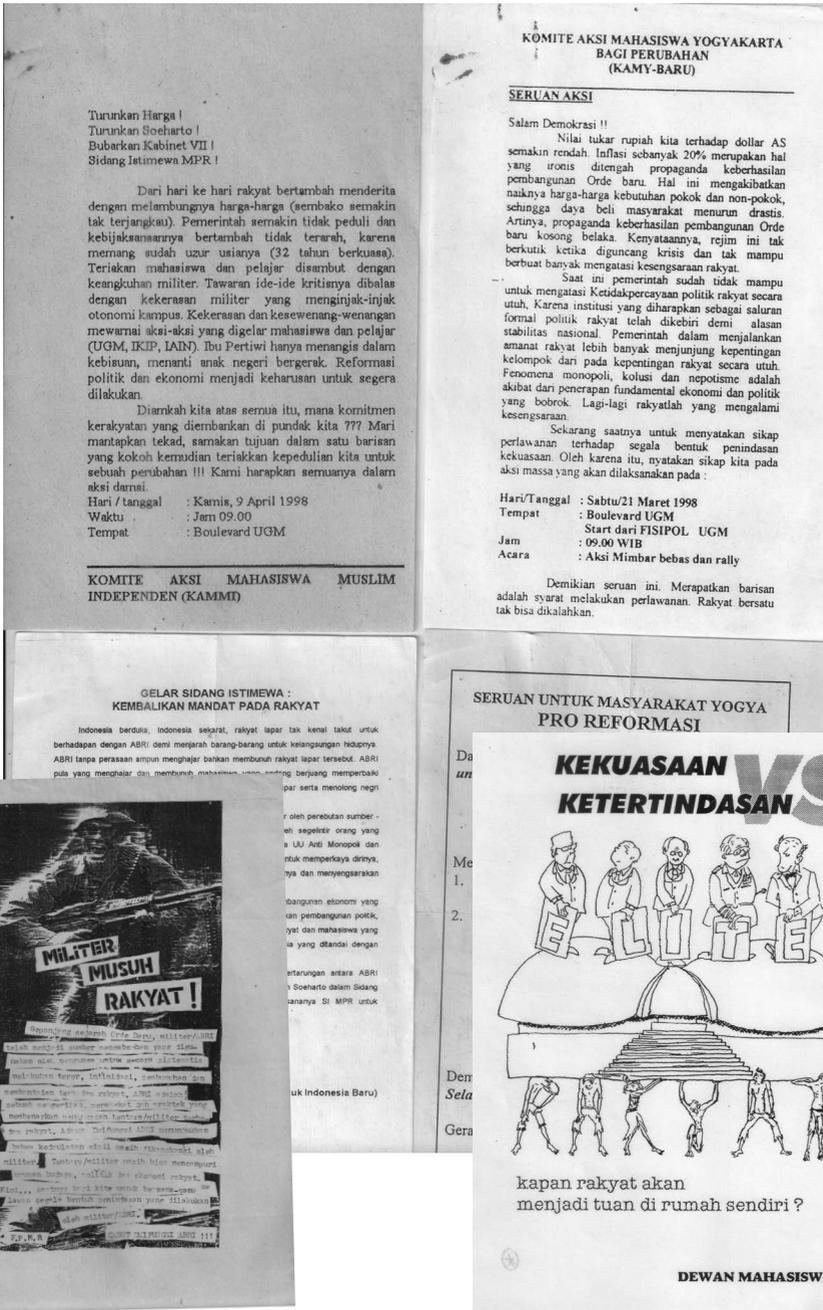
Audio anarchy – Yes No Wave and Senyawa

Besides the escalating dissent, the 1990s was also a time when Indonesian youths embraced new musical forms. With the increasing access of global media to Indonesia, sounds of punk, Oi!, ska, indie-rock, alternative rock, hardcore, and death metal became popular among youths 'in the know', coming from a diverse range of backgrounds from anak punk to children of the elite (Martin-Iverson, 2012). These sounds were distinguished from popular tunes, such as 'pop Indonesia', slow rock, and jazz, and were considered as, and formed into, an ideological space called 'the underground'. These new sounds were associated with independent DIY production, as opposed to mainstream cultural production by the multinational record labels that were newly stationed in Jakarta (see Luvaas, 2009), and were attributed with aesthetics and politics of resistance. The ideological space of these new scenes created a sense of democracy against the backdrop of escalating demands for political reform.

DIY music production has been a much-contested sphere, especially in terms of what aspects are 'anarchist' and which are not. As asserted by Kevin Dunn, DIY record labels embody what Walter Benjamin calls progressive production, serving as an anti-capitalist business model (Dunn, 2012). Similarly, for Sandra Jeppesen, the 'anarchism' of DIY is identifiable in the scene's generation of products, culture, and services by themselves, keeping the production, distribution, and consumption as separate from capitalism as possible (Jeppesen, 2018, p. 205). Although early examples of DIY production were responses to the dominance of the corporate music industry (involvement with which may mean loss of financial reward, and especially artistic freedom and integrity (Donaghey, 2013, p. 159)), by the end of the 1990s DIY producers were becoming entangled with the corporate industry. Compilations of various underground genres, who recorded their songs by way of DIY, were released by big recording companies − *Indienesia*, for example, was released by Musica in 1999 consisting of underground genres such as ska, britpop, indie, punk, hardcore, alternative, and grunge (Various Artists, 1999). A number of underground exponents 'sold out' and released their albums [on] mainstream record labels. Bali based punk outfit, Superman is Dead, for example, signed with Sony Indonesia in 2003. For some hard-core

underground scenesters they were considered as traitors (Lilley, 2015). At the turn of the twenty-first century, more and more DIY practitioners distanced themselves from the anarchist explications of do-it-yourself. DIY came to be understood as a capitalist mode of economy, either by selling out or by following the economic logics of capitalist industries (Hesmondhalgh, 1999). In the 2000s, amidst capitalized indie festivals sponsored by tobacco companies and the broadcasting of indie and underground bands on national television, the remnants of anarchism of the early DIY underground music scene were like nostalgic tales of the golden past told by an ageing underground musician.

However, despite the numerous co-optations of underground forms into profit-oriented objectives, there are still some communities that maintain the post-anarchist DIY approach, finding new ways to navigate against the profit-oriented trend in twenty-first-century Indonesia. In this regard I follow the trajectory of a 1990s punk exponent, Wok the Rock, whose legacy of the underground materialized into a different form of cultural activism. He founded Yes No Wave (YNW) in 2007, an internet-based free download record label, whose objective resonates with Sean Martin-Iverson's observation of post-Reformasi Indonesian punk as 'turning away from overt protest politics and focus[ing] instead on their own cultural and economy, constituting significant forms of working class politics' (Martin-Iverson, forthcoming). Wok the Rock, real name Woto Wibowo, was involved in the establishment of the underground scene in Yogyakarta against the backdrop of political activism in the 1990s. He was renowned for his engagement with underground scenes, mainly punk communities between his hometown in Madiun, East Java, and Yogyakarta, where he studied communication and fine art. From 1999 to 2004 he was the prominent figure with a punk record label called Realino Records, he booked underground gigs, and produced several zines (Juliastuti, 2018, p. 90). As an artist aligned with the Mes 56 art collective, his works often take a cynical approach to capitalist means of production in popular culture. His journey into the multiple dimensions of anarchism can be traced since his time as a student in Yogyakarta in the 1990s. In 1997, alongside fellow students from Indonesia Institute of the Arts (Institut Seni Indonesia – ISI), he organized a showcase entitled 'Twenty Something Twenty Nothing' held in a sports hall at the center of Yogyakarta. The bands that performed were affiliates of students from the arts institutions.

As the Wok the Rock suggests, the production of the gig exemplifies the camaraderie and voluntary work that revolved around the circle of students/ artists: work was shared collectively; travelling bands financed their own expenses; the committee gathered funds for sports hall rental and logistics through donations and contributions from circles of associates; the advertisements were hand drawn and stuck on walls around the city (interview with the author, 2018). Bands such as Bandoso, Race Riot, Turtles.Jr, Fabel, Naif, Rumah Sakit, I Hate Mondayz, and Wok's own band Polka Dot Panties, were some of those who took turns on the stage performing their cultural expression of the underground. The work that was put into producing the gig was a true reflection of DIY praxis – that is to say, a close intertwinement between theoretical ideas and practice – with producers, performers, and perhaps some of the audience engaged in a process of self-participatory democracy, autonomy, and self-valorization. In the late-New Order period, at the time when democracy was in decline, and musical taste was defined by capitalist owners and the state, Twenty Something Twenty Nothing and other regular gigs at campuses exemplified activism in the sphere of cultural production, enhanced by anarchistic praxes and the surrounding political atmosphere. No one was able to formulate it then, but the sense of change was captured by anthropologist Brent Luvaas, who attended the show: 'The nation's youth were perched on the edge of a precipice they could barely see over. They had a sense that something new and better was waiting for them on the other side but couldn't say exactly what it was' (2009, p. 3).

The political stance of this DIY production, however, went beyond an opposition to sponsorships or mainstream genres. The underlying camaraderie reflects the zeitgeist of the decade, shaping the meaning of being underground, being democratic, being pro-democracy, and being anarchist. Being a student carries political connotations in this context too, because campuses were centers of political, as well as cultural, activism. Many underground bands were given the opportunity to perform at student-organized gigs because some of the band members were students themselves, and, as such, the network of the underground music scene intersects with the student culture of staging free gigs on college campus premises. Reciprocal objectives were met; students needed bands to play at their events, underground bands could not hope for a more diverse audience than at

campuses. The campus is therefore a site of political and aesthetic social relations (Sasono, 2021).

In the mid 2000s as underground scenesters became more accustomed to the internet, and major recording companies' profits were disrupted by easy access to free downloads, more and more musicians from the underground scene saw internet platforms as a democratizing domain. The internet, and later innovations such as MySpace and Facebook, increased the possibilities for virtual connection between participants (Bennet and Peterson, 2004, p. 187). Moreover, activities of sharing previously practiced in the physical sense, such as home taping and CD ripping, traversed into the virtual. This digital culture also provided an accessible space for anarchy in terms of democratic forms of knowledge sharing. For many musicians and music enthusiasts, torrent files in 'illegal blogs', where people share and download music, enriched their musical horizons (Juliastuti, 2018, p. 92). For Wok the Rock, the overarching idea of digital culture and sharing was a source of inspiration for his artistic work. He initiated the 'Burn Your Idol' project to endorse the sharing culture, compiling 1,000 CD-Rs from friends, colleagues and anonymous others, who burned their favorite music onto a blank CD and provided a photo of themselves for the cover. These burned albums were accompanied with a piece of information about each of submitters: childhood, adolescence, the first addictive substance consumed, courtship, growing old, birth, death, loss, and so on (Wicaksono, 2011). The thousand pieces of information (and the CDs) became a disordered timeline of music history, a random discography of an artist or band's journey, and their juxtapositional intersections with the journeys of each participant involved in the Burn Your Idol project.

In 2007, Wok the Rock established a music label, Yes No Wave (YNW), which is described on their website as 'a non-profit music label that distributes sound or musical works to a broaden public as a "gift-economy" act; an experiment on applying free legal music both online and offline to support open-sharing culture movement' [*sic*] (Yes No Wave website). YNW's free download policy and adherence to Creative Commons sharing is a uniting concept envisioned to achieve collective sustainability (Juliastuti, 2018, p. 91). As opposed to copyright, which reserves all the rights to a piece of work to the producer(s) or distributor(s), Creative Commons derives from the concept of 'copyleft', which puts the work into the public realm, where, depending on the

degree of freedom in the particular license used, the work can be freely changed, reproduced, used, or distributed (Downing, 2010, p. 143). In this sense, YNW exemplifies the values of the gift economy, an idea coined by Marcel Mauss to describe complex interpersonal bonds, as opposed to straightforward market economy (Mauss, 1990). David Graeber places Mauss's gift economy at the core of the forming of a society that relies on personal and reciprocal qualities:

> In gift economies, exchanges do not have the impersonal qualities of the capitalist marketplace: In fact, even when objects of great value change hands, what really matters is the relations between the people; exchange is about creating friendships, or working out rivalries, or obligations, and only incidentally about moving around valuable goods. As a result, everything becomes personally charged. (Graeber, 2008, n.p.)

This resembles punk's culture of sharing, where money-oriented matters are viewed as supplementary to integrity rather than merely means of exchange. This is contradictory to market economy where transactions are based upon the use value (or, more usually, the distorted *market* value) of things, regardless of the personal qualities of buyer and seller. In the sphere of DIY production, Shannon Garland claims that indie communities snub the market economy by working within the idea of 'friendism'. Participants within the indie music scene (musicians, producers, organizers, even the audience) are intertwined; indie participants – like their punk counterparts – are socially connected to one another, making their relations intimate. While stranger-oriented music practice is compatible with capitalist economy, friendism defines itself in terms of a sociality that sustains the community. In Garland's words:

> such values and relationships are the very glue that sustains meaningful musical practice. Musical production and circulation, in other words, are inherently 'interested', there is no musical meaning without social meaning, there is no social meaning without social relationships, and there are no social relationships without

contestation over their historical, contemporary, and future nature.
(Garland, 2019, pp. 40-41)

The sharing culture that became the soul of YNW's hundreds of releases is itself an underground practice and an anarchistic praxis challenging the normalized power of for-profit music productions. The profit-oriented industry endorses capitalism, retaining the power hierarchies of the market economy. Their cultural production, or music production in this case, is defined by a top-down approach which attempts to influence wider society, and is deeply engrained in the logics and behaviors of capitalism (Donaghey, 2019, p. 434). This top-down, for-profit model fits neatly with the state's view of cultural expressions as 'creative economy', and in neoliberal Indonesia, this is supported with governmental initiatives around entrepreneurship and labor incentives (Pangestu, 2008; Purnomo, 2016, pp. 48-52), but also enforced through copyright. In 2021 the government of President Joko Widodo established the National Collective Management Institute (Lembaga Manajemen Kolektif Nasional – LMKN) to collect and distribute the rights relating to creators, copyright holders and owners (Lembaga Kolektif Manajemen Nasional website). Moreover, there have been controversies surrounding the establishment of LKMN, questioning its power, financial accountability, equity (Barus, 2021), and the links between LKMN, other State-Owned Public Enterprises, and 'powerful people' in the music industries.

While the capitalist mode of economy is the norm for the Indonesian music industry in general, YNW's underground trajectory continues to find alternative ways towards a more democratizing economic system. YNW continue to experiment with a free music model, outside of the industry (Agato and Rasudi, 2017). The notion of democracy that surrounds YNW can be exemplified by the release of Senyawa's album entitled *Alkisah* in February 2021. Senyawa, a group put together by Wok the Rock, consisting of Rully Shabara and Wukir Suryadi, were born out of the underground, noise and experimental scene in Yogyakarta. Scrutinizing alternative means of distribution while abiding by their sharing culture, Senyawa decided to open their album to labels all over the world as co-producers. The group put out an open call through social media for labels who would produce and sell small, localized editions of the same record. As a result, 44 labels around the world

produced distinct editions of *Alkisah*, with different artwork and, in many cases, bonus tracks (Currin, 2021). Rather than being trapped into a hierarchical power relationship by submitting music to big streaming companies who don't care about their music, Senyawa distributes their power by giving authority to a network of people who do care and who are supportive. The trust network also allows the public to explore and exploit Senyawa's works, so it is not only appointed labels that are allowed to negotiate how the system works in terms of distribution area or format (vinyl, cassettes, digital), and people are invited to transform it into new works beyond Senyawa's authority. As Rully from Senyawa puts it:

> Not only [do] we provide stem files, artwork, we provide everything that we produced to be owned by anybody – it also means [it is] not owned by anybody. It belongs to anybody who wants to explore, utilize or exploit it in any way, even for money. If someone can eat by being involved with this project in some way, why not? (Interview with the author, 2021)

The multiplicity of new creations based on *Alkisah* echoes Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome metaphor of influences and intersections with no clear origin (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 [1980]) – the rhizome epitomizes the idea of decentralization, which creates autonomy in multiple centers rather than merely going against one center of power. Although regarded as an experiment, Senyawa's initiative to decentralize power exemplifies anarchistic approaches in audio production, which Rully describes as 'letting go of the power and a step towards fairness' (interview with the author, 2021). The experiment to decentralize the means of production through Creative Commons approaches is also a manifestation of local traditions of sharing, and therefore a work of decolonization against Western economic ideology. Traditional Indonesian cultures, for example, recognize concepts of swasembada (self-sufficiency) and gotong-royong (mutual aid) as a form of collectivism, which includes traditional systems of communal service where people contribute their labor (Suwignyo, 2019, p. 387). Despite the usage of these terms for government-initiated programs, the ideals of the gift economy are evident in traditional Javanese (and Asian) societies. These 'Eastern' ways of thinking were also highlighted by Rully in terms of the gift philosophy

popularly known as 'rejeki' (or fortune), in which personal misfortunes are caused by lack of giving (sedekah) (interview with the author, 2021).

While we recognize in the underground culture, especially in the discussion of punk, a legacy of anarchism filtered through avant-garde culture, hippie counterculture, and the class-conscious of European societies (Donaghey 2013, pp. 149-150), we should also bear in mind that international anarchism in the underground scenes entails engrained local social, political, and economic circumstances that have a contextual bearing on anarchist and democratic behaviors. These go beyond the musical and visual attributes of counter cultures, and reside under the surface of the global appropriation of punk culture. Indonesia's underground societies have their own indigenous expressions (Donaghey, 2016, p. 259), and we must be aware of the subtle traditions that underground individuals carry within their expressions of anarchism. YNW and Senyawa may well be representations of that. Senyawa's politics of sound traces back to the sphere of the underground and punk's political attitude. Although they are often described in the media as experimental punk, Rully claims that there have been no punk elements in their music. For him, punk is about attitude rather than aesthetics. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Rully recognized the government's failure to provide for the people, and stepped up to help, in the mutual aid spirit of gotong-royong, which highlights the local social order of things, such as the joint bearing of burdens and reciprocal assistance, or 'tolong menolong' (Geertz, 1983, p. 146). Addressing the anxiety about people's inability to work during the pandemic lockdown, especially for those who make a daily, hand-to-mouth living, Rully initiated a 'Feed Your Neighbor' project. He provided over 200 artworks for participants who were willing to feed one neighbor – there would be no need to feed many people because everyone should care for just one neighbor. By doing that no one would be left starving.

Coda

The underground perspectives of anarchism and democracy help to explain the sonic politics of the SPI busker union's music during the struggle for political reform in the late-New Order authoritarian regime, and these perspectives are also informative in understanding the politics of sound of YNW and Senyawa against the background of contemporary neoliberal Indonesia.

In 2009, the SPI was restructured and became two separate entities, Kepal SPI (Keluarga Seni Pinggiran Anti-Kapitalisasi Sarekat Pengamen Indonesia [Family of Anti-Capitalist Marginalized Art]) and SeBUMI (Serikat Kebudayaan Masyarakat Indonesia [Union of Indonesian People's Cultures]). Although employing slightly different strategies, both maintain their anarchistic traditions through sound and by being involved in social movements against the state oppressions that have characterized Indonesia's prolonged neoliberal authoritarianism since Reformasi.

A few months after Senyawa's *Alkisah* release, a version of their album was found on sale at Walmart, an American multinational retail corporation, assumingly initiated by Senyawa's label partner in the US. When I informed Rully about the *Alkisah* vinyl being distributed in one of the biggest commercial chains in the US, he noted that the deeply rooted cultural and economic dominance of capitalism simply shakes off the whole idea of the sharing philosophy. Referring to the traditional values of the 'East', Rully said, 'the doors for decolonization are seemingly open, but we need to teach philosophies that they don't understand. The West needs to be educated' (interview with the author, 2021).

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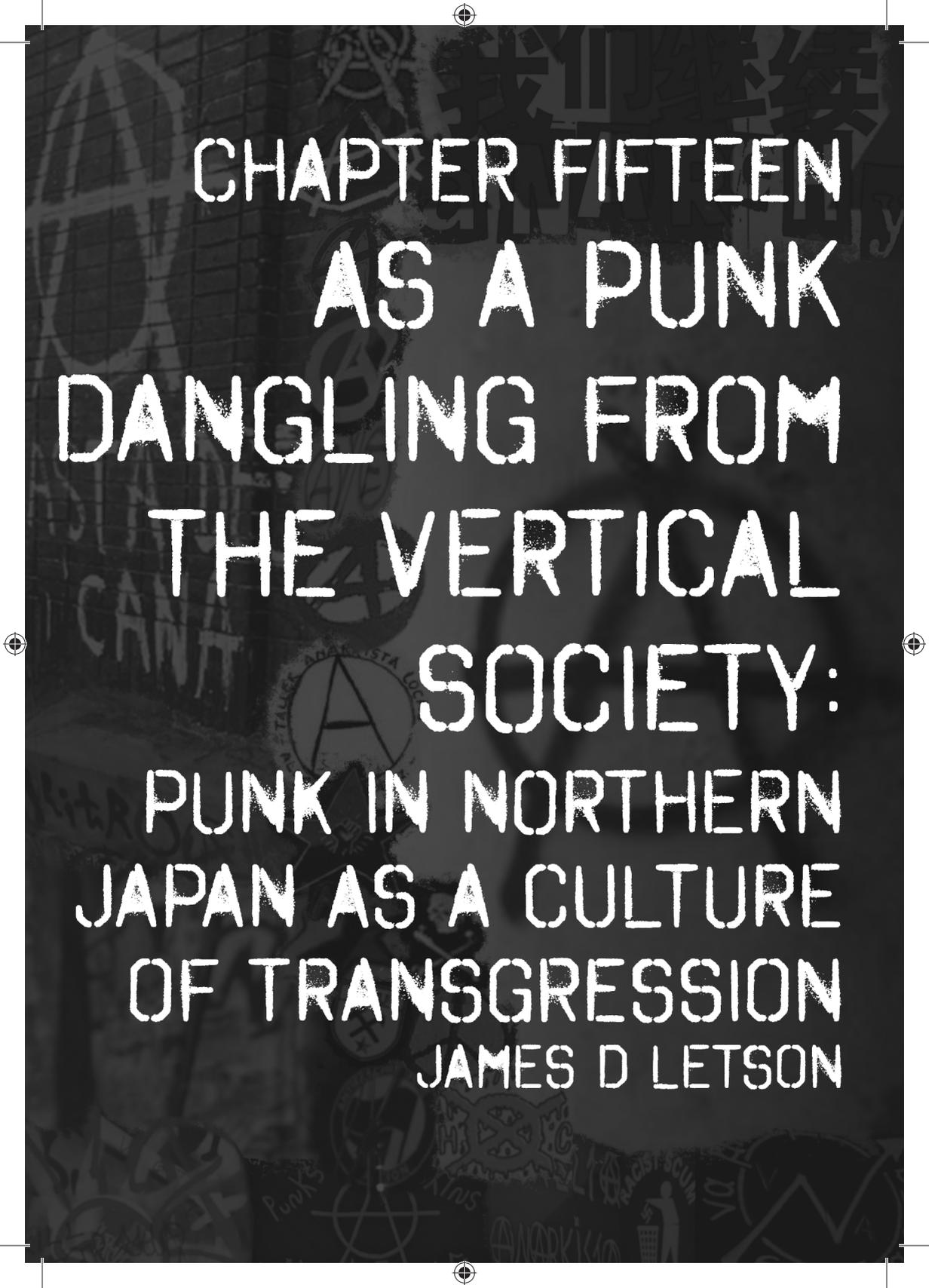
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AS A PUNK DANGLING FROM THE VERTICAL SOCIETY:

PUNK IN NORTHERN JAPAN AS A CULTURE OF TRANSGRESSION

JAMES D LETSON

Chapter Fifteen: AS A PUNK DANGLING FROM THE VERTICAL SOCIETY: Punk in northern Japan as a 'culture of transgression'

James D Letson

Introduction: KLUB COUNTERACTION IS MORE THAN MUSIC

At Klub Counteraction – the main hub for punk and hardcore activity in the city of Sapporo, on Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido – there is no mistaking the influence of British anarcho-punk and hardcore of the 1980s. Posters, record sleeves, band merchandise, and even tattoos echo the now classic styles of UK luminaries such as Crass, Discharge, Chaos UK and The Exploited. Spend some time at the venue and it soon becomes clear that, in addition to the visual style, the engagement with a politically aware practice of punk activism is also something that has been embraced by the Sapporo community. Charity events, benefits, and efforts to raise awareness of issues including racism, hate-speech, animal welfare, LGBTQ rights, and nuclear disarmament abound – to name but a few. This, of course, extends to the music, too. While the scene as a whole is remarkably eclectic, political and social commentary are common themes in many of the local bands' activities. It is clear that, here in Sapporo, hardcore (and punk) is, indeed, 'more than music'.

At first glance, it would be natural to assume that punks in Sapporo, in particular (and Japan, in general), have adopted punk and hardcore tropes from 'the West' more-or-less wholesale. Such an apparently universalist (sub)cultural colonisation would be problematic, to say the least. However, Mueller (2011) argues that hardcore punk practices are 'dislocal'. He asserts that local and/or global (sub)cultural identities are 'loci of action' (2011, p. 138) around which and through which subculturalists act in ways that are constantly (re)constituting these same loci. He offers the humble distro –

Figure 15:1 – A selection of photos showing some of the posters on display at Klub Counteraction (photograph by the author).

Figure 15:2 – A banner hung at the back of the stage area declares that 'Klub Counteraction is more than music' (photograph courtesy of Klub Counteraction).

small-scale, independent dealers in records, clothes, and other subculture-related goods – as one example of a loci of action which simultaneously bridges and transcends localities. These collectors and re-sellers of music and merch from around the globe are to be found wherever there are punk scenes, reproducing in miniature the interplay between constructions of the local with the cosmopolitan (some might say, hegemonic) global. A kind of punk Starbucks, if you will.

If this is truly the case, and punk and hardcore subcultural practices are, indeed, 'dislocal', then so too should be the milieu of sociocultural beliefs and values which surround and infuse them. In Sapporo, given the obvious influence of 1980s British anarcho-punk, this would namely be a culture of resistance based on the utopian ideals of anarchism and other associated political philosophies. On the surface, at least, this would seem to be the case for the community based around Klub Counteraction.

However, while there exists a distinct culture of resistance in northern Japan's punk and hardcore practitioners, it is a culture with neither clear focus nor definition. As I have argued elsewhere (Letson, 2021), this has allowed for the creation of an inclusive community where the everyday practice of resistance takes precedence over its specific aesthetic, purpose, or ideological content. Furthermore, those in the community who do choose to practice a more politically reflexive form of resistance shy away from adherence to any particular philosophy. They prefer to position themselves reactively, rather than proactively. Prefigurative visions for the future are eschewed in favour of demands for a resolution of the problem at hand, commonly through expressions of what Sapporo's punks set themselves up 'against'.

The city's somewhat nebulous form of punk finds its place in the formation of a space of heterotopia (Foucault, 1998a). This is a site where those with access may express and enact forms of difference from wider societal norms. However, unlike utopian space, heterotopia's participants do not seek to rebuild or refashion society, rather they explore and practice modes of transgression which disrupt norms, yet simultaneously retain their connections to them (Foucault, 1998b). Heterotopia is thus a site where people may question their ties to family, work, national culture, global movements, and so on, without needing to sever them completely. In other words, it is a space of potentiality and imagination which is nevertheless firmly rooted in the everyday.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is twofold. First, I examine the documentary history of punk and hardcore in Japan in order to highlight the specific social, cultural, and political trajectories that have shaped a punk culture of resistance which lacks the more overt political associations seen elsewhere. I then draw on my ongoing participant observation, begun in 2018, with the punk and hardcore community in Sapporo, to provide an ethnographic account of the contemporary situation on the ground. In doing so, I explore the current discursive construction of a punk culture in northern Japan as a space of heterotopia and tangential transgression, rather than one of anarchist-inspired utopian ideology and oppositional resistance.

The conclusion of these considerations underlines one inescapable fact. As a punk, however much you may deliberately attempt to remove or exclude yourself from the so-called mainstream, it is practically impossible to ever be fully disentangled from the society(ies) in which you live, work, and play. This leaves you, like the lyric from Sapporo band, Cosmos (2014), from which the title of this chapter is taken, 'dangling' from society; not fully part of it, but not fully apart from it, either. This leads me to the second goal of this chapter: beginning a discussion on whether a specific political philosophy, such as anarchy, is a prerequisite for a culture and practice of 'punk'. If so, does this mean that, as they develop and change over time, subcultural communities are inevitably forced to choose between ideological purity and community cohesion?

Historic trajectories of punk activism in Japan:
LIFE MADE ME HARDCORE (Slang, 2010)

Contrary to the widely held view of Japan as a nation of quiet conformity, the country – much like anywhere else in the world – enjoys a long and rich history of political engagement, activism, and protest. However, though there were many prominent political anarchists active in Japan in the pre-war period, in the latter half of the twentieth century and onwards, they have been conspicuous by their absence (Andrews, 2016).

This situation is not unique to anarchists in the country. In the wake of the militaristic nationalism and colonialist expansion which culminated in the disasters of the Second World War's Asia-Pacific conflict, the vast majority of

Japanese people have – perhaps understandably – eschewed ideology in favour of narrow, locally focused politics (Igarashi, 2018). In practical terms, this has resulted in a chronic inability for those on the left to recruit and organise, and even centre-left parties have historically struggled to prevent factional in-fighting and schisms. In addition, much of the general public view the dogmatic politics of these left-leaning parties with suspicion, at best (Braga Silva, 2021). On the right, the governing Liberal Democratic Party (hereafter, LDP) have long maintained a broad church of neoliberals, conservative nationalists, and whoever else wishes to get their hands in the pot. The LDP tends to keep its eclectic factions in line by focusing on local issues. Except for two brief periods from 1993-1994 and 2009-2012, the LDP has maintained power since 1955 in large part through pork barrel politics (that is, bankrolling local construction and renewal projects in return for electoral support) (Winkler, 2017). Further to the right, while there is arguably greater tolerance for those who adhere to more extreme views than for their counterparts on the left, they are often side-lined to the point where very few actually take them seriously (Smith, 2014).

Outside of party politics, political activism in post-war Japan has also broadly followed a model of loose collectives of diverse stakeholders coming together around specific issues. The first example being the 'Anpo' protests of 1959-1960, which involved activists from both ends of the political spectrum, as well as many ordinary people who had no specific political alliance. Opposition to the renewal of the US-Japan security treaty allowing the US military to maintain bases in the country climaxed in a mob attacking the parliament building in Tokyo on the 15th of June 1960, and the death of a young female protestor (Andrews, 2016).

This was followed by a period of student activism through the 1960s and 1970s, in which protests organised by groups, such as Zenkyoto, over issues including tuition fees and corruption in university administrations, often ended in violent clashes with law enforcement (see Walker, 2020). Involved in these groups to varying degrees was the bourgeoning Japanese hippie counterculture, along with experimental, avant-garde groups such as the angura underground theatre movement. This entangling of art and activism was nothing new in Japan, as protest has often incorporated elements of noise making, music, performance, and flamboyant display (Andrews, 2016; Manabe, 2015).

In the late 1970s, it was in this disparate group of students, experimental musicians, avant-garde artists, free thinkers, and political vagrants that Japan's emergent punk scene first found a home. Rather than react against the hippies and progressive rockers – as their Western contemporaries often did – early punks in Japan looked up to these performers as their musical senpai (先輩: a term which denotes a member of a group who is senior to the speaker – see below). They listened to the latest imported records together in cafés and other communal hangout spaces, and they shared resources and networks. A number of hippies even reinvented themselves as punks. Between the older musicians' know-how and the young punks' drive and attitude, they laid the foundations of what would later evolve into a thriving and diverse independent music scene (Hopkins, 2015; see also Sasakawa, 2021).

This close connection between punks, hippies, and prog-rockers would perhaps have been unthinkable to anyone involved in UK or US punk of the 1970s. However, it provides just one example of how Japan's punks have, '[fitted] into a narrative of rock history that bends around punk without breaking' (Hopkins, 2015, p. 143). In a similar way, punk activism in the country has also at times followed, and at others 'bent around', the DIY anarchism espoused by bands like Crass and others in the anarcho-punk movement. While many punks, particularly in the hardcore scene, have for several decades continued to pen lyrics on politically charged, socially aware themes, the change which they wish to affect is in the individual listener, rather than society at large. Even Endō Michirō, lead singer of Japanese hardcore pioneers, The Stalin, who was known for his willingness to tackle controversial topics in his lyric-writing, preferred to let his audience do the thinking:

I don't want to sing about justice or the communist fantasy … right to the bitter end I've always been more interested in 'the individual'. I want to sing about things which I don't know are right or wrong. What's 'right' changes with the times anyway. (Endō, in Sasakawa, 2015, p. 51)

This emphasis on the micropolitics of personal change and self-making is something that continues to be at the heart of punk and hardcore practice among many of my interlocutors in the Sapporo scene (see below). While not

in any way unique to punks in Japan (see Dunn, 2012; Haenfler, 2004), this focus on what punk 'does', rather than what punk 'means', has lent itself well to the single-issue-driven nature of Japanese political activism. More recently, in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and resulting meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, punks have played a central role in the anti-nuclear protest movement, as well as the drive to prevent the LDP from revising the country's pacifist post-war constitution (Manabe, 2015). In addition, those who engage in activism in Sapporo's punk community also campaign on issues ranging from hate-speech, to LGBTQ+ rights, to raising funds for disaster victims (see Letson, 2021). While the passion they feel for their causes is by no means in question, as will become clear below, they do not attempt to force change, and they respect those within the scene who do not share their beliefs. They are content to perform a resistance that hopefully makes others think about the issues at hand.

Another historical entanglement influencing the trajectories of both political activism and musical subcultures in Japan is the country's often inflexible social structures (see Walker, 2020). Arguably, one of the biggest factors affecting personal relationships in this way is the importance of age-based seniority. From family, to school, university, and on through career and employment, the socialised acceptance of authority-by-seniority is widely considered a defining feature of Japanese culture and society (Miller and Kanazawa, 2000).

One of the central pillars of these seniority-based social structures is the senpai-kōhai relationship. This is a close communal bond between junior members (kōhai – 後輩) of a given group (school year-group, club, company, and so on) and their immediate seniors (senpai). As it is common in Japan to follow a fairly rigid pattern of social development whereby age-based cohorts advance through education and employment more-or-less in step with each other, a senpai's seniority is strongly rooted in their superior age (and hence greater experience) relative to the kōhai.

While mostly rigid in form, this relationship is nonetheless built on mutual dependence and trust, as well as gain. In exchange for performing menial or demeaning tasks (cleaning team uniforms, filing and photocopying, for example), kōhai receive help, advice, and training from their supposedly more

knowledgeable senpai. This can include anything from help with school assignments, to finding employment, and even matchmaking. Age cohorts become a defining feature in most people's lives, and it is around these relationships that many people continue to build their social networks in contemporary Japan. Furthermore, these senpai-kōhai bonds have exerted a significant influence on the shape, form, and function of both political activism (Shimada, 2020), and music-based subcultures (ISHIYA, 2020; Novak, 2013) in the country.

Although it is important to note that senpai-kōhai relationships are contingent and often more fluid than is commonly believed (Enyo, 2013), they are nevertheless strongly hierarchical in nature (Qie et al., 2019). That such a rigid social hierarchy is so deeply ingrained in the everyday culture of Japan provides yet another reason for anarchism's lack of purchase in the country. As will become clear below, rather than seeking to resist senpai-kōhai hierarchies, these relationships have, in fact, come to be a defining feature of the punk community in Sapporo. However, through the unique construction of punk in northern Japan which stems from the histories outlined above, they have come to be reimagined in a variety of flexible ways.

Japan's activist punks thus engage in forms of advocacy and protest which have been shaped and influenced as much by the particularities of domestic socio-history, as by the global flows of subcultural rebellion. Here, the peculiarities of resistance are based less on any central ideology or group, and more on specific responses to localised issues. This is a situation which both reflects and differs from the British anarcho-punk movement from which the Sapporo community, and indeed, Japanese punk in general (Hopkins, 2015; Namekawa, 2007), take many of their aesthetic cues. Like their Western peers, Japan's politically active punks are extremely averse to any form of centralisation or adherence to a specific doctrine (Dunn, 2012). However, unlike Europe's anarchist punks, the community is shaped and guided through clear relationships of power and authority founded on age-based seniority.

Heterotopia, punk, and the question of resistance: (SUB)CULTURES OF TRANSGRESSION

The examples above provide just a glimpse of the complex, multi-stranded confluence of historical trajectories from which punks in northern Japan (re)produce their emergent community. While this socio-cultural environment is unique to this specific locality, it is also entangled within wider local, national, and global flows of culture, politics, economics, and power (Appadurai, 1996). Analysis of this unique-yet-interconnected quality thus requires a theoretical framework which allows for this 'semi-autonomous' nature, where subcultural communities are simultaneously separate from and connected to wider social systems (Ventsel, 2008).

I suggest this can be found in Michel Foucault's (1998a) notion of 'heterotopia', which refers to textual, discursive, or physical spaces of difference. These are places where activities which digress from sociocultural norms are permitted, even encouraged. Additionally, these are spaces to which access is restricted in some way, in terms of both entry and exit. Even if you become aware of the existence of a particular heterotopic space, you still require an 'in' (an introduction from another member, for example). Once you have gained entry, the heterotopia then marks you in some way when you leave, changing your tastes, behaviour, or even your language. To the so-called 'mainstream' you are now one of 'them', even if society is not fully aware of who, exactly, 'they' are (Johnson, 2006). Anyone who has ever considered themselves a member of a subculture will find the above description very familiar.

While Foucault gave a smattering of examples on the two occasions on which he spoke about heterotopia (ships, prisons, children's make-believe games, and so on), he never expanded on his theory in any meaningful way. This has led Harvey (2000) to suggest that Foucault himself considered this idea an intellectual dead end. Nevertheless, it has become a topic of much interest, particularly to scholars of urban modernity and its spaces of transgression and deviance (see Dehaene and De Cautier, 2008; Palladino and Miller, 2015). The vagueness of this concept is by turns tantalising and

frustrating. On the one hand, it opens the theory up to a wide range of interpretations and uses. However, this flexibility also has the potential to be too ambiguous or too generalised for any practical application.

The idea of heterotopia has been criticised, not only for its vagueness, but also for its potential to lead those who employ it as a theoretical tool into a pitfall of structuralist essentialisms (Saldanha, 2008). That is, they risk basing their ideas on the assumption that societal structures (the family, the workplace, education, civic and government institutions, and so on) are solidly bounded spaces whose existence precedes the people who interact with them. This would be in contrast to the large body of research which shows that such structures – and their limits and boundaries – are, in fact, constantly (re)generated by those who move and act through and within them (see Taylor, 2004). What exactly is 'mainstream society'? How does heterotopic space 'differ' from it? Where are the boundaries between them located, and how flexible and/or porous are they? These are questions which must be addressed if this concept is to be of any intellectual use. As such, care must be taken to ensure any framework employing this concept is clear on its boundaries and limitations.

Here, I define heterotopia as a space – real or imagined – in which people are not fully cut off from their 'normal' relationships and networks but are nevertheless able to suspend or disrupt them in some way (Foucault, 1998a). Further, this space is employed for the practice of transgression, which can be understood as a *contestation of* social norms, rather than an oppositional *resistance to* them (Foucault, 1998b). In short, heterotopia is a place where the potentiality of difference can be imagined and emplaced within the networks and confines of everyday lives. While this idea of heterotopic difference is often linked to resistance or escape, Johnson argues that it is better to understand heterotopia as something which, in fact, 'contests utopian forms of resistance … based on a space of liberation' (2006, p. 82). Thus, a deeper understanding of the forms and functions of heterotopia can come from contrasting it with the concept of 'utopia'; two notions which are often conflated in studies of resistance which take heterotopia as their model (Johnson, 2006).

Perhaps the principal expositions of classic twentieth-century utopian theory can be found in the philosophies of Lefebvre and Bakhtin. For Lefebvre, utopia is the ultimate goal of the urban project, 'the transcendence
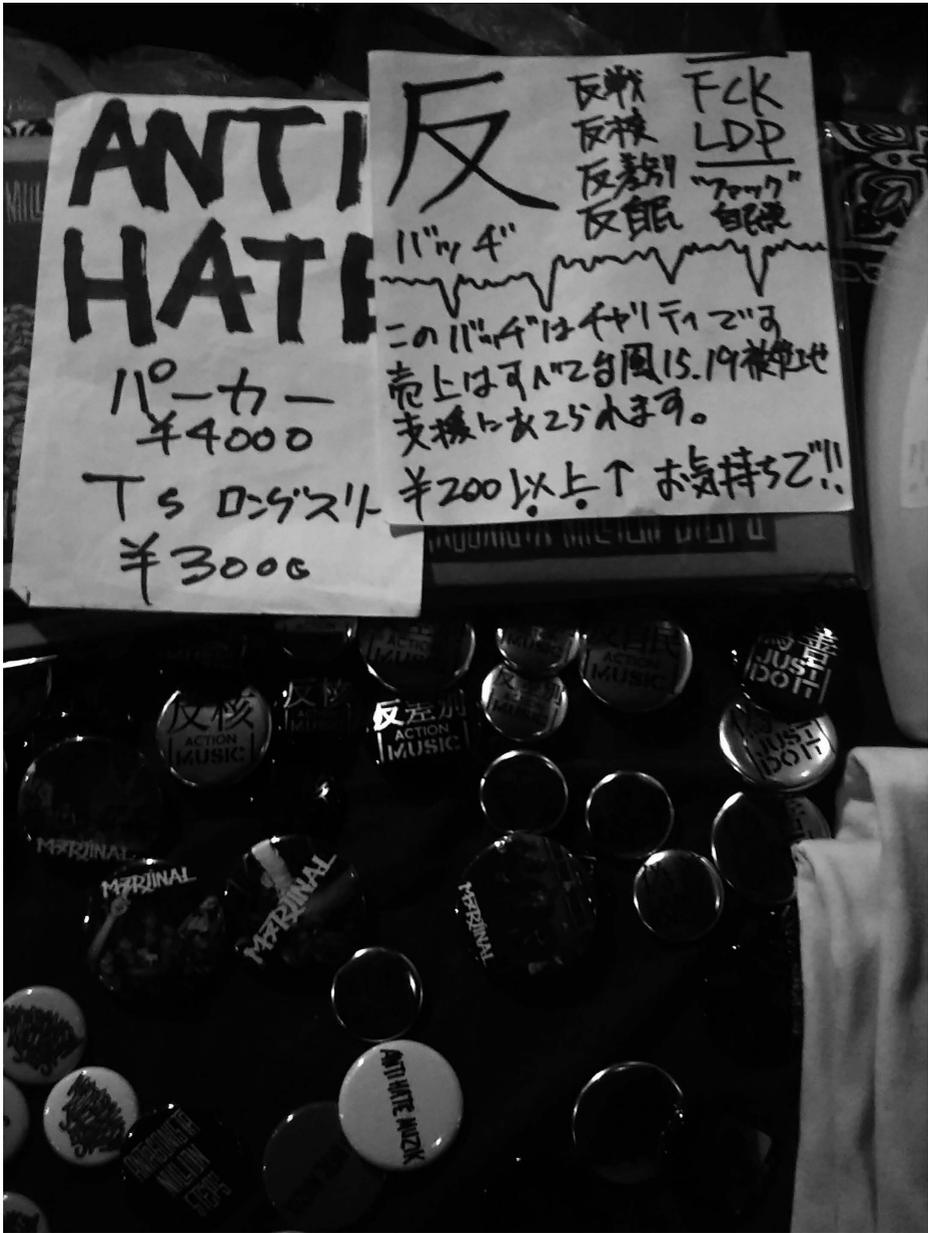
Figure 15:3 – A selection of 'anti' (反 – han) badges made and sold by the band, Antagonista Million Steps. These include: 'anti-war' (反戦 – hansen), 'anti-nuclear' (反核 – hankaku), 'anti-discrimination' (反差別 – hansabetsu), and 'anti-LDP' (反自民 – hanjimin) (photograph by the author).

of desire and power, the immanence of the people … the rational and dreamlike vision of centrality' (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 131). In this conception, utopia is a dream, a desire for a better world, the impossible for which we must strive in order to improve the possible (Coleman, 2013). Whereas, for Bakhtin, utopia lies in the social inversions of the carnival, 'the right of a certain freedom and familiarity, the right to break the usual forms of social relations' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 200-201). Here, utopia is the chance to deconstruct hegemonic discourses to create a transient space for social inversion, or radical, transformative egalitarianism (Gardiner, 1992).

The parallels between these conceptions of utopia and commonly held notions of subculture-as-resistance are obvious. Classic punk and subculture studies (for example, Cohen, 2002 [1972]; Hall and Jefferson, 1975; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978) describe these movements as spectacular, class-based attempts to resist cultural hegemony through the appropriation and subversion of widely accepted symbols. This is principally done in an attempt to find expressive solutions to the social problems facing the lower social classes (Hall and Jefferson, 1975; Hebdige, 1979). Ultimately this resistance is doomed to fail as subversion is itself subverted by the insidious powers of commodification, commercialisation, cultural capitalism, and mass media (Cohen, 2002 [1972]; McKay, 1996). This articulation of subcultural resistance mirrors scholarly constructions of utopia that attempt 'to find the authentic utopian spirit that is destroyed, side-lined, dissipated or hidden by dominant and coercive socioeconomic and political forces' (Johnson, 2006, p. 84).

This formation of utopia is undeniably a space which seeks to invert the strictures of normativity. However, it is ultimately unable to deliver on its promises due to the impossibility of ever fully disentangling ourselves from the socio-environmental world in which we live (Faubion, 2008). In reaction to this, as well as to the development of the ever more complex transnational ties born out of globalisation, particular forms of 'punk utopia' (Webb and Lynch, 2010) have sought to succeed, albeit fleetingly, where classic utopian visions have failed. These contemporary 'micro-utopias' are transient spaces of connectivity, hybridity, and flow (see Appadurai, 1996). It retains the aspirational anticipation of classic utopian visions, but tempers it with a temporary, interstitial liminality which is inherent to the heterogenous entanglements and compound becomings of life in the globally connected

now (Levitas, 2003). This form of utopia is understood by Webb and Lynch (2010) to be a process not of integration, but of singularisation and extension, of lines of flight and potentiality leading away from a localised, but ultimately transitory, rhizomatic assemblage (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). What this means is that 'punk utopias' can be understood as spaces, temporarily embedded in a specific location, in which difference does not come together to form some kind of hybrid perfection, but rather explodes outwards to explore myriad potentialities.

Such a space undeniably lends itself well to the 'punks' (Donaghey, 2020) that have emerged in an Anglo-American context following the anarchist punk trajectories first set in motion by Crass and their contemporaries. These loci of anarchist praxis are spaces where the inherent tensions between 'anarchy' as a political ideology and 'punk' as a performative cultural form may come together without the reduction or absorption of one into the other. This conception follows Franks, Jun and Williams' (2018) framework of anarchism as a constantly shifting, contingent assemblage of related political concepts, momentarily decontested in order to provide an appropriate response to a specific situation (see Freeden, 2013). Both 'punk utopias' and 'punk anarchisms' can thus be understood, not as *dislocal* universalisms, but as utopian *dislocations* of time and/or space focused on individualised hybridity and self-revolution.

Heterotopia, on the other hand, provides an enacted, emplaced, and very much *located* reworking of the utopian dream. These are spaces where social bonds may be subverted or undermined, but never fully severed. In other words, places where 'the sterile fantasy of utopian inversion and the inconsequential negations of utopian resistance' (Faubion, 2008, p. 38) are replaced by ongoing mediation between the imagination of difference and the pragmatics of the everyday. Thus, subculture-as-heterotopia provides a space in which the classic More-esque utopias of Lefebvre and Bakhtin can be emplaced within the constraints of the socio-environmental and affective 'meshworks' (Ingold, 2011) through which we necessarily act. Simultaneously, and particularly in the context of punk in Sapporo, this heterotopic space is firmly rooted in the permanence of community. In this way, it differs from the punk utopias and anarchisms with which it nevertheless shares subcultural ties, both real and virtual. As will become clear below, punk-as-heterotopia does provide many of the same opportunities for the micro-politics of localised

hybridisation and self-renewal. However, rather than a space of temporary dislocation, it is a space where difference is explored in a site of relative permanence and longevity which grows, shifts, and matures along with its members.

However, this notion of heterotopia as a space in which difference may be articulated while still maintaining one's connections to the rest of the world, is also open to critique. Heynen points out that heterotopia can be seen as a double articulation; one that, 'resonate[s] in between liberation and oppression' (2008, p. 320). As a site of ambiguity, it is neither fully liberating nor completely oppressive. Perhaps it is even the ultimate expression of the

Figure 15:4 – The steps leading up to Klub Counteraction, known affectionately by Sapporo's punks as, 'that staircase' (あの階段 – ano kaidan) (photograph by the author).

neoliberal illusion of individuality; a 'safe space' where those with access are free to 'play at resistance' (Matsue, 2008, p. 49) while still able to return to homes, families, jobs, and tax bills when all is said and done.

In this argument, heterotopia's ambiguous nature allows those who would use it as an investigative apparatus to forever stay 'on the fence', as it were. If heterotopia is neither liberating nor oppressive, then scholars do not need to address the thornier issues which would be brought to light were it unequivocally one or the other. While it is certain that heterotopia can, indeed, provide such a theoretical safety net, I argue that it is precisely this equivocality that allows it to be employed as an effective analytical tool. Such a tool affords us a framework to productively explore articulations of difference as they are enacted within

Figure 15:5 – Miburō headline the Shōwa yonjū-san nenkai (photograph by the author).

the ever-increasing complexities of contemporary life (Gallan, 2013).

If we return to punk – but viewed through a heterotopic rather than a utopian lens – subcultural participation is no longer necessarily an exercise in utopian revolution (personal or otherwise), or resistance against a dystopian hegemony, or even directionless, nihilistic rebellion. It is, instead, an ongoing, long-term negotiation of the spaces and boundaries of difference. Here, an element of resistance is no longer necessary to provide meaning to its practitioners, even if it may have been, may be, or may become so for some members at some point. That is not to say that punk practice is not resistive – indeed, a practice of resistance in many ways similar to Donaghey's (2020) punk anarchisms is a central tenet of both ideology and praxis for many of my interlocutors in Sapporo – but rather that subculturalists may be 'punks' without needing, or even wanting, to 'resist' (Letson, 2021).

If this is indeed the case, and punk in Sapporo is not a culture of 'resistance' as such, what, then, is it a culture of? In the following passages, it will become clear that, for both those who actively 'resist', and those who do not, northern Japan's heterotopic punk provides a site for a culture of 'transgression'. In general, Sapporo's punks do not so much *resist* mainstream

Japanese culture (although, of course, some of them do), as *contest* it. Contestation is itself transgressive, where transgression is understood as a questioning, testing, breaking and (re)delineation of boundaries of understanding. This is an act which 'opens onto a scintillating and constantly affirmed world, a world without shadow or twilight … the solar inversion of satanic denial' (Foucault, 1998b, p. 75).

Just as heterotopia provides a space for the potentiality of difference, so transgression provides an escape from the endless dialectic opposition of subjugation and resistance, utopic striving and dystopic resistance. Contestation is *not* denial, and, by the same token, transgression is *not* resistance, though they may contain elements of each other. As will become clear below, understanding subcultural practice as transgressive contestation, rather than resistive denial, explains how punks may constantly question and even occasionally break through the accepted limits of societal norms, without necessarily placing themselves in absolute opposition to them. In the following passages, through the use of ethnographic examples and interview excerpts, I explore this heterotopic culture of punk transgression as it exists in Sapporo.

Northern Japan's heterotopic punk:
DANGLING FROM THE VERTICAL SOCIETY

It is April 6th, 2019, and I am on my way to Klub Counteraction on a crisp, Spring evening. Being around six months into my fieldwork, I am no stranger to this venue. However, as I climb the poster and sticker-bedecked stairwell to the upper floor entrance, I am already aware that tonight may be a little different from what I am used to in this particular place of punk practice.

Tonight's show is a special event, 'Shōwa yonjū-san nenkai' (昭和四十三年会), which roughly translates as the 'Shōwa forty-three year-group party'. 'Nenkai' (年会) are regular gatherings held by people in the same age cohort, somewhat akin to a class reunion, and are one example of the importance of generational groups and age-cohorts in

Japan. At this show, each of the eight bands includes at least one member who was born in the Japanese calendar year, Shōwa 43 (1969), and thus celebrates their 50th birthday this year. The organisers and headline act tonight are the band, Miburō (壬生狼). Active since the 1980s, this band is widely considered to be one of the key exponents of 'Oi! Punk' in Japan.

After exchanging pleasantries with a few scene veterans hanging out by the bar, I wander over to the merchandise table, which tonight is watched over by a short, middle-aged woman whom I have never seen before. A flash of panic crosses her face as I approach, which is quickly assuaged once she realizes I can communicate in Japanese. In fact, once she recovers from her initial shock, she becomes positively effusive. She fizzes with excitement as she explains the purpose of tonight's show, points out various key people around the room, and proudly introduces herself as the wife of Eikichi,* a Miburō band member. She gives her own name, Sayako, almost as an afterthought. After talking for some time, I feel obliged to purchase a commemorative gig t-shirt, and promise to find her again after the show, when she says she will introduce me to her husband.

The show itself is highly entertaining. Band after band show their years of experience with performances that display impeccable musicianship, while maintaining a level of energy of which many younger bands would be envious. The audience move towards the front of the stage for each band but remain relatively stationary throughout, chatting with their neighbours as they watch the performance. Other than the odd raised fist, there is no jumping, dancing, or strenuous activity. Tonight's gig-goers are comfortably enveloped in the sloppy-but-good-natured camaraderie of drunk, middle-aged men. This is highlighted in part by the fact that there are very few women here, comprising only around 10% of the crowd (in contrast to the 45% or so which I have typically observed at other

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*In order to protect my interlocutors' anonymity, all names are pseudonyms.

shows in Sapporo). These women mostly avoid the area in front of the stage, hanging back around the edges of the room.

After the show, Sayako appears and latches onto my elbow. She asks me how I liked the bands, beaming when I say (truthfully) how much I enjoyed the show and was surprised by the level of musicianship on display. I am hurried over to where her husband is talking and drinking beer with a few of the other musicians. They are, at first, suspicious of the strange foreigner that has been led into their midst. However, once Sayako repeats verbatim my words of praise for the show, and my Japanese language abilities have been ascertained, I am invited to 'kanpai' (乾杯 – cheers) with them. Thus, I am allowed into the conversation, albeit hovering at the edge of the group. Sayako makes her excuses and returns to her place at the merch table. Dressed in stained workman's overalls, wearing sunglasses despite the dimness of the room, Eikichi embodies the 'chinpira' (チンピラ – a working class yob, or ruffian) style which he has embraced as a 'Japanese' expression of skinhead identity.

After some time, he finally turns to me and, giving the Japanese flag embroidered onto the shoulder of his overalls a hearty slap, says, in broken English, 'I sorry. I love. Japan!'.

'What's wrong with that?' I reply, in Japanese, with a shrug, 'I love Japan, too'.

He grins at my response and reaches out with his free hand. He grabs my crotch and gives a playful squeeze, 'I'm sure you do!', he says (in Japanese), laughing. He lets go of my genitals and grins again, 'you want a beer? I'm buying'. I nod and follow him to the bar, trying to shake off my momentary shock and discomfort. His friends all laugh at what I'm sure must be some amusing expressions passing across my face.

'You know, you need to be careful doing something like that where I come from' I say as nonchalantly as possible. Eikichi passes over the

beer he has just bought, and we clink our cups together. As we do so he flashes another grin and responds again in English:

'Here. Is. Japan!'

The abrupt manhandling of my genitalia provides just one example of the heterotopic nature of subcultural relations on display at the nenkai. Eikichi's treatment of me was far more than just a crude assertion of male dominance, however. While his behaviour firmly and publicly established his place above me, it was as a senpai, rather than an 'alpha male'. Physical and even quasi-sexual horseplay is an often-observed aspect of social relationships among male Japanese teenagers (for example Rickert, 2018; see also Tahhan, 2010) and forms an integral part of age-cohort and senpai-kōhai bonding during their school years. As such, Eikichi's behaviour can be interpreted as a recognition of my place as a member of Sapporo's punk community, while simultaneously reminding me that he sees me very much as his junior.

On the other hand, it is considered common knowledge in Japan that 'Westerners' have certain notions concerning physical contact. It is often a point of amusement that visitors to the country are quick to offer handshakes and hugs, but balk at being naked at the public bath, or are shocked at behaviour such as Eikichi's. Thus, his actions – and the laughter amongst the group which my reaction provoked – allow him and his friends to impress upon the foreigner in their midst that, 'here is Japan'. Hence, he embodies not just through his fashion, or his words, but also through intimate bodily contact, the fact that *his* punk is spatially and socially located in *his* Japan. A performance of identity that unmistakeably displays his right-wing leanings as a chinpira/skinhead, but also acknowledges that there are those who interpret punk differently (such as left-wing activists, or white, European ethnographers, for example). He is tacitly admitting that there is space enough for them in Sapporo, too.

Eikichi's establishment of his position as a senior, 'Japanese' skinhead is underscored by the 'traditional' Japanese social relations on display at the nenkai. The event itself reaffirms the age-based relationships of his cohort, as well as their position in relation to the other generational groups within the Sapporo punk community. In a similar way, the lack of women in attendance, and the way in which those who were tried to fade into the background is

indicative of gendered social norms, particularly among older age groups in Japan (Osawa, 2015). Unfortunately, an exploration of how gender intersects with the issues raised in this chapter – especially if it is to be done with the sensitivity and care such a topic deserves – is far beyond the scope of what is being written here. It is my intention to investigate these issues in future publications.

Furthermore, the nenkai shows how this generation have been able to imagine a 'traditional' Japan that exists both within and alongside understandings and articulations of 'punkness'. The widely held view of Japan as a middle-class nation holds no place for Eikichi and his chinpira friends, but punk and skinhead subcultures have provided a space in which they can negotiate a vision of 'their' Japan as something both conservative and working-class. In addition to being a space which is simultaneously inside and outside mainstream Japan, it is also both inside and outside the often politically left-leaning punk community in Sapporo which we glimpsed in the introduction to this chapter: a heterotopia within a heterotopia.

Though much of what was on display at the nenkai stands in stark contrast to the activities of the majority of Sapporo's politically left-leaning punk and hardcore community (see Letson, 2021), that Eikichi and his cohort are firmly part of that same community is without doubt. It is not unusual for Miburō and other Oi! or skinhead bands in Sapporo to play shows or be involved in events featuring the whole breadth of the city's punk populace. Just as Eikichi was willing to welcome me into the scene in his own inimitable way, so, too, do the more socially liberal members love and respect Miburō as a part of their eclectic community.

One of the reasons for this is Miburō's place as senpai within the community. More than merely the respect being shown to one of the city's most long-lasting punk bands by their juniors, this is a mutual relationship of care between generations. Satoru, a hardcore musician and postal worker who has been active in Sapporo since his teens explained it to me this way:

I don't like being told, 'you should do this', or, 'you should sound like that', and punks are really *straight*, you know? But I have really close senpai, if we weren't all so close, I don't think the scene would survive. And everyone's different, you know? I always try to keep this in mind [when I write lyrics]: how can I express myself while representing the

different views of my band members and also making sure all my friends and senpai can have fun [at live shows]? That's why I don't sing about politics. Instead, I'm really influenced by [early-twentieth-century poet and author] Miyazawa Kenji and Buddhism. (Interview with the author, 2020)

At first, it may seem that punk's subversive tendencies have been conquered by the unyielding nature of Japanese social relationships; in much the same way as the insidious powers of capitalism proved too much for the British punk explosion of the 1970s (at least, if you follow the 'classic' narrative). However, Takuya, one of Satoru's kōhai and a call centre employee, speaks of his various senpai in this manner:

The guys [in Satoru's generation], they're the guys who've helped us out the most. They're super *flat*, yeah? Flat people. They talk to everyone the same, no matter what. I try to be like that. I've never met anyone I couldn't get along with … And you know, I actually work in the same building as Miburō's drummer, so we take smoke breaks together and we've talked about stuff a lot. He's always ready to accept where we differ on things. Our approaches are different, but we're concerned with the same things. (Interview with the author, 2020)

In the above passages, as well as the example of the nenkai, we see how the discursive construction of punk in Sapporo as a space of heterotopic transgression has created a community in which Japanese social norms have been simultaneously mirrored *and* subverted. The senpai-kōhai relationship is contested, but not directly resisted. Its limits are tested, its application questioned, and its function probed. Eikichi and his contemporaries enjoy the respect they feel is their due, while also acknowledging that their juniors have opinions and methods of their own. Satoru works hard to display the debt of gratitude he holds towards his senpai, but he and his cohort display no desire to be treated with deference by their kōhai. Takuya revels in the fact that his seniors do not conduct themselves as they would traditionally be expected to do so, yet he strives to be just like them in his interactions with other generations in the community. What emerges from this is a network of

relationships which provide many of the advantages of the anarchist, or even post-anarchist community (mutual aid, personal freedom, alternative socio-economic support structures and so on – see Clark, 2007; Dale, 2012), yet retains the familiar forms and structures of wider Japanese society. The end result, rather than revolutionary attempts at overthrowing Japan's rigid age-based hierarchies, is to maintain them, but in manners which are constantly changing to suit each generational cohort, and even each individual member of these age-based groups.

Ideological purity or community cohesion: INEVITABLE DILEMMA?

The punk and hardcore community described above have created a space in which the possibility of difference can be articulated through an array of practices which move in a transgressive direction. That is, rather than colliding with sociocultural norms in direct opposition, transgressive acts spiral about it in an endless contestation of boundaries and limitations (Foucault, 1998b). As such, the heterotopic space provided by the physical, social, and cultural constructions of 'punk' in Sapporo can be described as 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 [1980]). In the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, a 'rhizome,' like the botanical term from which it derives, refers to a system which is inherently multiple (a plant rhizome is both stem and root). Moreover, if broken apart, rather than disintegrate, each piece will simply become its own rhizome (plants with rhizomes are commonly propagated using tissue cultures). Similar to Webb and Lynch's (2010) punk utopia, then, this is a space which cannot be understood through being broken down into discretely defined components, or categorisation into rigid dichotomies. It must be looked at, where it can be brought to light, as a holistic assemblage of objects, ideas, and phenomena.

Framing understandings of the community's activities, ideas, and fashions in this way shows that they do not 'break through' the norms of mainstream society (that is, the classic 'utopian' vision of resistance). Sapporo's punks instead explore the lines of flight through which they may deterritorialize those norms, reterritorializing them for their own purposes (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 [1980]). In other words, they take what is considered 'normal'

and, rather than discard those components of it they see as not fit for purpose, they rework them into a shape that suits their needs. As this subcultural rhizome is encompassed, in part or in whole, by other rhizomes (Japanese culture, transnational punk networks, and so on), these lines of flight simultaneously offer directions in which any related actors (musicians, fashion designers, mainstream media, local businesses, international corporations, academics, the list goes on) may also deterritorialise/reterritorialise productions of punk culture.

Sapporo's subculturalists achieve this specifically through punk's function as a space of heterotopia. Once again, while the similarities to forms of punk utopia are striking (Webb and Lynch, 2010), punk-as-heterotopia differs from these and other forms of anarchy-as-micro-utopia in its rootedness. That is, it provides somewhere people may explore the potentialities of difference and transgression, while remaining permanently and inextricably emplaced in the pragmatics of the everyday world around them. It is this space of simultaneous insider/outsider/in-between-ness which opens up lines of flight and contestation in the mutually embedded, rhizomatic assemblages of Japanese society and global punk subculture. Moreover, it is this heterotopic process which lies at the heart of the city's subcultural community longevity. It allows Sapporo's punks – individually, in age cohorts, or as a holistic entity – to (de)construct, (re)negotiate, and (de/re)territorialise 'punk' as a subculture, community, fashion, music, identity, artform, social space, political statement, or as any, all, or none of these things. This is done while maintaining a sense of permanency, togetherness, and community in – for better or worse – the very traditional sense of the word.

It is clear that the historical, cultural and social trajectories of punk in northern Japan have led to the emergence of a 'culture of transgression'. This is in contrast to the 'culture of resistance' which might be expected from a community that owes so much of its aesthetic to British anarcho-punk of the 1980s. Given that subcultural activity here occurs across generations in a way that is not usually seen elsewhere (see Bennett, 2006; Davis, 2006; Klien, 2020) this raises an important question. Namely, is it a rejection of utopia-seeking oppositional resistance which has produced the conditions for the intergenerational inclusivity that lies at the heart of Sapporo punks' robust community longevity? If so, does it follow that subcultural groups must shun ideological purity for the sake of social cohesion?

Dunn (2012) and Haenfler (2004) have addressed these issues in the case of UK anarcho-punk, and US 'straight edge' adherents, respectively, while Donaghey (2020) provides insights into broader Anglo-American manifestations of punk anarchy. All contribute compelling views of the ways in which individual subculturalists explore, adapt, and construct personal meanings within seemingly inflexible ideological frameworks. While these studies go a long way towards understanding how punks address the issue of political ideology for themselves, it has not always been clear exactly how these individual standpoints affect the communities of which they are a part. The case of northern Japan's heterotopic punk provides some answers to this question of how a more traditionally imagined 'community' fits into subcultural cultures of resistance and/or transgression.

For Sapporo's punk and hardcore practitioners, while many are closely concerned with self-making and individual development, how they each seek to express their subcultural values is filtered through a desire to maintain group coherency. Communal *relations*, mediated through culturally and historically specific social structures, take precedence over communal *ideals*. The nature of this heterotopia has meant that arguments over what punk should 'be', have been replaced with free explorations of what punk can 'do'. Although 'resistance' is an important feature of subcultural practice for many in the community, it is not the central pillar of punk or hardcore identity which it may be in certain other localities. It is clear that for the assemblage of people and practices referred to here as 'Sapporo's punks', *transgression* rather than *resistance* has provided the necessary response to the particular trajectories of geopolitical and cultural history that converge, entangle, and re-emerge within their social space. Whether this is the case for other communities, in other localities, with complex and intersectional histories of their own, remains open for debate. I very much look forward to future research revealing more on this all-too-often overlooked topic.

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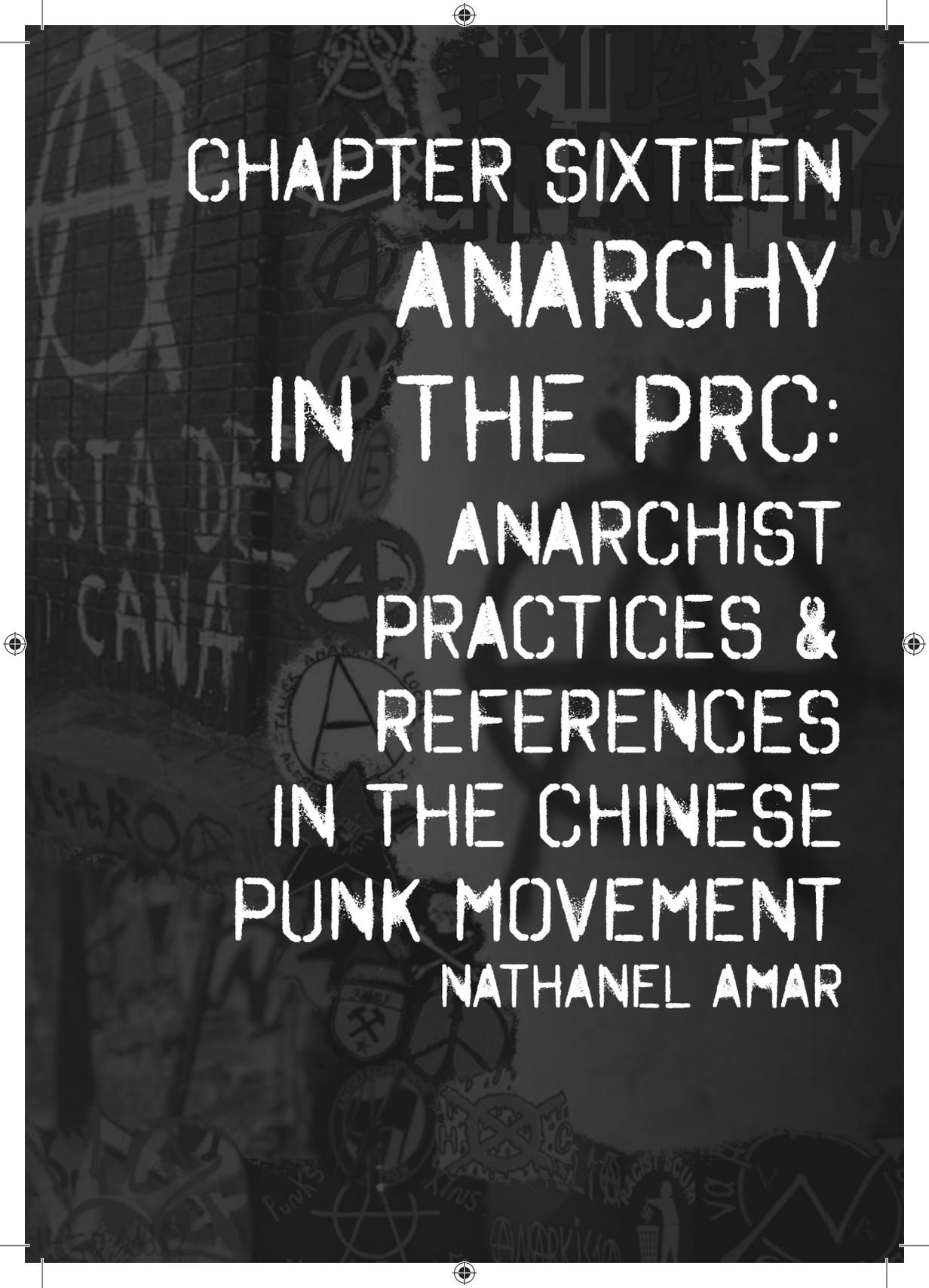
CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ANARCHY IN THE PRC:

ANARCHIST PRACTICES & REFERENCES IN THE CHINESE PUNK MOVEMENT

NATHANEL AMAR

Chapter Sixteen: 'Anarchy in the PRC': Anarchist practices and references in the Chinese punk movement

Nathanel Amar

'The future has no future' is the wisdom of an age that,
for all its appearance of perfect normalcy,
has reached the level of consciousness of the first punks.
(The Invisible Committee, 2007, p. 13)

The intimate relationship between punk music and anarchism has been examined by scholars and by the punks themselves, rightly pointing out the anarchist aesthetics of the punk movement (Sartwell, 2010), the possibility for disalienation offered by punk communities in capitalist societies (Dunn, 2008), the direct action tactics of the punks (Barrett, 2013) and their DIY (do-it-yourself – or perhaps we should say do-it-together) spirit (Martin, 2015). Jim Donaghey has described 'the various ways "anarchy" and anarchism appear in early punk' (2013, p. 143), including shock tactic, reactive anarchism (opposition to the state and societal repression), practical necessity for organising the scene or intuitive anarchistic politics – all of which are particularly useful for understanding how anarchism is practiced among punk enthusiasts, even without prior knowledge of the anarchist intellectual canon. Much of the literature on the relationship between anarchism and punk focuses on Western punk movements in specific capitalist societies – but what about punk scenes in other political, social and geographical contexts? As an international phenomenon, punk music has appeared in various countries of the Global South, and has been appropriated by local punk communities, changing and adapting its meanings and practices in order to reflect their local situations – as for instance in Indonesia (Baulch, 2007) or Mexico (Tatro,

2014), and as exemplified by the numerous international chapter contributions for this Anarchism and Punk Book Project.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has seen the rise of a locally grown punk scene since the mid 1990s in a context where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still firmly controls the cultural and public spheres. The cultural hegemony of the CCP – its ability to shape society's value system and manufacture consent – doesn't mean that anarchism has never taken root in China. Indeed, anarchism flourished in the Chinese radical sphere in the first three decades of the twentieth century (Dirlik, 2012), to the point that it was in serious competition with Chinese communism in the 1920s (Dirlik, 1989), before its marginalisation after the foundation of the PRC in 1949. To what extent has the Chinese punk movement integrated anarchist elements in its everyday practices?

I have myself been involved with the Chinese punk movement for more than ten years, doing an ethnographic study of the scene for my doctoral dissertation, and collecting archives of the movement ever since. For this chapter, my aim is to show how Chinese punks, since the creation of the punk movement, have integrated several typical anarchist themes into their cultural production, and to interrogate the extent to which anarchist ideas of autonomy and DIY have been implemented in the Chinese punk scene. I will first analyse how anarchist themes and discourses have been used in the texts and visual productions of the Chinese punks since the mid 1990s, before examining punk DIY practices and their political meaning in contemporary China. The last part of this paper will examine two examples of Chinese punk counter-institutions which will highlight how punk's use of space can be seen as radical political practice and as tools for resistance. More than just a purely aesthetical relation, I will try to show that punk and anarchism share in the Chinese context an 'elective affinity', to use Löwy's term – 'one that cannot be reduced to direct causality or to "influences" in the traditional sense … the relationship consists of a convergence, a mutual attraction, an active confluence, a combination that can go as far as a fusion' (Löwy, 1992, p. 6).
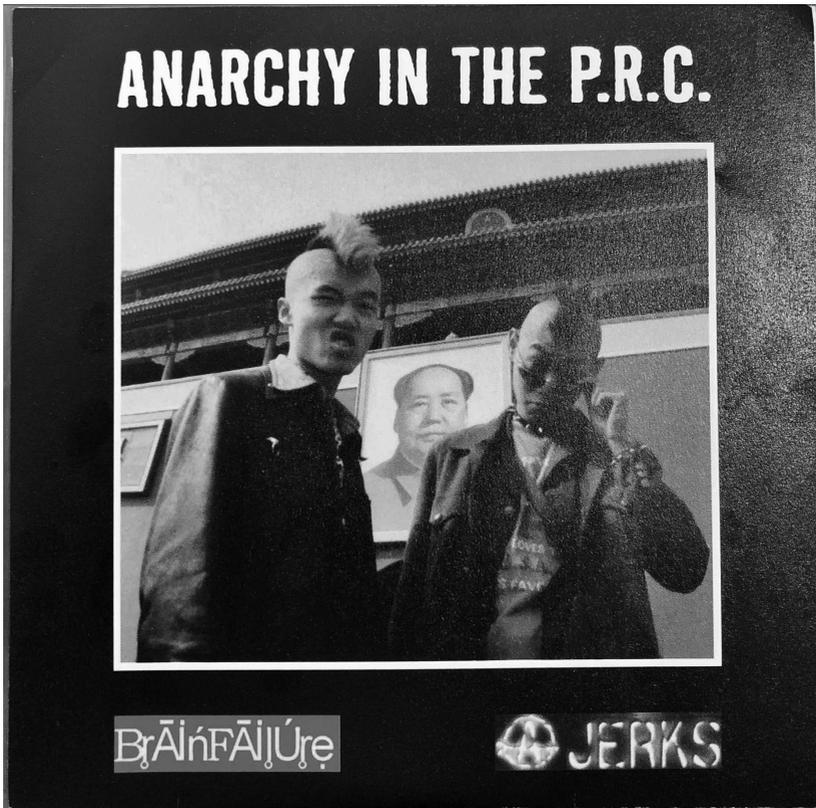
Oi! Oi! Oi! Anarchy

The Chinese punk-rock movement emerged in the mid 1990s, a decade after the first appearance of Chinese rock and six years after the Tiananmen democratic movement of 1989 which had resulted in the repression of the nascent rock scene (Jones, 2010). New alternative music communities began to grow in major Chinese cities, influenced by pirated foreign music smuggled from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and then by 'dakou' CDs and tapes in the early 1990s (unsold music records from the West, exported to China in order to be recycled, but sold on the Chinese black-market instead – see De Kloet, 2010; Amar, 2018). The first Chinese punk communities took root in Beijing and

Figure 16:2 – Poster for the punk concert '我们继续 Anarchy', at Mao Livehouse (Beijing), January 2013.

Wuhan, and early punk enthusiasts slowly developed their own spaces, to perform, rehearse and hang out. If anarchism is present in the Chinese punk scene, it is not of course the sole political affiliation of Chinese punks. Among the Chinese punk scene, one can find bands close to anarchism, neo-Maoism, nationalism, or liberal democracy. References to anarchism, however, were very present at the beginning of the movement, in the lyrics of songs, on the posters, or on the clothes worn by the punks. Anarchy Boys (无政府主义男孩, sometimes spelled Anarchy Jerks or A Boys) were one of the major early Beijing punk bands, and were part of the first punk collective, Boredom Contingent (无聊军队). Anarchy Boys were well known for their provocative looks, wearing torn leather jackets and sporting colourful mohawks – shocking passers-by when taking a photo in front of Mao's portrait in Tiananmen Square for the cover of an album. As Donaghey puts it in the Western context, early punks 'developed a form of oppositional politics, initially rooted in shock, that can be described as anarchistic' (2013, p. 145). Indeed, at the time, these early Chinese punk bands adopted an anarchist style, drawing circled-As on their jackets and on the walls of their favourite live venues, screaming 'anarchy' in their songs, and shocking people when walking on the streets with their unconventional clothes and hairstyles. While it may seem a purely aesthetic approach to anarchism, without deliberate political motivation, it did go hand-in-hand with a systemic critique of social and political oppression in their songs. In 'Oi! Oi! Oi! Anarchy', Anarchy Boys detailed their vision of anarchy by asking the audience to 'say what they want to say' in a context where a lot of topics were still taboo and politically sensitive – not least the figure of Mao Zedong, criticised in another song, 'Heil to Who' ('向谁万岁') (2002b).

'Oi! Oi! Oi! Anarchy'
Say what you want to say.
Do what you want to do.
Don't mind them.
They are all but the law of the jerks.
Look at your lives. How stupid they are.

Look up, you'll see all you're afraid of.

Taboo, it's what suppresses your mind.

Laws, make you lose yourself.

Taboo, rule over the jerks.

Laws, what you say is a fart.

You need to tear your raincoat open.

Let your ideas out.

Liberate yourself.

Throw out the taboos.

And go on walking down the street.

Until you find yourself living like an Anarchist.

(Anarchy Boys, 2002a [English translation provided by the band in the CD booklet])

In 2002 Anarchy Boys and another early Beijing punk band from the Boredom Contingent collective, Brain Failure (脑浊), released a split seven-inch vinyl on the American punk label Broken Rekids, entitled *Anarchy in the PRC*. The cover image is the famous photoshoot of Anarchy Boys in Tiananmen Square, and the four tracks all contain reference to anarchism. In the song 'Anarchy in the PRC', Brain Failure vehemently criticises the social and political situation of the country, lashing out at Premier Li Peng (1988-1998), also known as 'the butcher of Tiananmen', for his role during the repression of the social movement in 1989. The song ends with Brain Failure's strongest political statement: 'We won't shout long live socialism anymore' before screaming 'Anarchy in the PRC!'.

'Anarchy in the PRC'

我们国家没有交通规则

我们国家没有固定语言

我们国家没有英雄主义

我们国家没有李鹏总理
我国人民不知道什么是钱
我国人民从小就不上学
我国人民不知道什么是困
我们不再高喊着社会主义好
Anarchy in the PRC!

['Anarchy in the PRC']
[Our country has no traffic rules.]
[Our country has no unified language.]
[Our country has no heroism.]
[Our country has no Premier Li Peng.]
[My country's people don't know what money is.]
[My country's people didn't go to school.]
[My country's people don't know what exhaustion is.]
[We won't shout long live socialism anymore.]
[Anarchy in the PRC!]*

(Brain Failure [脑浊], 2002a)

In Brain Failure's song 'Living In The City' (2002b), also included on the split vinyl, the singer Xiao Rong shouts over and over the word 'anarchy'. The music video of the song is even more explicit in this respect: the band takes the subway to Tiananmen Square and sings 'anarchy' next to the cops and the portrait of Chairman Mao (O'Dell, 2007) . One can rightfully say that this kind of anarchism is mainly oriented towards a foreign audience, as Geremie Barmé has pointed out regarding 1980s Chinese rockers and independent filmmakers. According to Barmé, several Chinese artists of the 1980s:

produced a small body of material that could be called 'bankable dissent': nonofficial or semi-illicit works, be they in the fields of art,

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* Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Chinese are by the author.

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literature, music, or film, that, owing to the repressive state control, could accrue a certain market value – and street cred – regardless of (even, in some cases, despite) their artistic merits. (1999, p. 188)

In Brain Failure and Anarchy Boys' case, several clues indicate that the punk bands wanted to appeal to a foreign audience – Brain Failure used their sulphurous reputation to appear in a Levi jeans commercial in 1999 (Chinese Alternative Music Archive Project, 2018) and later toured the US, while Anarchy Boys participated in the Ray-Ban sunglasses 'Never Hide Noise' campaign in 2012 (Ray Ban Noise, 2012). However, it would be unfair to say that Brain Failure and Anarchy Boys only paid lip service to anarchist ideas for glory or were only motivated by fame or money. They did take obvious risks by dressing-up provocatively in the public sphere and singing politically sensitive lyrics during their concerts.

Figure 16:3 – Poster for the free punk show 'Riot Vol. 3', at School Bar (Beijing), July 2013.

One could also argue that, contrary to certain tendencies of Western punk communities (Barret, 2013, pp. 23-24), their struggle was not primarily directed at capitalism or neoliberalism, but against the more immediate social and political threat posed by the CCP. Indeed, other Chinese punk bands have

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accepted sponsorship from foreign companies, more-or-less related to punk music – for example, the School Bar venue supported by Vans skate shoe company, various punk bands sponsored by the guitar string brand Ernie Ball, and the Beijing Punk Fest sponsored by Dr Martens boot brand (though this did spark controversy between the Beijing skinhead community, who had organised the punk festival, and other street punk bands). Punk bands have accepted sponsorship from foreign capitalist companies, but they are reluctant to take money from Chinese state-controlled institutions. The anti-commercialism at the core of Western punk anarchist practices is replaced in the Chinese context by an ideological struggle against Chinese state capitalism and its hegemony. Western capitalism can be seen, at times, as a tactical ally to fund the scene and allows punks to fight against the ideological and financial control of the CCP.

Figure 16:4: Poster for the 2019 Hangzhou Punk Festival.

However, this position is not shared by everyone in the punk scene, and punks have, since the beginning, tried to create self-managed counter-institutions to produce zines, posters or albums with references to anarchist aesthetics and ideas. Later punk and hardcore bands have produced songs and artistic materials tightly linked to the international anarchist movement and to DIY practices. Gouride (狗日的), a hardcore band from Yunnan consisting of foreign and Chinese musicians, has dedicated songs to

topics such as veganism, imperialism, and consumerism in China (with the song '为人民币服务' ['Serve the People's Money'], a play on word with the Maoist slogan '为人民服务' ['Serve the People'] (Gouride, 2011)), or even in solidarity with La Finka social centre in Chiapas, which was destroyed by the Mexican government. The Beijing hardcore band Fanzui Xiangfa (犯罪想法) – also consisting of foreign and Chinese musicians – has constantly promoted a DIY spirit in practice and in songs ('DIY!' (2014)) and anarchist themes ('Fuck your flag' (2014)). In Shenzhen, the crust punk band Disanxian (地三鲜) has nurtured a local scene inspired by the anarchist punk spirit, independently producing records and zines. Their songs often talk about consumerism, oppressive state policies, and anarchism (the song 'Follow No Leader' (2017) is a perfect example). Anarchist and DIY themes in Chinese punk and hardcore songs also allow local bands to connect with the wider anarchist movement, by touching upon more general subjects about oppression and consumerism and developing a sense of solidarity with punk communities abroad. This is one way in which global punk themes, and their appropriation in China, function as a culture of resistance, plugging the local scene into a worldwide struggle against state oppression and capitalist consumerism.

'DIY!'

如果你有绝妙的想法

行动就是最好的表达

探索与创作的过程

快去 DIY

谁要控制你的想法

谁能控制你的想法

Vem kan stoppa oss?

智慧之门就在你面前

钥匙就在你手里

没有人会帮你将它打开

只有DIY

Start a band, never sign

Do it yourself it's DIY

Punk's not something for you to buy

Make a zine, speak your mind

Do it yourself it's DIY

Punk's not something for you to buy

['DIY!']

[If you have a brilliant idea,]

[Action is your best expression,]

[The process of exploration and creation.]

[Quickly go DIY]

[Who wants to control your mind?]

[Who can control your mind?]

[Who can stop us?]

[The door of wisdom is right in front of you,]

[The key is in your hand.]

[There's no one who can help you open it,]

[Only DIY.]

[Start a band, never sign.]

[Do it yourself it's DIY.]

[Punk's not something for you to buy.]

[Make a zine, speak your mind.]

[Do it yourself it's DIY.]

[Punk's not something for you to buy.]

(Fanzui Xiangfa [犯罪想法], 2014)

Visual representations of anarchism in punk posters and zines

In the lyrics of early Chinese punk, we can indeed find references to a more 'intuitive' anarchistic politics, to borrow Donaghey's terminology (2013). Anarchy, understood as a refusal of authoritarian constraints and taboos, was used by Chinese punks to talk about their local situation. We can also see in punk posters a re-appropriation of punk anarchist themes and graphic representations, especially from early English punk bands such as the Sex Pistols. Indeed, the Sex Pistols' 1977 album is a common reference point for Chinese punks, and, for most of them, this is their first encounter with the word 'anarchy'. This is of course not specific to the Chinese context, as mentioned by Eryk Martin, 'culturally, there were elements within punk's global explosion that sounded familiar to anarchist ears. Among the more

notable developments was the release of the Sex Pistol's *Anarchy in the U.K.* [1976] … whose dissemination spat out anarchist language around the world' (2015, p. 28). Punk-style collage art and references to *Never Mind the Bollocks* can be found in many punk posters across China. For instance, a poster from a January 2013 concert at Mao Livehouse, featuring the Beijing skinhead band Misandao (蜜三刀) and the punk hardcore bands Hell City and Discord, displays a Union Jack flag with the sentence '我们继续 Anarchy' ['We carry on Anarchy'], using Jamie Reid's distinctive Sex Pistols 'ransom note' font. Another poster makes the reference even more obvious, featuring a collage with the picture of Queen Elizabeth II taken from the Sex Pistol's single 'God Save the Queen' (1977) pasted onto the head of former General Secretary of the CCP, Zhao Ziyang, in a famous photograph taken on Tiananmen Square on the 19th of May 1989, when he was addressing the hunger striking students shortly before his own demise. A more recent poster for the Hangzhou punk festival in 2019 uses the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks* album cover to make fun of Hangzhou's famous West Lake (西湖) 'three ponds' – which are also known for being printed on the back of one yuan bills.

These posters illustrate how Chinese punks continue to reappropriate English punk (and anarchist) aesthetics, while simultaneously distorting their initial meanings by adding elements specific to their social and political environment. By using punk 'collage' techniques, punks can make veiled references to the Tiananmen protests of 1989, perhaps the strongest taboo there is in contemporary China. But posters are not the only punk cultural production that can be linked to anarchist aesthetics in China. Like their Western counterparts, Chinese punk enthusiasts have, since the 1990s, engaged in the production of fanzines to document the underground music scene. These predominantly homemade zines are paradigmatic of the DIY ethics at the heart of punk practices (Bestley and Binns, 2018) – zine creators had to get a hold of cheap printers (usually black and white), format the zines themselves, and glue or staple the pages together on their own. Zines are an ephemeral testimony of fans' interests and cultural preoccupations, as well as 'residues of youthful agency; "visual and verbal rants" freed from the pressures of censorship, editorial dictates, subbing and deadlines' (Worley et al., 2018, p. 3). The majority of these fanzines unfortunately disappeared due to their ephemeral nature, but we can still find their traces, such as the influential zine

Sub Jam, created by the rock critic and experimental musician Yan Jun (颜峻) in 1998. Yan Jun came from the city of Lanzhou in Gansu, and since his involvement in the underground music scene of the 1990s, he has been engaged in promoting independent music in several Chinese cities and provinces, in order to decentre the (sub)cultural hegemony of the Beijing scene. In *Sub Jam*, he describes the underground music scene of several lesser-known cities, including Nanchang, Shenyang or Urumqi, interspersed with quotes from Allen Ginsberg and Gilles Deleuze (an online scan of the first issue of *Sub Jam*, published in 1998, is available at the Scream For Life (Hypotheses) webpage). Yan Jun also participated in the short-lived adventure of the rock magazine *Punk Generation* (朋克时代) and *Heyday of Rock and Roll* (盛世摇滚) between 1998 and 2001 along with the rock critic Yang Bo (杨波), in which they interviewed Chinese underground bands and introduced Western bands to their readership. The fanzine *So Rock!* (我爱摇滚乐) has also had a lasting impact on the Chinese underground scene. First published as a fanzine in the late 1990s in the city of Shijiazhuang, *So Rock!* became a monthly magazine sold in major Chinese cities until 2013, each issue coming with a CD containing songs from Chinese underground bands, sometimes self-recorded. *So Rock!* not only introduced the Chinese audience to various musical genres and other subcultural productions, but also published its readers' scene reports, reviews and analyses, blurring the symbolic frontier between amateur and professional – an element also at the heart of the punk ethos.

As mentioned earlier, DIY is a practical necessity both because of the absence of a mainstream industry but also to circumvent censorship, which is ubiquitous in the Chinese context (Amar, 2020). Chinese punk bands have adopted the principle of DIY recording and selling their music at concerts in order to release albums without having to go through the approval of a registered label. For instance, the Beijing street punk band Shochu Legion (烧酒军团) has released several albums on their own, selling them during their concerts in the form of homemade burned CDs wrapped in black fabric, or as a USB memory stick in the shape of a studded bracelet containing their songs. Punk collectives, gathered around prominent punk live venues or bars (the Scream Club or the School Bar in Beijing, the Wuhan Prison in Wuhan), have established independent labels to release their own records, sometimes in

collaboration with more established and commercial labels. Indeed, while punk bands often release albums with a professional label, it doesn't prevent them from using DIY recording and distribution afterwards, depending on the degree of censorship they might have to comply with and their willingness to self-censor their lyrics.

Opening autonomous spaces: two examples from Tongzhou and Wuhan

Punk music, as with other musical communities, is strongly linked to the question of space – spaces to rehearse, spaces to perform, spaces to gather and drink together. Throughout their history, in the wider context of an unwelcoming cultural environment, Chinese punks have opened alternative spaces where they could perform their music. As highlighted by Dawson Barret, 'punk, at its core, is a form of direct action. Instead of petitioning the powerful for inclusion, the punk movement has built its own elaborate network of counter-institutions, including music venues, media, record labels, and distributors' (2013, p. 23). Since the beginning of the movement in China, punk musicians and enthusiasts have had to find, and, most of the time, *create*, venues and rehearsal spaces to foster a subcultural community. Early punks in Beijing gathered at the Gao brothers' rehearsal space – members of the early punk band UnderBaby (地下婴儿) – a spare room adjacent to their parents' duck restaurant (O'Dell, 2011). If early Beijing punks managed at first to secure performances in venues opened by the rock community of the 1980s, they quickly moved to venues specifically dedicated to punk music, such as the Scream Club, opened in 1998. In Wuhan, punks initially started to play at universities or in karaoke parlours, but were rapidly confronted with the hostility of the university management and of karaoke customers, annoyed both by the noise made by the punks and by their attitude. Punks thus had to organise themselves and mutualise their scarce resources to open live venues dedicated to underground music, where they could perform freely.

I want to focus here on two experiments which showcase the organising power of the punk community in China, as well as their engagement in the more global anarchist and autonomous movement. In 2012, Spike, the singer of the punk band Demerit (过失), decided to organise a punk festival in Tongzhou, an eastern suburb of Beijing where a lot of punks lived at the time. They were fed-up with major rock festivals, which refused to invite punk bands to perform. On the day of the Strawberry Festival, Spike and his friends set-up the Strawberry Fucktival, a counter-festival featuring major Beijing punk bands. Instead of choosing the line-up of the show according to the fame of the bands, as they usually do in rock festivals and live venues, it was decided that a beer competition between all of the bands would be organised – the fastest drinker being able to choose his or her band's order in the line-up (the majority of band's drinkers were men during this edition of the Strawberry Fucktival). This unusual practice stems from punks' critique of Beijing rock venues' operation. Indeed, as the singer of the street punk band Discord told me:

> The manager of the Mao Livehouse [a Beijing rock venue] decided by himself the line-up of the concert, we performed at the very end, after all the rock bands. The audience had to say which band they were here for, and according to this ranking, the bar will give you more or less money. But at the end of our performance, the manager fled with that night's ticket money, we had to threaten him in order to get our share. And it was less than the other bands, what a dickhead! (Interview with the author, 2013)

The Strawberry Fucktival was conceived as a way for the punks to overcome Beijing rock venues' malpractices and organise their own shows according to their own rules. Following the success of the Fucktival, Spike opened the DMC (Dirty Monster Club) in Tongzhou, a bar and live venue operated by the punks and for the punks. The line-up of punk festivals organised at the DMC continued to be decided through beer competitions, and the revenue of the tickets was equally redistributed between the bands. The DMC – whose storefront paid explicit homage to CBGBs in New York – was a major place of punk experimentation, where punks could collectively organise themselves, far from the control of the state and the mercantile

management of rock venues. The DMC was covered by posters and tags inspired by the global punk and anarchist movement, displaying 'ACAB' (All Cops Are Bastards), anti-racist and circled-A graffiti on the walls. However, urban renewal projects in Tongzhou forced the DMC to close down in 2015, and Spike opened up a new bar in his hometown of Qingdao, with the same spirit and the same name.

On the outskirts of Wuhan lies one of the city's biggest lakes, East Lake, or Donghu (东湖). You can reach Donghu by bus in ten minutes from the student neighbourhood in the Wuchang district, where the major underground live venues and bars are located. Donghu is a special place for Wuhan punks, since the rent is cheap, and the atmosphere less suffocating than in the city. It is here, in Donghu, near the Botanical Garden, that Mai Dian opened his Our Home Autonomous Youth Centre (我们家青年自治中心). Mai Dian was the guitarist of the early Wuhan punk bands SDL (死逗了) and 400 Blows (四百击). After touring Europe and experiencing living in squats, he decided to open a space in Wuhan where people could gather, share a meal, sleep, and borrow (or create) books and leaflets from an infoshop. As it is very difficult to illegally occupy a space in China without being quickly confronted by the police, he decided to rent a cheap, dilapidated house in Donghu. As he recalls in an article published in 2012:

> We need a place inside our own lives, to find a space to serve as a meeting place and an intermediary, to circulate information, to discuss the 'symbols' of action we have encountered, to share the connectedness of our plights, to interpret it, and to attempt to act to the best of our ability. Certainly, such a place could not be a state-run 'youth palace' [government-run youth centres]. Nor could it be a bar or a coffee shop either, which are invested by businessmen. If you want to occupy a place illegally and make it happen, you first have to be ready to deal with violence. Perhaps, we can refer to the response adopted by European squatters after being violently evicted: rent a house or organise a housing cooperative ... If you want a place you can completely control, you have to rent it. Fortunately, we were able to find a secluded house just outside Wuhan with no walls and a harsh environment. Although the house was old, the surrounding scenery

had a natural beauty we found invigorating. After cleaning out the dust and pulling out the weeds, we assigned different functions to the house: it had to serve as an infoshop – a place to supply all the various alternative writings and information on social movements we could gather. A conference centre – from that day forth all workshops, seminars, and film screenings would be held at the house. Also, a stage located in the courtyard – to provide a space for rock, experimental, and street artists to perform. A guest house with free beds for those in need, and a courtyard with a campfire to gather all the friends. Finally, on a pillar of the outside wall, we put a red and black five-pointed star, and gave the house a name: 'Our Home Autonomous Youth Centre'. (Mai, 2012, pp. 106-107)

Our Home is consciously inspired by anarchist practices – the red and black star fixed onto the front of the house symbolises its inscription into the global anarchist movement. The management of Our Home is also based on autonomy, DIY, and collective organisation. Moreover, the library in Our Home is filled with radical left references, books or zines, in Chinese, Japanese and English, bought by Mai Dian (and often translated into Chinese by himself) or donated by visiting friends, highlighting the trans-national dimension of Our Home. One day, in 2014, while I was spending my afternoon at Our Home, I talked to Mai Dian about the newly published Chinese translation of *The Coming Insurrection* (the 2007 book by the radical French leftist collective, The Invisible Committee). To my surprise, Mai Dian already possessed the book, and knew that it was reputed to be written by the infamous 'Tarnac Nine', including the so-called leader Julien Coupat, who had been accused by the French government of conspiracy, sabotage and terrorism. He was also very knowledgeable about the previous incarnation of The Invisible Committee, *Tiqqun*, who had published two radical philosophical journals between 1999 and 2001 – something that most French people knew nothing about, even in leftist circles. The ideas of *Tiqqun* and The Invisible Committee resonated with Mai Dian's own experience, particularly in their vision of a cybernetic governmentality and their oppositional tactics. The global connectivity of Our Home appeared even more clearly when I visited the anarchist infoshop Irregular Rhythm Asylum in Tokyo. There, one could find stickers of Wuhan's Our Home, and the owner, Kei, knew Mai Dian very

well. His infoshop also featured writings by Mai Dian, as well as Japanese and Chinese versions of various texts written by The Invisible Committee and *Tiqqun*. Indeed, anarchist knowledge and practices circulate around the globe – obscure French anarchist writings are translated, interpreted and used in Shinjuku as well as in Wuhan. Punk collectives and social spaces thus function as knowledge hubs, where ideas and practices are shared and experimented, and Wuhan punk is connected to like-minded anarchist and punk collectives in the East Asia region, in Japan, Taiwan or Hong Kong.

Our Home is not only a place of experimentation, it is also practically at the centre of a social movement directed at the preservation of the Donghu area. In 2010, an investigation published by *Time Weekly* revealed a corruption scandal regarding the urban development of the Donghu area involving a state-owned real-estate company and the local government. A protest was organised against this real-estate development project, involving Mai Dian and other Wuhan punk figures, university students and local farmers. The participants were supposed to 'go out on a stroll', a widely known protest tactic in China – since public protests are largely banned, people gather without slogans or banners and take a collective stroll (Davies, 2012). However, the cops showed up a day before the demonstration, and intimidated the organisers, including Wu Wei, the singer of the oldest Wuhan punk band, SMZB (Momin, 2014). The demonstration had to be called off, but Our Home became the main platform of contestation against the Donghu real-estate project. Donghu's punks, artists, activists and residents decided to create a collective, Donghu For Everyone (每个人的东湖), to organise happenings, discussions, seminars and screenings in order to raise awareness of the environmental impact of the project. Even now that Our Home has been closed down and the 'Happy Valley' amusement park has been constructed in Donghu, punks and activists still try to defend Donghu and its memory – as illustrated by Wu Wei's recently released song on Donghu, 'Lovers' Prattle for Donghu' ('东湖情话'):

'东湖情话'

我在东湖划过船，我在东湖看日出

我在东湖洗过澡，我在东湖泡过脚

我在东湖赏过花，我在东湖拍过照

我在东湖裸过泳，我在东湖见过红

一鹅？有人填了两百亩，上面建了个欢乐谷

一鹅？警察不让去散步，那就一起去搞三俗

来东湖，搞三俗，我要去东湖搞三俗

['Lovers' Prattle for Donghu']

[I rowed a boat in Donghu, I watched the sun rise in Donghu.]

[I washed myself in Donghu, I soaked my feet in Donghu.]

[I have enjoyed flowers in Donghu, I have taken photos in Donghu.]

[I have swum naked in Donghu, I have menstruated in Donghu.]

[A goose? Someone filled two hundred acres, and built a Happy Valley on it.]

[A goose? The police don't allow you to go on a stroll, then we can go engage in the three vulgarities together.]

[Come to Donghu, engage in the three vulgarities, I want to go to Donghu to engage in the three vulgarities.]

(Wu Wei [吴维], 2021)

In this song, Wu Wei recalls the movement to defend Donghu, when the police forbade them from 'taking a stroll'. The punk singer also mentions the 'three vulgarities' (三俗), a cultural policy enforced by the former President Hu Jintao in 2010, to avoid vulgar, cheap and tasteless cultural contents in order to build a strong socialist culture (Bandurski, 2010). Wu Wei makes fun of this policy, and indeed, punk and other Chinese subcultures were considered as 'vulgar' – Donghu represented one of the rare places where young punks

could go run and swim naked or organise BMX contests and parties. The fight for Donghu was also a fight to preserve a space of relative anarchy, where punks could engage freely in the 'three vulgarities' without fear. Punk music and DIY practices are, in the Donghu case, examples of how punk culture is understood as a tool for resistance. Poking fun at the local government in song lyrics, while organising the community according to DIY principles, or spraying subversive messages on the sidewalk of the Donghu urban development project, are viewed as small everyday acts of resistance.

Conclusion

The relationship between punk and anarchism in China has taken many different forms. Chinese punks have appropriated several anarchist symbols from the international punk movement – primarily the circled-A, Sex Pistols' 'anarchist' references and design, DIY practices, and political slogans like 'ACAB' – but these symbols are more than mere copies of Western punks. On the contrary, for the audience, these symbols echo their locally specific social and political experience: shouting 'ACAB' can start a conversation about Chinese police brutality, as is this case in a song which denounces the infamous Chinese 'Urban Administrative Enforcement Bureau Agents' (Chinese Alternative Music Archive Project, 2016); using Sex Pistols' graphic design fosters the remembrance of past social movements; singing 'anarchy' in songs allows one to condemn social, political and familial constraints. As mentioned in the chapter, the social and political context of contemporary China means that punks have to deal with specific constraints related to censorship, freedom of speech and the general control of the public sphere by the Party-State. While anarchist punk practices are, in Western countries, oriented towards a critique of (post)capitalism and commodification, Chinese punks more generally tackle the hegemony of the CCP and the historical taboos it has established. There is also a pragmatic affinity with anarchist DIY practices, since it would be complicated, if not impossible, for punks to release albums, edit magazines, or organise shows under the censorship system established by the CCP. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is a kind of spontaneous and organic 'elective affinity' between Chinese punk and anarchy. But this relationship is also, in certain cases, built upon the circulation of

anarchist ideas, showing how anarchism can simultaneously be a global phenomenon and be locally translated into everyday punk practices.

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