

**“There is no authority but yourself”:
Tracing first-wave British punk philosophy, from Nietzsche to Rotten**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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November 2021

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Abstract

1970s British punk-rock has been studied as both a music genre and subculture to great extent in the literature. It is often framed as a rejection of prog-rock, working-class socialist revolt, and celebration of nihilism. This thesis instead locates punk within Existential philosophy, a school of thought centring on personal authenticity. The Sex Pistols embody Existentialism perhaps more so than any other punk band active in the 1970s. Central tenets shared by both the Sex Pistols and Existentialism include: destruction as a path to creation; the rejection of authority, morality, systems of thought and religion; the elevation of personal authenticity as the highest value, and an ability to encourage critique, self-reflection, and activity. These themes are explored through the work of Existentialists Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabrielle Suchon and Simone de Beauvoir. The principal aim of this thesis is to understand the ways in which punk embodies the philosophy of these towering philosophical figures; firstly, from the perspective of a generalised (Western) human experience (in relation to the predicament of modernity); and secondly, from the perspective of the Western female. Punk attitude, lyrics, and music are analysed throughout, demonstrating that these elements of the subculture work together to not only embody Existential philosophy, but create a space within which an existence moulded by Existential principles can be explored. Tracing punk genealogy is shown to not only provide the subculture with a richer sense of itself, but to enrich the study of philosophy.

Acknowledgements

I am privileged enough to have had the support of many people throughout my time as a PhD student. The support of my supervisor, Dr Catherine Haworth, has been unwavering. Her intellectual input, patience, understanding, encouragement, and faith in my ability have been invaluable. Special thanks must also be given to Dr Lisa Colton, who has offered support generously when needed.

I would also like to thank the staff at Bishopsgate Institute for their practical assistance in accessing the wonderful world of punk fanzines. I am grateful for their timely responses to queries, expertise, and supportive environment. The University of Huddersfield have also provided financial support to enable conference and course attendance.

I cannot express enough my gratitude to friends and family. My parents for their love, support, and financial assistance; my sister for her unflagging faith in my ability; my friends for their kindness and words of encouragement; and finally, my partner Celia whose steadfast love, support, patience, and generosity of spirit has been there throughout. This thesis would not have reached completion without them.

This thesis is dedicated to Helena and Katie, who I know would be proud.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

The study of 1970s punk-rock is an established area of research in sociological and musicological studies; however, it is usually interpreted at the intersection between political resistance and popular culture. Punk's political and cultural meaning has been explored to a significant extent within the academy, yet from a historical and philosophical perspective it has been largely ignored (Wilkinson et al., 2017). The absence of scholarship on punk as a philosophy of life is notable considering terms such as 'nihilism', 'authenticity', 'existential', 'feminism', 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' are used so frequently in discussions on the movement and yet these terms are rarely elucidated or grounded in a broader philosophical context. This project should be read as a step towards filling this gap within the scholarship: it is an interdisciplinary project that synthesises multiple academic disciplines such as traditional Western philosophy, subcultural studies, personal testimony (drawing on zines and biographies) and musical analyses to provide a richer philosophical understanding of a significant moment in twentieth-century history.

This thesis explores relatively uncharted terrain and therefore offers initial points for discussion as opposed to definitive answers on philosophical questions. The scope of this project does not allow for an in-depth discussion on each of the towering figures of philosophy that are drawn on throughout: Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabrielle Suchon, and Simone de Beauvoir. However, aspects of their thought will be identified in relation to punk-rock and musical analyses will be presented with the intention of inspiring in-depth discussions on the philosophy of punk. These philosophers have been chosen due to their elevation of personal 'authenticity' as the highest value, a value that is also central to punk. The principal aim of this project is to understand the ways in which punk can be read as a manifestation of Western philosophy: firstly, from the perspective of a generalised (Western) human experience (in relation to the predicament of modernity); and secondly, from the perspective of the Western female¹. The focus is not on whether the artists themselves directly engaged with philosophical texts (although this will be touched on); rather, it is an investigation into the ways in which punk - in both 'the music itself' and the scene more broadly - can be read through an Existentialist lens.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is concerned with the metaphorical death of God. With the decline in the belief in God throughout the Western world humankind no longer has an external source of authority within which human meaning, evaluation and morality is anchored. Nietzsche's diagnostic term for this condition is 'nihilism' and his philosophical project can be read as an elaboration of the conditions under

¹ I have simplified the gender spectrum to 'male' and 'female' because these are the terms used in the original Existentialist texts drawn on throughout. An interesting project for future research would be to examine Existential-punk beyond the gender binary.

which the creation of new values may be possible, to avoid nihilistic despair. Whilst Nietzsche's solution is not a return to Christian society (Nietzsche himself was an atheist and much of his philosophical project is a railing against the Platonic-Christian value system) he does assert that authority should be present in some form. This authority, for Nietzsche, should derive from within the individual as opposed to an external source. This thesis situates the Sex Pistols (and punk more broadly) within this line of thought: their attitude and music, like Nietzschean philosophy, rails against established systems of thought accepted by 1970s British society and looks towards a future in which the individual derives authority from within. In this way - contrary to the accepted interpretation - they do not embrace nihilism; rather, they offer a way out. As John Lydon said of the Sex Pistols: "I don't think anything about the Pistols was nihilistic. We certainly weren't on a death trip. Maybe it was wreck-and-destroy stupidity, but I would hardly think that's nihilistic. Quite the opposite. It's very constructive because we were offering an alternative" (Lydon, 1994, p. 82). The scope of this thesis does not allow for an exploration of the extent to which the band were 'successful' in this respect, however, it does offer an alternative perspective. It is the similarities between Nietzsche and punk that allowed punk to be adopted by the far right: these problematic associations will also be explored in detail.

Following Nietzsche's retreat into the self and the advent of personal authority, second-generation Existentialist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) re-examines the question of 'Being'. Golomb (2012) notes that: "a significant area of affinity between Heidegger and earlier proponents of authenticity lies in his attempt to entice his readers" (p. 91). Enticing readers/audience into action is a strong thread running throughout Existential thought from Nietzsche through to the Sex Pistols (and the early punk scene more broadly), and is a theme explored throughout this thesis in detail. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger is concerned with authentic and inauthentic being: for Heidegger, "authenticity is ontologically prior to inauthenticity" and so his philosophical project can be read as an attempt to lure the reader out of inauthentic existence into an authentic one (Golomb, 2012, p. 96). He recognises that whilst human beings are responsible for the choices we make, we are also embedded in a social world and always engaged with people, tools and objects of our experience which will impact our choices: unlike Nietzsche, Heidegger recognises subject-object relations. Life is difficult in that we are immersed in the totality of existence, distracted by ongoing activity; in this state we lose individuality, develop a conformist public persona, and become 'inauthentic' whilst harbouring a deep, unfulfilled desire to discover who we really are. The only way for 'Dasein' (Heidegger's term for the situated human being) to escape inauthenticity is through 'anxiety' i.e., a situation in which we are confronted with the nature of existence and the fact of our mortality. This thesis argues that first-wave punks were forced to confront these realities through the Cold War (compounded by trauma rooted in the catastrophic events of World War II) and Nietzsche's death of God, and thus shaken from a conformist state. Once enlightened, in a Nietzschean manner, the Sex Pistols attacked the values of Western society in an attempt to enlighten the British public to their collective inauthentic

existence. Heidegger recognises that Dasein lives in a shared world and so Heideggerian philosophy can shed light on the punk movement in that punk emphasised not only individuality and personal authority but recognised that this personal authority exists alongside the autonomy of another human being. This is captured somewhat in a quote from John Lydon responding to a comparison that was often made between the Sex Pistols and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* [2019] in the 1970s: "Definitely not! Stanley Kubrick's film centred around a gang mentality, not individuality. It was about everyone looking and being the same. The four Johns weren't interested in that. We were more like Pinkie and his gang from Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* [2004]. That's what made that book so riveting for me. His gang was deeply peculiar, extremely different from each other. They weren't a bunch of clones, nor was it ever explained how Pinkie, being as young as he was, could be leading around this bizarre collection of strange, older people. I hung around with people who challenged me continually about everything I stood for. Constant challenge" (Lydon, 1994, p. 76).

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) takes from Heidegger concepts such as: being-in-the-world; anxiety/anguish; the distinction between an authentic and inauthentic existence; facticity and transcendence, and the notion that human beings are defined by projects, always projecting into the future. At the core of Sartre's philosophy is the notion that existence precedes essence i.e., existence is made by the subject and there is no such thing as pre-given or fixed identity (unlike the postmodernists, however, he doesn't deny the possibility of an identity). An examination of the extent to which punk can be said to embody Sartrean philosophy in this way will be explored in detail. Analysing punk from the perspective of Heideggerian authenticity/inauthenticity and Sartrean authenticity/Bad Faith not only sheds light on the philosophy of punk but reveals distinctions between the two models (which are often conflated in the literature). Sartre's concept 'The Look' - the notion that consciousness can only gain self-reflective awareness in becoming an object for another consciousness - will also be explored in relation to both the Sex Pistols and The Raincoats. John Lydon's infamous 'Lydon stare' (a result of the meningitis he contracted at 7 years old [Lydon, 2014]) is analysed from the perspective of Sartre's 'Look', revealing ways in which it is "primordially alienating" for the observer thus triggering self-reflection and potentially enticing the recipient into action (Rae, 2009, p. 57).

Gabrielle Suchon (1632-1703), whilst not an Existentialist in the traditional sense, anticipates Existentialism in elevating (female) personal authenticity as the highest philosophical value. Suchon addresses the issue of 'woman' in her social, political, and religious position. Fundamental to her work is the notion that women are deserving of rights granted to men. She was also one of the first philosophers to argue that women could – and should – lead a fulfilling unmarried life (considering the time in which she was writing, this was ground-breaking). Her work, like punk and the Existentialists, is designed to prompt women into action; however, Suchon recognises that women must be convinced of their own abilities before their status can be challenged. She promotes a 'celibate life' in which women commit only

to their authentic selves and thus discover their true nature. Her term for the woman who adopts this position is 'The Neutralist' i.e., one who doesn't conform to social norms, helps others, and rejects man-made constructions and submits above all to her own authority. An examination of the ways in which punk – broadly through its subcultural nature and specifically through the music of The Raincoats – created space for women to explore the 'Neutralist' position will be presented. Punk as a route to 'epistemic authority' (a precondition to becoming a 'thinking thing' and thus living a fulfilling, authentic life) will also be explored in detail.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) laid the foundations for feminist thought in the twentieth-century (Sandford, 2006). Like Heidegger, de Beauvoir recognised that human beings live in a shared world. From the perspective of 'woman' this presents a problem: women are restricted socially, politically, economically, and Existentially by the patriarchy. To fully exercise freedom, women rely on freedoms granted to them by society such as access to contraception, the right to abortion, divorce, and so on. Woman must therefore examine her position in the world as woman before the process of self-creation can take place. She must deconstruct her patriarchal conditioning (internalised ideas about herself) before she can construct herself as Existentially free. This explains some of the tensions present within first-wave British punk between the recognition for the need for collective resistance against the patriarchy, and a desire for individual authenticity expressed by female punks active within the scene. Building on Sartre's 'The Look', de Beauvoir asserts that women cannot gain recognition from men due to their acceptance of the position as 'Other' i.e., an object rather than a subject. The implications of this on Existential freedom will be explored in detail.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the current scholarship on punk-rock and explores issues which arise in attempting to rigidly define punk as a music genre, subculture, and postmodern phenomenon. Punk as a philosophy of life is also explored as a springboard to more in-depth discussions in Chapters 3 and 5. Chapter 3 demonstrates that British punk was a reaction to the rise of neoliberalism in Britain in the late 1970s and early 80s (a topic which has already been covered to great extent in the literature and is therefore only touched on): it was also a response to the predicament of modernity and can be read as a Nietzschean (Existential) response to the crisis of nihilism and the Death of God. As this is not a thesis on Nietzsche's philosophy - but rather an investigation into how his thought can provide a fresh and insightful perspective on punk - I have focussed mainly on what scholars say about his work as a secondary source. Punk is also situated more broadly as a reaction to The Cold War in the twentieth-century. Chapter 3 also reveals ways in which Nietzsche's thought manifested in the twentieth-century with Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, examining the extent to which punk sits within their respective philosophies. An extended analysis of the Sex Pistols is presented in Chapter 4, demonstrating the ways in which the philosophical ideas explored throughout Chapter 3 can be read within the band's attitude, lyrics and 'the music itself'. Chapter 5 examines punk through an Existential-feminist lens,

offering another perspective on the movement through the work of Gabrielle Suchon and Simone de Beauvoir. Finally, Chapter 6 offers an extended analysis of The Raincoats, demonstrating the ways in which the philosophical ideas explored throughout Chapters 3 and 5 can be read within the band's attitude, lyrics and 'the music itself'. Case studies on DEVO, Nina Hagen, the Buzzcocks and Siouxsie and the Banshees are also offered throughout Chapters 2 and 3.

This thesis is concerned with the Existentialist thread that runs throughout British punk music created in the late 1970s. 1970s British punk has been chosen due to the fact there is already a substantial body of academic work on this moment in punk's history, and the case studies selected – the Sex Pistols, The Raincoats, the Buzzcocks and Siouxsie and the Banshees – are bands cited most often in the literature. Whilst there were many bands active within the scene, these case studies epitomize the British manifestation of first-wave punk, at least according to the current literature. The Clash were rejected due to their explicit political associations and as demonstrated in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', this thesis is primarily concerned with philosophy, not politics. The Slits were also considered, but due to their opposition to collective political action (Wilkinson, 2018), they have not been included. As Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism demonstrates, a recognition of the need for collective action is central to an Existential-feminist perspective. Perhaps since a substantial amount of work already exists on these bands, certain narratives on the history of British punk have been created (and accepted) within both the academy and wider audiences: a fresh perspective on this moment in musical history is therefore needed. DEVO (American) and Nina Hagen (German) have been chosen to demonstrate that there is a clear 'postmodern' strand that runs through 1970s global punk more broadly. DEVO themselves are self-professed postmodernists (DEVO Inc., 2014; Dellinger & Giffels, 2008) and Nina Hagen is often referred to as a postmodernist in reviews of her work and academic scholarship (McLeod, 2001). These artists have been chosen because the postmodernist strand that runs through first-wave punk is perhaps most clear in their work: DEVO and Hagen serve as a point of comparison, highlighting the ways in which – despite confusion in much of the literature – postmodernism and Existentialism are distinct schools of thought. The impact of this confusion on punk scholarship is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Punk scholarship is interdisciplinary due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subculture itself. British first-wave punks not only engaged in music-making, but in fashion, the visual arts and zine creation. It is for this reason that this work draws on multiple sources. The archival material at Bishopsgate – an extensive collection of punk fanzines distributed across the UK throughout the 1970s and 80s – offers insight into the philosophy underpinning creative decisions made by punks during this time. The music-analytical approach to case studies highlights the ways in which Existential themes can be located within punk music and lyrics – it is through the medium of music that punks most often expressed themselves, and so this aspect to the subculture takes precedence throughout this work. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it is within sociological and musicological studies that punk is an established area of study, and so

current literature that falls within these fields of study is drawn on throughout to further the argument for British punk's Existential strand. The philosophical framework adopted – Existentialism – was the starting point for this project, and so all material is examined through this lens. Drawing on the work of Broad (forthcoming) who argues for a 'public musicology' i.e., a more inclusive musicology that is approachable by non-specialists and expands the engagement of intellectual considerations of music to outside the academy, this thesis should not be read as an exclusive academic text; rather, as a project that is of academic/research value which has a broader remit in terms of engagement and educational value.

Chapter 2:

Defining 'Punk'

This chapter outlines some of the ways in which British punk has been conceptualised in the literature since its inception in the 1970s and examines issues which arise in attempting to categorise punk in the following ways: a music genre, a subculture (rooted in working-class disaffection), a manifestation of the postmodern condition and, finally, a philosophy of life. This thesis argues that much punk-rock created in Britain in the 1970s sits most comfortably within the fourth category and can be read as Existentialism-in-action. Existentialism is a school of thought which became popular in France in the 1940s that traces lineage to European philosophers of the nineteenth-century. It must be noted here that not all punk-rock created during this time demonstrates an adoption of Existential principles; rather, Existential-punk² is a key strand which has been neglected in the literature. This chapter demonstrates that the 'part political' and 'part musical' have been examined to great extent in punk scholarship the 'part personal', however, has not. Existential-punk, this thesis argues, centres on revolutionary personal politics. This will be elaborated on throughout Chapters 3 and 5.

Punk as a Music Genre

In *Punk Rock: So What?*, Roger Sabin (2002) argues that 'punk' is an amorphous concept that took many forms in the 1970s including fashion statement, artistic statement and even a philosophy of life; however, its primary manifestation was in music. Worley (2017) writes: "for those with less overtly political agendas... punk more simply provided an opportunity to reinvent popular music, scrambling the codes of rock and pop to create new forms free from the tenets of rock 'n' roll" (p. 9). A mélange of musical styles were fused together - rock, ska, dub, reggae, folk - and complex form, virtuosic instrumental solos and macho posturing were rejected (Worley, 2012; Prinz, 2014). Punk challenged the rock canon of the 1970s and the idea of canonicity itself, transforming the meaning of originality, authenticity, and credibility (Jones, 2008). For many, punk was primarily "an attack on the professionalisation of music" (Simonelli, 2002, p. 22). To be a punk musician was to reject prevailing 1970s prog rock values such as: obscure meaning, artist at the centre of the work, escapism in narrative, instrumental and technological innovation and expertise, extended tracks, spectacular staging (stadium rock), virtuosic playing, complex arrangements, and perfectionism (Faulk, 2016; Ware, 2014; Worley, 2015; Worley, 2017; Jones, 2008; Prinz, 2014). In contrast to highly structured and tightly woven prog rock, punk sounded like, in the words of John Lydon of the Sex Pistols, it was "borderline falling apart" (Lydon, 2014, p. 107).

² The term 'Existential-punk' will be used throughout this thesis to refer to that punk music which embodies the philosophy of Existentialism.

However, the 'Year Zero' narrative immortalised in many historical accounts of punk - that with the birth of the Sex Pistols there was a radical rejection of popular music created pre-1976 - has been widely disputed (Wilkinson et al., 2017). As Dale (2016) argues, punk was "very much in line with a longer pedigree of rock music, and consciously so" (p. 32). Similarly, Redhead (1990) asserts that punk was a "continuation of the rock legacy that it was supposedly critiquing" (p. 28). Robb & Craske (2013), over a series of interviews with prominent first-wave punk figures, reveal that early rock and roll artists such as Cliff Richard, Chuck Berry, The Rolling Stones, the Beatles, the Who, the Yardbirds, Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis were hugely influential on punks such as Hugh Cornwell of The Stranglers, Glen Matlock of the Sex Pistols, Steve Diggle of the Buzzcocks and Siouxsie Sioux. These early bands were influential because, according to Jake Burns of Stiff Little Fingers, they had a sound that was "pretty easy to play and learn, so you could make something that sounded like a proper band" (Robb & Craske, 2013, p. 69). John Lydon (2014) saw the Sex Pistols as a continuation of popular music: "the bottom-line function I see in what I do is - I write pop songs. I can go into elaborate versions of pop songs but the basic root of me is *pop music*" (p. 48). Short, fast-paced songs with stripped-back instrumentation was a punk staple, but nothing popular music hadn't seen before. Lydon (2014) praises Status Quo specifically for the way they "found something inside a simple format... their methodology is simplicity" (p. 44). Furthermore, many punk artists released cover versions of 1960s classics. Patti Smith, for example, who is considered a forerunner of punk and whose music is celebrated as a break from tradition, recorded cover versions of 'My Generation' (1965) by the Who and 'Gloria' (1973) by Van Morrison's band Them, demonstrating respect for artists of the previous generation (Jones, 2008).

The notion that punk rejected prog rock outright is, to an extent, hyperbole. Many punks interviewed by Robb & Craske (2013) talk of the fertile music scene in early 1970s Britain. Captain Sensible of the Damned says underground prog rock bands such as the Groundhogs were exciting, and some punk musicians were even into mainstream prog rock groups like Yes, such as Keith Levene of The Clash: "when I was nine or ten I was into... the beginnings of heavy metal and Led Zeppelin and all that kind of stuff as it was coming hot off the press. This culminated in my absolute godhead band, Yes" (Robb & Craske, 2013, pp. 45-46). Pink Floyd were also cited as an influence on many punks, in particular Captain Sensible, who talks of the impact of psychedelia on his musical development: "I was quite normal until I heard 'See Emily Play' [1967]... the incredible psychedelia and the beautiful melody and Englishness of that song!... I was transfixed by this sound. It had a profound effect on me and changed my life forever... I went home and started nagging my parents to get me a guitar after that" (pp. 29-30). The influence of prog rock on punk, then, was mixed, and although the sound and ethos of punk may have been very different to prog rock, there was a clear influence. Most punks interviewed by Robb & Craske (2013), however, agree that towards the mid-1970s prog rock became somewhat self-indulgent. Rat Scabies of the Damned says: "a good drum solo is a thing of rare beauty. Not many were that well-constructed. The whole self-indulgence

thing with Emerson Lake and Palmer lost me” (Robb & Craske, 2013, p. 44). Steve Severin of Siouxsie and the Banshees, in a similar vein, rejects the notion of being a ‘muso’, a derogatory label which is often assigned to prog rock musicians by punks: “I never wanted to be a ‘muso’ and I still don’t... I am naturally drawn to anyone who has a unique vision and doesn’t deviate” (Robb & Craske, 2013, pp. 47-48). Punk’s disregard for musical competence was, according to Worley (2012), a “claim to realism” with an aim to break down barriers between audience and musician (p. 339). Some, however, have argued that the amateurism of punk “often belies a masked musical proficiency” (Dale, 2016, p. 32). Malcolm McLaren, for example, “tended to promote the idea of the Sex Pistols’ instrumental shortcomings in the face of the fact that they could (with the exception of Sid Vicious) all play their instruments reasonably well” (Jones, 2008, p. 86). Reddington (2007), in a series of interviews with female musicians active within the first-wave punk scene, notes that very few of the women she spoke to had no musical skill: “some of them, such as Lucy O’Brien, transferred existing skills to a similar instrument. Others had picked up skills, or at least enabling ideas, from the school system or home musical environments” (p. 47). Some bands, however, did appear to have very little musical ability if any at all. The Ex and the Mekons formed bands before learning an instrument and one can hear the musicians developing technique as records progress (Dale, 2016). Similarly, Viv Albertine of The Slits, in her autobiography *Clothes, Music, Boys*, writes of how she built her guitar style “from scratch, from a starting point of no chords, no twelve-bar blues chord progressions, and no scales”, and instead tried to recreate animal noises (Albertine, 2019, p. 101). John Lydon (2014) in *Anger is an Energy*, says of his musical ability: “I had a huge musical knowledge, just not about the actual construction of it” (p. 108). Jones (2008) writes, however, that musical amateurism has been celebrated since the beginning of rock and roll and isn’t necessarily unique to punk: “histories of rock suggest that it is better to have learnt from imitating records or fellow rock musicians than to learn from conventional, institutional ‘teachers’... institutionalised learning is both regarded with suspicion and looked down upon as an inferior means of ultimate expression” (p. 85). Lack of technical sophistication is often considered an indicator of punk authenticity, yet it has arguably been a marker of rock authenticity more broadly since the 1950s (Jones, 2008). This suggests that punk was a call for the reinstatement of rock and roll as an oppositional force, not a rejection of rock music entirely. Glam-rock was a precursor to punk (Robb & Craske, 2013). John O’Neill of the Undertones, Marc Riley of The Fall, Colin Newman of Wire, Marco Pirroni of Siouxsie and the Banshees and Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex all talk of Bowie, T. Rex, Roxy Music, and Slade being notable influences. Colin Newman says of Bowie: “I was a big, big Bowie fan. There was a sense that Bowie was art... there was no other music about other than that... The fact that people are still talking about Bowie during punk shows how important he was to that generation... I tended to like people who couldn’t technically sing” (pp. 63-64). For Jimmy Pursey of Sham 69, glam was the reason he got into punk: “I was really into David Bowie... glam was about the music, the sexuality, the clothes - anything goes, and that’s why I became a punk rocker” (pp. 68-69). Similarly, John Lydon (2014) notes the connection between glam and punk: “the sexual curiosity that glam rock kicked up - Bowie standing up for

something, saying, 'Who are you to tell me what to do?' - it was a great breeding ground for punk to begin" (p. 48). Not all punks, however, shared the same enthusiasm for glam. Founder of Factory Records Tony Wilson says: "for me, Bowie was kind of some guy from London who was a wanker and that put me off Bowie, also I never really liked Roxy Music because of Bryan Ferry. He's all about form over substance, so it was a bit boring" (Robb & Craske, 2013, p. 93). Even writers on punk often make a clear distinction between punk and glam, such as Italian filmmaker and avid punk fan Antonino D'Ambrosio (2012b): "Glam was pretentious, overproduced, slick and bourgeois. Punk rock, in stark contrast, was angry, loud, aggressive, and rooted in working-class alienation" (pp. 3-4). So, whilst many punks may have taken the 'anything goes' ethos from glam, many rejected it entirely. Again, the musical influences and non-influences on punk are not as straightforward as the narrative constructed in much of the literature suggests. Moreover, Stratton (2005) notes that "while in terms of popularity glam preceded punk, especially in England, generically the two musical forms developed about the same time and coexisted", confusing the relationship further by the implication that they informed each other's development (p. 81). However, Stratton (2005) notes that the philosophical preoccupations of punk and glam were somewhat distinct: "where glam was more concerned with style and gender issues, punk was much darker, acting out" (p. 81). The manifestations of Existential punk's 'acting out' will be discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism.

Jones (2008) explores tensions between punk-rock and the established rock canon of the 1960s and 70s: on the one hand, punk transgresses the rock canon by challenging the idea of canonicity itself, subverting accepted definitions of originality and authenticity within music; on the other, it reproduces canonical rock values. Jones (2008) writes that in a direct reversal of the celebration of clarity in 1960s rock music, punk values perceived 'truth' over beautiful singing (valuing 'truth' in a broader philosophical sense will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism). Jones (2008) writes: "John Lydon's... singing lacked subtlety or sophistication, but it perfectly suited the music and message of punk" (Jones, 2008, p. 83). The abrasive, chaotic and raucous sound of punk records - created by minimal instrumentation including vocals, lead guitar, bass guitar and drums - stands in direct contrast to popular music recording techniques of the 1960s (Jones, 2008; Brown, 2012). Phil Spector's 'Wall of Sound', for example, is a production technique that values rich and complex textures and draws on a wide range of instrumentation (Brown 2012). Spector - who worked with many rock bands throughout the 1960s including the Beatles - was incessantly in pursuit of the 'perfect' sound, meaning endless adjustments and retakes in the studio (Brown, 2012). In contrast, many punk bands rejected perfection. John Lydon (2014) talks of how he refused multiple takes requested by professional producers, insisting: "one take is all I needed" (p. 127). Similarly, hardcore punks Discharge allegedly recorded *Realities of War* (1980) in three hours (Worley, 2011). In other respects, punk sits comfortably within the rock canon. For example, the attitude of rebellion which is central to the 1960s rock persona is an important marker of authenticity in

punk (Jones, 2008). However, punk rebellion differed to 1960s rock rebellion in that it was not only aimed at society at large, but the music industry itself. Martin (2015) writes:

Critics alleged that rock's soul had been broken on the wheel of superstardom, corporate money, and influential record labels, processes that had produced a frustrating contradiction. On the one hand, capitalist structures had amplified and extended the reach of rock and roll, bringing it into the lives and senses of millions of people. On the other hand, that success had also turned rock into an item of contempt for those who no longer saw it as a relevant and engaged form of social expression. As a result, rock and roll was ripe for a dramatic transformation (p. 25).

Marcus (1992), however, argues that this rebellion was superficial. For him, although punk tried to break away from the music industry it was unsuccessful because it *was* rock and roll (many punk bands even signed to major labels) despite its insistence otherwise.

Punk, then, can be read as both a continuation of, and reaction against, rock music and the rock industry. Punk as a revitalisation of rock and roll is supported by The Clash's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003 (Onkey, 2016). Onkey (2016) writes: "one of [Joe Strummer's] most lasting achievements was his attempt to revolutionise rock and roll within the discourse of the genre itself" (p. 25). Similarly, Marcus (2012) writes: "If the Sex Pistols... truly were committed to the destruction of rock 'n' roll not only as myth but as fact, the Clash were committed to changing rock 'n' roll, to taking it over, to becoming the Number One Band in the World" (p. 61). Although, Worley (2015) notes that The Clash came under attack from many punks for their "apparent absorption into the rock 'n' roll mainstream", suggesting a tension within the punk movement between reclaiming the genre and 'selling out' (p. 84). U2's The Edge praises The Clash for "[saving] rock and roll itself" by representing it as life-changing for listeners (Onkey, 2016, p. 26). He recalls his first Clash gig: "something had changed. It was like the axis of the world had shifted; for everyone there, that show was an awakening. We all caught a glimpse of something. Something distant, but now attainable. A sense of possibilities - part political, part musical, part personal - but all completely inspirational" (Onkey, 2016, pp. 26-27). It is the 'part personal' – the revolutionary personal politics – with which this thesis is concerned, and it is this which distinguishes Existential-punk-rock from other incarnations of punk, and rock and roll more broadly.

Punk's relationship to early rock and roll, glam and prog has been explored in detail, however, scholars have also drawn connections between punk and music traditions such as folk and Victorian music hall. In *British Rock Modernism*, Faulk (2016) argues that the gap between rock music and working-class culture widened in the 1960s and the Sex Pistols attempted to reclaim a link between class and traditional English culture. He argues that singer Johnny Rotten drew on theatrical gestures of Victorian music-hall performance in "an anxious attempt to reintegrate British rock with a specific British working-class identity" at a time when tensions between workers' and the state was fraught (p. 16). Like much of the literature discussed in the following section 'Punk as Subculture', Faulk (2016) overstates punk's working-

class associations, asserting that the relocation of working-class neighbourhoods, high rise concrete council flats and American-style consumerism was responsible for breaking down the “once held tight-knit working-class families”, acting as a primary catalyst for the British punk movement (p. 17). Issues which arise in viewing punk as a solely working-class rebellion will be discussed in ‘Punk as Subculture’; however, Faulk’s (2016) study is a useful one that explores how the Sex Pistols tried to restore the status of rock music as an oppositional force. As Reddington (2007) notes, however, what began as a (male) expression of rebellion and opposition quickly became “one of the last bastions of inequality, a symbolic resistance to change in the gender relations of young people” (p. 108). The problematic gender relations within first-wave British punk will be examined in Chapter 4: Punk as Existential-Feminism.

Dale (2016) argues that the roots of punk can be found in folk music. He notes similarities in traditions of inclusivity i.e., ‘anyone can do it’, and an acceptance (even celebration) of amateurism. Both genres also acknowledge that a ‘beautiful’ voice may not always communicate specific messages to an audience i.e., a critique of the modern industrial world. Folk, like punk, accommodates a wide range of positions across the political spectrum, although Dale (2016) emphasises that the “anarchistic or individualistic ideal seems to be stronger in punk than in folk”, and folk music overall has a stronger tendency towards socialism (Dale, 2016, p. 67). The individualistic ideal running through punk - expressed through the adoption of Existential principles - will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. Like folk, punk occasionally embraced the protest song, albeit in a more confrontational way. D’Ambrosio (2012a) understands Joe Strummer as “a new type of folk singer chronicling the demise of one revolution (industrial) and the rise of another further alienating upheaval (technocratic)” (p. xxxvii). In *Anger is an Energy*, Lydon (2014) identifies the Sex Pistols as protest music: “I suppose what I was doing was protest music. I can’t help that. It has to be done. The truth has to be out there. That was a very untruthful period” (p. 331). Whilst similarities between punk and folk can be identified, there are also notable differences. For example, within folk music there is “conservation, preservation and recuperation in traditionalist/authenticist approaches” yet within punk there is an “aspiration towards innovation, originality and transgression in what is probably best described as a modernist attitude” (p. 55). It is within this line of modernist thought - which can be traced to Friedrich Nietzsche in the nineteenth-century - that this thesis situates Existential punk-rock.

Punk as Subculture

Subcultural studies grew out of the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1960s (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). For scholars working within the CCCS tradition, British punk is viewed as a subcultural category that emerges from class tensions: it is read as one in a series of collective responses to the alienation and disillusionment of postwar working-class youths (Hall & Jefferson, 2006; Hebdige, 1979). Whilst subcultural studies has developed significantly since the work of the CCCS, their

ground-breaking work in class relations, hegemony, ideology and culture in relation to British postwar subcultures provides a somewhat useful framework through which to view Existential-punk: drawing on the CCCS's work on the relations between dominant culture and subculture, this thesis frames punk as a response to, amongst other things, the hegemony of neoliberalism on the rise throughout 1970s Britain, a term that will be defined in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. It must be noted here that unlike the work of the CCCS this thesis is not a Marxist analysis of class relations within Britain at that time, and Existential-punk is not conceptualised as a solely working-class response to broader economic changes (although working-class punks were active within the scene); rather, it is read as a rebellion against a dominant ideology, a rebellion which wasn't *necessarily* class-based.

Early CCCS thinkers – working within the Marxist tradition i.e., operating on the premise that society is structured according to class relations and divisions of labour – conceptualise subcultures as a response to the postwar transition from industrialism to commercialism (Hall & Jefferson, 2006; Hebdige, 1979). During this transition, a subset of the working-class fragmented into subcultures (the middle-class response to this was the 'counterculture' [Hall & Jefferson, 2006]) as both a coping mechanism and form of *symbolic* resistance which stood in for class consciousness (Hebdige, 1979). It is symbolic because one's class oppression cannot be resolved at the level of subculture ("there is no 'subcultural career' for the working-class lad" [Hall & Jefferson, 2006, p. 35]). This approach – an examination of the ways in which 'codes' are turned against the system – marks the birth of subcultural studies as semiotics (Garnett, 2002). According to the CCCS, with broad economic shifts during the postwar period (the rise of modern technical industries and the rationalisation of society) came destabilisation at the social, familial, and cultural level: redevelopment led to the disintegration of communities, the rise of immigrant labour, fragmentation of the traditional extended family and the dying of small craft industries. There was a spectrum of responses to these shifts, but subcultural resistance specifically took the form of an adoption of style, language, activities, values, material artefacts and territorial space (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). These social rituals underpin a sense of collective identity (homology) and define the individuals as a group (being-as-a-group) (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Viewed through this model, punk style (tartan, Dr Marten, leather jacket, Day-Glo, bondage, safety pins), language (argot), activities (playing music, creating zines), values (vegetarianism, pacifism, nihilism, anarchism, fascism, anti-commercialism), use of material artefacts and symbols (Union Jack, swastika, anarchy symbol) and marking of territorial space (gig venue, street corner, squat) are read as a cultural response to broader economic shifts in 1970s Britain (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). This thesis accepts the CCCS model to the extent that it acknowledges that broad economic shifts do play a central role in the shaping of subcultural (philosophical) values; however, it rejects the thesis that punk was a class-based rebellion, and instead argues that the thread running through all expressions of Existential-punk is an *opposition to societal and cultural norms*, despite one's social stratum.

For Hall & Jefferson (2006) subcultures are located at the intersection between hegemonic dominant culture and the subordinate, working-class parent culture. Hegemonic dominant culture is defined as those ideas in society which are naturalised and normalised by the dominant class (the bourgeoisie). The 'powerful' in society are not simply those who own capital, but who rule as thinkers and producers of ideas (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). In 1970s Britain, neoliberalism was the ruling political-economic ideology upon which society was, and still is, structured (Venugopal, 2015). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. The 'parent culture' according to the CCCS, was the working-class: through this lens, punk is framed as a response to the dominant culture (the bourgeoisie) which shared the concerns of its parent culture (the proletariat). This thesis both rejects and accepts this position: the notion that Existential-punk was a response to a dominant ideology (neoliberalism) is accepted; however, the framing of punk as a working-class phenomenon which shares concerns with its parent culture, is rejected for reasons discussed throughout this section. More specifically, there are three central tenets of the CCCS framework – drawn from Marxism – that this thesis accepts. Firstly, whilst ideas produced by the dominant class may 'win' at any given time, conflict can never fully disappear – it fluctuates, and (class) identity is never settled i.e., there is an ever-present potential for resistance (contrary to the postmodern position, discussed in detail later). Secondly, we are both formed and form ourselves through society, culture, and history; one makes something of one's starting conditions and things can only happen within a given field of possibility. We experience ourselves *in terms prescribed by the dominant culture*. The CCCS draws attention to this dialectic: 'subculture' is a subset within a larger cultural network, and it must be analysed *in relation to the dominant culture*. And finally, one's individuality is never wholly individual or free-floating – individuation takes place within collective structures (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Like the most powerful thinkers within the Existentialist tradition, the most exciting and potentially revolutionary punk music created in the 1970s also recognises the social aspect to individuality.

CCCS theorists have since been widely criticised. Worley (2017) writes: "a lack of empirical evidence has led to suggestions that the scholars associated with or informed by the CCCS sought to fit youth culture to their own politically motivated theories rather than any recognisable - more complex - reality" (p. 17). The framing of British punk as a class-based social crisis was also a narrative constructed by the British media through the work of journalists Caroline Coon and John Ingham in the 1970s (Worley, 2017; Faulk, 2016). Johnny Rotten critiques this narrative in a cover version of The Stooges' 'No Fun' (1996): "Here we go now, a sociology lecture, with a bit of psychology, a bit of neurology, a bit of fuckology", suggesting that this reading was contrived (Wilkinson et al., 2017). The generally accepted view in current scholarship is that the conditions which gave rise to British punk are much more complicated. One must acknowledge, however, that there are arguably no circumstances where experience is not shaped in some way by class, and an examination of the ways in which Existential-punks from different class backgrounds developed Existentialist ideas differently (in a comparable manner to the way men and women do) is an important

topic for future research. However, the primary concern of this thesis is the ways in which, broadly speaking, Existentialist ideas are explored in Existential-punk despite class position: it looks to lay the groundwork for future discussions on more specific manifestations of Existential-punk.

Whilst this thesis rejects the notion that punk was a solely working-class rebellion, it is important to acknowledge that many on the Left saw in punk a potentially revolutionary space for the proletariat. In 1970s Britain, the Left were “struggling to make sense of a shifting political terrain” and punk provided a space within which political ideas could be explored and disseminated (Worley, 2015, p. 100). On the Left, the Young Communist League (YCL) issued an open letter to the Sex Pistols in 1977 expressing their admiration. The YCL urged the Sex Pistols to use their strengths not just in the music industry but on the streets, and felt that by working together they could present a real threat to the establishment (Worley, 2012). The Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP) and International Marxist Group (IMG) also saw in punk a proletarian revolt (Goodyear, 2013). In 1976, journalist and political activist Garry Bushell, in *Socialist Worker*, writes: “punk’s aggression reflected the answer of a generation who had graduated from school only to serve their time on street corners and on the dole. It was working class rebellion” (Worley, 2012, p. 337). Moreover, The Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP) backed the Rock Against Racism (RAR) campaign that many punk bands were involved with throughout the late 1970s and early 80s, mobilising people against the National Front (NF) (Goodyear, 2013). In 1978, The Labour Party Young Socialists “[approved] punk’s anti-establishment stance and [acknowledged] its projection of genuine working-class frustration” (Worley, 2012, p. 334). Not everyone on the Left, however, agreed on punk’s political potential: some viewed it as a potentially dangerous conduit for right-wing ideology, a “passing fad that brought no positive value to the broader struggle for socialism” (Worley, 2012, p. 339). Moreover, the postmodern Left drew the conclusion that punk was merely a “simulated substitute” for actual working-class rebellion, although this stance was uncommon (Worley, 2012, p. 339).

Punk did provide space within which working-class rebellion could be expressed. Jah Wobble of Public Image Limited, in an interview with Robb & Craske (2013), says: “when I grew up no working-class lad would ever be in a band. It was all middle-class people playing prog rock. It never occurred to us that we could be in bands. It took punk rock to change everything” (p. 88). Viv Albertine of The Slits writes that seeing the Sex Pistols for the first time made her realise she was capable of anything despite her social status: “I’ve always thought that my particular set of circumstances - poor, North London, comprehensive school, council flat, *girl* - haven’t equipped me for success. As I watch the Sex Pistols I realise that this is the first time I’ve seen a band and felt there are no barriers between me and them” (Albertine, 2019, p. 86). Working-class Italian filmmaker and author of *Let Fury Have the Hour*, Antonino D’Ambrosio (2012a) expresses a similar sentiment: “The Clash... allowed me to lay claim to the world that at one time felt foreign. I could reimagine what kind of world I wanted to live in but also imagine being a key player in shaping history... I could invent alternatives... It gave me life as a participant” (p. xxxviii). Punk, then, did

give working-class musicians a sense of agency. There were also (right-wing) working-class offshoots of punk, such as Oi!, that “reflected a class-based masculinity perceived to be under threat from deindustrialisation and associated dissolution of communities built on collective class experience” (Worley, 2017, p. 205). The strand of working-class rebellion running through punk, then, wasn’t always situated on the Left.

Some British punks were influenced by Marxist theory (Spracklen, 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Some bands focussed on concepts such as labour - like The Mekons and Six Minute War - whilst music by bands such as Gang of Four and Scritti Politti contain traces of The Frankfurt School’s Marxist-Freudian thinker Herbert Marcuse (Wilkinson, 2018). Joe Strummer of The Clash, directly influenced by Marx, was probably British punk’s most influential political figure on the Left. D’Ambrosio (2012b) writes: “through his songwriting Strummer consistently critiqued capitalism, advocated racial justice, and opposed imperialism” (p. 4). In ‘Generations’ (1997) he captures “the despair not just of the nameless worker... but of a father dehumanized by the consumer society in which he lives”, in ‘Career Opportunities’ (1977b) he addresses the harsh realities of the job market in mid-1970s Britain, in ‘Clampdown’ (1979b) he “presents the contradictions which lead us to believe that if we work hard, don’t complain, and don’t rock the boat, we can get ahead” and advocates the need for working-class rebellion (D’Ambrosio, 2012b, p. 10). He even cites Marx in ‘Magnificent Seven’ (1980): “Karlo Marx and Fredrich Engles, Came to the checkout at the 7-11, Marx was skint - but he had sense, Engels lent him the necessary pence” (Shannon, 2016, p. 18). Although from a middle-class background, Strummer adopted working-class values and presented himself as a proletariat hero (Shannon, 2016; Salewicz, 2006; D’Ambrosio, 2012b). He was involved in many causes on the Left in the 1970s, such as Rock Against Racism and the H-Block protests in Northern Ireland (D’Ambrosio, 2012b; Stratton, 2007). Later, in the 1980s, he became involved in the Free Nelson Mandela concerts organised by Amnesty International, and, as late as 2002 (a month before his death) performed at a benefit for striking London firefighters (D’Ambrosio, 2012b). The Clash’s manager, Bernie Rhodes, was also anti-fascist, and prohibited The Clash from adopting Nazi imagery (Stratton, 2007).

Green Gartside from Scritti Politti was also heavily influenced by Leftist thought, although his perspective shifted with the Left’s move towards postmodernism in the academy in the 1970s (Wilkinson, 2018). Schill (2017a) also notes the shift towards post-structuralism in post-punk in the late 1970s and early 80s, when musicians began drawing on Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault (although his study focuses primarily on American punk). Postmodern theory has been adopted in punk scholarship to explain punk’s ‘failure’ to instigate a socialist revolution (Moore, 2004; Davies, 1996). Whilst it has also been argued by those not associated with the postmodern Left that punk ‘failed’ to instigate revolution – a theory which cannot be repudiated easily – postmodern accounts of punk take this premise to the extreme, asserting that punk was a commodified rebellion which was quickly co-opted by capitalism (Moore, 2004; Davies, 1996). Contradictions within postmodern thought and the theoretical problems which arise in the application of

postmodern theory to the study of punk will be discussed in 'Punk as Postmodernism'. Even by the end of 1977, journalists such as Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons of *NME*, "despaired of what they saw as the dilution of the Sex Pistols' genuine rage and co-option of punk's early challenge by the media, music and clothing industries" (Worley, 2017, pp. 32-33). Worley (2015) argues, however, that "though its obituary was drafted many times within the music press and media, punk's enduring relevance and diffusion continued long into the 1980s" (p. 83).

Another (post-)Marxist strand in British punk was 'Situationism' (which Lydon [1994] once referred to as "foolishness - art students just being art students [p. 202]). In *Lipstick Traces*, music journalist and cultural critic Greil Marcus traces a European history of rebellion, situating punk on a continuum of movements and events which have emerged on the fringes of society, dating back to medieval European heretics, through the French avant-garde movement 'Lettrism', through Dada, Surrealism and Situationism, to a punk-oriented rebirth in the 1970s (Marcus, 2001). The influence of Situationism - in particular the writings of French philosopher and film-maker Guy Debord - on the work of Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid has already been explored to great extent in the literature (Marcus, 2001; Robb & Craske, 2013; Moore, 2004). Building on Marxism and avant-garde art movements such as Dada and Surrealism, the Situationists critiqued mid-20th century capitalism. They criticised contemporary society for its "passive consumption and vicarious living, where culture was commodified, fact and fiction coalesced, and celebrities... seemingly lived out lives to compensate for the fractured and banal existence of lives actually lived" (Worley, 2017, p. 79). The Situationist International (SI) began with the release of the first issue of the journal *International Situationniste* in 1958, written by social revolutionaries, avant-garde artists, and political theorists whose writings attacked contemporary social life in Paris's Left Bank (Gray, 1998). Their work explores themes such as: the idea that art had become completely played out by the mid-twentieth century; the apathy of modern urban life; the notion that overwhelming media saturation had come to define the times; more leisure time was available due to increased automation (time which should be filled with a new kind of creativity); the notion that real life should be passionate, as opposed to the reflection of life in philosophy and art, and one should embrace experience and play (Gray, 1998). Their primary concern was the revolution of everyday life which "anarchically embraced all experience" (Steirer, 2012).

Central to the SI was Guy Debord's notion of the 'Spectacle': for the Situationists, the 'Spectacle', broadly speaking, is the idea that contemporary society is organised around consumption, and desires can now only be fulfilled by purchasing consumer goods (Debord, 2005). Debord (2005) encourages a subversion of capitalism which can be achieved by disrupting monotony: by interrupting people's thought patterns with cleverly chosen words and phrases and creating 'situations' which "would reveal the true dynamic and shape of the city" (Gray, 1998, p. 2). They wanted to devalue everything that was part of modern society and to make daily life a creative and continuously original experience (Debord, 2005). The Situationists,

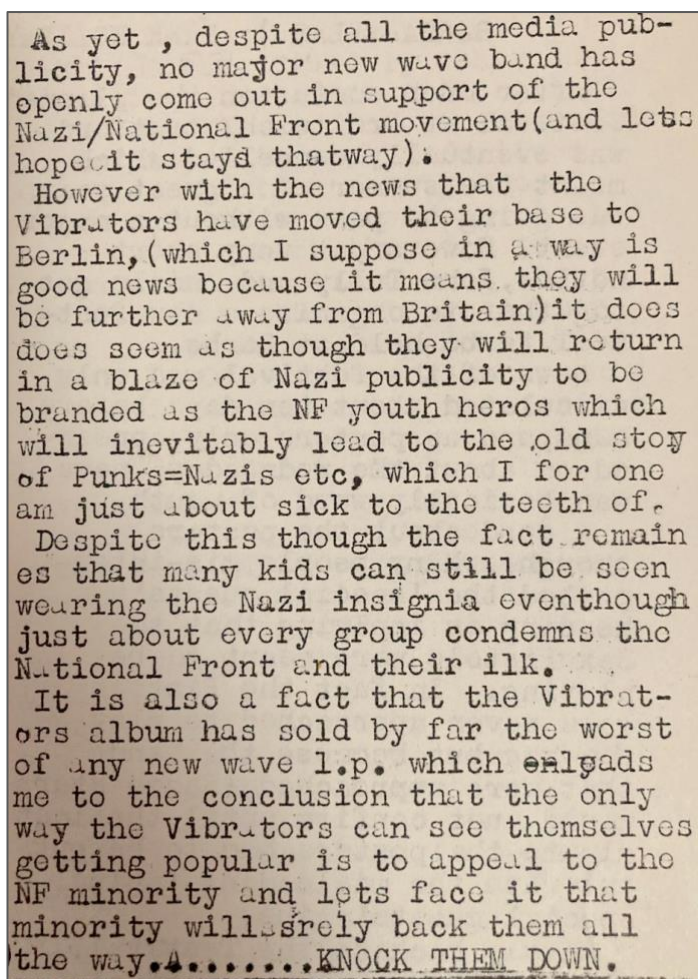
alongside The Frankfurt School's Herbert Marcuse, had a huge influence on the riots of May '68, of which Malcom McLaren was involved (although Lydon [2014] claims that McLaren was more a spectator than a participant) and musicians like Joe Strummer were somewhat influenced by (D'Ambrosio, 2012b; Lydon, 2014; Cogan, 2007). Music and visual arts group active within the first-wave British punk scene Throbbing Gristle engaged in Situationist disruptions (Steirer, 2012). For example, in 1976 band members Cosey Fanni Tutti and Genesis P-Orridge used Arts Council funding to stage a show at the ICA in London called 'Prostitution' (Hodgkinson, 2004). Politicians, the press, and feminists were outraged by the show's "pornographic photographs of Cosey taken from the pages of the top-shelf magazines she modelled for at the time, a performance by a stripper who did her best not to slip on the fake blood covering the stage [and] a few used tampons that were distributed by P-Orridge" (Hodgkinson, 2004). Closer to 'everyday' disruption was a Throbbing Gristle gig at the Oundle public school, booked by a schoolboy who claimed the band were just like John Cage. The band "[tore] into a performance of questionable educational value" and the schoolboys "jumped on stage and screamed into the microphone before carrying P-Orridge around the school on their shoulders" (Hodgkinson, 2004).

The Situationists also promoted 'drifting' (free association in terms of city space i.e., following spontaneous, continuous and ever changing experience, being pulled in by the attractive things you could find in the city, or repulsed by things that appeared hateful; this was a way of finding out what you hated and what you loved), psychogeography (the study and correlation of the material found from drifting, play as free and creative activity) and détournement (cut up, collage, juxtaposition, refusal of original creation, the belief that everything that needed to be said was already there and needed to be put together in new ways) (Gray, 1998). This echoes Throbbing Gristle's cut-up/deconstruction technique, borrowed from writer William Burroughs and painter Brion Gysin, in which the band "eschewed the usual romantic poetry of the pop lyric in favour of news reports of recent atrocities, letters from friends about severe burns victims, even death threats left on their answerphone. These they combined with home-made synthesizers and early sampling devices to create a sound that could be described... as challenging" (Hodgkinson, 2004). Descendants of punk, such as Pussy Riot, also perform within the Situationist spirit (Goldman, 2019).

Although it can be argued that British punk was Left-leaning overall, its oppositional stance meant that both the Left and the Right made attempts to infiltrate the movement and it became "a contested site of political engagement in the late 1970s and early 1980s" (Worley, 2012, p. 334). On the Right, members of the National Front and neo-Nazi organisation British Movement (BM) claimed punk (Worley, 2012). Mark Perry, editor of punk fanzine *Sniffin' Glue*, was invited to a National Front meeting in the late 1970s and punk gigs were sometimes used by the NF to recruit members: "punk's aggression, rebelliousness and claims to working-class authenticity appealed to just those that the NF and BM wished to mobilise" (Worley, 2012, p. 342). The bands themselves even flirted with Nazi ideology and symbolism (Bell & Howe,

2019; Stratton, 2005; Stratton, 2007). Punk's problematic relationship with fascism will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. Even those bands who explicitly aligned themselves with the Left have been criticised for not making their position clear enough. For example, Ambrosch (2018a) criticises The Clash for 'White Riot' (1977a), asserting that the lyrics are susceptible to right-wing appropriation and the song feeds a widespread racial stereotype that black people are pathologically violent, uneducated, and prone to criminal behaviour. Johnny Rotten's stance on politics has always been difficult to determine. In writings on punk, he is often associated with the political Left, however, in an interview with *The Observer* in 2006, Rotten turns to the subject of staying true to yourself, praising controversial Conservative British politician Enoch Powell as someone who "stood up for what he believed in" (Stevenson, 2006). In *Anger is an Energy*, he even criticises Joe Strummer for his socialist stance: "He took himself way too serious as purveyor of some kind of weird socialism, and was definitely out to grab himself a crown" (Lydon, 2014, p. 160). It is important to note, however, that very few punk bands associated with the Right, including the Sex Pistols. Many bands openly attacked the 'Nazi Punks' which tried to infiltrate the scene in the 1980s (Spracklen, 2015) and anti-racism and anti-fascism were regular features in British punk zines from 1976-84 (Worley, 2015) (see Fig. 1). Throughout the 1980s, after the initial explosion, bands such as Crass and Poison Girls embraced political philosophies such as anarchism to shake up the Left and the Right, igniting the anarcho-punk scene which fought for causes including feminism, anti-militarism, animal rights activism, anti-capitalism, and anti-globalisation (Donaghey, 2020). The anarchist thread running through punk and its relation to Existential-punk will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. For some, the politics of punk should not be so rigidly defined. Savage (1991) argues that punk was a mode of critique rather than a solution: it confronted disaffection but was politically ambiguous. Many bands saw themselves as simply telling the truth to the world around them and a lot of the social realism tackled was political by default (Savage, 1991). Moreover, it is unclear to what extent those who aligned themselves with punk believed in the political statements they were making (Cogan, 2007) and often there were disagreements between members and managers on the 'message' (Lydon, 2014). Lydon (2014) in his autobiography *Anger is an Energy*, says of McLaren: "He lived in fear rather than fearlessness. Too much education so the intellectual process just ends up in self-doubt, because you over-think a situation to the point where you're killing the joy of it and killing the instinct. We do things in life to put ourselves into a position where our instincts can take over. Not with Malcolm. Instinctively he was correct, but then the intellectual process would negate that" (p. 163). This anti-intellectualism suggests that despite many readings of the Sex Pistols that have developed retrospectively, Lydon worked against McLaren's attempt to intellectualise and politicise punk. Poly Styrene - who Vivienne Westwood claimed was the most important person in punk, "the only one telling the truth" (Bell & Howe, 2019, p. 47) - energised by the Sex Pistols and The Clash, wrote songs as a documentation of 1977, a process she compared to that of writing a diary. For her the most important issue was not politics but consumerism (Bell & Howe, 2019). She distanced herself from what she considered to be the nihilism

and darkness of early punk and even rejected the term 'punk' on the grounds that it was insulting (Bell & Howe, 2019). She considered herself on the edges of the movement, aligning with New Wave Romanticism that came shortly afterwards (Bell & Howe, 2019). It may be more accurate to say that those who found affinity with the punk movement did so on the basis of some form of discontent which wasn't necessarily class-based, or even political, and although the movement was Left-leaning overall, there was no coherent 'politics of punk'. This thesis argues that the thread running through punk-rock is a sense of opposition to societal and cultural norms. Punk was a way of "saying no to the false morals that oppress us" (Worley, 2017, p. 47). Friedrich Nietzsche's work reveals the ways in which Western morality is oppressive, and in this way, Existential-punk can be read as a continuation of his thought into the twentieth-century. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. Whatever side you're on, "traditions of punk have empowered individuals to feel that a new politics, culture and society are possible" (Dale, 2016, p. 215). In line with Dale (2016) this thesis argues that Existential-punk's primary concern was to shock the individual out of a conformist state and show that an alternative was possible, as opposed to delivering an ideology that sits on the political spectrum.



As yet , despite all the media publicity, no major new wave band has openly come out in support of the Nazi/National Front movement (and lets hope it stays that way).

However with the news that the Vibrators have moved their base to Berlin, (which I suppose in a way is good news because it means they will be further away from Britain) it does seem as though they will return in a blaze of Nazi publicity to be branded as the NF youth heroes which will inevitably lead to the old story of Punks=Nazis etc, which I for one am just about sick to the teeth of.

Despite this though the fact remains that many kids can still be seen wearing the Nazi insignia even though just about every group condemns the National Front and their ilk.

It is also a fact that the Vibrators album has sold by far the worst of any new wave l.p. which engenders me to the conclusion that the only way the Vibrators can see themselves getting popular is to appeal to the NF minority and lets face it that minority will sorely back them all the way. 4.....KNOCK THEM DOWN.

Figure 1: excerpt from Birmingham punk fanzine Censored, Issue 3, n.d. [Bishopsgate Archives]

Whilst the CCCS theorise subculture as a symbolic 'solution' to working-class disaffection, the actual experiences of working-class youths are largely ignored. Moreover, insufficient attention is paid to those who exist on the margins of a subculture, and the 'ordinary' is often subsumed under the 'spectacular'. Whilst the spectacular is an important area of focus in developing an overall account of any subculture any sociological study which claims to examine working-class culture should adopt a framework in which actual working-class experiences are accounted for. The charge by CCCS writers such as Hebdige (1979) that punk was merely a symbolic form of resistance – with no material solution – has also been disputed. Street et al. (2018), for example, examine the extent to which British punk was disruptive on a material level. Using archival material to assess punk's place in British history, the researchers conclude that punk's impact was mixed: disruption on the upper echelons of society appears to be minimal, lower down, however, it did seem to have an impact on local government and those institutions linked to it i.e., the police and higher education. Similarly, Hesmondhalgh (1997) assesses punk's long-term intervention in the British music industry, examining to what extent it democratised music-making through independent record companies. He writes: "it was the formation of hundreds of small record labels, seemingly unconnected with previously existing networks of cultural enterprise and outside the traditional south-east England hinterlands of the British music business, which has spawned punk's great reputation as a democratisation of popular music" (Hesmondhalgh, 1997, p. 257). Rough Trade, Mute and Factory all dealt with artists in new ways: deals with musicians were often 50:50 (which meant payment rates for musicians were higher), contracts were made based on personal trust as opposed to long-term arrangements, and record-by-record deals were favoured so that musicians could move on to another label (Hesmondhalgh, 1997). Many of these arrangements have continued into the present day (Dale, 2016). Moreover, whilst writers like Hebdige (1979), and McRobbie & Garber (in Hall & Jefferson [2006]) addressed race and gender respectively in early CCCS work, more recent punk studies have developed this intersectional approach further to include a broader range of participants including women (Cogan, 2012), older generations (Gordon, 2014), trans-punks (Schott, 2020), queer-punks (Wilkinson, 2015), immigrant-punks (Gololobov, 2014; Patton, 2018), disabled-punks (McKay, 2015) and punks of colour (Ambrosch, 2018a; D'Ambrosio, 2012c). Interesting points have been raised by writers such as Sabin (2002) who criticises punk for its silence on the racist murders in late 1970s Britain in which people of South Asian descent were targeted, and Stewart & Way (2020) who note that able-bodied punks can switch 'freak' status on and off in a way that disabled punks cannot.

Other interesting studies have developed in response to the work of the CCCS. Gordon (2014) in 'Subcultural Entrance Practices in UK Punk Culture, 1976-2001' examines subcultural entrance practices and authenticity within punk – a topic largely neglected by the CCCS (pp. 155-174). He looks at "how [punk] authenticity is initially perceived and how moral/ethical compasses are formed by participants" (Gordon, 2014, p. 156). Crossley (2015) in *Networks of Sound, Style and Subversion* writes that whilst punk

was a response to the alienation of young people, to label punk as a working-class phenomenon can result in ascribing political motivations to those whose focus isn't necessarily political change. Punk lyrics touch on a range of subjects including boredom, freedom, love, lust, fun, dancing, pleasure, and sexuality, as well as political commentary, and often it is only in retrospect that actions are read as political due to the opposition encountered from authorities: the consequences of punk may be read as political, but it doesn't necessarily follow that the motivations were. Similarly, Worley (2012) notes that punk lyrics explore both political and non-political themes, including "contemporary events, sexual politics, the commercialisation of leisure under capitalism and the tyranny of imperialism" (p. 339). Theorising punk as primarily a music scene, Crossley (2015) argues that scenes emerge due to a combination of social networks and are not a straightforward class-motivated response to dominant culture. Using London, Manchester, Sheffield, and Liverpool as case studies, Crossley (2015) identifies a range of social networks that contributed to punk's emergence. He asserts that the London scene, for example, emerged due to proto-punk's disillusionment with mainstream music (prog rock and disco); a desire to look different (countercultural boutiques were already popular on the Kings Road in the 60s and 70s); the concentration of record labels; London's cultural privilege, and the city's music press. Once these networks began to form, ideas travelled quickly, and ties between participants served to "create, recruit and expand a distinct music world" (Crossley, 2015, p. 104). In *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution* Patton (2018), rejecting the narrative that punk was imported into the UK through McLaren, offers a sophisticated reading of punk's global birth and evolution. He asserts that punk is more mobile and interconnected than scholars have recognised, and global pockets of punk appeared simultaneously across the world during the 1970s, each informing the other. Patton (2018) argues that the identities 'punk' and 'immigrant' are inextricably linked, and, rejecting the working-class lens adopted by early punk scholarship, he argues that punks were "socially diverse, coming from and mingling with working-class communities, circles of avant-garde artists, art school dropouts, and bohemian squatters" (p. 14). Patton (2018) draws on global studies scholarship which explores not just the local contexts from which punk emerged, but the international flow of both people and information throughout the late Cold War era. He writes that this flow resulted in a hybridity and diversity that is central to punk identity, and we shouldn't separate punk's local and global contexts (Patton, 2018). The 'global' and the 'local', for Patton (2018), should be read as "complementary aspects that coexist within the same culture" (p. 14).

He explores the personal history of many leading punk figures, demonstrating that punk identity is often intertwined with immigrant status: Dee Dee Ramone was born in the US, grew up in West Berlin, then relocated to New York in his teens, explaining his fusion of "quintessential American style... and international symbolism" (Patton, 2018, p. 15); Tommy Ramone was born in Hungary in 1949, six years after the climax of the Holocaust and at the peak of Stalinism, and later emigrated to the US following the Hungarian Revolution; Joe Strummer was born in Turkey in 1952, spent his early years in Egypt, as a

teenager moved to Mexico, then moved to London where he started his first band, for Patton (2018) Strummer “epitomizes the diversity and mobility of London’s punk ethnoscape” (p. 16); Nina Hagen was born in East Berlin, moved to Poland in the 1970s where she was introduced to rock ‘n’ roll, her father was later expatriated from East Germany in 1976 and she left with him to Hamburg, then moved to London where she lived in a squat for a time before returning to West Germany in 1977; DJ Don Letts was well known amongst London punks for his mixtapes of music from New York and reggae from Jamaica, his parent’s homeland; Ari Up of The Slits was a German living in London, who eventually permanently settled in Jamaica. There are other leading punk figures involved in the British movement not mentioned who also support this argument, such as Poly Styrene of X Ray Spex who was half Somalian, and although born in Bromley (London) later moved to India for a short time to join the Hare Krishnas (Bell & Howe, 2019). Patton’s (2018) work offers a new conception of punk identity, one in which punk and immigrant status are intertwined: whilst this thesis does not focus on the immigrant-punk identity, Patton’s (2018) study is a useful one in that he highlights the centrality of both the local and global context. The global context of punk (the Cold War and Nietzsche’s ‘Death of God’) was, alongside the rise of neoliberalism, central to Existential-punk identity. This will be explored in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism.

I have demonstrated that there are many issues which arise in conceptualising punk as a subculture rooted in solely working-class disaffection situated on the Left of the political spectrum, however, it is important to note that, as discussed at the beginning of this section, the CCCS do provide a useful conception of punk as resistance against capitalist systems and dominant power structures. As Goldman (2019) notes:

Authoritarian regimes understand that punk’s quintessential raw primitivism is a threat to their control. In its purest form, it represents empowerment, enabling people without access to talk back to the dominant power structure and make their own statement with sound. Very often, it will be loud and angry - especially for girls, among whom the volume may be softer, but no less furious... Punk means outrage toward rapacious capitalist and/or neoliberal systems. Punk means that women have the right to decide the fate of their own body. Crass chronicler Richard Cross speaks of the ‘sub-cultural expectation of co-operation and self-activity’. These beliefs are the non-negotiable heart of punk, and it is intrinsically a music of resistance against those who think otherwise (p. 148).

Punk, then, is a ‘music of resistance’ against dominant ideologies which gives voice to the oppressed; however, this oppression does not necessarily have to be conceived of in terms of class. Examining punk through a philosophical lens sheds further light on the ways in which punk can be read as resistance.

Punk as Postmodernism

Within punk scholarship there is debate surrounding punk's status as a postmodern phenomenon, partly since punk's emergence coincided with the rise of postmodern theory in the 1970s (Patton, 2018; Deppen, 2021). Patton (2018) writes that on the one hand, punk cannot be considered postmodern by virtue of its affirmation of authenticity as a core value. As discussed later, 'authenticity' as understood within the context of Existential-punk is impossible within the context of postmodern theory, rendering them incompatible - this thesis argues that the notion of 'authenticity' at the heart of Existential-punk is more aligned with 'authenticity' as conceptualised by Existentialism. On the other hand, Patton (2018) asserts that "punk's appeal to artistic avant-garde derived from its ability to repackaged the postmodern influences of the performance art tradition for a popular audience" (p. 55). He asserts that punk repackaged these influences in two ways:

First, it suggests a blurring of boundaries between high and low culture and between genres, and the practice of recombining formerly incompatible domains and styles in a process called 'bricolage'. Second, it indicates the rejection of privileged, universal vantage points for understanding reality - that is, metanarratives that impose totalizing frameworks for conceptualizing the world, whether science, humanism, the notion of progress, or Marxism. In both these respects, punk and the postmodern developed in tandem, transgressing the boundaries of the late Cold War, drawing and blending elements from its "worlds," and defying the metanarratives that structured and justified the existence of each - including core values like modernity, hierarchy, progress, tradition, family, religion, morality, order, and beauty (Patton, 2018, p. 35).

Whilst this section briefly touches upon the ways in which punk blurred the traditional categories of high and low culture, I will examine in detail the second of Patton's (2018) proposed influences - the rejection of privileged, universal vantage points for understanding reality. Issues which arise in applying these this notion to the study of punk, and popular music more broadly, will also be discussed in detail.

The legitimisation of 'postmodernity' as a Western socio-cultural condition has been subject to much debate within academia and is still a widely misunderstood concept (Patton, 2018; Lucy et al., 2016; Nehring, 1997; Hebdige, 1986). As Nehring (1997) writes: "postmodernism can be perplexing, even for the initiated, because there are many versions of it, ranging from the positive and celebratory to the negative and apocalyptic" (p. 5). Due to the term's adoption across multiple disciplines its meaning has become mired in confusion, as Patton (2018) argues: "like globalization, 'postmodern' is a word that has come to mean everything and thus nothing" (p. 9). Nicholson (1990) offers a useful summary of 'postmodernity' as a socio-cultural condition: "The postmodernist critique of modernity is wideranging; it focuses on such diverse elements as the modern sense of the self and subjectivity, the idea of history as linear and evolutionary, and the modernist separation of art and mass culture" (p. 3). When drawing on postmodern

philosophy, due to the varied and often confusing forms in which it takes one must specify the aspect of the theory under discussion: like any philosophical movement or school of thought, not all figures who identify with postmodernism agree on everything. Many writers who draw on the concept - whether celebrating, condemning, or denying the existence of postmodernity - use the term as a placeholder for any theory that hints at a rejection of, or reaction against, modernity, rarely elucidating the nuances of such a densely theoretical and highly abstract topic. An examination of the central tenets of postmodern theory is much too large a project for the scope of this thesis, however, there are two central tenets that will be discussed in relation to punk, academic scholarship on punk and music criticism more broadly: firstly, the rejection of metanarratives; and, secondly, the renunciation of a stable, unified identity (a tenet which is inextricably linked to the first).

The first postmodern tenet which has been drawn on in punk scholarship is 'incredulity towards metanarratives', first found in the work of French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1984) in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. This refers to Lyotard's (1984) scepticism towards unifying belief systems which promote a collective destination such as religion, morality, the Enlightenment, or any system of thought that promises a better world (Lucy et al., 2016). According to Lyotard (1984), overarching systems have failed because there is no universal foundation for knowledge, and thus the theory of knowledge (epistemology) is in crisis (Caldwell, 2005). Lyotard (1984) writes that the idea of consensus is unjust, and he suspects all sights of power in the modern world. In creating consensus, Lyotard (1984) asserts that one defies and undermines justice because it prevents alternative discourses, thought and speech from proliferating and blooming, and so for him, recourse can only be found in localised micro-narratives where each culture has an equal claim to truth (Lucy et al., 2016). In its celebration of fragmentation, Lyotard's (1984) work is often associated with 'relativism' (Benhabib, 1990). Relativism is the notion that truth is "true only in the context of a time, or for a culture, or for a person, or within a given conceptual scheme" (Zuboff, 2015). Relativism has been criticised not only for its paradoxical nature – "if relativism takes itself to be renouncing its own objective truth, it can only be doing so from an implicit position of assumed objective truth" – but for its repudiation of a universal foundation for morality, the implications of which can be dangerous (Zuboff, 2015). Similar charges have been aimed at Nietzsche, who is associated with postmodernism; however, there are some fundamental differences between Existentialism and postmodern thought that are often missed in the scholarship. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism.

If, as the CCCS note, individuation takes place within collective structures (Hall & Jefferson, 2006), what happens to the individual when these structures 'disappear'? In a world where overarching systems of belief no longer hold, the notion of a stable identity/self is called into question. For Nehring (1997) whilst modernism was preoccupied with the alienated subject, postmodernism goes a step further in its absolute fragmentation of subjecthood, and the notion of identity as 'in flux' presents marginalised groups with a

difficult task: “they are left to negotiate an intractable deadlock between the postmodern quest for identity dissolution, on the one hand, and cultural or radical calls for assertion, on the other, which requires the stable basis of an identity” (p. 7). It must be noted here that whilst Nehring (1997) raises an interesting point, much of his criticism of postmodern theory rests on misunderstanding: he confuses currents in contemporary Western Marxism with postmodern theory. For example, Nehring (1997) attacks Frederic Jameson for cultural ‘elitism’ in his work on popular music, accusing Jameson (1992) of adopting the postmodern position. Jameson’s (1992) work is in fact a Marxist critique of the postmodern condition: he adopts an historical materialist starting point (White, 2021) to critique global networks of cultural and economic production. He asserts that postmodernity is a late capitalist cultural condition rooted in a-historicism, and his work is an attempt to re-historicise i.e., bring it back to Marxist thinking (Jameson, 1992). Jameson (1992) critiques late capitalism (which he equates with postmodernism) for its: colonisation of the subconscious, psyche, mind, and imagination; commodification of modernism; absence of depth; absence of history (we have an ahistorical obsession with the present); inability to envision something radically different from the present, and lack of affect and desire. It is important to note that whilst Jameson (1992) asserts that postmodernity is our culturally dominant form, *it is not the only cultural form*, suggesting the possibility of resistance. He is a critic, not a proponent, of the postmodern condition, and calls for political organisation to overcome the malaise of atomisation. This is a crucial point which some critics of postmodernism such as Nehring (1997) often fail to understand. Jameson (1992) would most likely agree with Nehring (1997) that the relativist, fragmented postmodern world is unstable for both the individual and the collective and is something we should strive to resist.

Now the relevant central tenets of postmodern theory have been outlined, I will now focus on ways in which they are applied to punk scholarship and examine problems which arise from this application. Moore (2004) in ‘Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction’ locates British and Californian punk of the 1970s and 80s, respectively, within a postmodern context. He argues that punk’s conflicting tendencies (nihilism and negationism on the one hand, and the quest for authenticity and hope on the other) is a reaction to the crisis of postmodernity. Moore (2004) writes:

Postmodernism is said to characterize the exhaustion of totalizing metanarratives and substitute localized, self-reflexive, and contingent analyses for the search for objective, universal truth... capital has employed the apparatuses of media, fashion, and entertainment to accelerate its shift from a regime of accumulation founded on the production of goods to one based in the circulation of instantly disposable spectacles and services, each dependent upon the creation of desire. Partially free from the authoritarian grip of religion, family, local community, the military, and the work ethic, consumers are now left to themselves to fabricate an identity from the unending flow of celebrities, lifestyles, and products which confront them in public and in their homes (pp. 305-306).

For Moore (2004), because the stable and unified self no longer exists in the postmodern world, 'identity' can only be constituted through consumer choice; through the "unending flow of celebrities, lifestyles, and products which confront them in public and in their homes" (p. 306). Moore (2004) argues that punk responded to the postmodern condition in two ways. Firstly, through 'postmodern punk' (or 'the culture of deconstruction'): postmodern punk is first-wave 1970s British punk, which for him was primarily centred around fashion, style, and gesture. He argues that this subgenre was "the response of young people raised within a mass-mediated, consumer driven environment who have turned signs and spectacles against themselves, as a means of waging war on society" (p. 307). This echoes early CCCS theories which position punk as symbolic resistance. The second response came later in 1980s California through 'authentic hardcore punk' (or 'the culture of authenticity'). This subgenre went underground, "[insulating] punk subculture from the superficiality of postmodern culture" (p. 307). Moore (2004) argues that both subgenres are "simply different responses to the same system of social conditions" (p. 308). As this thesis is primarily concerned with the British punk scene, Moore's (2004) culture of deconstruction will be examined in detail, with the culture of authenticity touched on only briefly.

Moore (2004) asserts that the stylistic gestures of British first-wave punks enabled them only to enact "parodies of power" which were "proven to be as fleeting and ephemeral as postmodern culture at large" (p. 308). In other words, gestures were symbolic, and the scene failed to present any 'real' threat to British society or alter social relationships (echoing the CCCS). However, he goes on to contradict this thesis: whilst dismissing the gestures of the Sex Pistols as fleeting and ephemeral, he also acknowledges the actual impact that the band had on British society i.e., a "small but violent confrontation" between police and audience when the band played a concert on a boat named *Queen Elizabeth*, mocking Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee (p. 310). He also writes that the band's single 'God Save the Queen' (2012b) could have reached number one had it not been for the British Marketing Research Bureau manipulating chart positions, suggesting that authorities sensed a genuine threat. According to Lydon (2014), after the release of 'Anarchy in the UK' (2012c) and 'God Save the Queen' (2012b) in 1977, he was "openly discussed by councillors and parliamentarians, who angrily cited the Traitors and Treason Act" (p. 5). According to Lydon's lawyer, this was a "deadly thing to be brought up against... [and] still carried the death penalty" (Lydon, 2014, p. 5). It must be noted that Gildart (2013) has contested these claims, arguing that "contrary to popular myth, the Sex Pistols were not subject of major debate in parliament" and the few parliamentarians who did mention punk tended to present a measured view (p. 144). Moreover, recent work on punk's disruption on a material level has been discussed in 'Punk as Subculture'.

Fundamentally, the issue with Moore's (2004) thesis is not that punk was a reaction to the crisis of postmodernity, but that it was a manifestation of the postmodern condition in that its deviance and expression of dissent is dismissed as performative rebellion, immediately absorbed into the closed loop of

late capitalist power. This ignores Existential-punk's very real revolutionary power, which will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. Whilst Moore's (2004) criticism that neither punk's culture of deconstruction nor its culture of authenticity offered utopian alternatives to the crisis of postmodernity may carry weight, to dismiss first-wave punk as merely performative, semiotic deviance, is to ignore the fact that punk changed people's lives and gave creative agency to marginalised groups. If the postmodern position is taken to the totalitarian extreme, the social world becomes a realm in which genuine influence is unthinkable: we are trapped within a closed loop of power, where dominant culture absorbs and co-opts any expression of dissent (Nehring, 1997). Popular music cannot present any genuine threat to hegemony when viewed through this lens. However, alternatives are created all the time and there are many expressions of dissent which are not necessarily co-opted. Rejecting the co-option thesis and examining punk through the lens of Existential philosophy offers an alternative reading to Moore's (2004).

Drawing on Moore (2004) and in line with Patton (2018), Gololobov (2014) argues that whilst in some respects punk is rooted in postmodern culture, it does distance itself from the superficiality of postmodern theory. For him, punk can be seen as a "quest for authenticity aiming at expressing the Self which cannot be appropriately expressed by any other means" (Gololobov, 2014, p. 77). This thesis argues, in agreement with Gololobov (2014), that in actively seeking an authenticity which posits itself against socially accepted forms of morality, Existential-punk rejects the superficiality and depthlessness of postmodern culture, which renders the authenticity/inauthenticity debate insignificant. However, as Gololobov (2014) notes, "regular subversion of meanings, elements of self-destruction, self-abasement, nihilism, the clear anti-foundationalist stance and revolutionising potential of punk, all make it difficult to locate something uncontroversially authentic" (p. 77). Punk's 'anti' stance often made it difficult to identify what it stood *for*. Viewing Existential-punk as authentic from the perspective of Existentialism as opposed to postmodernism looks towards solving this theoretical problem. Prinz (2014) also highlights that punk authenticity can be read as oxymoronic in that anyone who had a superficial interest in punk (at least according to those at the core of the scene) were derogatorily labelled 'poser' suggesting that, contrary to postmodern identity, there are fundamental values underpinning punk identity. He writes: "it might seem ironic that punk emphasizes authenticity and individuality while also being highly prescriptive about acceptable tastes. Punks are sometimes ridiculed for exalting individualism and anarchy, while cultivating conformity" (Prinz, 2014, p. 590).

Whilst rethinking Enlightenment paradigms is important in creating space for new subjectivities, Lyotard's (1984) dismissal of collective human goals in their totality is problematic. Drawing on postmodern theory, Davies (1996), in 'The Future of 'No Future': Punk Rock and Postmodern Theory', claims to reject the notion that punks are subcultural participants, instead viewing them as producers of pop music. He asserts, like Moore (2004), that because of punk's "diversity and problematization of constituency and consensus, it is difficult to construct a unitary politics of punk" (Davies, 1996, p. 5). Whilst, to an extent,

this is a sound thesis which has been argued by writers with no affiliation to postmodern theory such as Worley (2012) who asserts that “by the early 1980s, the enthusiasm and hopes pinned on punk by activists within the far Left and far Right had somewhat diminished” (p. 347), Davies (1996) asserts the postmodern extreme, rejecting the notion that punk’s political significance can be found in collective resistance to the dominant culture in any form, arguing that punks “do not seek authentication by the development of shared consciousness” (p. 22). He separates punk into two waves: the first nihilistic wave (the Sex Pistols, early Clash, and the Jam); and the second wave which was a direct outgrowth of the first and an attempt to “establish a new constituency” (p. 9). For Davies (1996) first-wave punk (1976-78) - the subgenre of punk that this thesis focuses on primarily - explores themes such as: ways in which the city shapes an individual’s inner-life (alienation); alienation’s culmination in apocalypse (which was often seen as an attractive alternative to the state of boredom); the celebration of apocalypse (most notably in the music of the Sex Pistols); the city as a place of violence; hostility towards the state; solidarity with racial minorities; the end of rock and roll; the disintegration of society; disillusionment with the left; the tediousness of modern life; the forces of chaos; existential revolt; subversion over critique; energising over teaching; and the destruction of the Romantic notion of the audience/star relationship. One could argue that the themes identified overlap with subcultural studies; moreover, they represent collective goals, undermining Davies’ (1996) claim that he rejects punk as collective resistance.

Davies (1996) asserts that to bypass recuperation within postmodern society, bands such as the Sex Pistols intentionally supplied a lack of content to listeners (‘all shock, no meaning’) to avoid being treated as a commodity: “this very lack of content meant that there was nothing which could be recuperated. The Sex Pistols mirrored the vacuum effect of consumer capitalism, at once a perfect product, completely meaningless, and a focus for each and every kind of revolt. Listeners could supply their own context and their own objects of rebellion, from the banal to the political, from the family to the class system” (p. 13). Whilst punk fans do project personal and political agendas onto punk, to assume a lack of content altogether is an unfounded assumption: those involved in Existential-punk, this thesis argues, did express opposition to the same things which arguably amounts to collective resistance, albeit not necessarily political resistance. Davies (1996) asserts that “as soon as a subculture attempts to establish a communal identity, it becomes recuperated, since the only tools for doing so are already hegemonic. In other words, punk could subvert, but never challenge, respectability, and ironically, ended up reinforcing it” (p. 21). On reading Davies’ (1996) work, however, one gets the feeling that the difference between transcending identities and refashioning them is more of a theoretical distinction than a real one.

In ‘Everyone’s Given up and Just Wants to Go Dancing’, Nehring (2007) writes that the eradication of rock music by dance culture that supposedly took place in the late 1970s and early 80s never actually occurred. The narrative was constructed by music journalists emerging in the mid-1980s who felt “compelled to repudiate any notion that the first wave of punk had had some subversive impact and attacked very

specifically any lingering interest in the SI. Their absolutism on this account... reflects in part their having attended college just when postmodern scepticism of a theoretical sort became the cutting edge in the academy, a gloomy response in its own right to the rise of neo-Conservatism in Britain and the United States" (p. 2). This is echoed by British philosopher and literary critic Christopher Norris (1990) who argues that the Left responded to the rise of neoconservatism through a recourse to theory (postmodernism) and this response is: "[typical]... of any marginalised fraction of dissident intellectuals, excluded from the mainstream of political life" (p. 1). Nehring (2007) proposes that these writers felt the need to distinguish themselves from their predecessors, and postmodern theory happened to provide the tools to do so. Nehring (2007) argues that the postmodern narrative has had a lasting effect on music journalism (and as demonstrated, music scholarship) noting that much of the music to come out of the 1980s and 90s, for many writers, was considered a capitulation to Thatcherism by virtue of its alleged 'giving up', politically speaking. Contrary to this narrative, Nehring (2007) notes the popularity of bands made up entirely of women - such as Elastica and Fluffy - who emerged in the wake of punk, highlighting punk's very real potential to empower the marginalised.

It is important to distinguish between what Linda Hutcheon (2003) describes as "postmodernity as a designation of a social and philosophical period or condition" and 'postmodernism' as a cultural expression of this condition through architecture, literature, photography, film, painting, video, dance, and music (p. 23). There is a difference, then, between the condition the West finds itself in due to broad shifts in social, economic, and political structures throughout the mid-twentieth century (postmodernity) and the way in which this condition is expressed in aesthetics (postmodernism) (Hutcheon, 2003). The aesthetics and sound of punk have often been described as postmodern by virtue of their intertextuality or 'bricolage' (Patton, 2018; Deppen, 2021). According to Tan (2015), "bricolage, which comes from the French word for 'tinkering', is one of the prevailing techniques of postmodern art, in which the work is composed from a diverse range of available materials; artists reconfigure them in unprecedented ways that create new contexts". Tan (2015) reads punk style as postmodern bricolage in that designers McLaren and Westwood would fuse "otherwise ordinary" items of clothing and "imbue them with political meaning" creating a manifesto of ideas and desires. For example, the 1976 'Anarchy Shirt', designed by McLaren and Westwood, is a collage of Mao-style red armbands, silk patches of Karl Marx and stencilled Situationist-inspired slogans such as "Only anarchists are pretty" (Gorman, 2013).

Punk can be read as postmodern in this way, through its collapse of 'high' art (any work of art in which meaning derives from the creator) and 'low' art (any work of art in which meaning lies in its function within society) a central tenet of much postmodern theory (Frith & Horne, 1987). Frith & Horne (1987) write that 'postmodernism' has been applied to a wide range of contexts, however, this sense of breakdown between cultural categories unites them. They conceptualise punk as a union between modernism and postmodernism (interestingly, similar theories have been applied to Nietzsche's

philosophy) in drawing on Bohemian individualism and authenticity, and the artificiality of pop music. They assert that this collapse was most prominent in 1960s British art schools, where art school sensibilities were first integrated into popular music. Frith & Horne (1987) write that many punk musicians were educated in and performed in art schools, only moving to gig venues once the musicians realised, they could get the reaction they wanted from the audience in these spaces. Whilst there may be an element of historical accuracy to this, as discussed, these one-dimensional accounts ignore the fact that many of those who found alliance with the punk movement didn't attend art-school, and weren't even necessarily musicians, at least to begin with.

Although punk can be read as postmodern in this respect, Nehring (1997) and Goodwin (1991) argue that there are fundamental contradictions underpinning the notion that simply by merging the high and low, one is creating postmodern art. In 'Popular Music and Postmodern Theory', Goodwin (1991) argues that anything intertextual is often described as postmodern and so theoretically almost any post-war pop falls comfortably within this definition. One could argue that rock music in its entirety is inherently postmodern, simply by virtue of its eclecticism. Given the confusion surrounding the term, 'postmodern' has been applied to a diverse range of artists including Bruce Springsteen, Madonna, Brian Eno, and John Cage (Goodwin, 1991). If intertextuality alone is used as the distinction between modernism and postmodernism, then 1960s bands such as The Rolling Stones and the Beatles could be categorised as high modernists, whilst punk and post-punk bands such as The Clash, Talking Heads, and Gang of Four would fall into the postmodern camp. Davies (1996), for example, argues that: "The Clash are not short of post-modernist credentials: they are *Pasticheurs par excellence*, mixing a wide variety of musical styles, and resisting fixed perspectives" (p. 12). Goodwin (1991), however, demonstrating the theoretical inconsistencies, offers an alternative interpretation: Gang of Four were modernist in their offering of ambiguity, reconstruction of song structure, and self-reflexivity. This reveals the confusion between modernity and postmodernity often found in the scholarship, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism.

Goodwin (1991) emphasises the sociological realities of pop consumption to demonstrate that the high/low collapse is not as clear-cut as much of the literature assumes: Brian Eno, for example, is consumed as high art, but to some he is known as the person who helps produce U2. He writes: "what the postmodernists frequently miss in their accounts of popular music is the continuing presence of the categories of the popular and the artistic" (Goodwin, 1991, p. 407). For some, punk was art, and for others it was good rock music. For Goodwin (1991) a way out of this confusion is Susan McClary's (1989) analysis of avant-garde and postmodern music. McClary's (1989) definition of 'postmodern' centres on art music which abandons the difficulty of high modernism in favour of popular, pleasurable devices. For McClary (1989), composers who fall firmly in the postmodern camp include: Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Laurie Anderson (although Goodwin [1991] notes that the limited appeal of these composers undermines one of

the central tenets of postmodern theory, which is the convergence of art and mass culture). One could argue that according to McClary's (1989) definition, then, punk sits comfortably within the category of 'postmodern' by virtue of its strong avant-garde influence coupled with its ability to reach a mass audience through the form of popular song.

Case Study 1: DEVO

Whilst I have argued that a postmodern framework is generally unhelpful in illuminating the rich philosophical content of punk-rock, there are bands associated with the punk movement that consciously drew on postmodern theory to comment on the rise of global, corporate capitalism in the 1970s and 80s such as Akron, Ohio proto-punks DEVO who formed in 1973 (DEVO Inc., 2014; Dellinger & Giffels, 2008). DEVO's music can be read as an exploration of the relationship between power and subjectivity: a theme running through much postmodern theory, central to the work of postmodernist Michel Foucault who links the 'death of subjectivity' with the centralisation of corporate power (Taylor, 2011; King, 2004). DEVO's 'Corporate Anthem' (1979a) from *Duty Now for the Future* (1979), is a nod to the 1975 Norman Jewison film *Rollerball* (2002) (DEVO Inc., 2014). *Rollerball* is set in 2018, where the world has become a corporate state, home to entities such as the Energy Corporation - a global energy monopoly based in Houston which controls access to all transport, luxury housing, communication, and food (Jewison, 2002). In the video to 'Corporate Anthem' (1979a), DEVO are introduced as a corporation (see Fig. 2). The video begins with DEVO saluting the corporation to which they are enslaved. The band wear identical, industrial uniforms, thus eroding personal identity (a concept central to existential punk bands such as the Sex Pistols) and destroying the uniqueness of the self in the name of corporate capitalism. This visual, accompanied by the fanfare-like musical flourish and its associations with *Rollerball* (2002), can be read as DEVO's paranoia concerning the rise of corporate capitalism, the centralisation of technology, and the subsequent decline of the self, themes which are central to postmodern theory. Figures 3 and 4 show this erasure of the self that can be found elsewhere in DEVO's video catalogue - 'The Day My Baby Gave Me A Surprise' (1979b) (Fig. 3) and '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' (1978) (Fig. 4). This homogeneity also reads as modernist: according to Van Tonder & Berner (2003), for the modern consumer, collectivism and conformity are valued over individual taste; conversely, for the postmodern consumer, individual taste and heterogeneity is valued above conformity and is displayed through the consumption of goods, products and services (see Tab. 1). I would argue, however, that DEVO's music falls within the postmodern camp for reasons elucidated more clearly over the course of this section, however, the point here is that the potential double reading of DEVO's work as both modernist and postmodernist further highlights the difficulty in differentiating between the two schools of thought.

DEVO's 'Freedom of Choice' (1980), a song from the album of the same name released in 1980, can be read as a critique of postmodernist consumption patterns in relation to free will. The lyrics contain the

limerick: “In ancient Rome / There was a poem / About a dog / Who found two bones / He picked at one / He licked the other / He went in circles / He dropped dead” (see Fig. 5). Nagy (2015) writes that this is a nod to the parable of Buridan’s ass, in which a donkey that is equally thirsty and hungry (and situated between a pail of water and stack of hay) dies of both because it can’t make a rational choice between the two. The moral of the story is that one will meet their demise in failing to exercise free will. In a postmodern world where options (products and services) available to the consumer are ever-growing, ‘Freedom of Choice’ (1980) can be read as a parody of - and warning to - the postmodern consumer: if you fail to make a choice between goods and services your sense of self will be destroyed, as within the postmodern world one’s sense of self is constituted through these choices alone. Failure to exercise consumer choice results in a disappearance of the self (“he dropped dead”).



Figure 2: DEVO - frame from ‘Corporate Anthem’ (DEVO Inc., 2014)



Figure 3: DEVO - frame from ‘The Day My Baby Gave Me A Surprise’ (DEVO Inc., 2014)



Figure 4: DEVO - frame from 'I Can't Get No (Satisfaction)' (DEVO Inc., 2014)

Table 1: Modern and Postmodern Consumption Patterns and Consumer Profiles, according to Van Tonder & Berner (2003, p. 3)

Modern Consumer	Postmodern Consumer
Consumption was viewed as being more functional and rational and therefore meaningful, consistent, and clear in its purpose. Viewed as a passive target group. Essentially conforming and traditional, and consequently homogenous in needs. A wholly analytical and rational being and in terms of consumption and buying behaviour, essentially considered an "information processor". Was predictable and clear in his/her service expectations. Preferences were gender-specific and consumption patterns followed from clear role stereotypes (associated with specific gender) - underscoring the sense of collectivism and conformity. Focussed on a singular lifestyle concept, founded on the modern values of orderliness and consistency.	Consumption is viewed as being more hedonistic, self-affirming, and compensatory. More active, in constant search of stimulation through events and images and, as a consequence, has more power than his/her modern predecessor. Global, non-conforming, and unpredictable (lacks depth and continuity). Generally open to new experiences and have few preconceptions about service. Many-faceted consumer that has become increasingly sophisticated and is likely to rely on own ability to seek value. Experience and pleasure are important. More humanistic and tolerant. May be unable or unwilling to express the meaning they seek, and often have only a vague preconception of what is desired. More individualistic in preferences and needs (genderless/with a blurring of gender stereotypes). Individual taste(s) and meanings are important, and consequently, individuality and sense of style is displayed through choice of goods/products and services. Engaged in multiple lifestyles and subscribes to multiple and often highly incompatible value systems. Is

Self-portrayal anchored strongly in the individual's occupation and social status. More susceptible to mass-produced products and services (mass markets) that are useful in day-to-day living. Loyal to a firm, brand, or product.	consequently immune to incoherence and accepts and may even appreciate and enjoy discontinuity. Self-portrayal and identity more prominently through imagery (symbolic value) created through consumption. Increasingly seeking, developing, or affirming personal identity through symbols (products and services) consumed. Appreciates individual and unique characteristics or products and services and places an emphasis on the spectacular, the popular, the pleasurable and that which is immediately accessible. Avoids commitment and exercises freedom to move where choice or whim dictates.
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Figure 5: DEVO - frames from 'Freedom of Choice' (1980) (DEVO Inc., 2014)

For DEVO, humankind was de-evolving (Dellinger & Giffels, 2008). Founding members Jerry Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh were among the 2,000 students protesting the Cambodian Campaign at Kent State University in 1970. During the protest, the Ohio National Guard opened fire, killing four students, two of whom - Alison Krauss and Jeffrey Miller – were close, personal friends of Casale. In an interview with Reynolds (2006) Casale recalls the incident:

For me, it was a turning point.... Suddenly I saw it all clearly: all these kids with their idealism, it was very naïve... after Kent, it seemed you could either join a guerrilla group like The Weather Underground, actually try assassinating some of these evil people, the way they'd murdered anybody in the sixties who'd tried to make a difference. Or you could just make some kind of whacked-out creative Dada art response. Which is what Devo did (p. 38)

In a speech given in 2010 at Kent State University, on the 40th anniversary of the shootings, Jerry Casale talks of the impact that moment in history had on his worldview: "for many others, and myself, that single moment changed the dynamic of civil disobedience forever. It changed my worldview and without question set me on a path I would never have travelled otherwise. My eyes were opened. Brute power had won the day. As George Orwell said, "history is the boot coming down in the face of humanity over and over again". I wanted to retaliate. I wanted justice" (RealityMonitor, 2010). DEVO, however, did not seek to substitute a new narrative in place of the current one; rather, their work was an attempt to

expose the oppressive powers of capitalism from within the system itself, working within the bounds of its discourse; their project was centred on both embracing and subverting postmodern consumer culture. In an interview with *Sound on Sound* magazine in 2010, lead singer Mark Mothersbaugh comments on DEVO's perspective on, and position within, 1980s American corporate capitalism: "we kind of knew how capitalism and democracies worked, and so rather than just pretending that it was something different, we were kind of mocking it and embracing it at the same time" (Inglis, 2010).

In retreating into a world of playful, absurdist mockery and irony from within the establishment (with the absence of any 'real' threat) and embracing the system they opposed, one could argue that DEVO endorse a pseudo-resistance that can only be enacted within the bounds of existing power structures: for both DEVO and writers such as Foucault, then, there is no imagined utopia 'beyond power', and in this way DEVO can be read as postmodern. Unlike their hippie predecessors, DEVO did not envision a utopian future where truth, freedom, peace, love, and self-expression prevail (Bannister, 2010); rather, they anticipated a world where the intellectual progression of humankind not only halted, but reversed completely i.e., de-evolved (DEVO Inc., 2014; Dellinger & Giffels, 2008). DEVO's music, whilst intellectually stimulating, leaves one feeling cold: they expose the absurdity of mankind without the proposition of an alternative, leaving one enlightened but hopeless - an "inhumanity" that postmodernists such as Foucault have been accused of (Bannister, 2010, p. 169). This echoes Eagleton's (2018) critique of postmodernism in that it allows one to *feel* radical without actually challenging 'the system'. One could argue that DEVO's take on humanity falls comfortably within Nietzsche's definition of nihilism, a state of mind Nietzsche encourages us to refuse at all costs. This concept will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. DEVO's inhumanity is further emphasised by the band's robotic approach to both physical gestures and the music itself (Cateforis, 2004). Cateforis (2004) writes: "Devo's matching outfits, assembly-line appearance, and robotic demeanor were meant both to signify and draw attention to the loss of individuality" (p. 565). As for the music itself, DEVO embraced technology in a way that reinforced mechanical identity through: "a heavy reliance on synthesized sounds, which ranged from Mark Mothersbaugh's use of the Mini-Moog and Arp Odyssey synthesizers in the late 1970s to Devo's adoption of the Linn drum machine, Fairlight music computer, and eventually Midi systems in the early to mid-1980s" (Cateforis, 2004). They also embraced odd metres such as 7/8, encouraging rigidity of movement. Cateforis (2004) notes that rigidity and regimentation "defuses the intimacy of the couples dance", further alienating the subject (p. 568). Cateforis (2004) also notes two central musical aspects to DEVO's cover of the Rolling Stones 1965 classic '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' (1978): DEVO's parody fails to acknowledge the original's guitar riff, and both the groove and Mothersbaugh's vocals can be perceived as the centre of the work. Whilst Cateforis' (2004) analysis isn't presented as a postmodern reading, I argue that these central aspects to DEVO's work can be read as postmodern: the refusal to acknowledge the original riff

represents a loss of the song's 'identity', and in embracing ambiguity concerning the centre of the work (groove or vocals?) the individual (Mothersbaugh) is decentred.

In conclusion, the relationship between punk and postmodernism, and the extent to which punk can be described as a postmodern phenomenon, is a highly nuanced and ongoing debate. The thesis argues that whilst punk may arguably sit within the category of postmodernism by virtue of its synthesis of high and low culture (a tenet adopted by DEVO), there are tensions between postmodernism's rejection of, and punk's quest for, authenticity and collective resistance. As demonstrated, the application of postmodern theory to the study of bands such as the Sex Pistols results in the dismissal of punk as socially and politically inconsequential. Patton (2018), bypassing an attempt to settle the debate, offers a useful perspective on the relationship between punk and postmodernism, and punk's resistance to 'categories' more broadly:

We need not be troubled by punk's uneasy fit with categories... punk is best understood in terms of the tensions on which it hinges: between the avant-garde and the populist, creativity and negation, the artificial and the realistic, between symbols with conflicting meanings, and between individual and collective... rather than interpreting punk and postmodernism as ready-made doctrines, it is more fruitful to see them as related interrogative practices, questioning the boundaries between elite and mass culture, the separation of art and everyday life, and the status of the artist as a genius creator. Both punks and postmodern artists questioned the defining political fault lines of the modern world, the politics of class and of nation, and often, the importance of politics altogether (at least in the traditional sense of the term). Finally, and perhaps most important, both developed an acute but ambivalent self-awareness with respect to art's relationship with market forces" (pp. 35-36).

This reading acknowledges the postmodern thread which runs through punk, however, rejects the thesis that punk is postmodern in its entirety. I argue, in line with Patton (2018) that Existential-punk both resists traditional categories yet demonstrates, to an extent, a coherent set of principles which can be identified as Existentialist, not postmodern.

Postmodernism and Feminism

A feminist perspective on postmodernity and its application to punk-rock reveals some of the tensions on which punk hinges. As Nancy Hartstock (1987) notes in 'Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories' on the rise of postmodernism in the academy: "Why is it, exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes "problematic"?" (p. 196). As discussed, the rejection of individual and collective subjecthood proffered by postmodernism problematises the difficult task of disrupting and dismantling the status quo (Nehring, 1997). However, a brief examination of the ways in which postmodernism and feminism have interacted in the literature sheds further light on why the application of postmodern theory to popular music can be both highly

problematic and, from a feminist perspective, potentially illuminating. As Nicholson (1990) notes: “there are many points of overlap between a postmodern stance and positions long held by feminists” (p. 5). Like postmodernism, feminism attempts to uncover the political power of fundamental claims to knowledge and the legitimacy of the expanding influence of science in the modern world (Nicholson, 1990).

Nicholson (1990) argues that the modernist criteria for true and false knowledge has guided the development of ‘power’ as a concept understood as fundamentally belonging to the state; postmodern thought, however, expands this definition, extending the field of power to domains such as mental health and sexuality (Nicholson, 1990). Foucault (1980) has explored this in detail and so his work will be touched on throughout this section. Nicholson (1990) also highlights that postmodernism developed in response to a modernism which “has been marked by the attempt to reveal general, all-encompassing principles which can lay bare the basic features of natural and social reality” (Nicholson, 1990, p. 2). This ‘natural’ reality is usually written from the perspective of the white, middle-class, able-bodied, cishet male (Nicholson, 1990).

Foucault (1980) argues that knowledge is bound up with power and every society produces its own ‘truths’ through claims of scientific rationality (relativism). Foucault’s (1980) project is an examination of how discourses of truth operate in relation to hegemonic power structures. Although Foucault fails to address the gendered aspects of these power structures, feminist thinkers have drawn on his work to examine how the concept of ‘femininity’ and the feminine body are invested with certain properties and inserted into certain regimes of ‘truth’ (Nicholson, 1990). This creates space for an examination of the ways in which power plays out in everyday life and guides the female experience. Unlike modernism, feminist theories are not generally concerned with the ‘true’ or ‘beautiful’; rather, they are rooted in concerns of everyday life (Nicholson, 1990). For Nicholson (1990) the feminist accomplishment is recognising gender as a category central to human thought and behaviour, and postmodernism has contributed to this development. However, as noted previously, the category of gender in relation to human experience usually discriminates against women located at intersections of oppression i.e., those who are not white, middle-class, heterosexual, cis or able-bodied, thus “[replicating] the problematic universalizing tendencies” of modernism (Nicholson, 1990, p. 1). Whilst on the one hand postmodernism has the potential to create space for the examination of systems of oppression, on the other, it is guilty of reproducing and perpetuating these systems.

McNay (1992) explores the relationship between Foucault and feminism, asserting that if feminists are to make use of his work there are theoretical problems to be addressed and overcome. She argues that Foucault is both compatible and incompatible with feminism in his insistence on placing ‘the body’ at the centre of oppression. His work examines “the way in which the body is arbitrarily and violently constructed in order to legitimize different regimes of domination” (McNay, 1992, p. 16). On the one hand, this is useful to feminist thinking in that it offers a way of conceptualising bodily oppression that

doesn't "fall back into essentialism or biologism" (McNay, 1992, p. 11). On the other hand, Foucault "neglects to examine the gendered character of many disciplinary techniques" (McNay, 1992, p. 11). Furthermore, if the 'feminine body' is shaped in this way, then it is merely a passive entity that has power stamped upon it. This monolithic model can lead to an oversimplified notion of gender as imposed rather than a dynamic process, leaving little room for autonomous and creative action (McNay, 1992). Although it should be noted that according to King (2004), Foucault's later work does allow for agency on the part of the subject. Similarly, Soper (1993) argues that whilst Foucault has shed light on the ways in which 'femininity' is inscribed onto the female body through various techniques of power, his work does not explain why women are subjected to patriarchal power in the first instance. Moreover, Foucault's "emphasis on the discursive formation of our corporeal existence" leads one dangerously close to a complete dismissal of spontaneous feeling, which, for Soper (1993) "[undermines] the feminist demand for a 'reclamation' of the body and the expression of an 'authentic' desire" (pp. 32-33).

As a solution to this theoretical problem McNay (1992) proposes that the body is viewed as an intersection between the biological and the social. Throughout history, gender inequality has been built and legitimised on the basis of biology, and biological functions are conflated with social characteristics ('masculine' characteristics are related to dominant perceptions of the male body i.e., firmness, aggression and strength, and 'feminine' characteristics are related to dominant perceptions of the female body i.e., frail, nervous, and weak): the notion that there is a 'natural' body is fundamental to certain oppressive strategies and so an analysis of the natural (female) body is central to a feminist analysis of oppression (McNay, 1992). McNay (1992) writes: "in our present society, femininity invariably connotes the female body, and in order to reveal the differences within monolithic sexual differences, it is necessary for feminists to analyse the processes through which the female body is transformed into a feminine one" (p. 23). However, as Butler (2006) notes, some women don't identify with a notion of femininity based on a non-phallic body and therefore risk being written off as male-identified. Placing too great an insistence on the specificity of female bodies perpetuates the polarisation between 'men' and 'women' and results in a trans-exclusionary conception of femininity.

Case Study 2: Nina Hagen

The work of German punk Nina Hagen - associated with the first-wave - provides an interesting case study on constructions of femininity in relation to postmodernism. In 'The Prisoner of Gender: Foucault and the Disciplining of the Female Body', King (2004) examines ways in which the feminine body is a target of disciplinary power in modern society: her work is an attempt to reconcile Foucault and feminism. Like Nicholson (1990), McNay (1992) and Soper (1993) she acknowledges Foucault's significant contribution to feminist thought whilst also highlighting his "gender-blindness" in his failure to address the various ways in which gender as a category determines disciplinary power techniques (King, 2004, p. 29). King (2004)

asserts, like Foucault, that “the body is an over-determined site of power... a surface inscribed with culturally and historically specific practices and subject to political and economic forces” (p. 30). King (2004) builds on Foucault’s assertion in claiming that these practices are gendered, and ‘femininity’ produces bodies/identities as a form of control. She argues that ‘woman’ is constructed as inferior and threatening to ‘man’, and is in need of containment (King, 2004). McClary’s (2002) work on the musical representation of the madwoman provides a useful framework for reading patriarchal containment and control within the music itself: her work will be drawn on briefly at the end of this section.

The male/female dualism is reproduced in many philosophical binarisms, such as mind/body, which traces lineage to French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) (Kenny, 2010). The mind/body dualism privileges the (male) rational subject as the centre of thought and derogates all that is understood to be opposed to it i.e., emotions, passions and (female) irrationality (King, 2004). Man is understood as being able to transcend his biology, whereas woman is “entrenched in her physicality” (King, 2004, p. 31). As a result, women’s bodies have been medicalised throughout history as frigid, hysterical, neurasthenic, post-natal, and so on. King (2004) writes:

Woman as other is inferior but also unknowable, enigmatic and disquieting. She represents that which must be investigated and dissected until her secrets are relinquished. Consequently the female body has been subjected to the scrutinizing gaze of the human sciences far more than the male. Every hint of abnormality has been thoroughly and enthusiastically ferreted out and classified by numerous ‘experts’ eager to provide indisputable proof of its inherent pathology. Its uncontrolled sexuality must be contained and inherent weakness of character exposed, particularly, as it is primarily a reproductive body. Medical and scientific discourse has confirmed the pathology of female biology and legitimated women’s subjugation, prescribing in the past what activities women should engage in, what clothes they should wear to preserve appropriate ‘womanliness’, their moral obligation to preserve their energy for child birth and so on (p. 31).

These ideas have permeated all areas of society, including medicine, science, law, and the arts, and are widely accepted as ‘truth’ (King, 2004). ‘Femininity’ is associated with myth, mystique and artifice, and ‘woman’ has historically been viewed as a problem to be solved and understood (King, 2004). Hagen’s work can be read as both a subversion and reproduction of this discourse.

As King (2004) notes, transforming the body with clothes, cosmetics and jewellery is a marker of femininity. These tools have been used to reinforce ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ in women; moreover, they have often been designed to restrict women in a physical sense by “[preventing] activity” (King, 2004, p. 34). In a televised performance of ‘African Reggae’ (1980) in 1980, Hagen draws on these markers, constructing a type of hyper-femininity in the following ways: bold, striking and heavily applied make-up with overlined lips; huge back-combed and bright (unnaturally) coloured hair; over-sized, novelty globe earrings, and a tulle pastel-coloured dress with a pink, silk bow around the waist - she almost parodies a little girl at a birthday party (B DP, 2013) (see Fig. 6). In this way she is over-signified as ‘female’. Hagen

draws on markers of femininity to reject hegemonic beauty standards for women i.e., a carefully constructed but 'naturally' beautiful look. In this way, she subverts expectations of women via the tools by which they are oppressed: like DEVO, she simultaneously subverts and embraces, working within the bounds of dominant discourse. In doing so, Hagen draws attention to the artificiality of constructions of femininity that position woman as decorative. Her look is perceived as 'unnatural' despite the fact that it is constructed using hegemonic tools. King (2004) notes: "paradoxically, while femininity is regarded as the most 'natural' of the genders (as women are biologically overdetermined) it also requires the most artifice to be considered successful, whilst those that are unsuccessful or refuse to take part in it are regarded as 'unnatural'" (p. 33). Hagen's critique can be read as Foucauldian in that she draws attention to a particular way in which women's bodies are subject to disciplinary power (although as noted, Foucault failed to recognise the gendered aspects of this power); however, at the same time she contradicts Foucault's monolithic model by demonstrating autonomous and creative action. Hagen's bodily movements throughout the performance are exaggerated, unrestricted and eccentric, resisting the physical constraints of women's clothing: in this way she challenges the expectation of woman as contained and demure (B DP, 2013).



Figure 6: Nina Hagen - frame from 'African Reggae' (1980) (B DP, 2013)

In performing on live television, Hagen offers herself up to the gaze (which following Mulvey [1989] is often theorised specifically as 'male') but posits a challenge through gaudy costume, (excessive) gesticulation and a confrontational stare. Hagen's 'stare' will be touched on further in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. It is interesting to observe the reactions of the male guests on the show, who mock, smirk and eyeroll: it is the male gaze in action (B DP, 2013). The ways in which women's bodies are at the centre of female oppression can also be located within Hagen's lyrics. For example, in 'African Reggae' (1980) she sings: "But what shall I do in Africa as a woman, as a woman? / Since the black man is castrating the black woman / Ouch, ouch, castration" (English translation). This is a nod to Freud's theory of penis envy and woman as 'castrated' (Minsky, 1996). 'Unbeschreiblich Weiblich' (1979) (German to English translation:

'Indescribably Feminine', which reinforces the notion of woman as unknowable, mystique and enigmatic) rejects pregnancy: "Why should I fulfil my duty as a woman / For Whom? For them? For you? For me? / I don't feel like fulfilling my duty! / Not for you, not for me / I don't have any duty!" (English translation). Again, like Foucault, Hagen draws attention to the ways in which power has been stamped upon the body (although Hagen's critique is specific to the 'feminine' body); however, unlike Foucault, she demonstrates resistance through creative action.

Showalter (1987) traces the relationship between madness and 'excess' feminine sexuality, an association established in the nineteenth-century. One of the most interesting aspects of Hagen's work is her juxtaposition of hyper-femininity (excess sexuality) and insanity: she plays into the 'spectacle' of madness as entertainment, which has been popular since the 17th-century (McClary, 2002). Madness can be read in Hagen's confrontational stare, exaggerated facial expressions, eccentric gesticulation, and signature vocal style: operatic voice techniques, animalistic growls, and shrieks (woman as nature), maniacal laughter, yodelling, tongue-rolling, and sudden leaps in large intervals. Furthermore, Hagen adopts an improvisatory style, creating tension between audience and performer: like the madwoman, her next move is unpredictable. In the context of Hagen's caricature of 'femininity' through the adoption of hyper-feminine attributes - coupled with lyrics which explore and resist woman's bodily oppression - her work can be read as a commentary on the ways in which madness is inextricably linked to excess feminine sexuality and has led to a pathologization of 'woman' as hysterical, emotional, threatening, and disruptive to the rational (male) order. Whilst this can be read as subversive, drawing on McClary's (2002) work on musical representation of madwomen in opera, Hagen's performances can also be read as a micro-reproduction of the patriarchal order.

In *Feminine Endings*, McClary (2002) reveals associations between madness, women, and opera. She notes that in visual art women are historically represented as 'mad' with the presence of male exhibitors: the male scientific 'experts' are depicted as the rational knowers, mediating feminine madness for public consumption. She writes: "the frame of masculine rationality is constantly visible to guard against the male-constructed (or framed) image of the madwoman. It is apparently only within the security of [the frame] that feminine madness can be presented for public declaration" (McClary, 2002, p. 85). McClary (2002) examines this process within the context of opera: her insightful analyses demonstrate that normative musical procedures are constructed around the madwoman to mediate the experience of insanity. She writes: "it becomes crucial... that the musical voice of reason be ever audibly present as a reminder, so that the ravings of the madwoman will remain securely marked as radically "Other," so that the contagion will not spread" (McClary, 2002, p. 86). The scope of this thesis does not allow for an exploration into why opera and popular music cannot be directly compared, however, McClary's (2002) work offers a useful framework through which to read popular music.

In a televised performance of 'Unbeschreiblich Weiblich' (1979) in 1979, for example, Hagen's 'madness' is contained within the framing of (masculinised) rationality: the presence of all-male musicians; standard rock instrumentation (the masculinisation of prog rock, virtuosity and the guitar has been noted by Walser [1992]); steady and controlled drumming which falls on the beat; tight musicianship; normative song structure, and predictable diatonic harmony and melodic guitar solos (TopPop, 2016) (see Fig. 7). However, there are crucial aspects to Hagen's performance which differ from both opera and visual art: McClary (2002) notes that usually the madwoman is presented as sexually titillating, yet as discussed, Hagen rejects hegemonic beauty standards. Secondly, her 'madness' is most likely contrived; in this way, she is both the subject and creator. She has agency in that she *chooses* to insert herself into the 'spectacle': her 'freak' status can be turned on and off. In this way Hagen's work treads the fine line between subversion (through the adoption of hyper-femininity and constructed madness) and reproduction (in the adoption of the male frame). Again, Hagen works within the bounds of discourse to comment on women's subjection to patriarchal oppression. In working within existing power structures, like DEVO, Hagen's work can be read as postmodern. Interestingly, Lucy Toothpaste - founder of feminist punk fanzine *Jolt* - criticises Siouxsie Sioux, Patti Smith, and Elli Medeiros for working with all-male backing bands for this reason (Blase, 2018). I would argue, however, that the presence of the 'male' in itself isn't necessarily un-feminist; rather, it is the way in which the dynamic between the 'male' and the 'female' is presented that is crucial. However, Hagen's work is more radical than DEVO's in that she does offer women an alternative to the dominant discourse of femininity in that she is a successful performer (it is Hagen's association with punk that allows for this alternative construction of femininity: this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism). In this way, an adoption of a postmodern position can be both restricting and liberating from the position of the female.



Figure 7: Nina Hagen - frame from 'Unbeschreiblich Weiblich' (1979) (TopPop, 2016)

Punk as Philosophy

In 'The Aesthetics of Punk Rock', Prinz (2014) argues that punk can offer philosophy a fresh perspective on the study of aesthetics (I would argue that it can also offer a fresh perspective on philosophical schools of thought such as postmodernism - demonstrated in the previous section - and Existentialism). For him, punk highlights the fact that aesthetic judgement is social in nature, not universal (punk also demonstrates a tendency to regard morality as a social construct as opposed to universal Kantian principles: this will be explored in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism). Prinz (2014) highlights three values which underpin the appreciation of punk as aesthetics. The first is irreverence (or the challenging of social norms) which can manifest in multifarious ways: protests, insults, swearing in public, song lyrics which attack the status quo, anarchy (although the brand of anarchy presented by early punks was centred on chaos and anti-authoritarianism as opposed to any adherence to a specific political philosophy), attacks on religion, morality, societal norms, consumerism, and the notion of celebrity. Punk, broadly speaking, targets any "entrenched standards of political acceptability" (Prinz, 2014, p. 585). In line with Prinz (2014), this thesis frames punk as irreverence rooted in Existential philosophy. The second value identified by Prinz (2014) is nihilism. Common nihilistic themes explored in punk lyrics include: despair, suicide, destruction, violence, impending warfare, decay, and societal collapse. He argues that even those punk songs which tackle less pessimistic themes, such as love, recreation, and fighting for social change, at their core remain a "demystification of cherished ideals", offering an alternative perspective which "continues to shatter rose-colored lenses" (Prinz, 2014, p. 586). Whilst there is a nihilistic strand running through punk, this thesis argues that the Sex Pistols - whose work is often referred to as nihilistic - does not neatly fit the definition of nihilism as conceptualised by Nietzsche. The third and final theme identified by Prinz (2014) is amateurism. Whilst this has been covered briefly in 'Punk as a Music Genre', it is worth noting here that punk's tendency towards amateurism has philosophical significance particularly for The Raincoats. This will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Prinz (2014) argues that philosophy can learn from punk's celebration of irreverence, nihilism, ugliness and discord: punk values these as 'good' precisely because society regards them as 'bad' (a Nietzschean reversal of values that will be discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism). Punk, like Dada, encourages a critical examination of accepted theories of aesthetic norms and universal rules of taste. In a comparison of punk and Dada, Prinz (2014) writes: "Dada photomontage anticipates punk album art, and dada periodicals anticipate punk fanzines. Members of the dada movement also wore outrageous clothing: Hugo Ball built robot-like costumes, Sophie Taeuber-Arp assembled multi-colored asymmetrical outfits, Marcel Duchamp was a cross-dresser, and he even donned an inverted Mohawk for a photo shoot with May Ray" (p. 588). In both punk and Dada, accepted norms and values are reversed, and that which is considered repellent by mainstream society becomes social currency within the micro-culture. Punk/Dada aesthetics are intentionally off-putting so as to "[serve] as a filter, attracting those who feel marginalized

and deterring those who wish to be conventional” (Prinz, 2014, p. 590). In this way, “punk is a form of life” for those who feel that the paradigms of the modern world do not accommodate their experience (Prinz, 2014, p. 590). In line with Prinz (2014) this thesis conceptualises punk as a Nietzschean critique of accepted norms and values.

Worley (2011) argues that “punk may best be understood as an ethos and an attitude rather than a musical or sartorial style” (p. 70). Similarly, In *Screaming for Change: Articulating a Unifying Philosophy of Punk Rock*, Kristiansen (2012) argues that it may be more appropriate to view punk not through a subcultural or musical lens, but a philosophical one. Whilst theorising punk as a subculture can offer insight into the lives of participants, we don’t yet have a theoretical framework that describes punk in its totality, one which accounts for its sometimes contradictory and confusing class-based and political associations. Kristiansen (2012) bypasses this problem, viewing punk not as a working-class rebellion but a unique perspective on the world with ‘deviance’ as the unifying principle. Whilst, for Kristiansen (2012), punk had no set agenda, it did stand *against*: good taste, acceptable behaviour, and inherited conventions; and *for*: social change, disruption, life on the margins of society, amateurism as a virtue (this in particular created space for those previously excluded from music making such as women and people of colour) and new ways of experiencing art both in its creation and consumption (Kristiansen, 2012). Rather than theorising punk as a working-class rebellion or straightforward manifestation of postmodernism, it may be more fruitful to see it as a “counter-cultural philosophical system with its own values, norms, and ideas” (p. 29). Kristiansen (2012), rejecting theories of punk as working-class rebellion, asserting that punk was a cultural war which opened up new social possibilities. Punk demystifies cultural practices, democratising the processes of creation.

In Chapter 4, Kristiansen (2012) attempts to uncover punk’s philosophy with an analysis of the Sex Pistols’ *Never Mind the Bollocks* (2012a). His analysis reveals themes such as: absurdist symbolism (sex and pistols); dystopian imagery; meaninglessness of life in modern society; the sinister side of the human psyche including manic obsession (fame and fortune); the insatiable desire for acceptance; inhuman cultural machinery that drives modern society; no future for humanity (people are unlikely to break the chains that are holding them back); the cowardice of lying; no longer a need for the masses to behave morally; the use of new (possibly violent) strategies; shallow goals; blind acceptance and submission; a call for autonomy and personal freedom; consumerism (within a consumer culture, consumerism is all there is); disregard for all forms of decency; cry for social evolution; individuality (as defined by consumerism) as unnecessary and superfluous; the rise of apathy; selfishness and preoccupation with trivial problems; deceit; inhuman behaviour; conformity and greedy business practices. Punk, to summarise, is a call to “think for yourself, be yourself, don’t just take what society gives you, create your own rules, live your own life” (Kristiansen, 2012, p. 43). Although Kristiansen (2012) attempts to uncover the philosophy of punk, he fails to situate the movement within the broader context of Western philosophy: it is this gap

within the scholarship this thesis aims to address. Existential-philosophical themes within the music of the Sex Pistols will be explored in Chapter 4.

Kristiansen (2012) finds a strong conceptual linkage running throughout punk - in the West at least - across time and space. He writes: "anyone who is willing to think for him or herself and is capable of rattling the cage of false consciousness can potentially be called a punk" (p. 119). One does not necessarily have to belong to a given social stratum, hold a particular type of job, dress in a certain way, believe in a particular God, or even listen to a particular type of music to be punk. All that is needed is that the person in question is willing to be the marker of his or her own future, question the social 'truths' that they are presented with, and reject conformity. Individuality should be chosen over conforming to a set of prescribed beliefs. Bands play punk because of their views in relation to prevailing ideas, values and social conditions, and audience members are expected to evaluate the information offered. Through creative action enacted on the cultural terrain, social change is possible. There is a sense of 'us' and 'them' in punk lyrics, but this distinction is not simply the proletariat 'us' vs. the bourgeoisie 'them': 'us' are the free-thinkers, and 'them' are the conformists, the followers of the status quo. Personal politics were favoured over politics with a capital 'P' (Kristiansen, 2012). As John Lydon (1994) notes in *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*: "The punk thing absolutely wasn't related to any one class at all - a combination of everything thrown in a dustbin, shaken violently, then thrown back out" (p. 315).

Finally, Kristiansen (2012) argues that although punk, at least in its initial form, had nihilistic and pessimistic tendencies, bands such as The Clash also offer hope. He argues that punk would have self-destructed had the initial nihilism not developed into something more hopeful: "punk continues to exist, and the reason for that can, more than likely, be attributed to the hope that it is possible to make an impact on the current system, to make even an infinitesimal change to the massive, perceivably all encompassing, institution that is the status quo... punks continue, even to this day, to speak out for social change and for the betterment of the human condition" (p. 124). D'Ambrosio (2012b) also talks of the hope found in The Clash, and how their music gave an "opportunity to authentically and sincerely create a new narrative, one that transcends deluded politics and the artificial borders that split us apart. Stand for, not against" (p. xxxvii). This thesis can be read as a continuation of Kristiansen's (2012) work which examines the sense of hope located within the music of the Sex Pistols. Punk, at its heart, is concerned with individuality and authenticity, an Existential rejection of the inhibiting constraints of conformity. It is an oppositional tendency that seeks to critique and unmask power dynamics within society, and reject hegemonic morality and common sense. This oppositional tendency, as discussed, isn't necessarily class-based. Whilst punk creates space for the proletariat to express discontent, it also creates space for *anyone* to do the same. Punk "liberated people to invent their own stories" (Bell & Howe, 2019). It is a cognitive filter through which one experiences the world. In this way, punk looked towards the betterment of the human *condition*.

In interviews, punks frequently talk of 'being yourself', 'rejecting authority', 'anyone can do it', and so on, without explicitly stating any political alliance (Worley [2015] notes in an analysis of British punk fanzines between 1976-84 that most punk bands and zines eschewed political affiliation). Bassist and band leader of Oi! band The 4-Skins, Tom McCourt, felt that punk was "people thinking for themselves, a medium through which people could communicate their own ideas" (Worley, 2017, pp. 26-27). For Frances Sokolov, better known as Vi Subversa - lead singer and guitarist of anarcho-punk band Poison Girls - punk was "a reaction to power, reaction of the powerless, punk is about life, punk is about taking my life for myself" (Worley, 2017, p. 27). For G.W. Sok, frontman of Dutch punk band The Ex, punk is "the idea that anything you want to do you can just do it, your limitations were also your strengths, you didn't have to know all the chords in the music book, just the idea that you wanted to play in a band was enough" (Sok, 2020). Similarly, Club owner instrumental to the punk scene Andrew Czezowski argued that there was no such thing as 'punk' and that it had "more to do with the energy and spirit of the time than the music" (Bell & Howe, 2019, p. 65). Whilst the punk tenet 'anyone can do it' "appears to dissolve the problem of power", value judgements were maintained within the scene (Dale, 2016, p. 9). As Haenfler (2014) notes: "pursuing, performing and judging authenticity is central to most subcultural experience" (p. 83). Punk's adopted the term 'poseur' to refer to the inauthentic hangers-on who claimed allegiance with the subculture, but failed to understand and adopt its core values (Haenfler, 2014). This thesis argues that these core 'values' are existential in nature. Dale (2016) argues that value judgements are essential in the process of creating and receiving music, and the "only way in which music could remain valuable without value judgement would be in some solipsistic, self-as-author-and-audience sense: pure and absolute individuality" (p. 11). Whilst individuality and authenticity are raised within the punk scene as the highest values, they are demarcated along the lines of existential thought; twentieth-century existentialism recognises that human beings live in a shared world, and so 'pure and absolute individuality' is impossible. This will be explored in detail in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. Freedom of thought always exists within a given framework, as John Lydon (2014) notes: "my songs don't lecture, they give you freedom of thought, inside of the agenda I'm pushing" (p. 134). This thesis argues that Lydon's 'agenda' can be read as Existentialist.

Links between punk and the philosophy of the counterculture have been acknowledged in recent years, despite punk's insistence that it was a break from hippiedom. Martin's (2015) work on David Spaner situates punk within the context of the counterculture:

David Spaner... sought to situate punk in a longer trajectory of radical culture and politics. Spaner... reiterated a more common perspective that punk was an elaboration and extension of countercultural youth movements that developed in the years after the Second World War. In this evaluation, the radicalism of punk culture had its historical origins in the Beat musicians, artists, and poets of the 1950s. Like punk, the Beats had developed as a reaction to the perceived social and cultural stagnation of their immediate surroundings, a context that led to

the creation of new autonomous culture. In this historical genealogy, such movements provided the basis for the “freak culture” of the mid-to-late sixties. According to Spaner, “the Hippies had many of the Beatniks’ values but they were just a few small scenes in dead times. Their times were alive and the Hippies became a massive cultural upheaval that affected the entire society with their music, underground newspapers, marijuana, communalism, dress and hair, co-ops, festivals, [and] protests” as well as radical organizations... For Spaner, punk’s place in the 1970s was part of this historical continuum that reached back to countercultural New Left and the Beats (Martin, 2015 p. 35).

Similarly, in an interview with Foster (2019), David Wilkinson (author of *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain*) notes that post-punk “picked up where the counterculture left off with the esoteric”. Whilst Wilkinson is referring here to post-punk, the lines between punk/post-punk are often blurred within the literature, and so it is reasonable to assume here that residual countercultural influence can also be found within early punk bands. Punk musicians themselves express mixed feelings towards the counterculture. Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood claimed to hate hippies (Savage, 1991). Gee Vaucher, however, who created the album artwork for Crass, says: “The hippie movement meant self-empowerment. Taking back your own autonomy, whether learning how to heal yourself, how to eat and stay healthy, how to speak up and express what you feel, how to lose the gender roles that you were forced into, all the things and more that go with self-empowerment. Of course we all know the story of how the hippie movement went up its own arse and into self-destruct. But people forget or do not grasp how it opened up a whole generation. It was a powerful voice that got destroyed by heavy drugs deliberately supplied by the US government - that's how effective the movement was” (Robb & Craske, 2013, p. 37). Similarly, Mick Jones from the Clash acknowledges his connection to the hippie movement: “my hair was really long... I was a total hippie, I had long hair and I used to do idiot dancing and everything! It was so great (Robb & Craske, 2013, p. 31). Poly Styrene also claims that she was “totally a hippie... I did it for real: bathing in streams, living on ferns” (Robb & Craske, 2013, p. 37). Punk, then, “might be configured as a *continuation* from the hippies and their counterculture rather than a break with the earlier movement”, a continuation which sought to inject social rebellion back into the counterculture, which had increasingly become commodified (Dale, 2016, p. 67).

Schill (2017a) notes the lack of scholarship on punk philosophy considering the fact that “punk and post-punks have, across time and place, taken philosophy quite seriously” (p. 29). He criticises O’Hara (1999) for employing the term ‘philosophy’ loosely in his study of punk, “failing to make a single reference to political, continental, analytic or postmodern philosophy” (Schill, 2017a, p. 29). Similarly, he criticises Kristiansen (2012) for failing to elaborate punk’s ontology and epistemology, and Waterhouse et al. (2014) for “[shying] away from actually defining or discussing philosophy proper, or any thinkers-writers dead or alive, in any detail” (Schill, 2017a, p. 30). He argues that this omission is notable considering many punks are interested in philosophy as a tradition (Schill, 2017a). Whilst the study focuses mainly on the American scene, Schill (2017a) presents a convincing case for philosophy as the primary source material

for the punk aesthetic in the late 1970s and early 80s, noting that punks drew mostly on existential philosophy (over analytical traditions) and marginalised philosophers for inspiration. He notes that punk philosophy was prefigured by thinkers such as: Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, Derrida and Foucault. Schill (2017a) addresses the Marxian and Hegelian influence (his analysis of DEVO through Hegelian philosophy is particularly insightful) and post-structuralist thinkers such as Derrida, Lacan and Foucault (noting the theme of 'madness' within post-punk, which explored depression, anomie, hysteria, schizophrenia and the splitting of the subject) in detail; however, with the exception of a chapter on punk and Dostoevsky, he fails to examine the relationship between punk and key existential thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and de Beauvoir. It is this gap within the scholarship that this thesis aims to address.

In conclusion, punk both affirms and negates what came before: it was both a continuation and rejection of rock music, a subcultural revolt which cannot be said to sit comfortably on the Left-Right political spectrum, and whilst a thread of postmodernism did run through punk, to locate the movement in its entirety within postmodern thought renders it socio-politically inconsequential, whilst at the same time creating space for previously marginalised subjectivities. When examined from the perspective of Existential philosophy, however, punk's potential as an agent for change is revealed.

Chapter 3:

Punk as Existentialism

to misjudge punk's intellectual ceiling, to dismiss it as mindless violence and atonal noise, is a precarious, and potentially fatal, move (Schill, 2017a, p. 27)

Alongside an examination of the philosophical principles adopted by Existential-punks, this chapter will outline the context within which British punk developed. Existential-punk was, broadly speaking, a reaction to three events in Western history: on a national level, it was a reaction to neoliberalism – the dominant political-economic ideology in Britain since the 1980s (Venugopal, 2015). On a global level, it was a reaction to the ‘Death of God’ in the nineteenth-century, and anxieties surrounding The Cold War in the 1970s. These three events and their relationship to both Existentialism and Existential-punk will be explored. Philosophers drawn on throughout this chapter include nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and twentieth-century philosophers Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, whose works are considered a continuation of Nietzsche’s thought into the twentieth-century.

Broadly speaking, ‘neoliberalism’ centres on the relationship between state, capital, property, and individuals (Ganti, 2014). Ganti (2014) traces the rise of neoliberalism in Europe and the US to 1938, when the Colloque Walter Lippmann was organised in Paris. Participants launched a journal and thinktank with the aim of promoting neoliberal ideology (Ganti, 2014). The outbreak of WWII halted their efforts, but in 1947, after the war ended, a group of economists from the US and Europe founded the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) to build a “transnational network of intellectuals who could be trusted to promote the cause of neoliberalism” (Ganti, 2014, p. 92). Here, they laid out principles that attempted to articulate a common vision for society, summarised by Ganti (2014):

Individual freedom could be preserved only in a society that protected private property and had a competitive market as the foundation of economic activity. Private property in terms of the means of production was seen as key to decentralizing power and preventing its concentration, which could otherwise jeopardize *individual freedom*. *Freedom of choice* across all domains of production and consumption – of the producer, worker, and consumer – was imperative for the efficient and satisfactory production of goods and services. *Freedom of choice* also extended to individuals who should have the right to plan their own lives rather than be directed by a centralized planning authority (p. 92, my italics).

Underlying neoliberal ideology, then, is the notion that economic activity should be organised such that *individual freedom* and *freedom of choice* is maximised. Individual liberty can only be secured through free and competitive markets.

Margaret Thatcher was highly influenced by MPS thinkers, in particular MPS co-founder and economist-philosopher Friedrich Hayek (Sultana, 2021). Throughout the 1980s, Thatcher’s government cast themselves as the sole defenders of liberty and portrayed capitalism as the pinnacle of freedom,

dismantling the postwar consensus (which was underpinned by values such as nationalisation, strong unions, and high taxes) by privatising industries, deregulating finance, and crushing trade unions (Sultana, 2021). Although Thatcher's election victory in 1979 was the political embodiment of a hegemonic shift towards neoliberalism, Rollings (2013) notes that this shift was beginning to solidify in the 1970s: "the crisis of the 1970s marked the tipping point in a global shift from a post-war world of Keynesian welfare capitalism to a new neoliberal ideology" (p. 637). It is amidst this 'crisis' that first-wave British punk developed. The 'crisis' that Rollings (2013) refers to is summarised neatly by Sandbrook (2020):

... most people regarded 1976 as a dreadful year. When it began, British families were still mourning the victims of the IRA's bombing campaign in London, while Westminster was digesting news of the government's decision to bail out the ailing Chrysler car giant. The next twelve months saw riots at the Notting Hill Carnival, the unravelling of the Jeremy Thorpe scandal, the petty sleaze of Harold Wilson's 'lavender list' and a series of appalling sectarian atrocities in Northern Ireland. Even the wonderful weather proved a very mixed blessing, with heatwave turning inexorably to drought. Above all, though, this was a year in which the exchange markets completely lost confidence in the British economy, the pound went into free fall and the government was forced to seek a humiliating bailout from the IMF... the post-war consensus was already in its death agonies. This had a profound impact on the lives of Britain's 56 million people: after twenty years of almost unbroken growth, real earnings fell in 1976 and again in 1977... The truth is that, although many people led happy and comfortable lives, Britain was in poor shape in the late 1970s... the gap between North and South was growing, while the manufacturing industries on which Britain's prosperity had long depended were in deep decline. In the industrial working-class cities, unemployment was mounting (pp. xix-xx).

This is worth quoting in full to set the context within which punk appeared on the music scene in 1970s Britain: tensions were building, and society was beginning to lose faith in the establishment.

It is also worth noting the role 'individualism' played in the ideological shift to neoliberalism in the late 1970s. The history of 'individualism' as a social, moral, political, religious, and economic concept is complicated, and the boundaries of each category are often indistinct (Smith & Moore, 2015). However, in the interest of clarity, I shall take the Cambridge Dictionary (2022) definition, which underpins all individualisms manifestations: individualism is, broadly speaking, "the idea that freedom of thought and action for each person is the most important quality of society, rather than shared effort and responsibility" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Robinson et al. (2017) offer an interesting account of the ways in which individualism gained momentum in Britain throughout the mid twentieth-century: the collapse of discursive Christianity in the 1960s; the publication of the Wolfenden Report into homosexuality and prostitution in 1957 which led to a flurry of 'permissive' legislation on abortion, divorce and homosexuality; an increase in untraditional family structures and birth rates outside marriage; an explosion of 'identity' politics, and social movements organised around new identities in the 1970s. Class voting was also eroding during this time, with people turning less to tradition, habit, family, and community for example (Robinson et al., 2017). These trends are seen by Robinson et al., (2017) not as

the 'result' of Thatcherism; rather, as a growing trend from the late 1950s onwards that Thatcher managed through skill to exploit. Other factors which contributed to this trend include: growing affluence and consumer capitalism, secularisation, the expansion of education and the rhetoric of meritocracy, suburbanisation, and the disintegration of traditional communities (Robinson et al., 2017). For Robinson et al., (2017), political-economic individualism has its roots in both the Left and the Right, whereas on the Left, many versions of what individual empowerment might look like suggested that personal liberation could be best realised through collective responsibility, not in opposition to it. Similarly, Existential-punk embodied both individualistic and collective elements: this will be explored throughout the rest of this chapter and Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism.

Political-economic context is important because it highlights that Existential-punk adopted neoliberalism's central value – individual freedom – but conceptualised it in Existentialist terms: 'freedom' (both practical and ontological, terms which will be defined later) is central to the development of personal authenticity, Existentialism's (and therefore Existential-punk's) highest value. Adopting the CCCS framework discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', in this way, Existential-punks experienced themselves *in terms prescribed by the dominant culture* i.e., individual freedom as the context within which humanity can flourish; however, they define the conditions for individual freedom not economically, but philosophically (Palmolive of The Raincoats once said "real freedom is not in politics" [Palmolive quoted in Pelly, 2017, p. 53]). Moreover, in contrast to the definition of individualism offered above, freedom of individual thought and action valued *over* shared effort and responsibility – a doctrine which Thatcher espoused throughout the 1980s (Sultana, 2021) – Existential-punks recognised that individuality is never wholly individual or free-floating, and that individuation takes place within collective structures i.e., a subculture, or, for the Existential-feminist punks, collectively as women. Freedom of individual thought and action valued *alongside* shared effort and responsibility, is closer to an Existential-punk conception of individualism.

Free from the grip of postmodern theory and drawing on subcultural theory to the extent that punk can be read as a reaction to neoliberalism, this thesis offers a reading of punk which allows for an examination of its historical and philosophical roots, a philosophy grounded in revolt against established authority and morality. This chapter will examine Existential-punk's philosophical genealogy and an application of these findings will be applied to the music of the Sex Pistols in Chapter 4 and The Raincoats in Chapter 6.

Identified tenets central to both Existentialism and punk include: the rejection of 'nihilism' (through the adoption of 'authenticity' and rejection of conformity), the utilisation of destruction in order to facilitate creation, the radical rejection of systematic thought, religion, authority and Western morality rooted in Judeo-Christianity, the potential to encourage critique, self-reflection and inspire activity ('do it yourself'), and the quest for a 'truth' rooted not in reason, science, bourgeois morality or religion, but in the crushing reality that life is chaotic, messy and painful. Due to the lack of scholarship on the relationship between punk and Existentialism the conclusions drawn offer initial points for discussion that require further

examination, not definitive answers. In tracing punk's philosophical past, one can look towards ways in which it may influence future cultural activity, radical politics, and the philosophy of Existentialism itself: this work should be read with that in mind. There is a small amount of literature on the links between British punk and Existentialism: John Lydon read Dostoyevsky (Lydon, 1994), Magazine's 'Song from Under the Floorboards' (1980) is a nod to Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* (2004); The Outsiders were named after an Albert Camus (2013) novel (Walker, 2021); The Mekons released an album in 2016 entitled *Existentialism*; Pete Shelley of The Buzzcocks read Sartre's novels at Bolton Institute of Technology where he studied philosophy and literature (Smith, 2018) (Shelley once said in an interview, "really, punk was about questioning things" [Gavan, 2014]), and dramatised accounts of nervous breakdowns and existential crises became a punk staple by the 1980s. Worley (2017) notes punk's "forced existentialism" (p. 239) i.e., they had to live for the moment because of the threat of annihilation through the atomic bomb (this will be discussed in detail later). Wilkinson et al. (2017) write: "even the Bromley Contingent, the select coterie of scenesters who provided the Sex Pistols with their early audience and were among the least politically engaged of the early punks, viewed the movement as an outlet for Existential dissatisfaction and a home for the marginalised" (p. 408). Whilst the word 'Existentialism' has been used in relation to punk rock in the literature, a detailed exploration of the central philosophical tenets is absent. As Hanscomb (2020) notes: "virtually nothing academic has been written on punk's links with existentialism" (p. 1). This thesis is an attempt to fill that gap within the scholarship.

Schill (2017b) examines links between (American) punk and proto-Existentialist Fyodor Dostoyevsky (synthesising Dostoyevsky and psychoanalysis). His study reveals that punk's "grotesque characterizations of humankind and questioning of the moral, political, and aesthetic status quo" (Schill, 2017a, p. 54) were inspired by Dostoyevsky's novella *Notes from Underground* (2004). Whilst Schill (2017b) is concerned with American punk - more nihilistic than the British scene - his study is a useful one in that it reveals links between punk and Existentialism. Using Iggy Pop as the principle case study (occasionally referring to Lydon and Pussy Riot), Schill (2017b) reveals themes within Iggy Pop's music/performances directly drawn from Dostoyevsky's characters such as: blasphemy (and vulgar speech), reactionary self-hate, misanthropy, masochism, self-deprecation, egocentrism, despair, intolerance to boredom, exhibitionism, humiliation, dismantling of hierarchy, demotion of high art, disaffection, dispossession, alienation, shame and destruction of the present in the name of something better (an Existential theme closely related to Nietzsche and the Sex Pistols). He writes that Iggy Pop self-styled as Dostoyevsky's 'underground' characters, presenting himself as an 'idiot'; brilliantly self-confident, but naive and ridiculous (Schill, 2017b). Drawing on Jones's (2002) study of the carnival (which will be explored in 'Punk as Anarchy') and noting the carnivalesque quality to both punk and Dostoyevsky, Schill (2017b) also highlights the collective transgression of punk and the effect this has on the observer. Comparing an Iggy Pop performance to the experience of reading a Dostoyevsky novel, Schill (2017b) argues that in observing Iggy Pop's depravity one

experiences both anger and pleasure, and such an experience forces a confrontation with one's own subordination and self-hate: the audience becomes disoriented, self-conscious and complicit in the deviance. Performer and audience become engaged in collective transgression. Schill (2017b) writes: "once such humiliations, such debasing thoughts and actions, have been expressed publicly and collectively, the subjects of such depravity - and their witnesses - emerge more conscious of themselves and the institutions and systems by which they are beset, including history and political economy" (p. 86). John Lydon (2014), in *Anger is an Energy*, echoes a similar sentiment: "By eleven, I was finding *Crime and Punishment* [Dostoevsky, 2003] very insightful - very miserable but sometimes when you wallow in other people's misery and dourness, it's fulfilling and rewarding" (p. 3). Dostoevsky was a novelist, not a philosopher in the traditional sense, and so his work will not be addressed in detail; however, Schill's (2017b) work highlights the ability of Existential-punk to force an observer into self-reflection. This theme runs through both the British and American punk movements of the 1970s and is a central point of discussion throughout this thesis.

Punk as Anarchy

As discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', despite punk's associations with the Left, overall, its "contradictory impulses meant that it offered a somewhat unreliable means of propagating socialism" (Worley, 2012, p. 340). Similarly, Duncombe (2008) argues that the punk underground failed to engage with the macro-social culture and was therefore incapable of offering political empowerment to society at large. Dale (2016) argues that this is due to the fact that punk has veered between Marxist and anarchist positions: there are fundamental tensions between "universalist and essentially localist ambitions for alternatives to capitalism" (p. 6). Punk-rock lends itself to anarchy in its resistance to established political binaries and rigid categories of thought: anarchy provides a pathway beyond the Left-Right political spectrum (Worley, 2015). Whilst this thesis is not primarily concerned with punk as anarchism, scholarship on the subject provides a useful framework for examining punk through an Existential-philosophical lens.

The relationship between punk and anarchy is complicated, and punk can be said to mirror the historic tensions within anarchist thought (Worley, 2015). Cogan (2007) writes on British first-wave punk: "most groups had no real theoretical background in anarchy, nor did they live a communal lifestyle based on anarchist principles and ways of living" (p. 79). While the Sex Pistols sung of anarchy in the late 1970s, the official anarcho-punk movement - which did embrace a communal lifestyle and other anarchist principles - didn't take off until the 1980s with British punk bands Crass and Poison Girls (Worley, 2015; Worley, 2017). Ambrosch (2018b) writes: "the distinction between anarchy as a state of chaos and disorder, as invoked by the Sex Pistols, and anarchy as a political concept, as advocated by Crass, is a crucial one to make" (p. 58). The scope of this thesis does not allow for an exploration of the development of anarchism in detail, nor does it allow for an analysis of the anarcho-punk movement, which has been researched to

great extent (Worley, 2015; Dines, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Cogan, 2007; Webb, 2016; Donaghey, 2020). Instead, this thesis takes as the point of departure the notion that the significance of the Sex Pistols lies in the band's Existential principles, including their ability to inspire independent thought and action, which can be conceptualised as both anarchistic and Existentialist in nature. Martin (2015) writes:

For Crass's Penny Rimbaud, the political significance of the Sex Pistols did not hinge on their philosophical sophistication so much as it did on their ability to inspire new ideas. When Pistols' vocalist Johnny Rotten remarked that there was "no future" in the current world, Rimbaud and his follow [sic] anarchists saw it "as a challenge to our creativity - we knew that there was a future if we were prepared to work for it". (p. 29).

Punk rejects proselytism and doctrinal teaching. As American rock singer-songwriter Tamar-kali proclaims: "if you're punk rock, you're not looking for a leader" (Goldman, 2019, p. 41). Instruction was never an Existentialist (nor punk) goal: "the point and purpose of music... is to entertain, enthrall and educate but not dictate" (Lydon, 2014, p. 45). Moreover, Pete Shelley has described the essence of punk as 'action' (praxis) in the sense of "ordinary people getting an idea and making it happen, without worrying about whether they are qualified for it or talented enough to do it" (Smith, 2018). As discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', early punk's political stance may have been somewhat disordered and ideologically incoherent, but the Existential-anarchist emphasis on individual thought and action was central to most of the bands active within the 1970s, including the Sex Pistols.

In 'The Blurred Boundaries of Anarchism and Punk in Vancouver, 1970-1983', Martin (2015) explores associations between punk and anarchism in Vancouver in the 1970s. Whilst the Vancouver scene cannot be directly compared to the British scene, Martin (2015) offers both an insightful perspective on the global manifestations of first-wave punk with relation to anarchism, and a useful framework through which to view the movement. Martin (2015) argues that the anarchism-punk relationship was a "critical part of the anarchist resurgence in Canada in the 1970s" (p. 11). Rather than viewing punk as an inherently anarchistic position, Martin (2015) argues that it actually served as a conduit to further the anarchist-oriented activist projects of the 1960s and 1970s: "anarchists not only argued that punk was an important instance of popular rebellion that ought to be encouraged in its own right, but they also maintained that this rebellion could be federated and connected to other political networks" (2005, p. 12). Many anarchists active in the 1960s and 70s saw that punk and anarchism could mutually enhance each other's cause: "punk offered a critical tool for direct support for and solidarity with emerging social movements while connections to radical theory and social movements could enhance the utility, significance, and meaning of punk's cultural expression" (Martin, 2015, p. 12). As discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', punk lends itself to right-wing ideology and so the meaning of punk's expression had to be channelled through anarchistic principles fairly quickly in order to "keep its anger and rebellion in a progressive political context" (p. 13). In combining political and cultural activity through the medium of popular music - particularly through the use of music festivals and zines, which are useful ways to spread

political messages to large audiences - anarchist ideals of “direct democracy, community control, decentralized organization, mutual aid, and critiques of both capitalism and the state” could be disseminated quickly and effectively (Martin, 2015, p. 19). Similarly, I argue that Existential-punk was also responsible for the dissemination of Existential principles, and both punk and Existentialism can enhance each other’s cause.

Central to punk’s relationship with anarchism is its desire for a particular kind of social revolution centred on self-expression (Martin, 2015). This social revolution can be defined not in Marxist terms, but as: “the process through which everyday forms of conflict and tension could form the basis of wider political transformations” (Martin, 2015, p. 25). As Leblanc (2008) notes: “punk’s radical politics... were more on the level of self-expression than social revolution” (p. 43). As discussed in Chapter 2: Defining ‘Punk’, one of the ways in which punk sought to transform social relationships was via an attack on the music industry through a self-organised and self-produced network of bands and records labels. Martin (2015) argues that whilst there were common interests among these bands, it’s important to understand that the movement was diverse. Punk was, at its core, “a series of shifting relationships, sounds, places, practices, and material cultures, all of which changed depending on time and place, but that reflected certain shared experiences and common interests” (p. 27). This definition allows for dynamism whilst also acknowledging - unlike postmodernists such as Davies (1996) and Moore (2004) who assert that punk was void of content to circumvent recuperation - there is a rich plethora of perspectives to be found within punk-rock. Following Martin (2015), this thesis understands Existential-punk as the basis of a cultural revolution through Existential philosophy centred on self-expression and the integration of the Apollonian and Dionysian. These concepts will be explored in detail later. Underlying this position is an understanding that Existential-punk can be viewed as shifting perspectives underpinned by common values central to Existential philosophy, listed at the beginning of this chapter. In the same way that “popular cultural activities [can] be both an important site and method for political struggle”, this thesis argues that through punk can also be viewed as a site of philosophical struggle (Martin, 2015, p. 29).

In ‘Anarchy in the UK: ‘70s British Punk as Bakhtinian Carnival’, Jones (2002) aims to “redefine and redeem [punk’s] many subversive features, and in addition, [open] up the discourse on punk which in general sees it as an episode in the history of British pop music, a youth sub-cultural phenomenon, or as a manifestation of postmodernism” (p. 26). In line with Jones (2002), this thesis rejects reductive definitions of British punk as a music genre, proletarian revolt, and expression of postmodernity. Jones (2002) conceptualises punk as a reincarnation of twentieth-century Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of ‘carnival’. Bakhtin’s carnival is a social event in which social rules, regulations and hierarchies are temporarily suspended (Lachmann et al., 1988). The carnival, “represented a Utopian impulse marked by the oppressed’s contestation and momentary release from the strictures of the established”, providing space for the disaffected to “voice their discontent and aspirations” (Jones, 2002, pp. 26-27). Contrary to

postmodern readings of punk which reject its utopian potential, locating punk within Bakhtin's notion of carnival allows for a reading in which punk's utopian ideals can be explored and expressed.

Like Martin (2015), Jones (2002) allows for a conception of punk which is both dynamic and static, dynamic in that it incorporates heterogeneous manifestations musically and stylistically, yet static in that there are similarities underlying its multifarious presentations. He writes:

Punk as a phenomenon like carnival was fluid, heterogeneous, and transient, marked by irreverence, dissent and symbolic resistance through music, dress and behaviour. Punk questioned decorum and subverted the conventions of fashion, typography and above all those of the music industry. Various, by demystifying creativity and the production process with its egalitarian message of anyone-can-do-it, a rhetoric of amateurism, raucous style, and inclusion of new and often taboo-breaking topics such as unemployment, consumerism, the police and royalty into songs (Jones, 2002, p. 28).

Whilst the values outlined above aren't necessarily central to this thesis, I argue, in line with Jones (2002), that there are (Existential) values which underline Existential-punk. Jones (2002) equates the punk phenomenon to Bakhtin's notion of 'dialogism'. Dialogism is a framework, applied to the carnival, which accommodates the articulation of voices excluded from dominant discourses. The carnival creates space for the disaffected to express frustration at the status quo on the grounds of any marker of oppression (Jones, 2002). Disaffection, despite social stratum, is the unifying principle of the carnival. Punk, although in many respects guilty of reproducing dominant hierarchies on a micro-level, to an extent, holds space for those voices which have long been repressed (the reproduction of patriarchal dynamics within punk will be discussed in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism). It is a "resurgence and recasting of long-suppressed yet irreducible elements of the carnivalesque in a clash between disaffected youth and official discourses against a backdrop of political and economic crisis, and heightened class tensions" (Jones, 2002, p. 27). Similarly, punk can be read as a 'resurgence' of Existentialism. Moreover, although Jones (2002) does not refer to Nietzsche in his study, the notion of punk as a resurgence of long-suppressed voices echoes Nietzsche's Apollonian/Dionysian framework which will be discussed in detail later.

Although, as discussed previously, it is difficult to locate a coherent political current within punk as an oppositional force against the dominant culture, the space opened up by punk was a catalyst for real change, which for the most part leaned towards the Left (Jones, 2002). Although punk may not have sparked a Marxist revolution in Britain that writers such as Simonelli (2002) hoped for (a revolution which punk never promised in the first place) it did incite self-expression and inspire individual authenticity, which lays the groundwork for collective resistance (this will be discussed in more detail later). Contrary to postmodern readings of punk which render the movement inconsequential in terms of *real* resistance, Jones (2002) offers a sophisticated reading in which punk resistance is taken seriously, politically and philosophically, on both an individual and collective level. Jones (2002) writes: "the carnival spirit although

attenuated still exists... as a disruptive and regenerative undercurrent which one must carefully listen out for" (p. 27). Punk embodies these dark, disruptive (Dionysian) forces lurking beneath the surface.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) himself has been described as 'punk' in his iconoclasm and aphoristic (and thus readable in comparison to the often obscure, inaccessible texts of traditional philosophy) writing style (Schill, 2017a). Schill (2017a) notes that there have been references to Nietzsche in American and British punk-rock: Iggy Pop (to the host's surprise) raises the subject of Dionysian and Apollonian art in an interview with Tom Snyder on the *Tomorrow Show* in 1981 (Mat M, 2015); Leonard Graves Phillips of the LA punk band the Dickies once expressed his attraction to Nietzsche's philosophy; British punks The Pop Group nod to Nietzsche in 'She is Beyond Good and Evil' (1979) ("Western values mean nothing to her") and 'Where There's a Will (There's a Way)' (1980), and Darby Crash of LA punks The Germs has confessed to reading Nietzsche in interviews. It was also revealed in the biography of Joy Division's Ian Curtis, *Touching From a Distance*, that he was obsessed with philosophy, including the works of Nietzsche and Sartre (Curtis, 2005). As noted in the introduction, this thesis is not concerned with punk artists who make explicit references to the Existentialists; rather, it offers a lens through which to view the cultural production of punk in general. However, it is interesting to note the direct influence of Existential philosophers on punk. This section will examine Nietzsche's work on Apollo and Dionysus, Western morality, the death of God and nihilism, identifying the tenets of Nietzschean philosophy which can be read in Existential-punk-rock, including: the insistence on an injection of Dionysian energy into Apollonian form, an attack on the West's established system of morality (derived from Judeo-Christianity), the ability to inspire individual thought and augment activity, and a rejection of nihilism.

In 'Punk, Jews and the Holocaust', Stratton (2007) locates punk within the broader context of the twentieth-century. He argues that punk was a manifestation of cultural trauma and celebration of nihilism - a term that will be defined later - which occurred at the moment in which the shock and trauma of the Holocaust was beginning to surface throughout the West. The realisation that fellow Europeans could engage in abhorrent acts of genocide undermined the values underpinning Western civilisation, values drawn from Enlightenment modernity such as: 'reason' paving the way for a better society, the idea that science and industry should bring material improvement, and "the West... leading the world in a global history that could be thought of in terms of progress" (Stratton, 2007, pp. 125-126). Stratton (2007) writes:

Punk was much more than a reaction to local economic conditions and the long, slow decline of Britain as a world power. Yes, as is usually argued, punk in England became a response to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government's championing of the aspirant middle-class, but we need to remember that Thatcher did not become Prime Minister until 1979. In England, as

elsewhere, punk expressed the inchoate agony of the experience of the cultural trauma that ended the confidence, and hope, of Euro-American modernity (p. 149).

The loss of faith in modernity also contributed to the rise in postmodern thought in the 1970s (Stratton, 2007). This is perhaps one explanation as to why punk and postmodernity have become associated in the literature. As previously discussed, punk in its totality (whilst containing traces of postmodernism) and postmodernism as a general philosophical position are distinct reactions to the same circumstances. Interestingly, Nietzsche is also associated with postmodernism; however, there is much evidence to suggest that the postmodernist adoption of Nietzsche is built on mis-readings of his work. This will be touched on throughout the following section.

Patton (2018) in *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, like Stratton (2007), locates punk within the broader socio-political context of the twentieth-century. However, Patton (2018) stresses the importance of finding an “account of punk that examines its development in both the East and the West, addressing punk as the global phenomenon that it was” (p. 7). He writes that whilst the globe was split into three ‘Worlds’ i.e., the Capitalist First World, the Communist Second World and the Anticolonial Third World, each with distinct worldviews, he notes that “punks in the East swapped stories with their Western counterparts, they were surprised at the similarities between the worlds they described” (Patton, 2018, p. 2). ‘Crisis’ and ‘decline’ are the two central similarities identified. He argues that there is evidence to suggest that popular culture in the East emerged in conversation with - as opposed to a copy of - Western culture, and that both Eastern and Western punk developed out of, and contributed to the transition from, approximately 1976 to 1989 i.e., from the late Cold War era to the globalized world that followed. He writes: “punk’s roots emerged from the ethnoscares of the late Cold War world, bringing together people who had different backgrounds yet shared a sense of disillusionment with the late Cold War and its limited possibilities. At a time of economic crisis, industrial decline in the First and Second Worlds, and expansion of capital and communication, punk spoke to the conditions of young people in the cities of the East and West alike. They communicated regularly with one another across the boundaries of the late Cold War world, sharing their disenchantment and longing for something vital and engaging” (pp. 30-31). He identifies a commonality between Eastern and Western punk that is central to this thesis: “punk only became widespread in societies around the world where modernity had taken root - it only made sense as a *postmodern* phenomenon” (Patton, 2018, p. 35). Here, Patton (2018) is using the term ‘postmodern’ not in the traditional sense discussed in ‘Punk as Postmodernism’ but as a term to describe *any phenomenon* which critiques the values of modernity. This thesis runs in line with this thought, arguing that punk was at its heart both a trauma response to - and critique of - modernity that sits comfortably within existential philosophy. Existentialism’s lineage will now be examined through Nietzsche, to Heidegger and Sartre.

Nietzsche and Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) are considered forerunners of Existentialism, a philosophy which became popular in France after the Second World War, most notably

through the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir whose work will be discussed in detail later (Lavine, 1984; Aho, 2014; Flynn, 2006). Following a long tradition of Western philosophy since Socrates (470-399 BC), Existentialism turns its focus from abstract, external truths and instead looks inward to the individual human self (Flynn, 2006). The philosophies of both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, “dwell on the human individual as conscious subject, the sense of meaninglessness and nothingness of human existence, and the anxiety and depression which pervade human life” (Lavine, 1984, p. 322). Their thought sits comfortably within the broader context of the turn of the nineteenth-century, when literary and philosophical references to “inchoate feelings of anxiety, boredom, and suicide were becoming increasingly common” in the West (Aho, 2014, p. 8). Nietzsche and Kierkegaard’s solutions to humankind’s Existential situation, however, are very different. Whilst Kierkegaard “counsels us to sink into despair so that we can make the leap of faith to God”, Nietzsche rejects God entirely, and instead “counsels us to become gods, joyous, hard, independent supermen” (Lavine, 1984, p. 325). Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘Superman’ (or ‘Overman’) will be discussed in detail throughout this chapter. Due to Kierkegaard’s theological associations and much of punk’s outright rejection of religion, his philosophy will not be discussed in detail, although it will be touched on throughout. Before examining Nietzsche’s relationship to Existential-punk, context to his thought will be provided to understand what Nietzsche, and therefore Existential-punk, was a reaction against.

Nietzsche’s philosophy had widespread influence on significant twentieth-century thinkers, including: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Jean-François Lyotard (Fielding, 2020a; Fielding, 2020b; Wolin, 2019; Gemes, 2001). More broadly, many twentieth-century schools of thought trace lineage to Nietzsche, including: The Frankfurt School and critical theory, Guy Debord and the Situationists, Existentialism, and postmodernism (Steinbauer, 2021; Gray, 1998; Paine, 2020a; Gooding-Williams, 1987). Nietzsche’s philosophy is generally accepted as a reaction to modernism, however, his relationship to modernism and postmodernism is a complicated one since scholars across multiple disciplines cannot agree on a solid definition of either term. As Gooding-Williams (1987) notes: “there may be little if any interdisciplinary consensus regarding the proper criteria for identifying a given writer as modern or postmodern” (p. 95). He argues therefore that it may be more fruitful to view modernism and postmodernism not as distinct epochs, but as distinct yet interrelated ways of thinking; lenses through which to view the world which inform each other. The confusion surrounding the terms ‘modernism’ and ‘postmodernism’ has fed into debates on Nietzsche’s work, as both the modernists and postmodernists claim that Nietzsche sits firmly within their respective schools of thought (Gooding-Williams, 1987).

In ‘Nietzsche’s Pursuit of Modernism’, Gooding-Williams (1987) writes: “the recurrent allusions to Nietzsche in contemporary debates about modernity, modernism, and postmodernism are hardly surprising, but often a source of confusion. This confusion has less to do with Nietzsche than with the very

project of identifying and distinguishing the modern and the postmodern" (p. 95). He identifies Nietzsche as a 'postmodernist' not in the traditional sense - Nietzsche does not propose a rejection of a unified self and does not disregard all forms of authority and truth *per se* - but by virtue of the fact that Nietzsche interrogates the values of modernity and looks toward an alternative (a 'post'-modernity): there are similarities here between this reading of Nietzsche and Patton's (2018) reading of punk (i.e., it was widespread only in countries where modernity had taken root). Following Gooding-Williams (1987) this thesis argues that Nietzsche's thought is best viewed in this light, as an interrogation of the values which underpin modern bourgeois society. It is also worth noting that although Nietzsche's thought has been adopted by many postmodern scholars, on closer examination, this association is revealed to be a superficial one. A careful reading of his work demonstrates that Nietzsche would have condemned the postmodern perspective on the world as nihilism in its alignment with the status quo and refusal to lay a groundwork upon which new values could be created. In the same way that postmodernism has infiltrated punk scholarship leading to one-dimensional readings of the movement, it has also claimed Nietzsche as one of their own (Gooding-Williams, 1987).

At the centre of Nietzsche's work is the problem of nineteenth-century values (Walther, 2012; Cerbone, 2016). His entire philosophical project looks towards a radically new conception of humankind that builds its value system not from prescribed, external truths, but from an internal authority: "modernism is an issue for Nietzsche, because he takes the new, or more precisely, the creation of new values, as his central philosophical concern" (Gooding-Williams, 1987, p. 99). The creation of individual, unique virtue is central to Nietzsche's thought (Linsenmayer, 2019). Nietzsche's project, then, is to "elaborate the conditions under which a creation of new values would be possible", however, it is important to stress that Nietzsche, "never maintains dogmatically that these conditions will be, or are likely to be satisfied" (Gooding-Williams, 1987, p. 105). Nietzsche's philosophy makes no promises but encourages critical examination of Western values. This thesis argues that the creation (or possibility of) the 'new' underpinning Nietzsche's project - a fundamental break with Christian-platonic values that have shaped humanity for the last 2000 years - also underpins the philosophy of many punk bands active in the 1970s, including the Sex Pistols. Nietzsche's project can be seen as an attack on humankind's misguided craving for certain 'truths' at the expense of all other philosophical concerns (Linsenmayer, 2009). It is important to note that whilst Nietzsche rejects the possibility of 'truths' grounded in rationality and Judeo-Christianity, unlike the postmodernists, he doesn't reject the concept of 'truth' altogether (BBC Sounds, 2000).

It is worth elucidating Nietzsche's position on 'truth' to further clarify the distinction between the Nietzschean and postmodern perspective. Nietzsche did not believe that all convictions are equally as valid (Steinbauer, 2021; Warburton & Edmonds, 2009; Walther, 2012); rather, he was critical of the West's 'Will to Truth' i.e., the desire for 'truth' (through reason, science, religion, and so on) as the highest

value, at the expense of understanding (Warburton & Edmonds, 2009; Bragg, 2000; Nehamas, 1985). He rejected systematic thinkers who claimed to reveal the 'true' nature of human existence and felt that "all systems, whether religious, philosophical, or scientific, are simply human constructions that express a psychological need for stability and control that protects us from the terrifying mutability and impermanence of existence" (Aho, 2014, p. 51). John Lydon echoes this sentiment in *Anger is an Energy*: "We've got to learn to stop thinking in terms of categories as a species" (p. 166). This central conflict at the heart of human existence - the need for stability in the psychological chaos that is existence - will be discussed in detail later; however, the point here is that Nietzsche's project locates 'truth' not in reason, rationality, religion, morality, and so on, but in the chaotic turmoil of existence, which ultimately cannot be overcome (Aho, 2014; Nehamas, 1985; Drochon, 2016). His philosophical project reads as an attempt to awaken the reader to this reality and thus divert the course of human history. Punk, in a similar way, "purported to... cut through the hypocrisy and the myths that maintained the existing order of things and reveal the "truth" beneath" (Worley, 2011, p. 70).

In 'Postmodernism's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche', Gemes (2001) argues that Nietzsche's work sits comfortably within modernist thought and that postmodern readings of Nietzsche are built on misunderstandings of his attack on both dogmatic philosophy and unity within the individual. He writes: "Nietzsche agrees with the postmodernists that unity is not a pre-given, but where he parts from them is in their complete rejection of unity as a goal... where the postmodernists typically celebrate the death of the subject, Nietzsche rejects this valorization of disunity as a form of Nihilism and prescribes the creation of a genuine unified subjectivity" (Gemes, 2001, p. 339). Gemes (2001) argues that the postmodernists are correct in their assertion that Nietzsche is anti-foundationalist i.e., rejects any external authority which makes claims to ultimate truths or beliefs. Where the postmodernists have made an error, however, is in their assumption that: firstly, Nietzsche rejects 'truth' altogether (a false assumption for reasons elucidated previously); and secondly, that this leads to a rejection of all forms of authority. In Nietzsche's thought there is still room for authority, however, it is one that should come from within the individual (Linsenmayer, 2019). In rejecting authority in and of itself, Gemes (2001) argues that the postmodernists represent Nietzsche's nihilistic 'Last Man', a concept that will be discussed in detail throughout this chapter. The issue for Nietzsche is not with dogmatism *per se*, but with certain forms of dogmatism - Christian dogma in particular - which prescribe a unified self-constructed through doctrinal teachings delivered through an external framework. This, for Nietzsche generates "complacency... [allowing] for the suppression of the problem of becoming" (Gemes, 2001, p. 342). Nietzsche stresses the importance of committing to a future self which requires a stable identity: "if one has no stable self who is it that is being committed?" (Gemes, 2001, p. 343). You can only commit to the future if you have continuity over time.

Like Gemes (2001), Marxist-philosopher Marshall Berman (1983) categorises Nietzsche as a modernist. He celebrates Nietzsche and other nineteenth-century modernists for dynamism and adventurousness in

thought. Like Gooding-Williams (1987), Berman (1983) stresses the centrality of the problem of values in modernity: “modern mankind found itself in the midst of a great absence and emptiness of values and yet, at the same time, a remarkable abundance of possibilities” (p. 21). This abundance of possibilities (and thus hope for humankind) pervades the work of both Nietzsche and punk. For Berman (1983), Nietzsche responded to the complexities of modern life with creativity. It is worth quoting the Berman (1983) passage on Nietzsche in full:

What is distinctive and remarkable about the voice that Marx and Nietzsche share is not only its breathless pace, its vibrant energy, its imaginative richness, but also its fast and drastic shifts in tone and inflection, its readiness to turn on itself, to question and negate all that it has said, to transform itself into a great range of harmonic or dissonant voices, and to stretch itself beyond its capacities into an endlessly wider range, to express and grasp a world where everything is pregnant with its contrary and “all that is solid melts into air.” This voice resonates at once with self-discovery and self-mockery, with self-delight and self-doubt. It is a voice that knows pain and dread, but believes in its power to come through. Grave danger is everywhere, and may strike at any moment, but not even the deepest wounds can stop the flow and overflow of its energy. It is ironic and contradictory, polyphonic and dialectical, denounce modern life in the name of values that modernity itself has created, hoping - often against hope - that the modernities of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will heal the wounds that wreck the modern men and women of today (p. 23).

Punk, in many ways, also sits comfortably within this definition. As Martin (2015) argues, punk was categorised by shifting, dynamic and contradictory perspectives. For Berman (1983), postmodernism is contemporary modernism which has “missed or broken the connection between our culture and our lives”: it is modernist thought which has stagnated and regressed (p. 24). In the postmodern world our perspectives have flattened, and our imaginative range has shrunk (Berman, 1983). The postmodernists look towards rigid polarities and flat totalisations, approaches Nietzsche resisted. Berman (1983) calls for a dynamic and dialectical modernism, criticising thinkers associated with postmodernism for “lacking empathy with their fellow man, [regarding] him as a member of a spiritless mass, believe him to be incapable of human response and judgement, and depict his soul as void of tensions, spontaneity, and dynamism” (Berman [1983] quoted in Gooding-Williams, 1987, p. 105). Nietzsche’s work injects ‘spirit’ back into humankind, allowing us agency and creative action. As Reginster (2008) notes: “Nietzsche declares that life is worth living only if there are *inspiring goals*, or goals that inspire to live” (p. 23). Without these goals, we are left with nihilism.

Nietzsche, Punk and the Far Right

Before an exploration of Nietzsche’s philosophical project in detail, it is important to confront his problematic association with right-wing ideology. In the mid twentieth-century Nietzsche’s work was popularised after falling into the hands of fascist groups across Europe. He was so revered by the right that Mussolini received a copy of Nietzsche’s complete works from Hitler for his birthday (Hendricks,

2017; Beiner, 2021). German universities taught his philosophy as part of the new order, German soldiers were referred to as 'Übermensch', and many of Nietzsche's radical psychological insights were adopted by the Nazis: "The Nietzschean ideals of anti-egalitarianism, the Superman, and the will to power inspired them to act, and millions died because of it" (Hendricks, 2017). Even today, white nationalist leader and antisemitic conspiracy theorist Richard Spencer describes his intellectual awakening as being "red-pilled" by Nietzsche (Illing, 2018). Some scholars have since debunked the notion that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi after it was discovered through the work of German-American philosopher Walter Kaufmann, that these associations were a result of repackaged interpretations of his work published by Nietzsche's German nationalist sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche who became his literary executor after his mental collapse towards the end of the nineteenth-century (Nehamas, 1985; Drochon, 2016). It is now widely accepted by many Nietzsche scholars that she selectively edited new versions of his works to bolster her vehement antisemitic ideology (Magee, 2000; Drochon, 2016; Prideaux, 2018; Bragg, 2017; Warburton & Edmonds, 2009; Hendricks, 2017; Illing, 2018; Walther, 2012). Despite this, however, there are still scholars - most notably Beiner (2021) - who consider his work to be highly controversial, if not dangerous.

Hendricks (2017) argues that contrary to early misinterpretations, a careful reading of Nietzsche's work reveals that he saw German nationalism as dangerous and ended relationships with both his sister and close friend Richard Wagner over his disapproval of their antisemitism (Prideaux, 2018; Drochon, 2016; Walther, 2012). Similarly, Drochon (2016) writes that Nietzsche dissociated himself from Wagner due to his growing antisemitism and German nationalism and became "the exact opposite of what Wager had become - namely, a good European, an anti-anti-Semite, and eventually an anti-Christ" (p. 132). Nietzsche scholar Brian Leiter, in conversation with Nigel Warburton, argues that to suggest that Nietzsche was a German nationalist is absurd: "the fact that Nietzsche hated Germans more than anybody else on the face of the earth didn't fit so well with [his sister's] story" (Warburton & Edmonds, 2009). Whilst Nietzsche was highly critical of the values of Judaism on the grounds that it was responsible for the rise of Christianity and Christian values, according to Leiter, this was not and has never been a theme of antisemitism (Warburton & Edmonds, 2009). Similarly, Hendricks (2017) argues that whilst Nietzsche's criticism of 'slave morality' can read like an antisemitic tirade, Nietzsche actually saw the Jews as powerful people with a sophisticated culture. Beiner (2021), conversely, argues that Nietzsche's philosophy was explicitly antisemitic: "he denounces Judaism and Christianity as slave religions and castigates the Jewish origins of Christianity... he resurrects Zoroaster as a symbol of anti-Christianity and mythicizes about cosmic cycles... he offers prophecies of a race of supermen who will rescue Europe from the curse of egalitarianism" (p. 36). Upon reading Beiner's (2021) interpretation it is difficult to conclude that Nietzsche's philosophy was not, at best, highly problematic in this respect. Although it can be argued that those who align with both the alt-right and Nietzsche have likely engaged in a superficial reading of his work, finding "just enough

ambiguity in his thought to justify their hate”, it is undeniable that there are elements to his philosophy which attracts dangerous thinkers (Illing, 2018). This should be acknowledged when handling his ideas.

If one is to conclude that Nietzsche was not in fact antisemitic, and that his attacks are aimed at ideas and not people, there are important questions to be asked of a philosophy that lends itself to such interpretations. As Beiner (2021) notes: “one can’t be true to the vocation of political theory without engaging, both intellectually and pedagogically, with the most radical minds, but one must do so always with the vivid awareness that many of the thinkers who loom large within our theory canon did contribute to, even if they weren’t directly responsible for, terror and atrocity committed by those they influenced” (p. 30). Even Nietzsche himself was aware of (even prided himself on) the fact that his texts had the potential to be misinterpreted and used as justification for cataclysmic events (O’Mahoney, 2020; Beiner, 2021). This raises important questions concerning responsibility: one could reasonably argue that it is morally irresponsible to promote ideas with the knowledge that they may be used to justify abhorrent acts. Nietzsche argued that although his work will be associated with future crises in humanity, his philosophy would ultimately guide us through. O’Mahoney (2020) writes: “[Nietzsche’s prediction was] that one day his name will be associated with a crisis unprecedented in human history. Nietzsche appears to suggest that his work may help precipitate the most acute stages of this crisis; but he also positions himself as humanity’s guide through and beyond the coming upheaval” (p. 20) (this is reminiscent of the line in ‘God Save the Queen’ [2012b]: “We’re the poison / In your human machine / We’re the future / Your future”). The scope of this thesis does not allow for an exploration of a solution to Nietzsche’s problematic association with the alt-right; however, the potential danger found within Nietzsche’s philosophy - and by extension the philosophy of punk-rock - is considered throughout.

As discussed previously, punk had a problematic relationship with right-wing ideology in ways that echo Nietzsche’s relationship with the alt-right. Stratton (2005) writes that structurally many punk (and glam) bands were comprised of Jews, with one non-Jewish member who had a fascination with Nazism. For Stratton (2005) this dynamic was the playing out of anxiety surrounding domination and subordination after the Second World War. Gene Simmons of KISS, for example, was Jewish, and his mother was sent to a concentration camp when she was fourteen years old. Lead guitarist of KISS Paul Frehley - more commonly known as Ace - had a fascination with Nazi memorabilia and would make videotapes of himself dressed as a Nazi (Stratton, 2005). Similarly, Joey Ramone had a Jewish background, yet Dee Dee Ramone, who spent most of his childhood and teenage years in Germany where his father was stationed, had a loft filled with Day-Glo swastikas and collected Nazi war relics (McNeil & McCain, 2016; Stratton, 2005). Ron Asheton, guitarist of The Stooges, was also collector of Nazi memorabilia and even dressed in full SS colonel’s uniform when he was best man at Iggy Pop’s wedding. Iggy’s bride, Wendy Weisberg, was Jewish, and unsurprisingly her parents refused to attend (Stratton, 2005). In Britain, the provocatively titled band ‘London SS’ - of which founder member Mick Jones went on to form The Clash - caused

controversy, as the generally accepted origin story regarding the name is that SS stood for 'Schutzstaffel', a paramilitary organisation under Adolf Hitler who oversaw the extermination of the Jews (Stratton, 2007). McLaren and Westwood also made clothes with Nazi iconography and sold them in SEX (Stratton, 2007). The radical rejection of morality found within both Nietzsche and punk easily lends itself to the right: an adoption of Existential principles, then, must be done so with care.

Apollo and Dionysus: Punk as an Injection of Dionysian Energy

Although Nietzsche rejects Enlightenment principles there is one aspect of his work that sits comfortably within Kantian thinking. Kant's seminal work *Critique of Pure Reason* (2007), written in 1781, is generally accepted by philosophy scholars as the "outstanding work of philosophy since the ancient Greeks" (Magee, 2000, p. 147). It is within this text that Kant introduces the idea that the human ability to apprehend experience depends not only on what there is to apprehend but the apparatus for making sense of it i.e., the human body and mind (Magee, 2000). The human brain must organise sensation to create perception. Human beings, according to Kant, are therefore incapable of detecting anything that may exist outside perceptual limits to understanding, or the 'phenomenal' world, to use the Kantian phrase (Barrett, 2019b). God, for example, is a concept which human beings will never 'experience' in the perceptual sense and is therefore difficult (even impossible) to comprehend. However, although there may be things in the universe that cannot show up in experience, such as God, there is not, according to Kant, substantial evidence to reasonably conclude they are not there (Barrett, 2019b). This means that we can be almost sure that part of reality lies outside the possibility of experiencing it - Kant's 'noumenal' world - but this reality is inaccessible (Magee, 2000). This shift in thought was revolutionary, and all modern philosophy is said to have derived from this idea in that the fundamental premise on which most modern philosophical ideas are based are either an acceptance or rejection of Kant (Magee, 2000). Those who accept this distinction, such as the Existentialists, tend to focus on the 'real world' as opposed to metaphysical questions concerning God or any other form of higher being (Flynn, 2006; Aho, 2014; Cerbone, 2016; Gravit, 2007).

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) drew heavily on Kant, in particular the concept of noumena and phenomena (Barrett, 2019b). Schopenhauer accepts Kant's distinction between consciousness experiencing the world in perception (phenomena) and that part of the world outside perceptual experience (noumena) (Barrett, 2019b). Schopenhauer develops this idea further: for him, phenomena is the 'intellect' and noumena the 'will' (see Tab. 2). The essence of what it means to be human is will i.e., a set of inner drives and desires (Barrett, 2019b). All life - human, animal, plant, etc. - is striving or tending in a direction. For the most part this is blind striving; nature isn't conscious and doesn't have desires like humans, but it is still striving to 'be' something. Even in human beings will is unconscious; our body fulfils needs without us knowing, as the will tries to keep itself alive. It's not just a will to live, but

a will to produce life. Schopenhauer thinks the neediness of the will is the essence of human beings, not rationality, like Enlightenment thinkers believe (Barrett, 2019b). Secondary to the will is the intellect, which “serves individual organisms by regulating their relations with the external world in order to secure their self-preservation”, which acts in service of the will (Troxell, 2021). Later, drawing on Schopenhauer, Nietzsche draws on this distinction to develop his notion of the Apollonian (the intellect) and the Dionysian (the will) drives, the two conflicting forces that exist within the human being. These concepts - which later became the basis for Freud’s notion of the conscious and unconscious - are often associated with punk. For example, note Jim Carroll’s description of Patti Smith lyrics: “Patti’s poems were very different than mine, she had this whole Dionysian thing, whereas I was pretty Apollonian. That’s why she was so successful with rock - she could just go nuts and counterpoint it with this sweet self” (McNeil & McCain, 2016, p.121).

Table 2: The Development of Nietzsche’s Concept of Apollo and Dionysus according to Barrett (2019b) - From Kant, to Schopenhauer, to Nietzsche

Kant	Schopenhauer	Nietzsche
Phenomena: experiencing the world in perception	Intellect: consciousness - which is mostly unaware that we are driven by irrational motives	Apollo: God of light; rationality; consciousness; intellect; clear, definite form; the autonomous individual; separation, distance, detachment Freud’s ‘conscious’
Noumena: the world outside perceptual experience	Will: the core of being - ceaseless, blind, irrational, striving; infinite and meaningless; desire will never be satisfied	Dionysus: worshipped in darkness; irrational, unconscious, will; dissolution of form and boundaries; merging into the collective (transcending the self); union, merging, involvement Freud’s ‘unconscious’

Nietzsche drew heavily on Schopenhauer (Prideaux, 2018). Schopenhauer was the greatest influence alongside composer Richard Wagner on his work (Prideaux, 2018). In *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Alexander Nehamas (1985) captures the relation between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer in a passage on Nietzsche’s thoughts on Greek tragedy. It is worth quoting this section in full to understand the relationship between the philosophers. Note that contrary to postmodernism, Nietzsche does not disregard the concept of ‘truth’ altogether: he asserts that these ‘truths’ will not be discovered through reason alone. The ‘truth’ of the world is that it is chaotic, and Apollonian structures offer consolation for the pain of this realisation:

mainly under the influence of Schopenhauer and of his reading of Kant, Nietzsche seems to have believed that there are some ultimate facts, some noninterpretive truths, concerning the real nature of the world. But he denied that these facts could ever be correctly stated through reason, language, and science. Yet he also believed (and here the influence of Schopenhauer became dominant) that tragedy, primarily through the musically inspired “Dionysian” chorus, can intimate the final truth that the ultimate nature of the world is to have no orderly structure: in itself the world is chaos, with no laws, no reason, and no purpose. Tragedy gives a nondiscursive glimpse of the contrast between “the real truth of nature and the lie of culture that poses as if it were the only reality,” a contrast that “is similar to that between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself, and the whole world of appearances” (*BT*, 8). It shows that the orderly, apparently purposeful world within which we live is a creation we have placed between ourselves and the real world, which pursues its course without any regard for our views, our values, and our desires. But what makes tragedy even more remarkable in Nietzsche’s eyes is that in the very process of revealing this painful truth, it offers a consolation for the negative and desperate reaction this is bound to generate. It shows that ultimately we are not different from the rest of nature, that we are part and parcel of it, and belong totally to it. It leaves its audience, which at least for a moment ceases to regard itself as separate from the rest of the world, with the “metaphysical comfort... that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearance, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable” (*BT*, 7), and that its blind, purposeless, constant ebb and flow is to be admired and celebrated (pp. 42-43).

In other words, the ultimate ‘truth’ of the world is that there is no rational, orderly structure. Life is chaotic, dark, purposeless, and difficult. Through culture (‘the world of appearances’) human beings give Apollonian form to painful realities: we place an existential buffer between ourselves and the universe. This buffer, for Nietzsche, is essential in that it offers ‘consolation’ to the crushing weight of reality. The ‘musically inspired Dionysian chorus’ will be touched on later. However, it is important to note here that for Nietzsche “music expresses the primordial essence of things” (Cox, 2006, p. 506); moreover, “it is associated with the Dionysian half of the Dionysian/Apollonian duality” (Cox, 2006, p. 506). Punk, then, by virtue of the fact that it is music, by its nature embodies Nietzsche’s Dionysus.

Existential-punk’s penchant for both order and chaos - “punk walked the line between order and chaotic destruction” (Stratton, 2005, p. 87) - can be traced to Nietzsche’s conception of Apollo and Dionysus. Punk embodies the two basic forces of life as conceptualised by Nietzsche: “on the one hand, the power to stabilise the chaos of uncontrolled life energy by such formations as identities and works of art, and, on the other, the power of sheer unformulated urge to be that cannot be harnessed for long by any formation” (Tuana & Scott, 2020, p. 28). It is important to highlight that Nietzsche did not think a total Dionysian experience (or society) was possible without layers of Apollonian structure (BBC Sounds, 2000). This thesis argues that much Existential-punk embodies the Nietzschean balance of form and chaos in its adoption of (Apollonian) traditional popular song form/structure and injection of unbridled (Dionysian) ‘energy’ through chaos, destruction, and disorder (in both its general ‘attitude’ and use of various musical devices that will be discussed in detail later). Due to Nietzsche’s insistence on the presence of the

Apollonian, the Sex Pistols have been chosen partly based on their adherence to traditional popular music form: in this way, they recognise the need for both structure and chaos. There were many punk/post-punk bands – Pere Ubu, Throbbing Gristle – who rejected traditional form in favour of experimental song structure and sound: their approach was to redefine what pop music *could* sound like in a more radical way (Reynolds, 2006).. The Raincoats fall more comfortably into this category, and in this way their music can be read as a tipping of the balance between Apollo and Dionysus, in favour of Dionysus. This will be explored in more detail in an analysis of The Raincoats’ music in Chapter 6. Nietzsche’s philosophy can be read as an attempt to understand humankind’s Existential situation (Fielding, 2020a). In his first publication *The Birth of Tragedy* (2008), written in 1872 and dedicated to his then good friend Richard Wagner, Nietzsche explores the integrating yet contrasting position of the human condition: on the one hand we want to *feel* and *experience* the world in all its chaos (embrace Dionysian energies), and on the other we want to *describe*, *understand* and *give form* to these chaotic forces (expression through Apollonian forms) (Fielding, 2020a). Ultimately, for Nietzsche, these cannot be resolved. Human existence, in this way, is a challenge, and Nietzsche wants to affirm this suffering in the meaning of life (Bartley, 2011). He was inspired by the idea that each civilisation presents the human ‘situation’ in a new way, and by breaking codes, practices and rules that have been imposed upon us, we can create something different. This is essentially what *The Birth of Tragedy* (2008) is - the story of making sense of human existence. Nietzsche wants to give birth to a new way of interacting with the world (Fielding, 2020a). Nietzsche scholar Aaron Ridley, in conversation with philosopher Nigel Warburton, argues that Nietzsche believed the Ancient Greeks used the ‘truth’ - the basic nature of existence is suffering - to create tragic art. The flourishing of Athenian culture, for Nietzsche, was achieved through the Greeks having found the ‘perfect’ balance between Apollonian forms and Dionysian energies (Drochon, 2016). They hinted at dark, irrational, intoxicating Dionysian forces of life, but were saved from its impact by layering over enough Apollonian illusion through order, reason, organisation, and structure (Warburton & Edmonds, 2008a). The Greeks acknowledged through tragic art that the world is chaotic, but gave coherence to this flux, bringing together these two fundamental life powers without compromise: for Nietzsche, Greek culture was perhaps uniquely a genius synthesis of these conflicting forces of life (Warburton & Edmonds, 2008b; Hendricks, 2018b; Drochon, 2016; Prideaux 2018).

Nietzsche argues that the perfect balance achieved by the Greeks was disturbed with the introduction of Socratic Rationalism (Linsenmayer, 2009). With this, Greek culture began to drift in favour of the Apollonian (Hendricks, 2018b). Nietzsche believed that the drift towards the Apollonian is the root of the problem of Western civilisation in that humankind’s sense of ‘self’ is rooted in the merging of Socratic philosophy and Judeo-Christianity (Aho, 2014; Hendricks, 2018b). Nietzsche’s philosophical project, then, can be read as a championing of Dionysus to redress the balance that Socrates disturbed (Bartley, 2011). Apollonian energies do not need championing because they have been championed for 2000 years:

Dionysian drives, which can be both constructive and destructive, however, have been repressed through 'ressentiment' - a concept that will be discussed in detail later - and Christianity has moralised this repression (Bartley, 2011). To be true to ourselves, according to Nietzsche, we must "acknowledge and accept the drives of the whole person", which includes an exploration of our long repressed unconscious energies (Aho, 2014, p. 85). I argue that Existential-punk both embodies and creates space for an exploration of these long-suppressed energies, drives and desires: it is a Nietzschean attempt to redress the balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Bands such as Siouxsie and the Banshees and the Sex Pistols are a twentieth-century manifestation of the championing of Dionysus: an attempt to inject 'truth' into both popular music (punk's criticism of prog-rock discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk' often echoes Nietzsche's criticism of the championing of Socratic rationalism in that it had become detached from the 'reality' of existence) and society more broadly (primarily through its attack on morality, which will be discussed in detail later). Existential-punk embraced the Dionysian forces of life - whilst adhering to Apollonian form - holding a mirror to a society which offered limited representations of what it means to be human. The value of Existential-punk lies beyond its ability to restore rock music as an oppositional force: it paves the way for new representations of what it means to be human in reintroducing the Dionysian to a repressed society.

On The Genealogy of Morality (1887)

On The Genealogy of Morals (2008) encourages an examination of the categories of 'ethics' and 'truth', concepts which Nietzsche believes humankind has uncritically accepted since Socrates and Plato (Drochon, 2016). He argues that we should question whether morality has value in the first instance and examine the conditions under which these values were created (Linsenmayer, 2009). For Nietzsche, nineteenth-century morality had come to "breed conformism and weakness, preventing individuals from wholly accepting themselves and diminishing their ability to create their own lives" (Aho, 2014, p. 90). Christian morality - which has dominated the West for 2000 years and is rooted in Greek culture - grew as an act of revenge by slaves against their masters (Bragg, 2017). The Greek masters had a value system based on being 'good' in character and/or action: strong, attractive, rich, healthy, and so on. 'Bad' was used in reference to the common man: ugly, weak, miserly, slow, stupid, and so on (Linsenmayer, 2009). Nietzsche argues that initially the slaves also viewed themselves as 'bad', but eventually a psychological slave revolt occurred, initiated by the Jews, as revenge on the masters (Drochon, 2016).

The slaves reversed morality so that poor, weak and powerless became 'good' and strength, creativity, wealth, and power became not just 'bad' but 'evil' (Linsenmayer, 2009). With this reversal, any action that involves imposing will upon another person is inherently immoral. This slave morality, for Nietzsche, has infected all dominant Western systems of belief. According to Nietzsche, this psychological revolt gave the slaves the strength to carry on and allowed a *feeling* of revenge on the masters by undermining the value

system that encouraged the masters to exhibit their strengths (Hendricks, 2018a; Walther, 2012). Nietzsche's name for the resentment motivating this revolt is 'ressentiment'. Ressentiment is different to resentment in that it exists within the imagination due to the powerlessness of one's position (Linsenmayer, 2009). It is thus internalised and directed at oneself: this creates a rich inner life, but it is done so in bad conscience (Bragg, 2017; Warburton & Edmonds, 2008b). We start to feel guilty about our own selves and invent a story in which we are sinful and unworthy creatures who deserve punishment: we develop, according to Nietzsche, a "hatred of life" (Warburton & Edmonds, 2008b). Nietzsche, presenting himself as the first 'immoralist', argues that humankind must let go of slave morality, and he saw himself as the one to revert its toxic decadence: he offers a revaluation of values, one which offers self-reflection not based on ressentiment (Drochon, 2016; Linsenmayer, 2009). It is important to note that Nietzsche does not wish to revert to the master morality; rather, he looks toward a conception of humankind that exists beyond both master and slave moralities (Linsenmayer, 2009).

On the one hand Nietzsche praises the slave revolt as it provided a way for some people (whom Nietzsche considers weak) to cope for nearly 2000 years (Walther, 2012; Hendricks, 2018a; Bartley, 2011). However, the slave morality adopted by Christianity - slave morality in its various Judeo-Christian forms is referred to by Nietzsche as the 'ascetic ideal' - is nothing more than a psychological response to power which cannot be overcome in any 'real' way: now anything that involves self-control or self-denial is seen as 'good' (Bragg, 2017). Through Christian doctrine: "man's instinctual animal pride has been abased through the disciplines of poverty, mortification of the flesh, guilt for sin; a morality echoing the message of a God that suffers on the cross" (Walther, 2012, p. 6). The ascetic ideal is essentially a top-down framework, imposed on us by Christianity, on how we should live our lives, whereby if you find something desirable you should immediately alert and deny yourself (Fielding, 2020a). Priests, for example, engage in slave morality in denying aspects of the world to hold authority, utilising this denial to present themselves as more competent than anyone else (Walther, 2012). For Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal is nothing more than a means of control, a device for the powerful to remain powerful; moreover, life is pleasant and joyful, and the preservation of life by denying it, is a lie (Nehamas, 1985).

Unlike Kirkegaard, Nietzsche radically rejects God (Lavine, 1984; Carlisle, 2020). Nietzsche thought that the purest form of the 'slave morality' can be found in Christ's teachings but is also present in various other secular systems of thought such as democracy, science, and socialism (Hendricks, 2018a). Parallels can be drawn between the priest and the scientist: they both retreat from the world into a life of the mind, searching for a payoff (the afterlife for the Priest, the machine for the scientist), attempting to explain the 'real' world in terms of something otherworldly (Linsenmayer, 2009). Nietzsche's concern was that "through tools like the fear of hell, authoritarian political power, and a mob mentality people who could live their lives otherwise would be coerced into following a slave morality that they didn't need" (Hendricks, 2018a). For Nietzsche, we are prisoners of morality and struggle with the contrast between an

individual relation to the world, and the conditions imposed upon us: freedom is only possible when religion, or any other overarching narrative such as systemic philosophy, becomes irrelevant (Fielding, 2020a). The idea is not to return to prior moral frameworks or a future moral vision, but to reject any top-down framework of morality (Fielding, 2020a). I argue that in a Nietzschean manner, Existential-punk attacked both religion (Christianity) and twentieth-century British morality.

There are legitimate concerns surrounding the collapse of morality and religion: it is difficult to envision a world without a system of belief within which meaning, value and morality is anchored. O'Mahoney (2020) writes: "a world in which deterministic ideas have become moral principles, really believed in, and *lived* by the vast majority of humankind, defines the dimensions of the Nietzschean crisis. Here, the conviction that a human being cannot realistically be held accountable for their actions is the norm... There are good reasons to believe that humanity, confronted with this refutation of its most cherished and sustaining illusions, would ultimately destroy itself" (pp. 21-22). For Nietzsche, a crisis was already unfolding with the 'Death of God' i.e., society was moving towards secularisation, unaware of the disastrous implications in losing its central belief system within which meaning and morality is anchored (Bartley, 2011). By 'God is dead' Nietzsche is not asserting atheism (although he was an atheist); rather, he is drawing attention to the fact that Western culture no longer places God at the centre of things (Walther, 2012). With the Enlightenment, Europe no longer needed God as the source of morality to order the universe. Science and philosophy took on the role of God and secularisation grew: the scientific revolution effectively killed God. Hence Nietzsche's famous statement 'God is dead, and we have killed him' (Hendricks, 2016). However, despite his metaphorical 'death', "God remains, but in the form of a longing, usually unfulfilled" (Gravil, 2007, p. 22). Without a replacement, humanity faces an unprecedented psychological crisis.

Nietzsche saw opportunity in the death of God: humanity was free from the fetters of religion and other imposed systems of morality (Aho, 2014). One is left with the potential for creativity and growth, but also despair and meaninglessness i.e., nihilism (Hendricks, 2016). Nietzsche feared nihilism - contrary to many interpretations of his work - predicting that it would be the principal dilemma of modern humanity (Hendricks, 2016; O'Mahoney, 2020; Walther, 2012). As Hendricks (2018c) notes: "while he is often mistaken for a nihilist, [Nietzsche] was in fact quite the opposite. Indeed, much of his work is concerned with the problem of overcoming nihilism despite the slew of problems that drive people towards it". I argue that the same mistake has been made about the work of punk bands such as the Sex Pistols and Siouxsie and the Banshees. Nietzsche was concerned that with no system of morality within which to anchor meaning and morality, humankind was heading towards catastrophic nihilism (Drochon, 2016). Nihilism in relation to both Nietzsche and Existential-punk will be discussed in detail later.

In railing against Western morality and representing long suppressed Dionysian energies, Existential-punk was frightening and chaotic to those who accepted British society's notion of 'truth' i.e., the rational and the proper. In 'The Antithesis of Humankind', Gildart (2013) argues that the Sex Pistols 1976 'Anarchy Tour', "can be characterized as both 'moral panic' and a particular cultural/political event that formed one response to a sense of social fragmentation" (p. 145). His research reveals that the Sex Pistols faced attack from five key sects of society: business interests, politicians, religious leaders, the media, and those members of the public concerned with 'folk devils', a term coined by Stanley Cohen (2011) to refer to those individuals or groups within society who are portrayed by the media as a threatening outsider. The words 'immorality', 'slovenly', 'dirty' and 'filthy' were often associated with the group, alongside accusations of violence and cult-like behaviour (Gildart, 2013). Women trade unionists, mothers, students, and feminists all publicly voiced their concerns about the Sex Pistols: many saw them as a genuine threat to not only bourgeois morality and British values, but their local culture. There was a general feeling in the 1970s that Britain was entering a period of both political and moral confusion. Gildart (2013) writes: "in December 1976 some working-class youths were defined by the media, social commentators and politicians as a symptom and cause of shifting morality that threatened the social fabric of the country. The Sex Pistols were the concrete personification of this 'condition of Britain', and their attitude, recordings and performances provided a critique of contemporary politics and culture" (p. 145).

Gildart (2013) argues that the Sex Pistols fit neatly into Stanley Cohen's (2011) 'moral panic' framework: the band members themselves, in particular Johnny Rotten, represent 'folk devils'; society and morality are the victims of punk's antisocial and 'immoral' behaviour and, crucially, there was "a consensus that the enemy is a deeper symptom of wider problems within society" (p. 130). This wider problem, I argue, was not just political, but philosophical. Although the media were central to the construction of the Sex Pistols as enemies of British society and Malcolm McLaren played a central role in constructing this image, Gildart (2013) argues that there were genuine concerns from the British public regarding the band: "if McLaren succeeded in manipulating an exaggerated response to the group, such a reaction nevertheless reflected 'real' anxieties regarding contemporary British society... the responses to the Anarchy Tour were not completely shaped by the media, elite commentators or music business impresarios, but were mediated by a complex array of social and political factors in particular localities" (p. 131).

Protestors gathered to greet the arrival of the Sex Pistols in nearly every town and city. These crowds were comprised of both conservative and progressive individuals and groups: "reaction to the Sex Pistols united many shades of political and religious opinion, from the right-wing Conservatism of Brook-Partridge through to feminist currents in the National Union of Students (NUS) and the 'traditional socialism' of the labour movement" (Gildart, 2013, p. 131). Community leaders, trade unionists, mothers, students, feminists, religious activists, journalists and conservatives all joined together in an attempt to prevent the performances from going ahead and were largely successful. The tour began just two days

after the Grundy incident: the BBC refused to play 'Anarchy in the UK' (2012c) which put the band's career in jeopardy and local authorities, venue owners and universities began to cancel scheduled gigs. Those against the gigs included: Trade Unionists (sixteen female members of the Transport and General Workers' Union refused to even handle any Sex Pistols' products, and union officials held a meeting with EMI to discuss the matter); members of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union who formally complained to EMI on the grounds that being involved in producing such a record was degrading; Norwich press who bombarded the University of East Anglia to such an extent that the hysteria became intolerable, and Aidan Lines president of NUS, agreed that it should be cancelled (despite the fact that students wanted the gig to go ahead); President of the Union at the University of Lancaster, Maggie Gallagher, who argued that punk was sexist; and local councils who made largely successful arrangements to ban the band from their towns and cities. In Derby, the Sex Pistols had to perform in front of the council as part of a vetting procedure which several parents had organised in order to try and prevent the show: "a caller to the paper's news desk warned that parents would use stink bombs, smoke bombs, air-raid sirens and violence if necessary" (Gildart, 2013, pp. 136-137). In Wales, over 100 protestors gathered outside a four-hundred capacity venue and a local religious leader gave a 'fire and brimstone' speech whilst the choir sang hymns and Christmas Carols in an attempt to drown out the music, while The Sex Pistols played on (Gildart, 2013).

Clearly, then, the Sex Pistols didn't speak for working-class Britain in its entirety. Gildart (2013) writes: "the reaction of trade unionists, the UEA and Lancaster students illustrates the use of particular political discourses and procedures to censure the Sex Pistols. The perceived radicalism of the group could not be located within existing characterizations of progressive politics, so the response from the left was largely negative" (p. 136). The narrative constructed by local and national media was that the Sex Pistols were "rapidly infecting whole swathes of the nation's youth" with their immorality (Gildart, 2013, p. 143). The reaction of the Derby councillors in particular demonstrates the way in which local authorities refuse to accept outside influences which may contaminate the morality of the local populace. They saw the Sex Pistols as a sinister force, a product of "a society that has lost its moral values" (Gildart, 2013, p. 138). Worshippers from local churches even handed out leaflets connecting punk to prophecy: "Does the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' tour offer the real answer to the needs of youth? What is the meaning of this latest controversial trend in the pop world? Oddly enough, this group's own reported use of the word 'antichrist' indicates the answer. This term describes the essence of the spirit of rebellion against all that God stands for. Even though apparently just a passing fad, therefore, such trends are clearly in part fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy that before his return to each, wickedness would multiply beyond all previous limits" (Gildart, 2013, p. 141). There may have been an element of 'moral panic', then, but the fear the Sex Pistols engendered was perhaps not misplaced. One could argue that those resisting the message of the Sex Pistols were the nihilists: in refusing to acknowledge humankind's existential situation

- God is dead - they deny the possibility of a future. As a final note, as mentioned previously, rejecting established morality systems can lead to dubious ends. For example, in Issue 4 of *Drastic Measures* (a punk fanzine associated with the Rock Against Sexism movement which grew out of first-wave British punk), the writer expresses solidarity with pro-paedophile group 'Paedophile Information Exchange' (PIE) on the grounds that "the prevailing morality of a society merely reflects the interests of those in power - in this case patriarchal capitalists who need to maintain control over the potentially devastating forces of the individual and collective libido in order to secure and feed their system" (see Fig. 8). PIE, formed in 1974, campaigned for 'children's sexuality' and the lowering of the age of consent: the cause was presented as a call for the sexual liberation of children, however, in reality, it was a group of men who wanted to normalise sex with children (Castella & Heyden, 2014). Castella & Heyden (2014) write that whilst, generally speaking, the group were not tolerated, PIE did manage to gain support from various progressive groups by "[conflating] its cause with gay rights". It is on these grounds that *Drastic Measures* showed solidarity with the group; however, this act of solidarity - grounded in a rejection of established morality - demonstrates the darker side to a Nietzschean position.

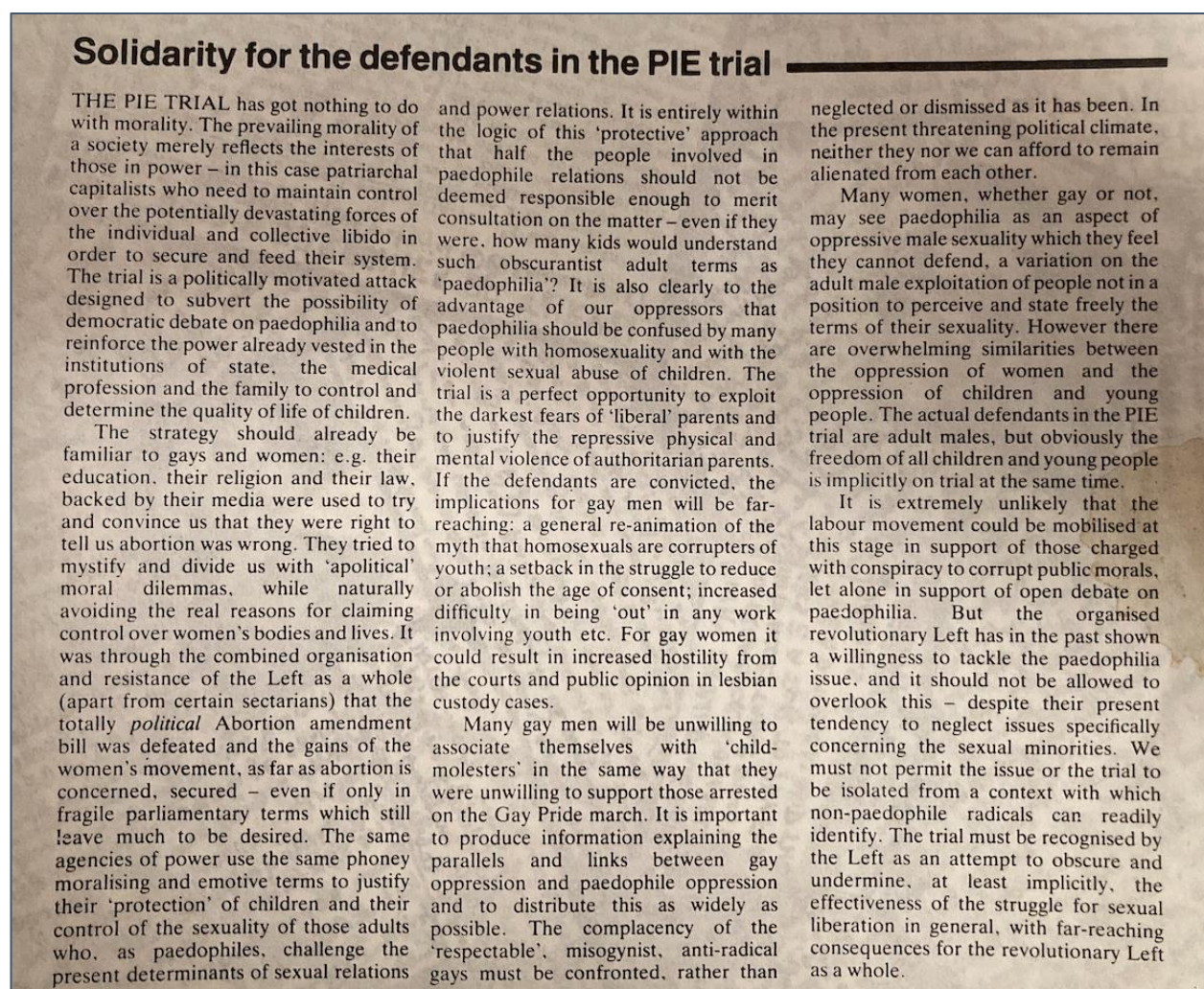


Figure 8: Excerpt from Rock Against Sexism punk fanzine *Drastic Measures*, Issue 4, n.d., p. 8 [Bishopsgate Archives]

Nihilism: Punk as a Rejection of Nihilism

The concept of nihilism and the closely related concept hedonism (immorality, excess, sexual deviancy and degeneracy, drug, and alcohol use, and so on) are often associated with rock music (Jones, 2008). The word 'nihilism' in particular is frequently used in conjunction with the Sex Pistols. Gilmore (2012) writes: "while the Sex Pistols proffered a nihilistic image, the Clash took a militant stance that, in an eloquent, guttural way, vindicated punk's negativism" (p. 48). Similarly, Marcus (2012) writes: "the Sex Pistols were symbolist, with every meaning left open and uncertain, utopia and hell in a single, unstable body; the Clash were rhetorical, voice to flesh... the Clash took the true anarchy and the real nihilism the Sex Pistols offered and rationalized it, made it seem reasonable" (p. 61). Ware (2014), in an analysis of Sid Vicious' cover of 'My Way' (1978), writes that the lyrics slip into "nihilistic territory invoking psychopathy, substance abuse, and death" (p. 6). Jones (2008) asserts that "the nihilism of the Sex Pistols was a powerful expression of the disposability of pop and the simultaneous celebration and destruction of the moment" (p. 87). Stratton understands punk more broadly as the "acting out of nihilism as initiated by and filtered through the surfacing cultural trauma of the not-yet-named Holocaust" (2005, p. 87), and the Sex Pistols specifically as "a welter of nihilistic annihilation and personal self-destruction" (2007, p. 147). Nihilism, then, in the context of punk rock, is used to describe a desire for oblivion and self-destruction, a retreat from reality. In line with Stratton (2005; 2007) this thesis locates Existential-punk with the context of socio-cultural trauma (the rise of neoliberalism, the death of God, the H-bomb and the surfacing of the realities of the Holocaust); however, whilst there was a nihilistic strand running through British first-wave punk, the conceptualisation of the Sex Pistols as nihilistic is rejected.

It is clear from close readings of Nietzsche's texts that he was concerned with the problem of nihilism and saw it as a sickness which the West should strive to overcome: he was not a proponent of nihilism but a diagnostician (Bartley, 2011; O'Mahoney, 2020; Keep, 2021; Bragg, 2017; Drochon 2016). It is, according to Nietzsche: "not a choice or intellectual commitment, but a thing that comes upon you" (Keep, 2021) as an inevitable consequence to the death of God. As discussed previously, whilst the death of God can trigger a retreat from life (nihilism), it also provides an opportunity for creativity. Nietzsche saw the confrontation with nihilism as "a cause for rejoicing, cheerfulness, and laughter because it opens up new and exciting possibilities for self-creation" (Aho, 2014, p. 91). Jones (2016) writes: "The greatness of Nietzsche's philosophy is that it encourages, uplifts, empowers, and revitalizes. It tells the individual to conquer fear and self-pity by affirming her unique power in the world" (p. 19). The sense of creativity, hope and future in Nietzsche's work is often overlooked in the literature. It is also an overlooked aspect to the work of the Sex Pistols. For example, John Lydon says in *Anger is an Energy* that joining the Sex Pistols was a way of "making the world a better place" albeit in a "very vengeful way" (2014, p. 17). He also condemns bands that followed in the wake of the Sex Pistols such as Sham 69, as he believes they were "incapable of learning, or growing with a thing, or seeing any hope or prospects for the future. We were

saying 'No future' in 'God Save the Queen', because you had to express that point in order to have a future" (2014, p. 161).

In *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, Reginster (2008) writes: "the most prevalent view among recent scholars is that nihilism is a claim about our values" (Reginster, 2008, p. 25). As discussed previously, Nietzsche is referring to the 'highest values' of nineteenth-century bourgeois morality. For Nietzsche, Western society has made the mistake of buying into a set of prescribed moral values on the grounds that they are objective: 'moral objectivity' is a concept which Nietzsche radically rejects (Reginster, 2008). Nihilism, according to the accepted definition, arises from the disorientation that one experiences upon the realisation that everything one took to believe as morally 'true' is revealed to be false: "nihilistic disorientation is... the implication of the rejection of the objectivity of the highest values" (Reginster, 2008, p. 26). A nihilistic view of the world is one in which the world doesn't make sense in its own right. This is not based on the notion that there are morally objective facts that we have not yet discovered; rather, morally objective facts do not exist in the first place and there is no 'good life' to be had. There is no hope, neither within this world or beyond. The nihilist laments this loss and carries a desire for meaning: "Nihilistic disorientation is a consequence of the frustration of that need: human beings need for their existence to have purpose or meaning, but it proves to be a pointless succession of events" (Reginster, 2008, p. 27). Moreover, this lamentation is aimed at life in general, not just the realisation of meaninglessness in one's own life. As Roodt (2005) notes: "Modern nihilism [can be] characterised as a problem of measure; more specifically, the absence of any given measure against which to establish the meaning of the world in which we are constrained to live" (p. 37).

In *Impossible Objects*, Critchley (2012) writes that in the modern world we are disappointed because following Nietzsche and the death of God religious belief is not an option for us. When one realises that everything you have taken to be true is in fact untrue, one turns to new forms of 'religion' for comfort. Modern day religions can take many forms: New Age, yoga, astrology, diet culture, etc. These alternatives are simply manifestations of 'passive nihilism' and develop in response to the meaninglessness of the world. The alternative response, 'active nihilism', is an arguably more dangerous reaction, and includes acts such as terrorism. Critchley (2012) argues that Nietzsche refused the meaninglessness of both active and passive nihilism on the grounds that they are both escapism: there is a meaning gap in our lives which we are refusing to address. The point of Nietzschean philosophy (the revaluation of our value system) is to work creatively within that gap, against nihilism. We must accept meaninglessness and create meaning in our ordinary, human existence. For Critchley (2012), if we are to utilise Nietzsche's philosophy for the betterment of the human condition (the usage for which it was intended) we must keep in mind the cruelty, violence and suffering of the present, but carry on, rejecting nihilism and despair in favour of creation and affirmation. In this way Critchley (2012) does not see philosophy as a purely academic enterprise: it is a process in which we are all capable of engaging with, including punks. If one is reflecting

and cogitating, then one is doing philosophy. Critchley (2012) also argues that whilst music has its own integrity, logic and history that is separate to - and does not depend on - philosophy, music is important to the philosopher because it has an ability to produce an experience of revelation within the listener, and in this way can push at the limits of reason. Existential-punk, through its quest for personal authenticity in response to nihilism, this thesis argues, can provide this 'revelation', or at least lay the groundwork for its potential.

In his exploration of Los Angeles punk-band The Screamers, 'The Screamers: Pop Ambition, Punk Nihilism and Queer Futurities', Brown (2020) offers an interpretation of the Sex Pistols which runs counter to common readings. He argues that the Sex Pistols' claim that there is 'no future' should not be interpreted literally. He writes: "the claim there is no future raises the spectre of even the temptation of nihilism, for if there is no future, then perhaps the present has no value or meaning" - this shifts the focus of concern from the future to the present, suggesting that for the Sex Pistols a future is possible, but only if we are to alter the conditions of the present, echoing John Lydon's notion that the statement 'no future' must be made in order to have one. This will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 4. Brown (2020) offers an interpretation of Nietzsche's nihilism, which for him was "a consequence of cultural modernity and its devaluation of life and levelling of meaningful distinctions", arguing that "early punk has been viewed frequently as indulging in nihilism, and some commentators see Los Angeles punk as particularly nihilistic... While I do not deny that some punk in Los Angeles and elsewhere could be nihilistic, there are other ways to think about it" (pp. 440-441). It is within this line of thought that this thesis situates the music of the Sex Pistols.

Music journalist Greil Marcus in *Lipstick Traces* also addresses this issue. On the 'do it yourself' ethos of punk he argues: "whatever that meant (do what yourself?), it wasn't nihilism" (Marcus, 2001, p. 8). Brown (2020) writes: "perhaps the best way to understand punk's apparent nihilism is to follow critics like Marcus and Nehring, who claim that it is not nihilism at all but a kind of negation: a negation of the negativity of the present. And even if many punks do not point explicitly to a specific possible future, we might say that some kind of future is implicit in the very idea of negation and in the rhetoric of destruction that some punks, both musicians and journalists, invoke" (p. 441). It is this line of thought that this thesis will follow – Existential-punk is not conceptualised as nihilism, but a negation of the present in the hope that it will pave the way for a better future. As Brown (2020) notes on punk: "among the wrath is the hope or at least the desire for a possible future, and we see desires not only to create something meaningful but also to communicate with others who might share the same feelings and beliefs. The very acts of forming a band or starting a fanzine are hopeful undertakings" (p. 441). In this way Existential-punk philosophy, like Nietzsche, is one of intervention, designed to "[augment] people's activity" in the face of the death of God (Tuana & Scott, 2020, p. 26). Punk fanzines often talk of the Sex Pistols as a constructive and positive force (see Figs. 9a and 9b; see Tab. 3).

THE SEX PISTOLS FOR TIME OUT

A GREAT BRITISH INSTITUTION

Right, here's a little story. I had a piece printed in Time Out No. 352. It was about the Sex Pistols. Originally they asked me to write 2,000 words, I wrote just over a 1,000 so they wouldn't cut it down. They still cut it down. I was fucked off by that so here's the piece in it's entirety.

THE START: No way are the Pistols gonna be filed under: Pop Groups. EMI will have to think up a new one 'cause this is the time for change. The Sex Pistols are gonna break all the rules. They'll bring about a change that will make the outlook for British rock music very exciting. Rock's been a "light entertainment" for too long, it's all too safe and it's not scaring parents. The Pistols are gonna scare more than just parents. They'll scare all the apathetic rock fans who've been satisfied with shit for so long.

The Pistols are the most important rock group in Britain at the moment. Not because they're playing 5 nights at Wembley or releasing a "Best of..." triple set but because they've chucked out the most relevant rock single since 'My Generation'. 'Anarchy In the UK' is the title, and when it gets heard it will startle, surprise and shock. With the tour as well the group will get to almost everyone. They'll bring about a reaction in everybody who sees and hears 'em. Good or bad, the reaction will be positive. They're going to give the music scene what it needs - a good kick up the throat.

Most kids have never experienced a feeling of unity between audience and performer. They've never had an idle who was on their level, I mean, how many kids have been to the South Of France? Even the Who, they were once an important group but what does 'My Generation' mean now when it's sung by a 30 year old. The audience for the Pistols is waiting-out there in the discos, on the football terraces and living in boring council estates. The Sex Pistols are not a "new fashion craze", they're reality. If people are scared of 'em it's their own fault, it's because they don't understand life. Life's about concrete, the sinking pound, apathetic boring people and the highest unemployment figures ever.

The Pistols are helping kids to think. That's why everybody's scared, because there's some kids that are actually thinking. The Pistols reflect life as it is in the council flats, not some fantasy world that most rock artists create. Yes, they will destroy, but it won't be mindless destruction. What they destroy will be replaced by a more honest creation. The likes of Led Zeppelin,

Queen and Pink Floyd need to be chucked in the "classical" music section. Those and bands like them are composers, musicians and artists. They've got to make way for real people and the Sex Pistols are the first of them!

The original group (Steve Jones, Glenn Matlock and Paul Cook) started out like any other. They used to rehearse in a Hammersmith warehouse. They played just sixties stuff and the future wasn't very interesting. Until they met Malcolm McLaren that is. McLaren ran the Sex boutique in the King's Road and they approached him about helping the group. He'd had experience in rock music before because he used to be manager of the New York Dolls. Johnny Rotten was soon brought in as vocalist after they saw him in the Sex shop, looking bored. The early gigs, in November 1975 were shakey but backed by McLaren's drive they used the non-reactions to their advantage. By April '76 they had a loyal following and were playing regularly at the 100 Club. This soon became the only place they could play after being banned at the Marquee, Nashville and Dingwalls for various incidents. Even with these obstacles they continued to play excellent sets when they were allowed to. July was a peak month when they played Manchester and 'Anarchy In the UK' for the first time. Through August and September their audiences grew, there were more and more kids coming from out of town to see 'em. The kids were great, they were there not just to enjoy a night out. They were there because they wanted to experience the energy and the honesty.

By this time other bands had formed - the Clash, the Damned, Buzzcocks, Subway Sect and Siouxsie and the Banshees. They all came together for a "festival" at the 100 Club in late September. On the first night, the Monday, the Pistols played great. There was no violence just exciting music. The following night was mared by the throwing of a glass during the Damned's set. It smashed on a pillar and one of the fragments blinded a girl's eye. It could have happened anywhere but the management put the blame on "punk-rock" so the music was banned. The Sex Pistols now had nowhere to play. The interest from the record companies still grew. They talked with Polydor for two weeks but Polydor were too slow, EMI zapped in and signed them.

Through October they were in the recording studio - Queen were in at the same time, I bet the Pistols annoyed them.

Contd. on next page →

the 12th November they appeared on Nationwide. A lot of people watched the programme and most of them hated it. It was a positive reaction. On the 15th they played the small Notre Dame Hall in Leicester Place, it was their first London gig for over a month. Some of it was filmed for TV.

The Pistols were great. After a month of recording and rehearsing they were as solid as a rock. A short set was done for the cameras and they came back to play a "real" set for the fans. Rotten was fantastic, he was breaking all the rules. What other guy would just stand stage-centre after the set and clap for an encore with the crowd. He was saying how he wanted rock to be. No rock'n'roll clichés for him. He's the most honest performer around at the moment. Rotten is the FACE, a cult figure, he's saying "up yours" to everyone. You can't help liking the guy, all that you see of him on stage is the truth. Some people love to hate him. It's natural 'cause they're probably scared of him. It's the same with the rest of the group, they don't apologise to an audience like most "small" bands. They'll shave their music down your throat. Glenn Matlock on bass, Paul Cook on drums and Steve Jones on guitar, they're all honest guys. There's not one bullshitter amongst them. This is the reason the group will make it. I'm not talking about the accepted way - i.e. record sales, sell-out concerts etc. but on the honest level rock should be. The level that pleases the kids on the street. McLaren knows it - "With the Pistols the kids really bop, that shows you they've made it!"



PHOTOS BY H. T. MURLAWSKI

That's what's bothering kids today. They feel restricted in everything they try to do. All those giant security guards at the big halls to stop them dancing until the encore. Some kids accept that kind of treatment but with the Pistols they get some kind of freedom. In this day and age you've got to learn to spit in authorities' face, otherwise they'll pin you down and you'll be boring like them. All the old creeps want respect because they "fought for you". Well, the youngsters of today ain't gonna fall for that old one. Britain is going downhill and it'll take more than memories of glory to save it. The Pistols are here because this country's so pathetic, they're a reaction against all the stupid apathy and ignorance. They don't want to be associated with honour and respect. That's nothing to do with change, the Sex Pistols are.

It doesn't even matter if 'Anarchy In the UK' sells well or not. The fact that it's been released proves that the record companies are a load of pathetic bores. The Pistols have won the first battle. From now on they'll move forward and smash every rock'n'roll law there is. Even now that in the recording business they still won't play by the rules. They'll be nasty and mean because that's the only way to get anything positive done.

You wanna thank god they've got their guitars and equipment 'cause otherwise they'd be burning down the record companies. At least they're doing it through music. Now they're on the inside they're gonna eat away at all the crap until there's none of the old stuff left. As McLaren said on Nationwide - "In order to create you must first destroy". Well, everybody better watch out 'cause the Sex Pistols are gonna destroy YOU! THE END.

As you've probably already sussed out, I wrote the above before the Grundy thing. Even with that fuck up I still believe in everything I said about the Sex Pistols. They're still gonna make it.

I hope that John Collis is forced into retirement. May he rest in peace

Mark P.



Figure 9 (9a and 9b): Excerpt from punk fanzine Sniffin' Glue (Jan, 1977, pp. 3-4): 'The Sex Pistols for Time Out' by Mark Perry [Bishopsgate Archives]

Table 3: Quotes from Sniffin' Glue (Jan, 1977, pp. 3-4): 'The Sex Pistols for Time Out' by Mark Perry (see Fig 9 a&b)

Figure 9a	"They'll bring about a reaction in everybody who sees and hears 'em. Good or bad, the reaction will be positive" (p. 3) "The Sex Pistols are not a 'new fashion craze', they're reality. If people are scared of 'em it's their own fault, it's because they don't understand life" (p. 3) "The Pistols are helping kids to think. That's why everybody's scared, because there's some kids that are actually thinking... Yes they will destroy, but it won't be mindless destruction. What they destroy will be replaced by a more honest creation" (p. 3)
Figure 9b	"In this day and age you've got to learn to spit in authorities' face, otherwise they'll pin you down and you'll be boring like them" (p. 4) "The Pistols are here because this country's so pathetic, they're a reaction against all the stupid apathy and ignorance. They don't want to be associated with honour and respect. That's nothing to do with change, the Sex Pistols are" (p. 4) "They'll be nasty and mean because that's the only way to get anything positive done" (p. 4)

Like Nietzsche, political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1961) is concerned with the condition of nihilism and conceives of modernity in terms of a loss (Roodt, 2005). In 'What is Authority?' Arendt (1961) asserts that one of the biggest losses to the modern world is the concept of authority, she writes: "a constant, ever-widening and deepening crisis of authority has accompanied the development of the modern world in our century" (p. 1). Authority, for Arendt (1961), is not power, violence or persuasion, but it does demand obedience. It is an imposed law that you accept, obedience when you are still free, a self-evident truth that compels the mind (Arendt, 1961). The source of authority, for Arendt, is always external to its own power and transcends the political realm i.e., the Law of God. Arendt (1961) writes: "the source [of] authority, which legitimates the exercise of power, must be beyond the sphere of power, and, like the law of nature of the commands of God, must not be man-made" (p. 12). With the 'death of God' and the subsequent loss of faith in belief systems, values, principles and commitments, human beings find themselves "between past and future that is at the same time a disjunction between experience and understanding" (Roodt, 2005, p. 15). Arendt (1961) asserts that the loss of authority in the modern world has had a profound impact on humankind in that it has severed our connection with the past, which human beings depend on for stability. She writes:

Authority, resting on a foundation in the past as its unshaken cornerstone, gave the world the permanence and durability which human beings need precisely because they are mortals - the most unstable and futile beings we know of. Its loss is tantamount to the loss of the groundwork of the world, which indeed since then has begun to shift, to change, and transform itself with every-increasing rapidity from one shape into another, as though we were living and struggling with a Protean universe where everything at any moment can become almost anything else (Arendt, 1961, p. 3).

Without external authority, then, we remain disoriented. The collapse of religious and moral traditions - within which humans felt an intrinsic sense of meaning - have resulted in internal dissolution and chaos.

With this loss of authority, there is a rupture. There are no longer grounds for mutual engagement. We are left with the “impossibility of being able to recognize in oneself the validity of another’s judgement” (Roodt, 2005, p. 44). Thus, human beings have retreated into the self and a private world of meaning. The difference between Arendt and Nietzsche (and therefore Arendt and Existential-punk), however, is that Arendt (1961) calls for a return to an external authority, whereas Nietzsche doesn’t. Punk, this thesis argues, provides a ‘private world of meaning’ that is lost with the death of authority, religion, and tradition. This will be discussed in detail later.

Case Study 3: Siouxsie and the Banshees

‘Israel’ (1980) by Siouxsie and the Banshees - released as a Christmas song (Paytress, 2003) - can be read as commentary on the anxiety surrounding the death of God, whilst demonstrating the Nietzschean injection of the Dionysian. Table 4 presents a line-by-line lyrical analysis of ‘Israel’ (1980), revealing three interconnected but distinct themes: religion, the death of God and Christmas.

Table 4: Lyrical Analysis of ‘Israel’ (1980) by Siouxsie and the Banshees

Lyrics	Theme 1 Religion	Theme 2 Death of God	Theme 3 Christmas	Other
Song title: ‘Israel’	Israel is the Holy Land; represents the three major Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam)	It is not simply the death of one religion, but the death of all religions (she doesn’t refer specifically to the Jewish people)	Instrumentation - sleigh bells and choir	
Little orphans in the snow / With nowhere to call a home / Start their singing, singing	Orphans - Holocaust victims	We are orphans without God; we have no anchor (home)	‘Singing’ e.g., Christmas carols ‘Snow’ Orphans - Christmas is a time for thinking about the less fortunate	
Waiting through the summertime / To thaw your hearts in wintertime / That’s why they’re singing, singing...		Later, she associates ‘singing’ with keeping your ‘heart alive’ i.e., keeping one’s individuality alive in the face of the death of God will guide us through (there is hope)	‘Singing’ e.g., Christmas carols ‘Wintertime’ Orphans looking forward to Christmas (season of goodwill); hoping hearts will ‘thaw’ and lead to generosity	Summertime/ wintertime - Apollo (light) and Dionysus (dark)

Waiting for a sign to turn blood into wine / The sweet taste in your mouth / Turned bitter in its glass	Sacrament in Catholic mass; wine as the blood of Christ Reference to miracles that Jesus performed (turning water into wine)	The sweet taste of religion has become bitter with the realisation that God is dead	'Wine' - Christmas drink	
Shattered fragments of the past / Meet in veins on the stained glass / Like the lifeline in your palm	Stained glass - church/cathedral 'Palm' Sunday - Jesus' entry into Jerusalem 'Lifeline in your palm' is also a reference to other types of spirituality (palm reading)	Arendt (1961) writes on the loss of religion/authority/tradition and how without these to anchor us. We are 'fragmented'; no longer tied to a past; we are disoriented Fragments of history have been taken and turned into (false) Biblical story		
Red and green reflects the scene / Of a long-forgotten dream	Nativity 'scene' - birth of Jesus	Christmas represents a past that doesn't really exist	'Red and green' - colours of Christmas	
There were Princes and there were Kings / Now hidden in disguise / Cheap wrappings of lies	Jesus as the King of the Jews David was the King of the Israelites (she wears the Star of David in the video [see Fig. 10]) 'Kings' - three wise men	The reality that God is dead is wrapped in the disguise of organised religion; she is aware that God is a 'lie', but his power over humanity has not yet waned	'Wrappings' e.g., Christmas presents 'Cheap wrapping of lies' also nods to the commercialisation of Christmas; consumerism is a lie (anti-postmodern stance)	
Keep your heart alive with a song from inside		There is no need to despair: nihilism can be overcome with a 'song from inside' i.e., an embracing of individuality		
Even though we're all alone, we are never on our own when we're singing		We are alone without God, however, if we look within we will find meaning (rejection of nihilism)	'Singing' e.g., Christmas carols	

There's a man who's looking in, and he smiles a toothless grin / Because he's singing, singing...		We still feel the presence of God as the 'man who's looking in', but his power has diminished ('toothless')	The homeless/poor man welcomes the arrival of Christmas (like the orphans) as it is the season of goodwill 'Singing' e.g., Christmas carols	Reminiscent of a scene from a horror film (menacing smile?) - Siouxsie Sioux adopted a gothic look (Mueller, 2017) which intensifies the anxiety surrounding the death of God (see also Table 6)
See some people shine with glee, but their song is jealousy / Their hate is clanging, maddening...	'Jealousy' - a deadly sin		'Shine' - Star of Bethlehem/Christmas decorations 'Glee' - Christmas is a time of happiness	Reference to the hate groups that attempted to infiltrate gigs after her use of the swastika (Paytress, 2003) - song can be read as an atonement for this; since she wears the Star of David in the video [see Fig. 10])
In Israel...will they sing Happy Noel? / Israel...in Israel.. in Israel will they sing Happy Noel?	Israel is the Holy Land	Will they celebrate Christmas, or recognise it for what it really is?	'Noel' - Father Christmas	



Figure 10: Siouxsie and the Banshees - frame from 'Israel' (1980) (Siouxsie and the Banshees, 2014)

The song captures the disorientation that arises in simultaneously recognising that God is dead, yet finding oneself unable to reject the safety of the value system which has anchored humanity since the birth of Christianity. A state of disorientation and anxiety is intensified through various musical techniques³. The tonal centre is suggestive of E aeolian (natural minor) with an unusual insertion of C[#]m⁷ in the verse; an aberration which creates chromaticism from D-C[#]-D and G-G[#]-G (see Tab. 5). Throughout the introduction, a pedal bass on the dominant B - which moves down a tone to A on the last beat of each bar - is accompanied by an ostinato in the lead guitar comprised of notes B, C[#] and A (see Ex. 1). This is suggestive of B⁹sus², a variation on the dominant of E minor. In opening on a variation of the dominant throughout the first 10 bars, tension is created in the anticipation of resolution. This is intensified by the drop to A in the bass; resolution to E (the tonic) or G (the relative major) is anticipated, however, a resolution to E does not occur until bar 11. In replicating the church/cathedral environment through the addition of haunting Gregorian plainchant (sung by a 30-singer Welsh choir [Paytress, 2003]) and reverb (expanding the artificial space) the listener is enveloped in the overwhelming presence of 'God': in subjecting the listener to God's presence so intensely, the abyss (nihilism) following his death is felt more acutely. However, this is all contained within the safety of traditional Apollonian song structure (intro, verse, chorus, and so on), traditional 'rock' instrumentation (guitar, bass, drums, vocals), a diatonic harmonic progression (with the exception of C[#]m⁷) drawing mostly on major chords, and a predictable 4/4 time signature. This 'safety', reinforced by the line "even though we're all alone, we are never on our own when we're singing", suggests that despite the death of God, hope is not lost.

Table 5: Harmonic Progression in 'Israel' (1980) by Siouxsie and the Banshees

Verse	Em7 (i)	C [#] m ⁷ (?)	G (III)	D (VII)
Chorus	Em (i)	C (VI)	Em (i)	C (VI)
	Em (i)	C (VI)	G (III)	D (VII)

The ambiguity surrounding the death of God - that it is both a good and bad thing - is also captured in the many binarisms located within both the music and lyrics (see Tab. 6).

³ This paragraph uses technical musical language to explain these techniques. Readers unfamiliar with music theory may wish to skip to p.95.



Example 1: Introduction to 'Israel' (1980) by Siouxsie and the Banshees - Lead Guitar and Bass Guitar

Table 6: Binarisms Identified in 'Israel' (1980) by Siouxsie and the Banshees

Binarisms		Themes
Past Gregorian plainchant (medieval) Gothic look adopted by Siouxsie Sioux nods to both the Victorian and medieval eras 'Shattered fragments from the past' 'There were Princes and there were Kings'	Future New Wave Shift to the future tense in the final line: 'In Israel... will they sing Happy Noel? / Israel... in Israel... in Israel will they sing Happy Noel?' - the future is uncertain in a world without God	With the death of God one loses a past and a future anchored in religion
Sweet The sweet taste in your mouth	Bitter / Turned bitter in its glass	The sweet taste of religion has become bitter with the realisation that God is dead
Life Song released at Christmas - birth of Jesus (God) Use of words such as: 'heart', 'blood', 'veins' and 'lifeline'	Death Death of God	Siouxsie Sioux's vampiric look (a corpse) evokes both life and death; the vampire is both dead and alive
Apollo (light) Waiting through the summertime	Dionysus (darkness) / To thaw your hearts in wintertime	In skilful experimentation without losing form (the song falls comfortably into the

Lighting in the video switches from dark to light (see Fig. 11)  Figure 11: Siouxsie and the Banshees - frame from 'Israel' (1980) (Siouxsie and the Banshees, 2014) Electric guitar - associated with (masculine) rationality Standard harmonies - Em⁷, C[#]m⁷, Gmaj, Dmaj	Lighting in the video switches from light to dark (see Fig. 12)  Figure 12: Siouxsie and the Banshees - frame from 'Israel' (1980) (Siouxsie and the Banshees, 2014) Electric guitar - layered with a flanger, blurring note definition (dissolution) Standard harmonies as broken chords (disintegration)	standard 'rock' structure), Siouxsie and the Banshees inject Dionysian energies into rock music, redressing the balance between Apollo and Dionysus Apollo and Dionysus as two forces of 'life' reinforced by words such as: 'heart', 'blood', 'veins' and 'lifeline'
Contrary Motion Chromaticism (see Ex. 2)  Example 2: Chromaticism in the Verse to 'Israel' (1980) by Siouxsie and the Banshees		Opposition reinforced musically

Siouxsie Sioux once said of the song: “No it's not about religion as such, it's more general. A disillusioned person, or whole race who've ceased to understand or believe in what they held to be the truth. It tries to put across, you shouldn't cover what you feel inside by teaching or attitudes imposed on you. It emphasises the strength of the individual” (Peekaboo Magazine, 2018), somewhat reinforcing the interpretation offered above. It is interesting that Siouxsie Sioux chose religion as the metaphor through which to comment on the rise of the individual, and whilst the point here is not that the band came into direct contact with Nietzsche's work, the impact of his statement would have been felt in the collective consciousness of the twentieth-century West. In an interview with *The Guardian* in 1979, Siouxsie Sioux clarifies the purpose and 'message' of the band's music: “we want to deal with real things and make them accessible. It shouldn't just be escapist and for dancing, which is what most of new wave has become. It has got to be an intelligent reflection of real life. We want to make people look at themselves and what they are doing” (Denselow, 1979, p. 8). Punk's insistence on, and ability to, inspire individual thought will

be discussed in detail later. 'Israel' (1980) is typical of existential-punk's ability to lean into and embody both hope and despair. The song is melancholic but hopeful: "We don't go around with long faces all the time, we're not bleak. It's like the German Realism Exhibition, there's a lot of beauty with the ugliness" (Siouxsie Sioux in an interview with Denselow, 1979, p. 8).

The Übermensch and Experimental Living: An Alternative to the Ascetic Ideal

I think there's something basically wrong with the general public that they do need their icons. I'm an icon breaker, therefore that makes me unbearable. They want you to become godlike, and if you won't, you're a problem. They want you to carry their ideological load for them. That's nonsense. I always hoped I made it completely clear that I was as deeply confused as the next person. That's why I'm doing this. In fact, more so. I wouldn't be up there on a stage night after night unless I was deeply confused, too. If I had all the answers, I wouldn't be involved in something like this at all (Lydon, 1994, p. 107)

Nietzsche offers three solutions to the death of God and the nihilism that inevitably follows (Hendricks, 2018c). Firstly, a cultural revolution by "[replacing] religion with philosophy, art, music, literature, theatre and other parts of the humanities" (Hendricks, 2018c). In this way, we can contextualise our suffering. The link here between Existential-punk and Nietzsche's proposed solution is clear; however, it is not the focus of this thesis. Secondly, Nietzsche offers the concept of 'Amor Fati' or 'The Love of Fate': "to love your fate is to know that everything that has happened in your life; the good, the bad, and the ugly, has contributed to who you are and what you are doing at this very moment. To embrace any part of life, says Nietzsche, thus necessitates that you embrace all of it. Trying to create yourself will lead to some failures, but embracing those failures alongside your successes can help re-spark a love of life and can help you see the meaning in even the worst moments" (Hendricks, 2018c). 'Amor Fati' is saying 'Yes' to life. Punk, in embracing life in all its ugliness, can be said to embody 'Amor Fati', however, it is not the focus of this thesis. Nietzsche's third solution, the 'Übermensch', will be explored in detail: the 'Übermensch' embodies self-creation and the process of becoming, made possible through the transitional state of nihilism (Cerbone, 2016). Embracing self-creation as a process, an ongoing project with no definitive end (until death) is a radical rejection of the nihilistic position which assumes that "the only thing that *could* give life value and purpose is something that is held absolutely" (Cerbone, 2016, p. 32). Once we recognise that values are not absolute, but have functioned as an expression of needs, "we are now free to re-evaluate things in a way that keeps that fact firmly in view. We no longer need to repress or cover up the real sources of value and purpose, and this... can get us beyond any nihilistic paralysis to a healthier, more creative way of living" (Cerbone, 2016, p. 33). In this way, we move from destruction to construction: "we can destroy only as creators" (Cerbone, 2016, p. 31). To move past the stage of nihilism, one must undertake an honest assessment of who one is, then "[devise] a plan that makes the most of it" (Cerbone, 2016, p. 36). Interestingly, John Lydon (2014) conceives of the Sex Pistols as a destructive force which exposed the "political restraints and presumptions of being British" (p. 6). He then talks of how his

later project Public Image Ltd was a way of finding himself and constructing something positive out of the debris: “what you do is move on to the next thing which was internal politics – sort *myself* out, and find out what’s wrong with *me*. Before you make your career of pointing fingers at others, you’ve really got to sort out what might be going wrong inside your own self” (Lydon, 2014, p. 6). In this way, Lydon’s personal journey mirrors the development of Existentialism from the nineteenth to the twentieth-century in that an initial destruction has to take place in order to pave the way for construction through a discovery of the self.

Tuana & Scott (2020) argue that Nietzsche’s philosophy, in its emphasis on self-creation, is a passionate affirmation of life: he calls for the antidote to nihilism in the form of the “antichrist and anti-nihilist, this victor over God and nothingness” i.e., the ‘Übermensch’ (p. 63). Nietzsche looks toward a reality beyond morality, self-imposed guilt, and ascetic ideals, all of which are rooted in Judeo-Christian faith. He envisions a world in which metaphysical comfort, sacrifice and repentance in the name of God are abolished (Tuana & Scott, 2020). He calls for creative thinking which goes beyond the transcendental world and bifurcations such as good and evil. By embracing the flesh and blood of life, rejecting metaphysical comforts, and finding affirmation in suffering, we can create our own identities and life stories (Aho, 2014). Aho (2014) writes: “unlike members of the herd, those who live with style and embody the ideals of the Übermensch do not mourn the death of God and do not invent and cling to new idols. They see the truths that have been handed down from history as simply ‘a mobile army of metaphors’ that are, in no way, universal or morally binding. And they overcome these truths by reinterpreting them in creative and original ways as a means of poetically expressing their own unique style of living” (p. 95). Creativity was central to Nietzsche’s philosophy: one must create new values, not appropriate what already exists (Walther, 2012). It’s important to note that Nietzsche “did not claim to know in detail what the overman would be like” (Walther, 2012, p. 6). In the same way that apes were unaware of how man would evolve, Nietzsche argues that modern man is unaware of what the ‘Übermensch’ of the future will look like (Drochon, 2016). However, we must at least attempt, in the face of the death of God, to move towards a new conception of humankind. Interestingly, in *Anger is an Energy*, Lydon (2014) captures this notion of striving for something ‘beyond’: “I feel it in me. It’s about finally reaching something that’s, aaah, beyond human, beyond your alleged capabilities, and you don’t know what that is, but that’s what you’re striving for” (p. 514).

For Nietzsche, we must look towards cultivating not our moral conscience, but something behind it; our intellectual (superior) conscience (Bartley, 2011). Moral conscience is something we’ve internalised through social processes, but intellectual conscience involves a questioning of the universe and our part in it: through this we cultivate an individual (secular) relationship to the world (Bragg, 2017). This revaluation of values within the individual - the beginning of ‘Übermensch’ - is achieved through the integration of Apollo and Dionysus within the individual (Drochon, 2016; Barrett, 2019b; Bartley, 2011). ‘Healthy’

individual instincts lead to authentic culture: Nietzsche thought that the Greeks gave rise to great philosophical figures because they successfully built - through the integration of Apollo and Dionysus - a 'healthy' culture from which true 'greatness' could grow (Drochon, 2016). The Greeks channelled darker, Dionysian forces of life - such as violence - into creativity; in this way they embodied the 'Übermensch' (Drochon, 2016). Whilst the scope of this thesis does not allow for an exploration into the institutional setup required in contemporary society which would allow for this flourishing (Drochon [2016] notes the lack of literature on this aspect of Nietzsche's thought), nor does it allow for a comparison between the 'ideal' future envisioned by both Nietzsche and Existential-punk, the point here is that in channelling the Dionysian through the Apollonian (and injecting the Dionysian 'truth' back into society), bands such as the Sex Pistols and Siouxsie and the Banshees can be said, in a Nietzschean way, to form the foundations for a cultural revolution centred on self-expression (the 'Übermensch'). This contradicts the postmodern thesis which renders punk's revolutionary potential non-existent, and echoes Martin's (2015) work on punk and anarchism (discussed in 'Punk as Anarchy') which conceptualises punk as a: "process through which everyday forms of conflict and tension could form the basis of wider political transformations" (Martin, 2015, p. 25). Societal change, for both punk and Nietzsche, begins with the individual.

Through the 'Übermensch', one can "attend to life as it happens in all its suffering, terror, and ecstasies" (Tuana & Scott, 2020, p. 51). Through this framework, we learn to hold the "affirmation of fleshly, sensuous desires and pleasures as well as tragedy without resentment, cruelty or revenge" (Tuana & Scott, 2020, p. 51). The process of self-creation is not easy: continually overcoming oneself is, for Nietzsche, a process only reserved for those who are worthy (Nietzsche's philosophy is highly problematic in that he believed a slave class comprised of the 'unworthy' was essential to the construction of a healthy culture in that they would take care of life's practical necessities whilst the 'worthy' are left to flourish [Beiner, 2021], as aspect of Nietzsche's thought which cannot be compared with Existential-punk philosophy). For those not up to the task of self-creation, there is another option: to disregard individual growth and live for comfort (Drochon, 2016). Nietzsche's term for this is the 'Last Men' (Drochon, 2016; Gooding-Williams, 1987; Gemes, 2001). Gooding-Williams (1987) defines the Last Man as: "the image of a contented, complacent and wholly self-contained form of life" (p. 105). The Last Man is the nihilist who follows the 'herd mentality' in which everything is reduced to the lowest common denominator (Drochon, 2016; Aho, 2014; Gemes, 2001; Gooding-Williams, 1987). The 'herd mentality' i.e., the nihilist, is a position that Existential-punk radically rejects.

In 'Nietzsche's Free Spirit', Mullin (2000) presents a useful framework through which to view Nietzsche's 'Übermensch': firstly, we begin as fettered spirits, holding onto childhood forms of worship; secondly, for some of us comes the great liberation where our illusions are shattered and we become estranged from everything we once loved; immediately following this liberation is a drive to self-determination through the desire to destroy and reverse values (solitude is necessary at this stage); next comes bird-like

freedom, coolness and detachment, where idols and ideals are frozen to death; the free spirit then draws nearer to life, and begins to 'feel' again, both within itself and towards others; next, the isolation and the renunciation of values and idols is questioned; and, finally, mature spirit of freedom is reached, permitting access to contradictory modes of thought, and experimental living is embraced (pp. 397-8). Nietzsche's free spirit endorses: "experimentation without limits and a stance beyond good and evil which recognizes that all which has been deemed evil and tyrannical in man does at least as much to enhance the species as all that has been deemed safe and therefore good" (Mullin, 2000, p. 386). Free spirits are not characterised by common values but are instead identified by their ability to shake loose contemporary value judgments and interpret independently. Free spirits "refuse to be dictated to by tradition, authority, or the power of habit, and are resolutely experimental" (Mullin, 2000, p. 394). They do not behave as believe as those around them behave and believe: experimental living is key. This framework is useful in that it allows us to situate Existential-punk along a continuum between the 'Last Man' and the 'Übermensch': I argue that the Sex Pistols embody the third stage, 'a drive to self-determination through the desire to destroy and reverse values', and in this way are a nod towards Nietzsche's 'Übermensch', as opposed to a fully formed ideal.

Existentialism in the Twentieth Century: 'Be a fucking individual!' (Lydon, 1994, p. 96)

Twentieth-century Existentialists Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre took Nietzsche's death of God as the point of departure and looked towards radical ways in which human beings can redefine ourselves and our relation to the world. Gravi (2007) writes: "the metaphysical watershed of the nineteenth century is Nietzsche's proclamation that God is dead. It is an announcement which Nietzsche makes in fear and trembling. God may have been an illusion, but he was a *necessary* illusion, and while his death may constitute a gift of freedom, we have first to recognise in it the fact of man's abandonment" (p. 21). We have lost faith in inherited codes of meaning, yet we remain dependent on them for making sense of ourselves and the world. God's death was both a disappointment and a liberation, and the cultural mood in Europe and America in the early twentieth century following Nietzsche's proclamation was that existence is absurd: "we are estranged from each other and not at home in the world... because there are no moral absolutes, we are left alone, rudderless and adrift" (Aho, 2014, p. 10). Eruption of WWI compounded already waning beliefs in the continuing progress of civilisation towards truth, freedom, peace and prosperity, which modernity and the Enlightenment had promised, and the Communist Revolution in Russia shattered confidence in political stability (Lavine, 1984, pp. 326-7). The loss of faith in external structures began to take a metaphysical toll on the individual. Following Nietzsche and Kierkegaard philosophers, novelists, musicians, painters and other creatives and intellectuals began to look internally - as opposed to externally - for answers. Lavine (1984) writes: "with the weakening or collapse of so many external structures of authority - authoritative economic, political, and intellectual

structures - all these structures began to lose their appearance of legitimacy, and their constraints upon the individual were soon felt to be intolerable" (p. 327). Jones (2016) writes that for the Existentialists, "to live authentically in the face of these themes is not to supply an answer to them, but to know there is none" (p. 22). 'Existentialism' as an intellectual phenomenon developed during the Second World War through a group of Parisian philosophers, most notably Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), with Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Heidegger cited in the literature as important precursors to the movement (Gravil, 2007; Bragg, 2001). With its value system in crisis, the West needed something constructive to replace the old system: Existentialism as a philosophy of life and way of thinking gave people an opportunity to make something of themselves in a period of nihilism (Daigle, 2005; Hanscomb, 2016). Marino (2004) writes: "after two world wars, everyone was ready for a philosophy that could nod to the irrational elements in life; hence, perhaps the immense popularity of both psychoanalysis and existentialism after the abattoir of the twentieth century" (p. xiv). Existentialism is found in the philosophy of Sartre, de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Husserl; the literary works of Dostoevsky, Ellison, Kafka; in psychology with Rollo May, Viktor Frankl, Ludwig Binswager, and in Ingmar Bergman films, and more contemporary cinema such as *Fight Club* and *The Matrix* (Cerbone, 2016). This thesis argues that a musical manifestation of existentialism in the twentieth century was in 1970s Existential-punk-rock.

The term 'Existentialism' is often used in the literature to encompass not only the Parisian intellectuals but also their nineteenth and twentieth-century precursors (Gravil, 2007). To avoid confusion, I will be using the term 'Existentialist' to refer to the Parisian intellectuals only. The Existentialists and their precursors were, broadly speaking, concerned with the philosophy of existence, and rejected traditional philosophical preoccupations such as metaphysics (Gravil, 2007, p. 7). As Marino (2004) writes: "existentialism works at the level of personal meaning in contrast to general theory" (p. xii). Since Kierkegaard, philosophers associated with Existentialism have all been "deeply suspicious of the tendency of philosophy to build elaborate self-referential metaphysical systems" (Gravil, 2007, p. 13). Traditional philosophical thought dictated that all things in the world were brought into existence by an outside force but for the Existentialists, human beings create meaning for themselves. Traditionally, Western philosophy tried to define humanity from an objective, outside perspective, but Existentialism demands that we define ourselves from the only point of view truly accessible to us: subjectively from the inside (Steinbauer, 2001). Subjective 'truth' cannot be taught but is felt with intensity and passion (echoing Nietzsche). Subjective truths are painful because they: "have no objective or rational justification and are, therefore, incomprehensible to others" (Aho, 2014, p. 25). In this way the Existentialists embrace irrationalism and emotion as fundamental components to the human condition. Existentialism asserts that human beings choose their own fate, or 'existence precedes essence': you determine your own character, create your own values, and have ultimate responsibility for your actions (Gravil, 2007). As

Sartre argues, fundamentally “the responsibility of our lives, our projects, and our personalities, is on ourselves” (Jones, 2016, p. 21). In a useful summary of Existential philosophy, Hanscomb (2016) writes: “It will rail against conceits such as the possibility of absolute knowledge, universal moral codes, an ultimate meaning of life, a final harmony between individual and state, or between the self and its possibilities. It will, in short, point to the limits of rational enquiry, and accordingly, the limits of the rational mind’s jurisdiction over emotion, desire and the body” (p. 12). Broadly speaking, philosophers and thinkers associated with twentieth-century Existentialism, are linked by themes of choice, freedom, authenticity, alienation, and rebellion (Marino, 2004).

One way of looking at Existentialism is a philosophy of tragedy, or more specifically, how tragedy is bound up with existence: an affirmation of tragedy in the meaning of life (Jones, 2016; Aho, 2014). As discussed previously, Stratton (2007) argues that punk was “the existential affect of a nihilism born in the slow surfacing of the cultural trauma embodied in what, around 1978, was becoming named, becoming known as the Holocaust” (p. 124). Similarly, Worley (2017) refers to punk as a manifestation of trauma:

punk was not only bored, it was ‘messed up’, ‘screwed up’, ‘fucked up’ and ‘sick’. And once the symptoms had been described and displayed, so they were also diagnosed. First, of course, the answer was sought in the immediate socioeconomic and cultural environment from which punk emerged: ‘dole queue rock’ and the state of rock ‘n’ roll. A closer look, however, revealed punk’s ailments to stem from deeper trauma... Punk’s import and influence communicated not just in British cities, but in the small towns and provincial backwaters. Consequently, beyond pop’s ongoing concern with love-sick lusting and other teenage urges, punk’s angsty and antsy expression began to ruminate on life itself... punk’s cultural critique encompassed deeper reflections on the pain of existence (pp. 133-134).

The Holocaust - following the events of WWI and the Communist Revolution - compounded feelings that surfaced at the beginning of the twentieth-century following Nietzsche that the foundations of post-Enlightenment modernity were questionable. The horrors of the Holocaust can be said to have marked a key moment in the transition from modernity to postmodernity in that it shined a spotlight on the values which underpinned the modern world (Stratton, 2005). I am using the word ‘postmodernity’ here not in the traditional sense, but in a similar sense to Gooding-Williams (1987) who uses it to describe any event or system of thought which questions the values of modernism. Stratton (2007; 2005) sees punk as a manifestation of an existential crisis and traces this crisis directly through the Holocaust to Nietzsche and the ‘death of God’. Similarly, Worley (2017) argues that punk was a conduit through which both socioeconomic and existential frustrations could be channelled in a specific moment in history when Britain was passing through a period of change and unpredictability. Punk, then, was an existential crisis triggered by socio-economic unpredictability, the traumatic global events of the twentieth-century, and the death of God in the nineteenth-century.

Gravil (2007) argues that most people are un-awakened to their Existential freedom and the burden of responsibility (in this way they embody Nietzsche's 'Last Man'), he writes:

Most people are *unawakened*. They have not *encountered* themselves or their *freedom*. They do not even realise that life is absurd: it has no meaning, beyond what we give it. They have not heard that *God is dead*, that we make our own morality and that it is immoral to submit to a moral code you have not chosen. They identify with '*the they*' (a Heideggerian term for aggregate impersonal existence), think what '*they*' think, judge as '*they*' judge, and so on. They are just segments of the crowd. They are in flight from themselves. But it is possible to *come into existence* through various agencies: perhaps a particular mood - especially *nausea* (Sartre), or *dread* (Kierkegaard) - or some kind of *encounter* (Buber and Heidegger), which awakens them from *everydayness* into consciousness in which it is open to them to *choose themselves* and their freedom (p. 8).

In line with Gravil (2007), this thesis argues that Existential-punk awakens people to their Existential freedom and responsibility. Existential-punk was a happening, a mood, an encounter, a revelatory philosophy to individual responsibility. As Gravil (2007) notes: "philosophy can *prove* nothing, but it may, Heidegger says, reveal something" (p. 17). Goldman (2019) conceptualises punk as a response to docility: "making things happen where you are, cleverly circumventing obstacles based on your class, gender, race - that is also punk's heartbeat. Ideally, it can be a lens to focus that suppressed or ill-directed passion, make it blaze and fire up into some practical, tangible entity" (p. 183). This thesis takes inspiration from Hanscomb's (2016) article 'Existentialism as Punk Philosophy' from *Philosophy Now* magazine. Hanscomb (2016) argues that punk and Existentialism are similar in that to experience either "you have to *be there*, in amongst the detailed stories, rolling critiques and inspirational prose: you have to *catch a dose of it* through its resonance with your own often unarticulated fears and aspirations" (p. 12). He even claims Existentialism is "the punk rock of philosophy" whilst Hegel is comparable to prog rock (Hanscomb, 2016, p. 12). In 'Shot by Both Sides: Punk Attitude and Existentialism', Hanscomb (2020) develops the ideas presented in *Philosophy Now*. He identifies three central tenets shared by both punk and Existentialism (although, drawing on Savage [1991], he recognises that punk's resistance to definition is one of the reasons why it was so powerful, and so too reductive a reading risks diminishing its significance): anti-institutionalism, freedom, and authentic belonging. Within these principles, Hanscomb (2020) identifies further similarities: a rejection of hero worship and tradition; embracing of originality and experimentation (DIY); quest for alternative fulfilment (rooted in life's unstable and contradictory nature); and the notion that whilst we are fundamentally alone, authentic relationships are crucial to our well-being in that they reinforce our sense of personal authenticity. This will be touched on in more detail later. Whilst Hanscomb's (2020) article is useful in that it provides initial points of discussion, like Kristiansen (2012), the scope of his work doesn't allow for an exploration into specificities concerning punk's ontology and epistemology. The rest of this chapter will begin to fill those gaps within the scholarship.

Authenticity

Before an examination of the Heideggerian concept of 'inauthenticity', the Sartrean concept of 'Bad Faith' and their relation to punk, a brief history of the authenticity/inauthenticity debate within the discipline of philosophy will be introduced, as it is important to understand the difference between traditional philosophical conceptions of authenticity and the Existential conception. 'Authenticity', or the notion of an authentic self, is often thought of as a modern invention, however, philosophers date it back to at least the Ancient Greeks with Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) and Plato (c. 428 BC - c. 348 BC) (Bragg, 2019). These philosophers believed that each of us is capable of judging our situation and acting on it. There is also a concern with not just whether someone does the right thing, but the intention behind it (Bragg, 2019). A virtuous person, for example, does something virtuous for its own sake, not because they are a slave to the opinion of others: what's important is how one relates to their actions. Later, with the emergence of Christianity, we begin to see an increase in human inwardness (Bragg, 2019). St Augustine (354 AD - 430 AD) believed that humans have inner depths that we don't yet understand, and one of the key themes in his philosophy was whether one acts on behalf of their own eyes or the eyes of others: note here the continuity with Ancient Greek thought. St Augustine also encourages us to think about God in relation to our actions: are you acting because you think what you're doing is right, or because God will punish you if you don't? When one reaches the 'true Christian experience', one loves what God loves, and actions will be right because the person wishes them to be right, not because they are frightened of punishment (Bragg, 2019). Genevan philosopher Jean-Jaques Rousseau (1712-1778) brings in the notion that social existence corrupts human beings: within society, we are corrupted in various ways and so our natural tendency towards compassion (which Rousseau believes each human being contains) is stifled. As a proto-Romanticist, Rousseau has a slight distrust of reason and rationality; he argues that humans are at their most authentic when they are in touch with the passionate side of our nature, and that reason is often used in a self-deceptive way that diverts us from what is good in us (Bragg, 2019). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) brings in ideas of autonomy (giving oneself to the law). For Kant, the idea is that if you are autonomous you are in a condition of self-governance (Bragg, 2019). This is genuine freedom, when you are not acting on a whim that grabs you in the moment: you are acting on reasons, deliberating about what you do and don't do, and who you want to be. Autonomy is a condition in which you are able to assess the conditions presented to you, and decide whether they are endorsable. Kant believes that human beings share a universal rationality and so if we are all assessing our incentives in the same way, we are all bound by the same constraints. This differs from authenticity as the Existentialists understand it: they are concerned with the individual, the uniqueness of the individual, and are pushing back on the idea that there is a universal formal condition that will mean we're all autonomous in the same way (Bragg, 2019).

With Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) - the 'Father of Existentialism' - we begin to see the championing of the single individual (Bragg, 2019). For him, social existence is a negative thing that encourages conformity, and therefore the individual has a duty to stand out against the crowd. Central to Existentialist thinking is the idea of anguish, anxiety or angst: Kierkegaard makes a distinction, which Heidegger later adopts, between anxiety and fear. Fear is an emotion that we may feel in relation to some particular worry, concern or danger, whereas angst is Existential. We feel angst when faced with the weight of our existence (Bragg, 2019). Nietzsche, like Kierkegaard, is interested in the idea of the individual: he rails against conformism and the Kantian notion that the rules governing how we ought to be will be the same for everyone. It is the individual's responsibility to get in touch with our own inner genius, and engage in the process of self-becoming. The ongoing labour of self-creation he compares to the making of art; you must get in touch with your basic loves and passions, and submit those to a discipline aimed at becoming an ideal version of yourself (Bragg, 2019). The Romantic influence of allowing one's inner bud to blossom is apparent here. Key to Nietzsche's thinking was to resist the idea that we are fully formed and therefore should stand back and watch the unfolding occur. Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976) - who was heavily influenced by Nietzsche - brings in the notion that one of the reasons why one might become 'inauthentic' is because we cannot tolerate the finitude of our mortality (Bragg, 2019). Most people live life with the idea that 'I'll get round to it later', as though we are immortal. In this way, the inauthentic have a specific relationship towards death: death is coming, but not yet, so therefore I am not willing to judge my situation right now. The inauthentic believe that there is still time to become who we are, just not now (Bragg, 2019). Only the authentic can tolerate the thought that death might come now, and therefore they make life their own, refusing to lapse into anonymity. They seize themselves without the comfort of conventions, and each person will individually decide what they will take ownership of. Many philosophers have criticised Heidegger for the lack of moral constraints in his philosophy (Bragg, 2019). The horrors of the twentieth century and the 'H bomb' meant that punks faced the notion that death might come now: this will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Sartre's work is in dialogue with Heidegger's, the difference, however, is that Sartre takes the centre of action somewhere different (Bragg, 2019). He rubbishes Heidegger's notion that we are all 'beings towards death', arguing that authenticity has nothing to do with the way in which I relate to my own death/mortality because we don't know when death will occur. The central concept for Sartre is freedom: to be inauthentic is to not want to acknowledge the freedom that all human beings possess by virtue of the kinds of beings we are (Bragg, 2019). Most of the time, we live in a state of inauthenticity where we choose to believe we're not actually free (the notion that moral values are given and shouldn't be questioned, for example). For Sartre, human beings treat themselves as though they aren't responsible for their own freedom (Bragg, 2019). Sartre also gives us the concept of 'Bad Faith'. Essentially, 'Bad Faith' is the act of avoiding the recognition of what we are. To use Sartre's example, this might be a waiter in a

cafe who's performing his role as a waiter as if he were determined by the role, as though he wasn't the person constantly responsible for committing himself to that role. It's important to note that for Sartre, an 'authentic' person is not necessarily the one doing radically different things; rather, they act in light of the understanding that we are free (Bragg, 2019). We are not an essence or a soul, we're constantly responsible for who we are and who we want to be, and people in *Bad Faith* avoid this. Irish-British novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch criticised the Existentialists by saying that their world could only exist in a moral desert. For Murdoch, you can be an Existentialist hero as long as you are willing to live in a world where nothing matters (Bragg, 2019). Whilst the scope of this thesis does not allow for an exploration of this in detail, it's important to note this criticism and the moral implications that may arise when committing to an Existentialist way of being. Later, Sartre did attempt to show that authenticity does have moral implications by arguing that it's not that we can simply choose any way of being, it's that the only value that makes philosophical sense for us to choose is freedom: at the very least, we have to be committed to this (Bragg, 2019). Simone de Beauvoir, whose work will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism, was in dialogue with Sartre. Whilst it is generally accepted that her work sits comfortably within Existential thought, she took issue with certain aspects of Sartre's thought, arguing for the necessity of enhancing the freedom of others to enhance one's process of becoming free (Bragg, 2019). De Beauvoir saw before Sartre that social position must be considered when talking about freedom: woman, for example, is constrained in ways that man is not (Bragg, 2019). Women are born into a position that they must accept. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism.

Heidegger on Authenticity

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is one of the most influential of the German philosophers within the tradition of Existentialism (Lavine, 1984; Gravil, 2007; Aho, 2014). It was on the grounds of their connection to Heidegger that the Parisian Existentialists were criticised by the Communist Party soon after the Liberation in 1945 since Heidegger had been a member of the Nazi Party and Rector of Freiburg University under Hitler (Arp, 2001). Reconciling these associations has proven a difficult task for philosophy. As Beiner (2021) asks of Heidegger's (and Nietzsche's) work: "how do we teach the canonical texts that in significant measure define our mission as educators, knowing that they often contain the potential to produce monsters?" (p. 30). 'Monsters' is a reference to well-known white supremacist leaders such as Richard Spencer. It is important to note, however, that Heidegger's situation was much worse than Nietzsche's in that Heidegger "[shamed] the proud tradition of philosophy by wearing a Nazi uniform and giving ardently pro-Hitler speeches" (Beiner, 2021, p. 330). This raises an important question concerning ethics: does Heidegger's membership of the Nazi Party demonstrate that personal authenticity - one of the central tenets and highest values of Existential philosophy - trumps morality? Perhaps

personal authenticity and morality are irreconcilable due to the intrinsic link between the decline in morality and the rise of the individual within Nietzsche's philosophy. This may be why some have argued that Heidegger's entire philosophy is corrupted by his Nazi disposition (Bragg, 2019). As Beiner (2021) notes, however, "Nietzsche and Heidegger are towering thinkers, and we would be failing to educate our students about the summits of Western philosophy if we cut them out of the curriculum... our vocation as citizens must make us wary of the dangerous minds in our theory canon; but our vocations as reflective human beings requires dialogue with those dangerous minds, while striving to be fully alert to their dangerousness" (p. 33). Both Nietzsche and Heidegger had a profound influence on twentieth-century thought and so their work must be taken seriously; however, one must be aware of the potential dangers and the material should be handled with historical awareness. Interestingly, the career of Dutch punk band PANIC "came to a sudden halt" when they sang of Heidegger's innocence at the Nuremberg War Crimes trials (Flint, 2020).

Central to Heidegger's project is a re-examination of the question of 'Being' or 'Dasein' (German to English translation: 'there-being') (Cerbone, 2016; Aho, 2014; Sherman, 2009; Barrett 2019b; Fielding, 2020b). For Heidegger, most people defer to an existence within the common world of experience that is "most readily-at-hand": Heidegger's term for this mode of being is 'the *they*' (echoing Nietzsche's 'Last Men') (Sherman, 2009, p. 2). The danger in 'the *they*' is that Dasein levels out to an average existence and its possibilities are repressed (Sherman, 2009). Much of our identity is constructed at the intersection of social roles i.e., mother, father, daughter, son, teacher, partner, etc., and so we occupy ourselves with habitual concerns in relation to these roles (Cerbone, 2016; Sherman, 2009). In doing so, Dasein "surrenders its unique individuality to these commonly defined styles of living, thinking, and communicating, and designs itself by them" (Sherman, 2009, p. 2). Living out a public self is stifling and Dasein bears a deep, unfulfilled desire to escape it (Cerbone, 2016). In living out a public self, Dasein is 'inauthentic'. This conception of existence is the premise on which Heidegger's entire philosophy is based: Dasein as inauthentic is an existential fact (Sherman, 2009). The search for authenticity, however, constitutes Dasein's meaning: "to be authentic *Dasein*... is to grasp that one cannot become authentic as an ontic entity among entities, as a static being, but only as the asking, searching Becoming, that is, as a transcendent consciousness, whose projected intentionalities become authentic 'only by anticipation'" (Golomb, 2012, pp. 89-90). 'Authenticity', for Heidegger, is ontologically prior to 'inauthenticity': life is a journey towards authenticity, which can only occur under specific conditions.

'Anxiety' is a crucial experience for Heidegger in that it can lead Dasein to an authentic mode of being. Anxiety occurs when "the totality of involvements, the entities within the world, the way Dasein was once engaged with the *they* world, falls away" (Sherman, 2009, p. 2). In a state of Heideggerian anxiety one is confronted with the true nature of existence and suddenly the world as Dasein understood it (the *they*) is unappealing. Anxiety shakes us out of the immersion in the everyday and, crucially, is "always on the

verge of breaking through” (Sherman, 2009, pp. 2-3). The lack of directedness triggered by anxiety forces Dasein to look inward, and in this state Dasein must confront its own existence (Cerbone, 2016). For Heidegger, this is a good thing: the shift from an engagement in the everyday leads to a reclamation of oneself (Sherman, 2009). Sherman (2009) writes: “Dasein inevitably moves between our day-to-day enmeshment with the *they* and seizing upon glimpses of our truer, uniquely individual possibilities for existence. The challenge is to bring ourselves back from our lostness and in the *they* to retrieve ourselves so that we can become our authentic selves” (p. 4). The clarity of self that arises through this process leads to our unique and authentic place in the world (Sherman, 2009; Cerbone, 2016; Fielding, 2020b; Barrett, 2019b). The ways in which punk can be said to trigger ‘anxiety’ in the Heideggerian sense will be discussed in detail later.

Reaching an authentic version of oneself is a difficult task, requiring a fundamental shift in our engagement with the world, however, for Heidegger, it is possible (Sherman, 2009; Cerbone, 2016; Barrett, 2019b; Fielding 2020b). The journey to authenticity begins with Dasein taking a stand on who and what it wants to be; more than this, Dasein must decide who and what it wants to be in any given situation (Barrett, 2019b). According to Barrett (2019b) there are three ‘dimensions’ to Dasein (see Tab. 7). The ‘present’ is Dasein’s current state. As discussed, the danger in the present is that we will go-with-the-flow and socially conform. The ‘past’ is our facticity i.e., “the parameters within which human possibility or freedom reside” (Sherman, 2009, p. 1). Unlike Sartre, Heidegger acknowledges that there are limits to freedom and that to an extent one is a “product of the time, place, and culture within which one is born, lives and dies” (Sherman, 2009, p. 1) (this aspect of Heidegger’s thought is particularly useful to the Existential-feminist perspective in that it allows for the recognition that female ‘freedom’ is restricted in ways that male ‘freedom’ is not). Whilst there are limits to freedom, Dasein has the capacity to make choices in any given situation: human existence is unique for Heidegger in that it is essentially a tension between facticity and transcendence (Aho, 2014). The ‘future’ is Dasein’s projection of itself (Barrett, 2019b). Life was not initially a matter of choice but we still have a yet-to-be-determined future that is Dasein’s responsibility alone to create. In acknowledging one’s ‘thrownness’ - the circumstances of existence - one can choose among the possibilities and take responsibility for a future based on what has already been. Dasein always understands itself in terms of its future existence: in terms of a *possibility* of self (Barrett, 2019b). Heideggerian authenticity, then, is a matter of how I relate to myself, my past and my world; what is crucial is making it *my* world that I take ownership of (Cerbone, 2016). How we go about living our lives either recognises our responsibility for our actions as choices (authenticity) or does not (inauthenticity).

Table 7: Dimensions of ‘Dasein’, according to Barrett (2019b)

PAST (facticity)	There are certain objective ‘facts’ about being human, and we are limited and constrained in certain ways: sexuality, physicality, genetic code, sociocultural context, geographical location, personal history. These are facts about my situation that I cannot change. To be a person is always to find oneself in a situation that was there before one came along; you become the inheritor of an entire past.
PRESENT (falling)	Authenticity can occur when we are lifted from our social conformity by anxiety. To be a person is always to be at risk of losing oneself in absorption in the practical tasks of daily living and the shared preoccupations of one’s social group (the easiest thing to do is to lose yourself in these activities).
FUTURE (thrown projection)	The common illusion for human beings is that once we reach what we desire, we will be complete. To be a person is always to find oneself on the way to something that does not yet exist.

Heidegger’s philosophy was important in the development of Existentialism because Sartre takes from him: “the concepts of conscious existence as being-in-the-world; the basis distinction between the world of conscious being and the world of things; the concept of being thrown absurdly into existence; anguish; nothingness; the distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence; the distinction between facticity and transcendence; and the concept of man as making himself by having projects into the future” (Lavine, 1984, p. 341). For Sartre, however, meanings emerge from the subject in a way that they don’t for Heidegger (Cerbone, 2016). Sartrean freedom is more radical in that “whatever limits or constrains us in terms of our facticity is something we can always transcend because we can reflect on it and give it meaning by choosing to interpret it in a particular way” (Aho, 2014, p. 71). This freedom of interpretation is central to Sartre’s work. Heidegger, on the other hand, de-centres the subject, recognising that decisions are always bound up in a wider historical framework (Cerbone, 2016). As discussed previously, contrary to Nietzsche’s conception of the self as individualistic, Heidegger asserts that we live in a shared world and so we must think of our authentic selves as fundamentally related to others (Aho, 2014). Aho (2014) offers an insightful interpretation of Heidegger’s notion of a shared world: “in my everyday life I am bound up with meanings, values and practices of the world. As an embedded way of being, I am limited and constrained by the world that I find myself in, and this influences how I interpret myself and make sense of who I am. This means that any attempt to address the question of human existence must also address how I am situated in a shared world” (p. 32). Heidegger rejects the isolated hero: before anything else we are *in* the world *interacting* with objects and other people. He uses the term ‘Being-in’ (German translation: Mitsein) to capture the concept that the world exists as a “unified context of

meanings” (Aho, 2014, p. 39). Being-in is essential and constitutive of what it means to be human. We are not self-contained subjects, disinterested minds looking down on the world, as traditional philosophy suggests. We never encounter things in isolation: things make sense to us only in relation to their connection to other things, including human beings.

Whilst Existential-punk calls for individuality, a notion of ‘authenticity’ as fundamentally related to others can be read in Existential-punk-rock. As noted in ‘Punk as Philosophy’, the term ‘poseur’ was used to refer to anyone who punks believed adopted an inauthentic punk identity (Haenfler, 2014). As Haenfler (2014) notes in his work on subcultures: “authenticity is a social construction, given meaning only by the people to whom it is meaningful” (p. 84). Punk identity, by virtue of the fact that it is negotiated within subcultural boundaries, is constructed in two stages: firstly, through an individual ‘awakening’ (triggered by Nietzsche’s death of God and Heideggerian ‘anxiety’); and secondly, through collective acceptance on behalf of the subculture. In this way Heidegger’s work lends itself to subcultural studies. As the CCCS note, subcultures are essentially ‘being-as-a-group’ in that they “win space and mark out territory, they explore focal concerns central to the inner life of the group, there is a set of social rituals that underpins their collective identity and defines them as a ‘group’ instead of a collection of individuals” (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, p. 35). A notion of ‘authenticity’ is central to any subculture in that it “helps participants police appropriate or desirable behaviour, to be sure people are present for the “right” reasons” (Haenfler, 2014, pp. 85-86); however, identity negotiated within punk is unique with respect to other British post-war subcultures in that the ‘right’ reasons essentially amount to an Existential perspective on the world. Punk, whilst reactive, divisive, and rebellious, also offers companionship and community (Hanscomb, 2020). Joining a band, creating a fanzine, or going to a gig, offers a ‘home’, cohesion in a world of uncertainty. Punk (and subcultures more broadly) provide an opportunity to know oneself through dialogue with others, as meanings and boundaries are negotiated. The importance of the presence of others in the construction of personal authenticity will be touched on later. Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism will argue that punk offered women a route to ‘epistemic authority’ (Shapiro, 2018), a precondition for becoming a ‘thinking thing’ that requires the presence of others. In this way, it offered women a route to authenticity in the Existential sense (Shapiro, 2018).

Punk as a Trigger/Embodiment of Heideggerian Anxiety

This section will examine the ways in which Existential-punk can be said to trigger (and embody) Heideggerian anxiety and thus self-reflection within the individual, which has the potential to lead to an authentic existence. Golomb (2012) notes that on the surface Heidegger’s philosophy appears “detached from existential issues” (p. 89). However, although it can read like old-fashioned system-building he does recognise that instruction is received via self-reflection and, like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, “he tries to motivate us to change our lives, or at least our perceptions of them” (Golomb, 2012, p. 89). As discussed

previously, Dasein is situated in a world in which it necessarily engages with objects and other consciousnesses (Aho, 2014; Peters, 2019). Any action requires a “pre-reflective understanding” of the world: we do not reflect on the physical properties of an object before we take action; we are already immersed in them (Aho, 2014, p. 38). Dasein is so absorbed in the tasks of everyday life that everything appears to flow together. Sherman (2009) writes: “to describe human being as Dasein is an attempt to leave behind philosophical notions of the individual as subject, and more broadly, the subject-object duality of the individual and the world, that is, interior consciousness juxtaposed against an objective world outside of it. Rather, for Heidegger we are out there embedded in the world, engaged with tools and objects of our experience” (p. 1). Contrary to Descartes’ solipsistic conception of being, then, Dasein is already immersed within a world of objects and should be recognised as such if we are to reveal anything about existence: denying this fact only further obscures the nature of Dasein (Barrett 2019b; Fielding 2020b; Rose, 2003; Peters, 2019). Peters (2019) adds that not only is Dasein always-already engaged in the world, but “always already [engaged] with the world as others engage with it” (p. 448). In other words, when I use a fork to eat or a hammer to nail, I use them in a way that others use them; we are “shaped by the cultural and historical framework in place” (Peters, 2019, p. 448). Heidegger refers to this framework as ‘das Man’. Peters (2019) offers a useful explanation: “So not only am I always already in the world with objects, and with others using objects, I am also already with others using these objects as one uses them. Their gestures are my gestures; we have always already learned to be a body from others. Significantly, then, it is exactly because I am always already using objects as one uses them, because I am part of das Man, that I also already understand the actions, and thoughts in the actions, of other people. Their gestures are my gestures; our embodied existence is a shared one” (pp. 448-449). Because of this shared understanding of the world other people’s actions can surprise us: when this happens, we take a step back from everyday interactions to contemplate another person and their beliefs (Peters, 2019). In this way, it is only when actions are unusual (or tools break down) that we are faced with ourselves (Sherman, 2009) (this echoes Schill’s (2017b) work on facing oneself in the act of collective transgression). In engaging in the destruction (or perceived destruction) of musical instruments - i.e., in engaging with an object in a way that violates the shared understanding of das Man - punk musicians (and rock musicians more broadly) create a situation within which Dasein is forced to confront itself (see Fig. 13 and Fig. 14). This also embodies the Nietzschean destruction/creation process: in destroying an instrument one opens the possibility of engaging with it in a new and creative way.

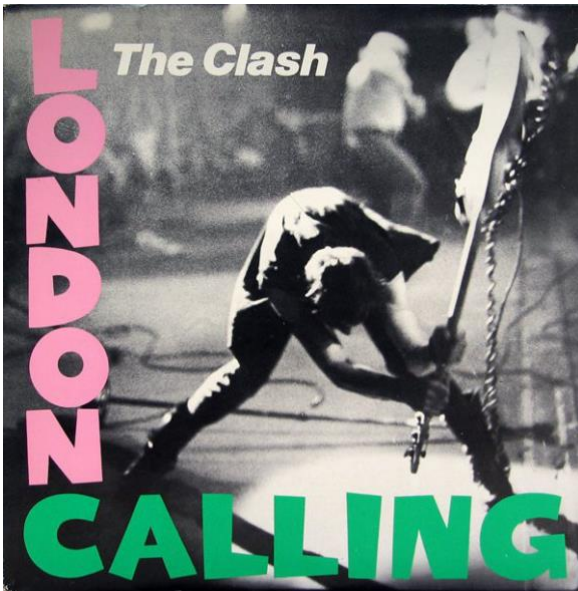


Figure 13: The Clash - *London Calling* (1979) album cover (Discogs, 2021)



Figure 14: Sex Pistols - frame from 'Anarchy in the UK' (2012c) (jaroshy, 2010)

Heidegger's work on finitude and death also sheds philosophical light on Existential-punk. Sherman (2009) writes: "Dasein is always in relation to death, but most of the time in the awareness that accompanies our average daily selves, this relationship is disregarded" (p. 3). In other words, an inauthentic existence involves a denial of mortality; it is a life lived as though death will never really occur. Through an escape into the everyday we live as though life is "unending, full of infinite possibility" and this provides comfort to us (Sherman, 2009, p. 3). For Heidegger, the fact of death defines existence (we are 'beings-towards-death') and an acceptance of this triggers anxiety and thus Dasein can look towards a more authentic and fulfilling life (Cerbone, 2016; Sherman, 2009). Sherman (2009) asks in a Heideggerian way: "what would everyday living be like, how would it impact us, to switch into a more realistic understanding of and appreciation for our mortality and death's significance?" (p. 3). In facing our mortality, everyday concerns disappear, and we begin to live life in accordance with our authentic selves. In 'One Nation Under the Bomb: The Cold War and British Punk to 1984', Worley (2011) situates punk in the broader context of the

late 1970s as the cultural expression of a generation that was “cast under the shadow of the bomb” (p. 66). He notes that during the late 1970s and early 80s “a flood of Cold War-inspired film and fiction made its way across the Atlantic, embedding itself in the cultural psyche to ferment a mood of grim foreboding” (Worley, 2011, p. 68). Essentially, then, Existential-punk can be read as a cultural manifestation of anxiety surrounding the Cold War. The Cold War and threat of annihilation under ‘the bomb’ presented punks with a situation in which they had to face mortality in a literal way, or, in Heideggerian terms, they were shaken from an inauthentic existence via anxiety. The immediacy of the Cold War is captured in the closing line to Conflict’s ‘One Nation Under the Bomb’ (1994), released in 1983: “It’s coming now. Now! Now! Now!”. Interestingly, the punk fanzine collection at Bishopsgate Archive also contains magazines from the 1970s which include articles on the threat of global nuclear annihilation (see Fig. 15 and Fig. 16). The fact that the archive has been curated in this way suggests that anxiety surrounding ‘the bomb’ was a significant part of public consciousness at this time.

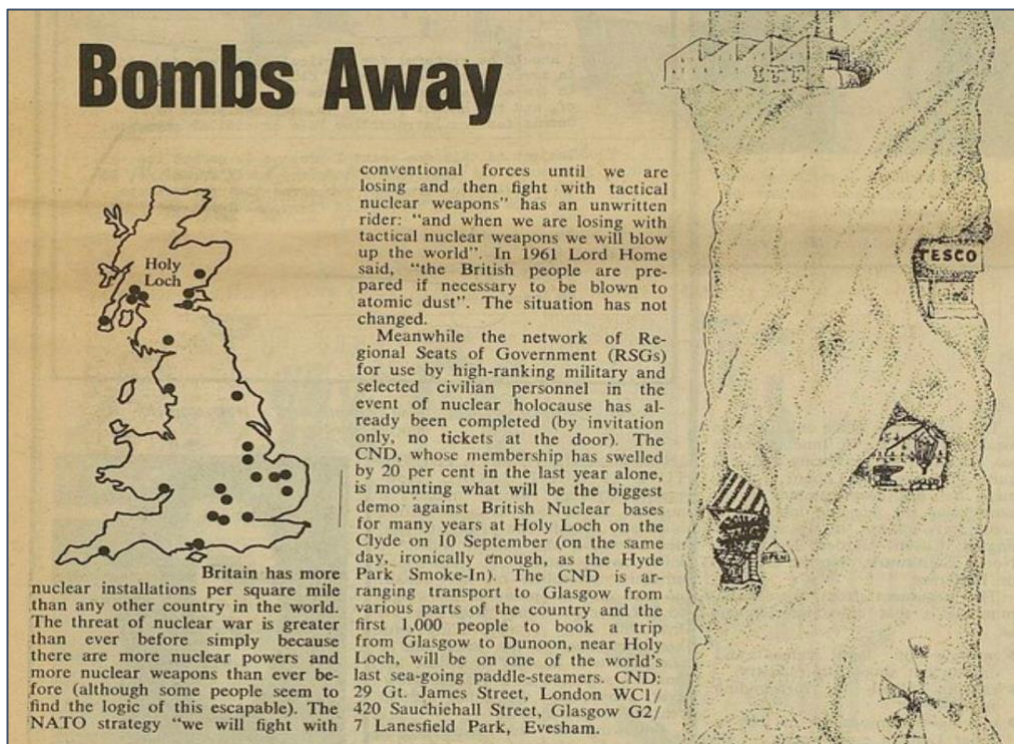


Figure 15: *International Times* (Aug, 1977) [Bishopsgate Archives]

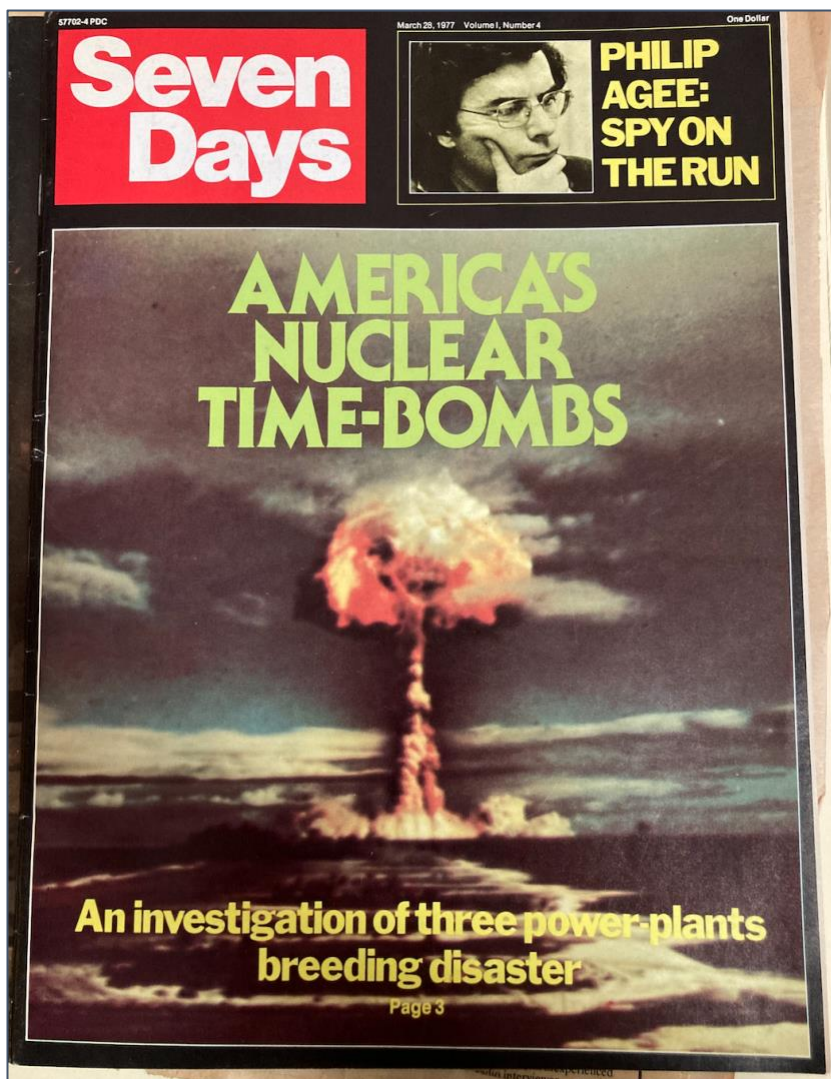


Figure 16: *Seven Days* (March, 1977, Vol. 1, No. 4) - front cover [Bishopsgate Archives]

Before a short analysis of the ways in which Heidegger's philosophy can be read in the music of the Buzzcocks, I will briefly expand on Heidegger's notion that living in a shared world is fundamental to Dasein's existence. In his reading of Nietzsche, Cooper (2009) stresses the centrality of community in the construction of personal authenticity. For him, authenticity in the Existentialist sense is not the same as "obsessive introspectionism" (p. 7). Through solitary inspection, we will never fully understand ourselves. Cooper (2009) notes: "in some ways, at least, others can understand me better than I do" (p. 7). To reach authenticity, then, we need other people: it is reciprocal. Through engaging and conversing with others, we find ourselves and our place in the world (dialogue as a route to 'epistemic authority' and thus authentic existence will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism). The notion of shared authenticity will be expanded upon later in an exploration of Sartre and de Beauvoir's work. The point here, however, is that punk, by virtue of the fact that it is a subculture, allows for the development of Existential personal authenticity in that this authenticity develops alongside others who seek the same thing. Lydon (2014) captures this notion somewhat in a comment on him and Glen Matlock

having to put their differences aside during the creative process: “Glen and I both understood that we had to amalgamate our two different perspectives without concessions into something even better than either one of us had conceived independently” (p. 96). Elsewhere, Lydon (1994) said: “maybe a room full of people having different ideas is chaotic, but it’s wonderfully chaotic, highly entertaining, and very educational” (p. 309). Another look at Nietzsche’s conception of Apollo and Dionysus sheds further light on why shared consciousness is fundamental to the construction of personal authenticity:

Greek tragedy according to Nietzsche is the truest art form because the destruction of the tragic hero is the paradigm of existential suffering... [Dionysus] represents “nature” as the “primal unity” which is the ultimate source of all existence, and his dismemberment typifies the division of this primordial oneness into individuals. Nietzsche interprets the rebirth of the god as the end of individuation and as man’s fusion with the primal unity. That fusion is re-enacted in satyr chorus of Greek tragedy. The Greeks who watched tragic performances identified themselves with the chorus as well as with the fate of the tragic hero. In doing so, they experienced the temporary annihilation of their individual identities, which became submerged in the identity of the group. Greek tragedy is thus an artistic representation of the true reality of existence (Henrichs, 1984, pp. 222-223).

Jones (2002) notes that music allows for: “the loss of the self in an experience of communion, as opposed to a Kantian-bourgeois aesthetic of individualistic and reasoned pleasure” (p. 30). The Dionysian loss of the self, then, through the experience of punk-rock (i.e., attending gigs and losing oneself in the collective), enhances shared consciousness; the crowd simultaneously reach ‘beyond themselves’ to other human beings, thus temporarily reaching ‘true reality’. These temporary moments of absorption are essential to the construction of an identity that is rooted in the reality of existence. Ironically, music, in this way, can be compared to a religious experience.

Case Study 4: The Buzzcocks

The Buzzcocks’ ‘Why Can’t I Touch It?’ (1979) - the B side to ‘Everybody’s Happy Nowadays’ (1979) - can be read as the disintegration of the *they* world from the perspective of the subject, Pete Shelley. The lyrics suggest that the subject has been triggered by anxiety (although the trigger is unclear) and the ontological shift from inauthenticity to authenticity is in motion. Pete Shelley sings: “Well, it seems so real I can see it / And it seems so real I can feel it / And it seems so real I can taste it / And it seems so real I can hear it / So why can’t I touch it? / So why can’t I touch it?”. The world ‘seems so real’ and yet the subject is no longer engaged in the same way. The fact that Shelley *can* see/feel/taste/hear ‘it’ captures the nature of existence as immersion, of which Dasein cannot escape; however, the refrain ‘why can’t I touch it?’ (coupled with the use of the word ‘seems’) suggests that the cohesion of the inauthentic world has fallen away, no longer in his grasp. The anxiety and disorientation underpinning his experience of losing ‘touch’ with the structure of the world is further reinforced by the fact that the word ‘touch’ - unlike ‘taste’, ‘hear’ and ‘feel’ - never falls on the beat, creating a misalignment between the subject and the musical structure

surrounding him. 'Why Can't I Touch it?' (1979) is reminiscent of a passage from Sartre's (2000) novel *Nausea*:

Something is going to happen: in the shadows of the Rue Basse-de-Vieille there is something waiting for me, it is over there, just at the corner of that quiet street that my life is going to begin. I see myself advancing with a sense of fate. At the corner of the street there is a sort of white stone. From a distance it seemed black, and at each step I take it turns a little whiter. That dark body getting gradually lighter makes an extraordinary impression on me: when it is completely white, I shall stop just beside it and then the adventure will begin. It is so close now, that white beacon emerging from the shadows, that I am almost afraid: for a moment I think of turning back. But it is impossible to break the spell. I go forward, I stretch out my hand, I touch the stone (p. 82)

However, Sartre's protagonist, Antoine Roquentin, is closer to an authentic existence than Shelley. Roquentin embodies the 'future' dimension to Dasein as outlined by Barrett (2019b) in that he recognises that to be a person is to always find oneself on the way to something that does not yet exist: 'something is going to happen', 'there is something waiting for me', 'it is over there', 'my life is going to begin', 'it is so close now'. However, he has not quite reached authenticity as the seduction of 'the *they*' is present: 'I am almost afraid: for a moment I think of turning back'. Shelley, however, is closer to the 'present' as outlined by Barrett (2019b) in that he cannot yet conceive of himself in terms of the future (this is reinforced by the use of 'now' and 'is' in the final stanza). The listener is anchored in the perpetual present throughout the verses via the use of various musical techniques: a simplistic drumbeat, repetitive bassline, and rotating harmony between Bb major and Eb major (a cycle of perfect V-I and plagal IV-I cadences). Musically, the 'chorus' ('So why can't I touch it?') is constructed differently, but the 'present' is still invoked. Shelley's melismatic (7 beats) 'why' descends melodically and is accompanied by a descending bassline (quite literally 'falling', to use Heidegger's term) extending the present moment, hinting at the notion that Shelley is at risk of losing himself in 'the *they*' once more. Both Shelley and Roquentin are in Heideggerian purgatory, stuck between inauthenticity and authenticity; however, Roquentin is closer to authenticity in that he conceives of himself as a future being.

Sartre on Freedom, Authenticity and 'The Look'

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French philosopher, screenwriter, novelist, playwright, literary critic, political critic, activist and biographer (Cohen-Solal, 2006). He was born, raised, and educated in Paris, and attended the prestigious École Normale Supérieure (ENS) - a Parisian institution designed to prepare students for a career in government or academia - where he met lifelong friends Raymond Aron and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (a notable Existentialist) and life-partner Simone de Beauvoir (Flynn, 2014). In 1939 he was drafted into the French army serving as a meteorologist and was captured by enemy troops in 1940 (Cox, 2016). It was during this period that he read Heidegger and is considered, alongside Heidegger, one of the "second generation of thinkers on authenticity" following Nietzsche and

Kierkegaard (Golomb, 2012, p. 88). Whilst Sartre took Nietzsche's proclamation that God is dead seriously, asserting that our abandonment in this sense is "a primary element in man's situation", he believed his philosophy was neither nihilism nor despair (Gravil, 2007, p. 22). His most notable works include *Nausea* (2000) - the story of protagonist Antoine Roquentin who is sickened by his own existence and records his every feeling and experience throughout the novel - and his philosophical treatise *L'être et le néant* (Being and Nothingness) (2015) where Sartre develops what is now known as the philosophy of Existentialism (Bragg, 2004; Cox, 2016; Flynn, 2014).

At the core of Sartre's philosophy is the tenet 'existence precedes essence' i.e., there is no given human nature and existence is perpetually re-made by the subject (Cerbone, 2016). Udokang (2016) writes: "it is Sartre's belief that what all existentialists have in common is that existence precedes essence or that subjectivity must be the starting point in every philosophical enterprise" (p. 86). By situating subjective experience at the centre of philosophical concern Sartre's philosophy runs counter to the main thrust of Western thought since Plato (O'Donohoe, 2005). For Sartre, "man makes himself what he is... no condition imposes itself on us without our subjective evaluation or estimation of that condition" (Udokang, 2016, pp. 86-87). Human beings are unique in that we are capable of reflecting on our existence and making choices which define our future within *any given situation*: in this way we have 'radical freedom'. In rejecting God, essence, soul, ego, and so on, Sartre leaves humankind to create meaning for itself (Udokang, 2016). Anguish occurs when we are left with the dizzying array of possible meanings and are answerable for those we choose: "the sincere and clear-sighted acceptance of human freedom is usually accompanied by anguish and dread because we realize that we alone are responsible for the choices we make in our lives" (Aho, 2014, p. 66). We are condemned to be free, and our choices are ours alone (Rose, 2003). One of Sartre's most provocative statements was that the French "never were freer than under the German occupation" (Bragg, 2004). On the surface this statement reads as flippant, however, its serious meaning is that the occupation made people aware of their radical freedom i.e., the freedom to interpret their situation as they choose. This freedom is not practical freedom, or freedom of will or action; rather, it is ontological freedom, freedom of consciousness and freedom to make decisions in whatever situation one finds oneself in. On Sartrean freedom, Linsenbard (2010) writes: "Sartre convincingly argues that the freedom we have as persons is not the freedom to do anything we wish, such as fly to the moon on a whim, but rather the freedom to make and remake ourselves in a world that offers resistance and, very often, overwhelming obstacles. Sartre wishes to emphasize that we are free in a morally important sense to choose who we will become and what sort of world shall become the world" (p. 29). In this way, Sartre's philosophy is a call to take control of ourselves and our world: "Sartre wanted no less from his philosophy than that it challenge us to change the world and he emphasized again and again, and in multiple ways, that it is only we who can change the world for better or worse" (Linsenbard, 2010, p. 30).

Most people avoid and deny this responsibility, constructing false narratives about who they are and conceive of themselves as objects with properties as opposed to a self-creating existence: Sartre's term for this is 'Bad Faith', which bears traces of Heidegger's 'inauthenticity' (Cerbone, 2016; Rose, 2003). According to Rose (2003), Bad Faith can take three forms:

(1) The belief that I am determined by my facticity: the agent assumes that essential, fixed properties limit his possibilities and explain his actions. (2) The belief that I exist most authentically as transcendence, that no matter what you describe as 'me', I can negate it. I can negate all my facticity, because I am free. This form of bad faith implicitly denies my being-for-others which is an essential structure of freedom; that is, existing in the world. (3) Finally, the 'spirit of seriousness' or binding oneself to a purpose: I am a communist, I am a Christian and my role dictates certain obligations which derive from something external to me. This is described as another way to try and fulfil my project without the anguish of choosing for myself because, as a part of a general movement, my choices are limited by the dictates of that movement (p. 13).

Rose (2003) notes that it is often assumed that Sartre's authenticity/Bad Faith distinction maps directly onto Heidegger's authentic/inauthentic Dasein, but this is not the case. In a way, they are similar: Heidegger recognises authenticity as Dasein choosing for itself and inauthenticity as chosen for. However, it is only the third form of Bad Faith - binding oneself to a purpose - that can be compared directly to Heidegger's notion of inauthenticity (Rose, 2003). Punks like Lydon resist binding themselves to a purpose and therefore, in this way, cannot be said to live in Bad Faith. This will be explored in Chapter 4.

Sartre has been criticised for denying the social dimension to human existence (Udokang, 2016). Some scholars recognise that Sartre addresses this aspect of humanity, but his conception is characterised by a "misanthropic attitude" (Dolezal, 2012, p. 23). This thesis builds on scholarship that acknowledges Sartre's recognition of a shared world. Unlike Heidegger (and de Beauvoir), however, Sartre "[summarizes] inter-human relations as marked by conflict and not co-operation. Man beholds the presence of the other as alienating and murderous and this creates in him fear, shame and hatred" (Udokang, 2016, p. 91). Similarly, Dolezal (2012) recognises Sartre's concern with intersubjectivity noting that he conceptualises the encounter with the Other in negative terms: "a conflictual relation where a power struggle to maintain one's subjective status ensues" (p. 14). Rae (2009) writes: "if social relations take place through the look, they are conflictual and tense: either consciousness looks-at the Other and objectifies it or it is looked-at by a subjective Other and is objectified... it is a conflict that neither seeks to lose" (p. 59). The essence of relations between consciousnesses for Sartre, then, is conflictual, not, as Heidegger asserts, *Mitsein*. As Rose (2003) notes: "Sartre is - in *Being and Nothingness* - pessimistic about the possibility of authentic recognition by others and replaces Heidegger's picture with a more antagonistic one, hence solitude is replaced by shame" (p. 8). It is generally agreed by contemporary Sartre scholars that whilst our initial confrontation with the Other reveals a sense of shame, this shame can be overcome, and authentic social relations can take place (Rae, 2009).

Before an examination of the ways in which authentic social relations occur and how this relates to Existential-punk, I will elucidate Sartre's thoughts on shared existence and 'The Look'. Dolezal (2012) writes that central to Sartre's Existential ontology is the notion that "in order to fully realise all the structures of one's being, the subject requires the existence of others, as some modes of consciousness (in particular reflective self-consciousness) can only be realised from the point of view of the other" (p. 11). In other words, one can gain reflective self-awareness only when one becomes an object for another person, and this objectification can only be achieved via 'The Look'. When a consciousness is 'looked-at' by another consciousness, we are forced to recognise that we do not exist at the centre of our own being; rather, we are an object in the world of others. In recognising this Existential fact, we become 'self-reflective' (inward looking) and are aware of ourselves in relation to Others. The Other, therefore, is a constitutive feature of the self. 'The Look' signifies the inherent intersubjectivity of being, is not necessarily ocular and doesn't require the literal presence of another consciousness. It is primarily an ontological notion: the foundation for a *possibility* of reflective self-consciousness (Dolezal, 2012). Dolezal (2012) writes: "the ensuing permanence of the capacity for reflective self-consciousness is ensured because the 'presence' of the Other is actually an 'omnipresence', reminiscent of the all-knowing and all-seeing God in the Christian tradition" (p. 20). In other words, we do not have to be literally 'looked-at' by another consciousness in order to feel its presence: "the Look for Sartre is not merely about being within the other's perceptual field; it is not a neutral *seeing*, but rather, it is a value-laden *looking* which has the power to objectify and causes the subject to turn attention to him- or herself in a self-reflective manner" (Dolezal, 2012, p. 15).

Dolezal (2012), drawing on the work of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) - whose work sits comfortably within the Existentialist tradition - notes that Sartre's 'Look' is only one of many intersubjective encounters offered by his philosophy: "there are other modes of relating which do not necessarily lead to objectification and alienation or a dichotomising battle between subject and object" (p. 24). As Sartre notes, "hell may be other people, but they are an indispensable part of our salvation as well" (Cerbone, 2016, p. 80). For Sartre, there is a mode of being that exists when consciousnesses can relate to one another not as subject-object, but as mutual subjects (an authentic relation): Sartre calls this the 'we-relation', and for this relation to take place, subjects must be able to communicate (Rae, 2009). Secondly, a process of 'conversion' must occur, which allows for two things (see Tab. 8):

Table 8: Towards a Sartrean 'We-Relation': Aspects of Conversion, according to Rae (2009)

Aspects to Conversion	Result
Consciousness alters its pre-reflective fundamental project so that it values freedom as the highest ethical end	The Other is a free subject with an independent project rather than the threatening object it took the Other to be prior to conversion
Consciousness alters its reflective self-understanding so that it recognises that it is a subjective freedom that lives an objective body in an objective situation	Because it is through the objectification of the Other's look that it becomes aware of its objective facticity, the converted consciousness understands that the Other plays a necessary role in the disclosure of its being

Conversion, then, is the process by which a consciousness comes to recognise another consciousness as a free being with individual projects that pose no threat whilst simultaneously recognising that it is only through the objectification process that a consciousness can recognise its own objective facticity. The result: "the converted consciousness's altered understanding of the Other leads it to experience a sense of solidarity with the Other that manifests itself in the affirmation of the Other's practical freedom" (Rae, 2009, p. 55). If both consciousnesses undergo conversion, they can form a social relation in which each recognises, respects, and affirms the Other's freedom. As previously noted, language plays a crucial role in this transition and the formation of the we-relation (Rae, 2009). Rae (2009) writes: "rather than seek to negate the Other, a relation based on communication allows each consciousness to *interact* with the Other in a way that: 1) does not seek to nihilate the Other's subjectivity; and 2) establishes a relation of mutual recognition of, and respect for, each other's freedom" (p. 62). Through language, we can resolve conflict and form authentic social relations: one learns to live with the Other comfortably in mutual freedom. As Jones (2005) notes, Sartre highlights the importance of reciprocal freedom, the notion that our freedom depends upon the freedom of others, arguing that "although moral values are created by individuals we still have a responsibility to every other human being" (p. 11). However, one can find the responsibility of freedom too difficult, and there is always the danger of leaning towards the safety and security of 'Bad Faith'. In this way, authentic relations, for Sartre, contain a tension: "this tension allows each consciousness to challenge and push the other. Through this challenge, each consciousness is opened up to new aspects of its world. But this challenge cannot go so far as to nihilate the Other, belittle it, or generally usurp its freedom. It must coax the Other into challenging its own assumptions and world-view" (Rae, 2009, p. 70). Rotten's 'stare' can be viewed as an exaggeration of 'The Look' without the possibility of communication and conversion; it is "primordially alienating" (Rae, 2009, p. 57), forcing consciousness to confront itself (see Fig. 17-21). As discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', Nina Hagen also incorporates the 'stare' into her performances, as shown in the music video for 'New York / N.Y.' (1983) where she gazes directly into the camera repeatedly across a range of 'looks': straight on,

obliquely, in mid and long shots, and in extreme close-up (Telegenics, 2018) (see Fig. 22). Drawing on the analysis presented in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk', I would argue that Hagen's stare is doubly threatening due to her gender: her constructed hyper-femininity and 'madness' are filtered through the male gaze. As McClary (2002) notes: "the madwoman is one of the most terrifying archetypes in Western culture, and she is fascinating precisely because she is terrifying" (p. 89). A synthesis of Sartre's 'Look' and Mulvey's 'male gaze' would be an interesting topic for future research.

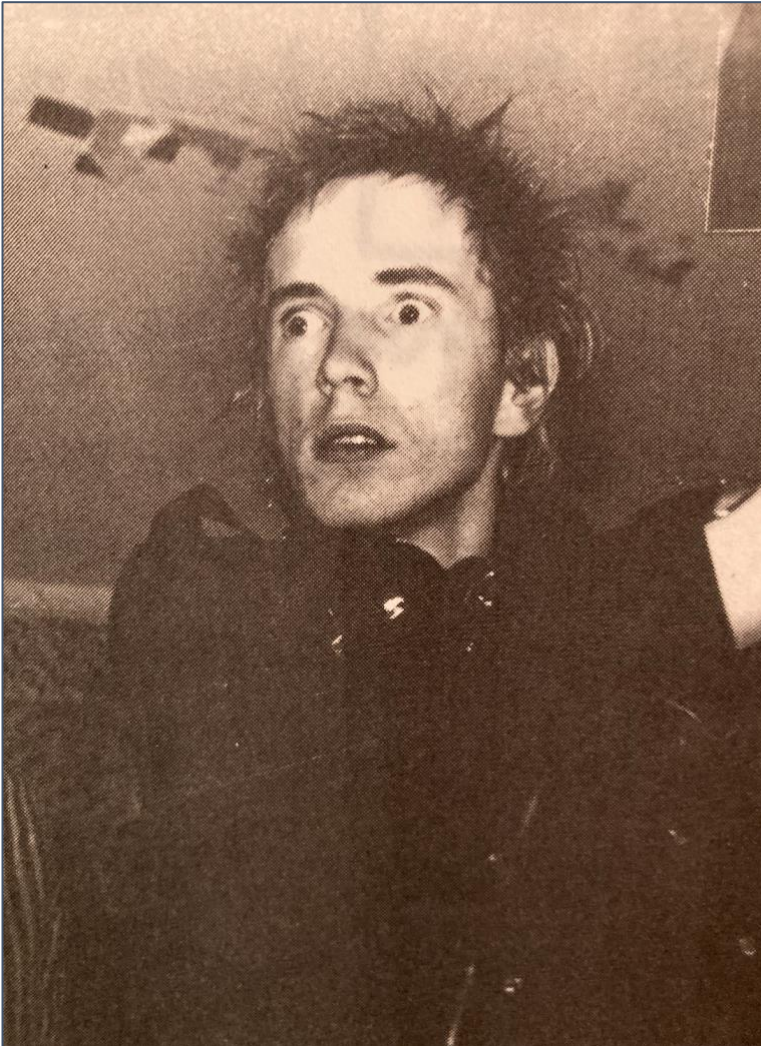


Figure 17: Johnny Rotten in Sniffin' Glue (Jan, 1977) [Bishopsgate Archives]



Figure 18: Bondage up yours! Johnny Rotten in classic punk get up (Hall, 2012)



Figure 19: The evil Elvis? Sid Vicious throws some shapes while on tour in Holland, 1977 (Hall, 2012)



Figure 20: Public Image: John Lydon and Keith Levine pose for publicity shots after forming PIL (Hall, 2012)



Figure 21: John Lydon enjoyed great success with post-punk band Public Image Limited (Hall, 2012)



Figure 22: Nina Hagen - frames from 'New York/N. Y.' (1983) (Telegenics, 2018)

Chapter 4: Extended Case Study: The Sex Pistols

This chapter presents a case for the Sex Pistols as an embodiment of Existentialism through Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. An analysis of *Never Mind the Bollocks* (2012a) is presented. Whilst Existential themes are present throughout all tracks on the album, seven tracks have been selected as offering the most substantial philosophical content: 'Holidays in The Sun', 'Bodies', 'No Feelings', 'God Save the Queen', 'Problems', 'Anarchy in the UK' and 'Submission'. Existential themes explored within these tracks include: destruction as creation; the rejection of authority, morality, and systems of thought and thus the adoption of personal authenticity; the quest for truth (often via the injection of Dionysian energy); and, finally, the ability to encourage critique, self-reflection, and activity. There is a general sense of urgency (we must act now!) throughout the album, for example, the band opt for fast tempos and Lydon tends to cram too many words into vocal lines. In this way he embodies a subject in a state of anxiety/confusion; he exists somewhere between inauthenticity and authenticity. A state of anxiety has been triggered and the subject is in the process of self-creation. The future, however, is uncertain.

Although Lydon doesn't suggest that he will engage in any form of destruction throughout 'Holidays in the Sun' (2012a), the implication is that with the fall of the Berlin Wall, a better world is waiting (although Lydon isn't sure what that world will look like, echoing the Nietzschean notion that the future is uncertain, but we must at least look towards something different). Based on Lydon's (1994) biography, the line "I'm looking over the wall / And they're looking at me!" is most likely a reference to the soldiers in East Berlin. The shared eye-contact between Lydon and the soldiers invokes Sartre's 'The Look': both consciousnesses are triggered into self-reflection, without the possibility of a we-relation, separated by a 'wall'. Moreover, it is a commentary on the hypocrisy of the West who have been conditioned to fear communism, yet the East have been conditioned to fear them in return (further alienating them from each other). The issue for Existential-punks is that in fact *all* systems of governance are corrupt, and the divide (the very literal divide in this case) is incomprehensible: "I don't understand this thing at all". Adopting a position – 'communist' or 'capitalist' – would be to live in Bad Faith. In going over the wall and violating man-made boundaries, Lydon would be rejecting both positions. The line "Claustrophobia there's too much paranoia / There's too many closets oh when will we fall?" is also commentary on adopting rigid subject positions – prescribed categories are claustrophobic 'closets', restricting free-thinking. Lydon asks when humanity will realise this ("when will we fall?"). The line "I'm looking over the wall / And they're looking at me" also echoes the Nietzschean staring into the abyss (the other side) only to have it stare back. Moreover, the way Lydon shouts, "they're looking at me!" conveys a sense of distress; he is uncomfortable with the prospect of having to face himself (i.e., he is not yet ready to let go of his inauthenticity).

For Lydon, the 'truth' of humanity lies somewhere over the other side of the wall, or at least in the act of violating the boundaries that the wall represents. Towards the end of the song, Lydon feels compelled to

see what's on the other side: "I gotta go over the wall / I'm going go over the wall". The final line "please don't be waiting for me", suggests that Lydon is frightened of whatever is waiting on the other side (i.e., the 'truth'). This suggests that Heideggerian anxiety has been triggered, but the subject is not ready to face himself. This quest for 'truth' is supported by the line "I don't wanna holiday in the sun", which could be read as a rejection of the Apollonian (sun) in favour of the Dionysian. The word 'holiday' also implies that residing in the Apollonian is never a permanent state. Encouragement of critique, self-reflection and activity can also be found in the lyrics. The opening line "A cheap holiday in other people's misery" echoes the notion that wallowing in other people's misery (a 'holiday' in Berlin) can be rewarding, as discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. In Berlin, one is surrounded by death (he refers to it as the "new Belsen" i.e., a Nazi concentration camp) – facing death in a Heideggerian way has triggered Lydon's 'anxiety'. Words such as 'paranoia' and 'claustrophobia' capture his anxious emotional state, as does the line "They're staring all night and / They're staring all day". Moreover, his thoughts towards the end become erratic, and by the third chorus he sings faster, with breaks in vocal lines which didn't occur before, further highlighting his confusion. Although triggered into a state of anxiety, Lydon expresses a Heideggerian projection of himself into the future: "I'm gonna go over the Berlin Wall" – there is no indication that Lydon goes over the wall, but he sees himself in terms of a future on the other side. Lydon recognises the danger of living in Bad Faith but isn't quite ready to let go of inauthenticity: "Now I got a reason / and I'm still waiting". His reluctance is reinforced by final line, "Please don't be waiting for me". As a final note on Lydon's projection of himself into the future, in the third chorus he shouts "I'm gonna go over *and over* the Berlin Wall", suggesting that transgressions will be repeated infinitely.

In 'Bodies' (2012a), Pauline may have 'killed her baby' (destruction), but in commenting on abortion from two opposing perspectives ("she was a bloody disgrace", "fuck it all and fuck a fucking brat"), Lydon invites the listener to question the connection between abortion and morality, thus laying the foundations for the potential construction of new values (creation). Although abortion was legal in Britain in 1977, the morality surrounding the issue would still be contentious, and so to speak so provocatively would have been shocking to 1970s British society. The track can be read as Lydon addressing the 'truth' of a situation in all its ugliness: "Throbbing squirm / Gurgling bloody mess", "Die little baby screaming". Here he addresses reality in that whether you are pro- or anti-, abortion is a messy and often traumatic experience. In this way he cuts to the truth of a situation as opposed to moralising it. Death as a theme runs throughout the song (alongside the death of the baby, Pauline is referred to as 'was', suggesting that she died because of the abortion). This confrontation with death may contribute to the listener's trigger into Heideggerian anxiety. After the line "I'm not a throbbing squirm", one could mistakenly assume that the song has ended. Until this point, Lydon condemns Pauline for what she has done; however, Lydon returns with: "Fuck this and fuck that / Fuck it all and fuck a fucking brat / She don't want a baby that looks like that / I don't want a baby that looks like that", suggesting that a moment of self-reflection (and

radical revaluation of values) has taken place. Self-reflection is evident in the line “I don’t wanna baby that looks like that” – he relates the situation to himself. Lydon leaves the listener feeling uneasy, with a closing “EUGH!”, drawing us into the messiness. Lydon (2014) claims that this song is neither anti- nor pro-abortion; rather, it’s supposed to be thought provoking. In this way, he embraces the Existential tenet ‘think for yourself’ and rejects rigid positions on questions of morality. He provides no answers; rather, he demands engagement from the listener/audience.

‘No Feelings’ (2012a) is interesting in that it offers a double reading. On the one hand, it is about finding meaning within yourself. The opening line, “I’ve seen you in the mirror / When the story began” suggests that literal self-reflection has triggered the development of personal authenticity and self-reliance. The subject is awakened to their inauthentic existence: “I look around your house / And there’s nothing to steal” i.e., there is nothing worth taking as the subject can find everything they need within themselves. “I love yer mortal sin” is a radical rejection of God. ‘Mortal sin’ is defined as: “a deliberate turning away from God and destroying charity (love) in the heart of the sinner... a grave action that is committed in full knowledge of its gravity and with the full consent of the sinner’s will. Such a sin cuts the sinner off from God’s sanctifying grace until it is repented, usually in confession with a priest. A person who dies unrepentant of the commission of mortal sin is believed to descend immediately into hell, where they suffer the separation from God that they chose in life” (Petruzello, 2021). It is, therefore, the most radical position one can take against God; Lydon celebrates his radical rejection and retreats into himself. On the other hand, ‘No Feelings’ (2012a) can also be read as an attack on someone who Lydon considers to be narcissistically inauthentic: “I’ve seen you in the mirror / When the story began” could refer to Lydon witnessing someone admiring themselves in the mirror. “You follow me around / Like a pretty pot of glue / I kick you in the head / You got nothing to say” – the narcissist is unable to think authentically for himself. “I kick you in the brains / When you get down to kneel and pray / You pray to your God” – in disrupting the act of prayer, Lydon breaks the connection between the narcissist and God. This intervention captures the essence of Existential-punk: like Nietzsche, they try to divert the course of humanity.

The general message running through ‘God Save the Queen’ (2012a) is the Nietzschean notion that we must destroy the present to create a future: we are a “potential H bomb”. In linking the monarchy and religion, Lydon associates the death of the monarchy with the death of God (there is no God to save the queen because God is dead). The entire song promotes personal authenticity: “Don’t be told what you want / Don’t be told what you need”, and although the refrain “No future” appears nihilistic, taken in context it reads as commentary on the fact that there is only no future if things continue as they are. The Sex Pistols present an alternative: “We’re the poison / In your human machine / We’re the future / Your future”. This echoes Nietzsche’s notion that he would create a crisis that would pave the way for a new future i.e., divert the course of human history. “When there’s no future / How can there be sin?” implies

that if we don't look to a future (i.e., remain stuck in nihilism) we lose value systems altogether, a position which Nietzsche rejects in that he doesn't disregard the notion of values *per se*, but rejects the current systems within which they are created and given meaning. Similarly, Lydon's project is not a rejection of values; rather, a revaluation of them. He looks towards a future underpinned by Existentialism. The line "We're the flowers in the dustbin" suggests that the Sex Pistols represent the growth ('flowers') that is needed in society; the adoption of Existential-punk values would lead to a healthy, authentic culture, however, the band has been misinterpreted and disregarded as rubbish ('dustbin'). As a final note on collective authenticity, towards the end of the song, after singing "No future for you", twice, Lydon sings "No future for me", reinforcing the notion that one is not free unless the other is free (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6).

'Problems' (2012a) represents a rejection of order and authority: "I ain't equipment / I ain't automatic / You won't find me just staying static / Don't you give me any orders / For people like me / There is no order". Moreover, in the Sartrean sense, Lydon rejects himself as an object with properties (I ain't equipment) and thus rejects Bad Faith. Lydon expresses anti-intellectualism in many of his interviews (see Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk'). The line, "Oh why am I here / I need to be me / 'Cause you're all too clear", read through this lens points towards 'all too clear' as a reference to systems of thought which are constructed through excessive, rational (Apollonian) thinking; clarity is not always possible when one takes into consideration the (Dionysian) messiness of life. In striving for clarity of thought, one neglects the aspects of life that cannot be contained within rigid categories. "You won't find me working / Nine to five / It's too much fun being alive" is a rejection of pre-existing categories and prescribed notions of what it means to be human (i.e., to work/labour) on the grounds that they destroy the fun of being alive. The line "You got a problem / What you gonna do?" forces the listener into self-reflection, encouraging them to move beyond their current situation. "Eat your heart out on a plastic tray / You don't do what you want / Then you'll fade away" – to 'eat your heart out' is to yearn for something unattainable (Dasein's yearning to discover who they really are), implying that Lydon is accusing the listener of inauthenticity. This is reinforced by "You don't do what you want / Then you'll fade away" i.e., if you don't strive for authenticity, you will lose yourself in 'the *they*' (fade away). The notion that Dasein is inauthentic by virtue of the fact that it loses itself in the everyday is reinforced by the next line, "You won't find me working / Nine to five / it's too much fun being alive", suggesting that to feel 'alive' (authentic) one must reject constructions of themselves that exist within prescribed social roles (i.e., the worker).

In 'Anarchy in the UK' (2012a), Lydon leaves us with a final instruction, "destroy". We won't know what the future looks like until we engage in a destruction of the present. Guitar feedback lingers, symbolising the injection of Dionysian energy i.e., destruction will lead us to a Dionysian 'truth'. The urgency of humankind's situation is captured in the opening line "Right now" – the listener is immediately situated in the present moment; we must act *now*. In proclaiming "I am an antichrist" Lydon aligns himself with

everything that God is not, his values are in direct opposition to everything God represents (interestingly, Nietzsche published a book called *The Antichrist* in 1985). This represents Lydon's iconoclasm and disdain for hero worship (discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism). He is making it clear to the listener that he does not want to present himself as an icon i.e., someone to look up to or follow. He himself resists living in the service of anybody ("Cause I wanna be anarchy / No dogsbody"). "Don't know what I want / But I know how to get it" suggests that Lydon has begun the journey to authenticity; he is unsure of what both himself and society will look like in the future, but he understands what needs to be done to get there (the adoption of Nietzschean critique and Existential principles). On the surface, "I am an anarchist" and "It's the only way to be" suggest that Lydon is binding himself to a purpose and thus living in Bad Faith; however, as discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism, 'anarchy' as understood by the Sex Pistols is centred on chaos, not an adherence to a political philosophy. He binds himself only to Dionysian chaos. "Know what I mean?" directly addresses the listener, triggering self-reflection. Lydon (2014) has said that 'Anarchy in the UK' (2012a) was written to inspire action: "That line, 'I wanna destroy the passer-by'... I was talking about all those kinds of people, the complacent ones that don't contribute, that just sit by and moan and don't actually do anything to better themselves or the situation for others. The non-participating moral majority" (p. 106). Lydon veers between establishing an identity in the present, "I am an anarchist", and projecting himself into the future in the Heideggerian sense, "I wanna be anarchy". His final statement, "I want to be an anarchist", suggests that in the end he accepts the future projection of himself, recognising that to be a person is to find oneself on the way to something that does not yet exist.

'Submission' (2012a), like 'No Feelings' (2012a) offers a double reading. On first listen, it reads as though Lydon is submerged in/sexually submissive to, a new love interest. However, in the context of punk's clear relationship to Nietzsche and the Existentialists, it reads as a journey into the dark, irrational and unconscious forces of life (the Dionysian): "I feel your undercurrent flowing" (Lydon is tapping into the underlying, unexpressed forces of life), "Dragging me down submission / I can't tell you what I've found" (the subject has been exposed to the darker forces of life, but can't yet make sense of them), "I can't figure out your watery love / I gotta solve your mystery / You're sitting it out in heaven above" (invokes Apollo and Dionysus in that Lydon is entering the Dionysian underworld, yet the Apollonian above – light, consciousness, separation, distance, detachment – is always present), "I wanna share it" (Lydon's sinister delivery suggests he understands the implications that his revelations would have on humanity), and, finally, "I wanna drown drown under the water / Going down down under the sea" (these final lines suggest that Lydon is losing himself in the Dionysian, the further 'down' he goes, the further away he is from 'above' i.e., both God and the Apollonian). The sound effect in the instrumental reinforces the second interpretation of this track: note definition is blurred (dissolution of boundaries) and the melody cannot be identified. The atmosphere of a dark underworld is created. As a final note, the subject as submerged in water reinforces the Heideggerian notion of 'das Man' in that every aspect of our being is

connected to others in the same way that when we are submerged in water, every part of our body is in contact with the water.

Chapter 5:

An Exploration of the (Feminine) 'Self': Punk as Existential-Feminism

As Blase (2018) notes: "women's cultural creative role within punk is frequently forgotten or misrepresented" (p. 85). Recently, both within and outside of the academy, however, there has been much written on women's role in the creation and consumption of punk-rock. Histories of punk that reconstruct the masculinised narrative are becoming popular, alongside autobiographies from key female figures who were active within the first-wave British and American scenes. Revised female-centred histories such as *Revenge of the She-Punks* by British journalist Vivien Goldman (2019) and *She Bop: The Definitive History of Women in Popular Music* by Lucy O'Brien (2020) - former keyboardist of Southampton-based first-wave punk band The Catholic Girls - have garnered much attention over the last eighteen-months, as have biographies such as *Dayglo: The Poly Styrene Story* by Poly Styrene's daughter Celeste Bell and writer/broadcaster Zoe Howe (2019), *Clothes, Music, Boys* by Viv Albertine of The Slits (2019) and *Just Kids* by Patti Smith (2012). Punk-turned-academics Helen Reddington (2007) and Lauraine Leblanc (2008) have undertaken interview-based research into girls' participation in punk to address the gap in scholarship which fails to adequately acknowledge the female experience of subcultures, resulting in the insightful publications *The Lost Women of Rock Music* and *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture* by Reddington (2007) and Leblanc (2008)⁴ respectively. On her methodology, Leblanc (2008) writes: "feminist cultural studies centre on the culture of resistance. Whereas British subculture theorists retained a Marxian focus on class issues, feminist theorists view patriarchy as the primary oppressive order that women resist. Unlike subculture theorists, feminist cultural theorists foreground the subjectivity of the women we study" (p. 16). Similarly, this chapter is an attempt to foreground the philosophical position of 'woman' in a male-dominated subculture and examine the movement through an Existential-feminist lens.

Leblanc (2008) notes that for many punk women the movement was about exploring issues of identity as opposed to a preoccupation with nihilism (although the accepted reading of punk as a preoccupation with nihilism has been challenged in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism). Women have struggled for subjectivity since the Ancient Greeks and so feminist thought tends to examine the experience of 'woman' in a patriarchal world as opposed to questioning the general principles of existence (Bauer, 2001). As Di Stefano (1990) notes on the white man of the industrialised West who asserts his position against Enlightenment principles, he has "already had an Enlightenment [and] is now ready and willing to subject that legacy to critical scrutiny" (p. 75). Women are burdened with the task of fighting for subjectivity before a questioning of subjectivity itself can take place. Feminist thought, broadly speaking, can

⁴ Although it must be noted that Leblanc (2008) interviews punk women who are currently active within the punk scene.

therefore be seen as an examination of the philosophical position of 'woman' as opposed to the philosophical position of humanity in general. Building on this I argue that, generally speaking, women's quest for Existential authenticity within punk involves three stages (as opposed to the two stages outlined in 'Heidegger on Authenticity'): firstly, through an 'awakening' (in the Nietzschean/Heideggerian sense); secondly, through the examination of the subjective position of 'woman' in a patriarchal world - she cannot 'be who she is' until she can differentiate between her 'real' self and those aspects of herself she has internalised through sociocultural expectations (interestingly, Leblanc [2008] sees the punk movement as a way for punk girls to circumvent the process of internalisation) - and finally, through collective acceptance on behalf of the subculture (which can often be more difficult for women by virtue of their gender). The framework for this chapter is taken from a course entitled 'Female Philosophers on Freedom' that I attended at the London School of Philosophy in 2020 (Paine, 2020a). In this course, Paine (2020b) sets out to: "[explore] what often neglected female philosophers have had to say about freedom, including: Princess Elisabeth, whose correspondence with Descartes led to his producing his final treatise, *The Passions of the Soul*; Gabrielle Suchon, who anticipates Existentialism; Émilie du Châtelet, whose essay 'On Happiness' is insightful and radical; Mary Wollstonecraft, who provides a colourful critique of the constricting effects of social norms and Simone de Beauvoir's account of a 'situated ethics'". This chapter will explore punk within this framework, examining the extent to which the first-wave scene provided a space for women to explore notions of (female) freedom and authenticity.

Women in Punk

In *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, English artist, journalist, and political activist Caroline Coon - who documented the first-wave as it was unfolding in the 1970s - says of punk: "[it] was the first time that women played an equal role as partners in a subcultural group... it was even more interesting seeing women standing side by side with men in the context of the patriarchy. It was a huge step forward" (Lydon, 1994, p. 72). Many have echoed a similar sentiment. Prinz (2014) notes: "it should be added that while misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of hate speech have been common in punk, the movement itself also initially had many more openly gay and female performers than mainstream rock, paving the way for greater tolerance in music" (p. 585). Similarly, Worley (2012) writes: "punk was soon recognised to have created a welcome opportunity for women to form bands and express their opinions. Again, there had initially been some concern that punk harboured misogynistic tendencies. However, the high profile of women within the early punk fraternity (Vivienne Westwood, Jordan, Siouxsie Sioux) was complemented by bands such as Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Slits, X-Ray Spex, The Raincoats, Au Pairs, Delta 5, Ludus and Poison Girls emerging to challenge the masculine conventions of popular music" (p. 338). Whilst punk was a space within which women could challenge perceived notions of gender and sexuality and provided a medium through which an overtly feminist stance could be (to an extent) safely

expressed, Worley's (2012) statement oversimplifies the female-punk relationship: it does not suffice to say that punk broke gender boundaries by virtue of the fact that women were present in the scene. Critics have more recently contested the claim that punk was a site of gender equality noting that as the scene expanded it became hyper-masculinised and explicitly anti-women: "after several years... punk became less hospitable to women as the scene reflected some of larger society's patriarchal tendencies" (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012, p. 138). The threat to women was felt so acutely that many female punks stopped going to gigs because they were frightened of getting killed (Downes, 2012). Leblanc (2008) captures the notion that on the one hand punk can be read as a site of female liberation, but on the other, it reproduced the dynamics of mainstream culture ('she' refers to a participant in Leblanc's [2008] study):

Like me, she felt troubled about the male-dominated gender dynamics in the punk subculture, a subculture that portrays itself as being egalitarian and, and even feminist, but is actually far from being either. Yet, like me, she had found that this same subculture gave her a place to be assertive and aggressive, to express herself in less 'feminine' ways than other girls. It is this paradox that led me to this research: on the one hand, punk gave us both a place to protest all manner of constraints; on the other, the subculture put many of the same pressures on us girls as did the mainstream culture we strove to oppose (p. 6).

Moreover, women were often required to reject their female peers to be accepted in the subculture as 'one of the boys', undermining the principle of collective sisterhood central to much feminist thought (Leblanc, 2008; Reddington, 2007). Many punk women internalise the norms within the subculture and project them onto their peers, expecting the same from other punk girls and rejecting them when they don't meet the accepted standards (Leblanc, 2008).

Goldman (2019) offers an interesting perspective on women in first-wave punk. Like Leblanc (2008) she notes that central to women's thinking generally is a quest for the 'self' and in this way punk sits within the history of women's thought comfortably. Punk women, for Goldman (2019), have all addressed the same question: who am I? In this way punk women tackle a fundamental Existential question - what is my authentic self, but more than this, what does it mean to be a woman searching for her authentic self in a man's world? Simone de Beauvoir tackled this question perhaps more so than any other philosopher in the history of Western thought and so her work will be discussed in detail later (Bauer, 2001). Punk offered a way for women to experiment with identities that were previously unavailable to them and thus discover who they 'really are' in an Existential sense (Goldman, 2019). Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex, for example, who struggled with her identity as a mixed-race woman in a white middle-class suburb, had never felt a sense of belonging until punk: the movement provided an outlet to find her 'authentic' self (Goldman, 2019; Bell & Howe, 2019). Similarly, Gina Birch of The Raincoats says that punk "was exciting and it was doable. It enabled a new sensibility to be let loose, unleashed in my heart and brain. I thought, this is the beginning of who I am" (Goldman, 2019, p. 30). Similarly, Leblanc (2008) notes that in interviewing young female punks she noticed that: "girls use the punk subculture to resist the

prescriptions of femininity, to carve out space where they can define their own sense of self” (pp. 219-220). Moreover, punk girls were either constructing a sense of self after losing it to the patriarchy - “to become a woman is to lose subjectivity and strength i.e., to destroy a strong sense of self” (Leblanc, 2008, p. 13) - or entering the subculture in order to “circumvent the process of internalising and enacting femininity” (Leblanc, 2008, p. 102).

Leblanc (2008) notes that despite problems with respect to gender, the punk movement did “[facilitate] personal growth and self-esteem” in young women, making them happier and self-reliant (p. 223). She observes that “in this reflexive subculture, the possibility of rejecting or subverting her own femininity plays a large part in a girl’s attraction to punk” (Leblanc, 2008, p. 141). Women have an opportunity to construct an identity that is not built on traditional notions of femininity. Punk allowed women to tap into their “inner resources, strengths that they had not possessed, or known that they possessed” (Leblanc, 2008, p. 222) and remain committed to these values. Punk women partake in (female) self-discovery: in this way they are doubly resistant/oppositional in that they engage in a ‘revaluation of values’ not simply in the Nietzschean sense, but also offer a critique of the ‘values’ of girl/womanhood. This process is central to the development of their ‘intellectual conscience’ (discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism) and this creates the foundations for an individual relationship to the world. Leblanc’s (2008) definition of resistance provides further clarification on this point. Her definition of resistance involves three stages: a subjective account of oppression; a desire to counter the oppression; and an action, word, thought or deed that is intended to specifically counter that oppression (Leblanc, 2008). In this way punk women demonstrate gender-resistance. This resistance, however, is always “tempered by the accommodations they make to the masculinity and male domination of their chosen surroundings” (Leblanc, 2008, p. 226). This will be explored in detail throughout the following section.

The ‘do it yourself’ ethos of punk, combined with its Existential tenet ‘be who you are’, was perhaps, then, more liberating for women: they were able to create an existence out of previously masculinised personality traits - loud, defiant, individual, confrontational, rebellious, assertive, etc. One could argue that they were creating this from nothing: with the exception of Patti Smith, punk women had no foremothers to draw from. Punk men had rock heroes to mould their identity on - Elvis Presley, Jim Morrison, Mick Jagger, Lou Reed - but women had no one. On French punk rocker Lizzy Mercier Descloux, Goldman (2019) writes: “one arty young French punkette’s quest for her voice over six albums illustrates the question of the first punk girls’ unprecedented generation: How will our music sound, with pretty much zero foremothers to draw from and respond to?” (p. 38). This can be liberating, as Leblanc (2008) notes on punk’s potential as a site for gender transgression: “for a brief moment, all forms of transgression had free rein, and women in punk took full advantage of this atmosphere of permissiveness and rebellion” (p. 36). On the other hand, it was restricting in that there is always the risk of reproducing patriarchal power dynamics within the subculture. As Leblanc’s (2008) study reveals, many punk women

adopt a masculinised-femininity to survive within the movement. Conventional expressions of femininity are mocked in ways which echo that of wider society and in this way punk, in some respects, “[perpetuates] a patriarchal devaluation of the feminine” (Downes, 2012, p. 208). Women construct female-punk identity from what is available to them: the result is often an amalgamation of “punk masculinity and conventional femininity” i.e., a vacillation between tomboy and sex object (Downes, 2012, p. 208). By presenting themselves as a sex object, one could argue that punk women gain empowerment through an “appeal to masculine heterosexual desire”, perpetuating the sexism (and homophobia) within wider society (Downes, 2012; Leblanc, 2008). Although, this reading dismisses the agency punk women exercise. Leblanc (2008) writes of her own experience as a punk:

If you had asked me, then, who I was, what I was doing, and what I had to say, I would have told you that I was protesting The Injustice of The System. I would have told you that I was not trying to anger people, but to scare them, to wake them up. I would have told you, perhaps not in these words, that I was not trying to be sexual or indecent, but that, although still a virgin, I was mocking female sexuality through parody. I would have told you how becoming a punk was, for me, the ultimate in self-empowerment - that I had moved from a position of victimization, as the smartest, dorkiest, most persecuted girl in school, to one of agency, as a person in control of my self-presentation (pp. 2-3).

Whilst on the one hand punk identity gave Leblanc (2008) a sense of agency, on the other, parodying female ‘sexiness’ in a culture dominated by the male gaze is arguably a reproduction of the very systems she was claiming to dismantle. The point here is not to elevate a particular reading, but to highlight the fact that punk gave women a sense of agency and a space within which to explore what it means to be a woman, even if those explorations were often tempered by accommodations they made to male gatekeepers. Moreover, note that Leblanc (2008) was trying ‘to scare them, to wake them up’, but was also ‘mocking female sexuality through parody’ i.e., doubly oppositional.

The ‘love song’ was either rejected by punks in favour of more ‘serious’ matters or approached from an unconventional angle, at least according to the standards of traditional popular music. Crass, for example, saw marriage as a “one-sided microsystem of societal control” (Goldman, 2019, p. 89). This echoes Gabrielle Suchon’s notion of marriage which will be explored in detail later. Bands such as Gang of Four took an ‘anti-love’ stance with songs like ‘Love Like Anthrax’ (1995): “Love will get you like a case of anthrax / And that’s something I don’t wanna catch”; as did Joy Division with their most notable single ‘Love Will Tear Us Apart’ (1980). Goldman (2019) writes: “as punk is a loose collective of different people united in being deemed outsiders by conventional standards - norms which themselves shift like a rope bridge slung between melting icebergs in a high wind - some degree of alienation is the default mode of punk love” (p. 94). This is perhaps best captured in the Buzzcocks’ classic ‘Ever Fallen in Love’ (With Someone You Shouldn’t’ve?)’ (1978) which not only hints at queer love, but rejects the happy ending found in traditional love songs. Goldman (2019) highlights that the 1970s was not only a time for

experimentation in music, but also in living. She writes: “all the usual courtship rituals seemed irrelevant, not designed for the reckless times” (Goldman, 2019, p. 101). Punks regarded sex as something casual and normal between friends: it wasn’t subject to moral judgement in the way it was in wider society (Goldman, 2019; McNeil & McCain, 2016). In rejecting romantic love as an ideal, female participation in punk subculture meant women were able to reject restrictive societal expectations of them i.e., housewife, mother, and so on. By extension, in normalising sexual activity outside of marriage there was potential for an exploration of female desire within the punk movement (although I am unaware of any studies that have explored this in detail) and connections which aren’t centred on institutionalised traditions such as marriage. Similarly, Leblanc (2008) notes that: “early punk was the first rock scene in which women and sex were not the main focus of song lyrics, allowing punk music to avoid gender stereotyping in large measure” (p. 44). In an interview with feminist fanzine *Jolt* in 1977, when asked: “what do you think about love songs and songs about relationships?”, The Slits replied: “We’re not anti-love, but we’re anti the idea of ‘true love’, anti the idea of a man buying you with money and presents. What most people call love is just status and security, just a facade. But we believe in friendship” (p. 2). Goldman (2019) sums up the liberating aspect of ‘punk love’ for women nicely: “punk love can often be an abrasive saga, involving negotiations with gender wars and power plays, asking if sacrifice is necessary for an autonomous creative life. In these songs, women work through a lifetime of seeking connection. We seek to understand our erotic drives and how to unleash them when female flesh, especially young meat, is a commodity that a predatory entertainment business must refresh as regularly as vampires seek new maidens. Marriage may be seen as a deep collaboration or an unfair trade-off, but the urge to merge remains. If your genetic family cannot follow you where you need to go, punk love means gathering a tribe, some maybe unprecedented form of community” (pp. 139-140).

Punk’s Association with Second and Third Wave Feminism: The Personal is the Political

David (2016) provides a useful framework in separating the various waves of feminism: the first wave in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries which centred around struggles for women’s suffrage; the second wave which lasted from the 1960s-80s, centring on civil rights and women’s rights; the third wave which lasted from 1980s-90s which began to recognise intersectional oppression (this was the era of diversity and global feminism); and, finally, the fourth and fifth waves of the twenty-first century, which centre on the digital era, millennials and everyday sexism. It is within the second wave that 1970s British punk can be located. Whilst the focus of this thesis is not on the ways in which the artists themselves engaged with the BWLM or specific feminist texts that would have been circulated in the 1970s, it is important to highlight the wider socio-political context in order to elucidate the type of feminism that would have been in the public consciousness at the time, and the tensions between organised feminist thought/action and the punk quest for Existential self-discovery and individuality, both of which were

present in first-wave punk. According to Binard (2017), the BWLM emerged “to a large extent, from the British New Left, from Socialist and Marxist groups in which women’s issues had often been dismissed as personal ones” (p. 2) i.e., it was centred on collectivist (socialist) action. However, in a quest for Existential authenticity located outside the limits of prescribed notions of identity - ‘socialist’, ‘Marxist’, and so on - many punk women resisted the label ‘feminism’ because of its associations with the BWLM. Viv Albertine, in *Clothes Music Boys*, highlights this internal conflict: “I read a lot about feminism and I’m a feminist, apply it to everything I think and do, but I don’t want to be labelled in any way” (Albertine, 2019, p. 153). Wilkinson (2018) notes the “growing essentialism” in the women’s movement around this time, which deterred many punks from identifying with it (p. 162). As discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism, ‘essentialism’ is a concept fundamentally rejected by the Existentialists (central to Sartre’s philosophy is the notion that ‘existence precedes essence’).

Despite the desire expressed by many female punks for Existential authenticity (i.e., free from external structures such as feminism), there was also a collectivist strand to first-wave British punk. It is the 1990s American punk offshoot, ‘Riot Grrrl’, that is associated most explicitly with (third-wave) collectivist feminist politics in its placing of gender at the forefront of the punk movement (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012; Garrison, 2000; Downes, 2012; Kaltefleiter, 2016; Schilt, 2003; Marcus, 2010). Riot Grrrl was formed in 1991 in Olympia, Washington by Allison Wolfe, and Molly Neuman (members of Bratmobile), fanzine editor Jen Smith, and Bikini Kill’s Kathleen Hanna who organised weekly meetings on women’s issues such as: sexual abuse, eating disorders, fat oppression, identity, and self-defence (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012). The desire for a feminist space grew out of a general feeling from female punks that the scene had become hyper-masculinised, and so Riot Grrrl was an attempt to “[reclaim] the multi-gendered spaces of the initial punk movement” (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012, p. 138). It is generally accepted in current scholarship that Riot Grrrl was largely successful in this respect, in particular for demonstrating a persistent opposition to mainstream media and encouraging young women to express themselves publicly (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012; Garrison, 2000; Downes, 2012; Kaltefleiter, 2016; Schilt, 2003; Marcus, 2010). The movement is celebrated for its “[combination of] feminist consciousness and punk aesthetics, politics, and style” (Garrison, 2000, p. 142) and its “[commitment] to girl empowerment and self-representation” (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012, p. 136). Riot Grrrl as a movement had an “explicit intention to disrupt gender power relations and encourage the politicized participation of girls and young women in independent punk music culture” (Downes, 2012, p. 204). For Downes (2012), it wasn’t until Riot Grrrl that punk’s “implicit feminist’s potential of women’s punk subcultural resistance could be made explicit” (p. 209). Perhaps due to the widely accepted ‘success’ of Riot Grrrl as a punk-feminist movement the first-wave is often looked on as merely paying “lip service to feminism” (with, according to the author of *The Guardian* article from which the quote is taken, the exception of Vi Subversa of British anarcho-punk band Poison

Girls) when there was actually a collectivist strand to the first-wave that has been largely ignored in the literature (True, 2016).

First-wave punk was more proactive in its approach to collectively tackling (second-wave) feminist issues than it is usually given credit for, and whilst *as a movement* it cannot necessarily be read as collectivist (for reasons discussed previously) there were elements to the scene that demonstrated collective political action in line with the BWLM. Rock Against Sexism (RAS) for example, was an organisation that formed in the UK in 1979 to tackle the sexism and misogyny that women faced in both the music industry and wider society. It was created as an offshoot of Rock Against Racism (RAR) which formed in 1976 and received support from many punk bands (both male and female) The RAS fanzine, *Drastic Measures*, states the organisation's aims (see Fig. 23).

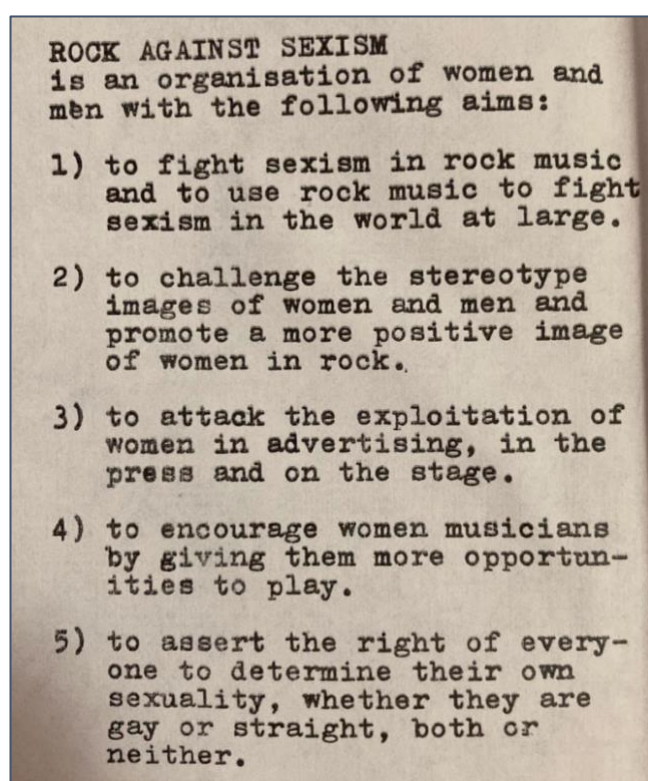


Figure 23: *Drastic Measures* (n.d., Issue 4, p. 2) - aims of Rock Against Sexism [Bishopsgate Archives]

RAS placed emphasis on collective action and was often intersectional: they organised gigs for women (ensuring that the music played between sets wasn't sexist and, later, published a commitment in Issue 4 of *Drastic Measure* to publish access information for people with disabilities [see Fig. 24]); encouraged readers to organise local gigs, hold workshops for women interested in learning a musical instrument, and host discussion groups on sexism (see Fig. 25), encouraged political action in support of women's issues, in particular the Campaign Against the Corrie Bill (a restrictive anti-abortion bill introduced by MP John Corrie in 1979 [Himmelweit, 1980]) (see Fig. 26) and showed solidarity with gay rights (e.g., the 'Paedophile Information Exchange' article highlighted in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism).

This gig was our first one where

we published access information for people with disabilities, and we will be doing this at all gigs in the future and hope that others will do the same. People with disabilities are often excluded from gigs due to poor access and lack of information, and we feel it's important not to discriminate in this way.

Figure 24: *Drastic Measures* (n.d., Issue 4, p. 2) - access information for people with disabilities [Bishopsgate Archives]

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- 1) Join Rock Against Sexism. For £1 you get a year's subscription to *Drastic Measures*, plus information about meetings, gigs and other supporters in your area. Affiliation for groups and organizations costs £5 a year.
- 2) Try to get a Rock Against Sexism group going locally. You could contact your local Rock Against Racism group if there is one for any advice, contacts, facilities etc. Women's groups, NAC groups and other anti-sexist campaigns may be interested in joint activities.
- 3) Organise a RAS gig. A major policy of RAS is to promote women musicians, so make sure you get at least one women's band or a mixed band. If you don't know of any in your area, we'll try to put you in touch with women musicians. Ask us for our gig guide.
- 4) Hold musical and/or discussion workshops. In addition to gigs it is important that RAS keeps its ideas alive and growing.
- 5) Try to get local record shops and bookshops to stock *Drastic Measures* and badges. Get into the local media - either get an article in, or draw attention to obvious examples of sexism.
- 6) Send us as much info as possible about what you're doing. If you have any suggestions other groups may find helpful, we'll pass them on. Send in any letters, reports on gigs, photos, record reviews, articles, cartoons, names of non-sexist bands who support RAS etc. for *Drastic Measures*.
- 7) Don't forget we have changed our address!

Hope to hear from you soon.
Love from Rock Against Sexism.

Figure 25: *Drastic Measures* (n.d., Issue 3, p. 2) - 'How You Can Help' [Bishopsgate Archives]



Figure 26: *Drastic Measures* (n.d., issue not known, p. 6) - Campaign Against the Corrie Bill [Bishopsgate Archives]

Blase (2018) notes the influence of the BWLM on first-wave British punk and punk fanzines: “both the women’s liberation movement and wimmins comix preceded and ran parallel to punk, interacting with it in ways that have only begun to be discussed in recent years. Certainly, the women’s liberation movement impacted on punk and punk fanzines... if we look at fanzines such as Lucy Toothpaste’s *JOLT* [of which there were only three issues] and the collectively run Birmingham fanzine *Brass Lip*, we can see the language of feminist debates around women in the workplace being mirrored in their debates around the treatment of women in the music industry” (p. 76). As Worley (2015) notes, fanzines often provided a space for those that were denied by traditional political realms. Lucy Toothpaste was concerned with fighting fascism - calling its presence within the punk movement “stupid” and “dangerous” (Blase, 2018, p. 76) - and sexism - her central concern was to “explore the role that women were playing within the developing London and UK punk scene” (Blase, 2018, p. 77). Later, Lucy Toothpaste founded *Spare Rib*, and was also involved in *RAR*, *RAS* and wrote for *Temporary Hoarding* and *Drastic Measures* (Blase, 2018). *Brass Lip* - which ran features on sexism and the music industry, alongside interviews with female bands - had two female editors and was professionally printed by Moss Side Printing Co-op in Manchester (all-female), linking punk to grassroots women’s lib and feminist counterculture (Blase, 2018). These fanzines, and punk fanzines in general, were central to the notion of punk as a collectivist approach to issues such as fascism and sexism. Furthermore, they inspired future incarnations of punk and feminism: “just as pre-punk publications forged a path for punk women, so *JOLT* and *Brass Lip* forged a path for *Shocking Pink*, *Bad Attitude*, *Girl Frenzy* and *Riot Grrrl* in the UK” (Blase, 2018, p. 86).

Female Philosophers on Freedom and Authenticity

This section was inspired by a course I attended at the London School of Philosophy in 2020 entitled 'Female Philosophers on Freedom' led by philosophy tutor and researcher Rachel Paine (2020a). Paine (2020a) explores what six female philosophers have to say about freedom and what this reveals about 'authenticity'. She is drawn to these philosophers because of their unique visions of authentic life and their ability to pursue this life despite the constraints and norms of their time that mitigate against doing so (Paine, 2020b). The female philosophers she focuses on are: Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618-1680), Gabrielle Suchon (1632-1703), Émilie du Châtelet (1706-1749), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). All philosophers in some way or another have pursued a life or thought that is unique to their conditions and understanding of the world in which they would like to live (Paine, 2020b). They focus on a life that they find to be valuable and build a philosophy based on the dynamic between philosophy and authentic identity. Central to their work is the question of whether personal authenticity entails freedom. Paine's (2020a) work is useful here in that she distinguishes between inner and outer freedom: inner conditions involve thinking for ourselves and sharing the world with people in ways that we choose; outer conditions of freedom are beyond our control and arrive from the actions of others, echoing the work of Simone de Beauvoir that will be discussed in detail later. Paine (2020a) argues that despite these outer constraints, personal authenticity can be achieved through 'inner freedom'. Similarly, as discussed previously, Sartre asserts that meaning derives from the subject. Sartre's account of freedom is most often conceptualised as metaphysical libertarianism, which asserts that "the human being is completely and unconditionally free" (Rose, 2003, p. 1). For the libertarian, one is completely free to choose projects and actions. To avoid this responsibility or deny your freedom in this way, for Sartre, is to act in 'Bad Faith' (as discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism). Rose (2003) writes: "Bad Faith is a denial of freedom, a denial of who we are, it is to deny the very dignity of humanity" (p. 3). Through this framework and an exploration of the work of Gabrielle Suchon and Simone de Beauvoir, the ways in which punk women look towards 'inner freedom' in the Existential sense, despite the constraints imposed upon them by the patriarchy, can be revealed. Moreover, the ways in which 'outer' freedom can impact the development of 'inner' freedom will be explored. In line with the thread running throughout this thesis that the cultivation of personal authenticity ('inner freedom') lays groundwork for revolutionary personal politics, Paine (2020a) also argues that robust inner freedom can play a role in challenging the constraints and norms we face. The scope of this thesis does not allow for a detailed account of all six female philosophers presented by Paine (2020a); therefore, de Beauvoir has been selected due to her direct association with Existentialism, and Suchon for her notable similarities with Existentialism, which have yet to be explored in the literature.

Gabrielle Suchon (1632-1703) and the Invention of Authenticity

There is very little written on the life and work of Gabrielle Suchon, especially in English (Desnain, 2009). She was a revolutionary French philosopher who explored the social, political, and religious position of woman in the modern era. Her work is unique in that she addresses the issue of woman in moral philosophy, which at the time was primarily concerned with man (Paine, 2019). Fundamental to her work is the notion that women are deserving of the rights granted to men including: liberty, education, and authority. She was also one of the first philosophers to argue that women can live a fulfilling unmarried life (Paine, 2019). Suchon's philosophy centres on the notion that "women are as capable as men, intellectually and spiritually, and are being unfairly prevented from fulfilling their God-given potential by arbitrary human laws" (Desnain, 2012, p. 3). Suchon asserts that a perverted use of religion has upheld male hegemony and so her work is designed to liberate: she wants to educate women and give them the means to challenge their "unfair and degraded condition" (Desnain, 2012, p. 4). She wants to give women a political conscience and prompt them into action (a theme running through Existentialism): "For Suchon... the primary aim is not to convince men of women's abilities, but to show women that they are not, by nature, inferior, to give them the means to improve themselves and to convince them that this can be achieved without men's approval or help" (Desnain, 2012, p. 6). Suchon's work, for example, includes instructions on rhetoric: given that public speaking was reserved for men, this presented a direct threat to man's monopoly on intellectual discourse. She also criticises the authors of her time who were "more concerned with showing off their rhetorical skills than with challenging the status quo" (Desnain, 2012, p. 11) echoing punk's criticism of prog-rock musicians who were more concerned with demonstrating musicianship than engaging with pressing social and political issues (discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk' Suchon is aware that "in order for women to challenge their status, they must be convinced of their own abilities and shaken out of the apathy in which their submission has condemned them: uneducated, belittled, mocked, they may no longer have either the will or the wits to fight" (Desnain, 2012, p. 12). Note here the similarity with Existentialism in her resistance to apathy and insistence on 'fight'. Suchon also notes that: "laws imposed by men through the centuries have harmed not just women, but society as a whole by depriving it of many gifted individuals who may have made a valuable contribution" (Desnain, 2012, p. 13).

Central to Suchon's work is the notion that key to human flourishing is 'the celibate life' i.e., a condition without commitments (Desnain, 2009; Paine, 2019). Once we are committed only to our authentic self the choices we make will not constrain our nature (it is worth noting that Suchon's work is not associated with the Existentialists in the literature and yet the similarities are notable). One very important model for Suchon's view of the natural state of our character is the Beguine movement of self-determining female religious communities that began in the 12th-century and spread throughout Europe over the next 400 years (Swan, 2016). Unlike nuns and married women, the Beguine's supported themselves through their

own work - making them worldly as well as religious - and owned their own property (Swan, 2016). They were not dependent on the church or any higher political authority; instead, the religious views they held were developed themselves. They usually lived in communities and were free to come and go. Suchon raises the Beguine character to a philosophical one who actively chooses life by rejecting pre-existing categories of life. She refers to one who chooses this path as 'The Neutralist'. The Neutralist is committed only to not committing herself (Desnain, 2012). The Neutralist lives a life free of commitments outside oneself, does not conform to social norms, helps others, and above all believes that if we don't identify ourselves with man-made constructions, we will find our natural, compassionate self. More than this, The Neutralist is: "a person, and more likely a woman, who is not called to the religious life but chooses to remain unmarried in order to dedicate herself to study, charitable works and contemplation, without submitting to any authority but that of her own reason and vocation" (Desnain, 2009, p. 3). The Neutralist, then, is a female who submits only to her own authority, dedicates herself to education and charitable works, and rejects the institution of marriage. Suchon stresses that there are as many ways of being a Neutralist as there are people taking up these roles: a life without commitments can be diverse.

To summarise, Suchon's model emphasises: liberating women through education, helping women improve themselves and their situation, convincing women of their own abilities, a life free from commitments (including marriage) and the rejection of pre-existing categories of life. Note the similarities here with punk: punk provided a *type* of education (albeit at odds with the establishment) through workshops on learning a musical instrument, discussion groups on sexism, and fanzines that produced thought-pieces on issues such as the entanglement of sex and violence. Reynolds (2006) conceptualises music as a form of education in that it teaches people to teach themselves. Punk also encouraged women to improve their situation through political action (noted previously) and a rejection of prescribed gender roles; it convinced women of their own abilities ('anyone can do it!'); offered an alternative to a life of traditional commitments such as marriage; and, finally, through its association with Existentialism, offered a fundamental rejection of pre-existing categories of life. However, as noted previously, despite the potential for female liberation within punk, patriarchal power dynamics were often reproduced within the scene. Perhaps, then, in this way, first-wave punk can be read as a case study in why female liberation can only occur within female-only spaces. Exploring authenticity within a female-only space may also circumvent the problem, presented by de Beauvoir, that women cannot gain recognition (and thus self-reflection) through Sartre's 'Look' when the relation is male-female. This will be discussed in detail later. This is perhaps why Riot Grrrl is usually considered more 'successful' by virtue of the fact that the scene was created and largely populated by women. Punk and philosophy, in this way, can inform each other.

A brief look at women's socio-political situation in the 1970s and early 80s further highlights the ways in which punk can be read as part of a broader expansion of women's social, political and economic freedoms during this period in British history. In 'Women, Education and Social Mobility in Britain during

the Long 1970s' Worth (2019) presents the results of a research project on the rise in women gaining post-secondary qualifications in 1970s Britain. Her research - conducted mostly through oral history interviews with women born between the late 1930s and early 1950s - finds that the total number of women with qualifications between 1971 and 1981 increased by 50 per cent (Worth, 2019). She notes an increase in both younger and older age groups but focuses primarily on those returning to education as mature students (Worth, 2019). Worth (2019) argues that this increase was down to several factors: the Labour government's introduction of the polytechnics in the late 1960s and the Open University in 1969, pressure from feminist activists in the late 1970s who "shone a spotlight on gendered inequality in education throughout the decade and campaigned for change" (p. 71) and the fact that course fees and living grants were often paid for by local authorities. She notes that with the development of the polytechnics, this also provided more opportunities for employment and social mobility for women (Worth, 2019). The 1970s was a significant moment in British history for women's education because "their sense of what they wanted out of life, and what they thought was possible to achieve in their careers, was shifting during this period" (Worth, 2019, p. 79). Alongside (and perhaps because of) these changes, the 1970s and 80s saw the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1974 and the Employment Protection Act of 1982 (Dalingwater, 2018). Punk, then (albeit in an anti-establishment form), can be read as part of a wider expansion in women's education in 1970s Britain.

Drawing on Aristotle, Suchon develops a philosophy which outlines three fundamental tenets to a truly fulfilling life: freedom of mind, heart, and conscience (all underpinned by God); knowledge derived from reasoning (for Suchon, evil originates from ignorance) and personal authority (when this is removed you become dependent) (Desnain, 2012). The topic of personal authority has been discussed at great length throughout this thesis; the aspect of Suchon's thought that is of interest here is 'knowledge derived from reasoning'. For Suchon, a fundamental condition to developing knowledge from reasoning is obtaining 'epistemic authority'. In 'Assuming Epistemic Authority, or Becoming a Thinking Thing', Shapiro (2018) defines epistemic authority as being reflexively aware of one's ideas and being able to defend one's belief against objections. To obtain this, one must become a 'thinking thing' in the Cartesian sense. Shapiro (2018) outlines the Cartesian definition: subjectivity proper to thinking (our own reflexive awareness, which, as discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism, Existential-punk can offer); representationality of thought (an ability to grasp reason and therefore properly construct an idea), and a range of experiences that involve engaging with others. She writes: "engaging with others exposes us to the perspectives of others and informs our judgements by moving us to situate ourselves within that array of diverse perceptions" (Shapiro, 2018, p. 7). Conditional to epistemic authority, then, is social freedom and self-confidence (mastery of our own thoughts), both of which the social order historically precludes women from.

This means that historically, the difference in women's intellectual capacities can be explained not by biology, but by deficiencies in women's education. Being able to reason does not just happen: becoming a thinking thing and assuming epistemic authority is a social undertaking (Shapiro, 2018). In conversation we learn to reason, broaden our connections between thoughts, and form the scaffolding to emerge from doubt. If women don't have access to the social in the same way that men do - and are deprived of freedom, knowledge, and authority because of custom - they cannot become thinking things (Shapiro, 2018). Suchon thought that the existing institutional practices of her time interfered with women's fundamental human freedom of self-determination, and therefore demanded the right for women to be educated, independent and free in all aspects of their lives (Dangerous Women Project, 2017). She herself was self-educated because women were barred from studying at public institutions during her lifetime. Suchon's 'celibate life' can liberate women: a condition without commitments means they have no strict obligation to remain in the same condition. With the celibate life (and the rejection of marriage, the convent, etc.) there is no institutional character, you choose an end for yourself, there are no rules and there is no code of conduct. Experiencing first-hand the pressures placed on women to submit to marriage or the convent, Suchon broke free of these constraints by exercising her authentic nature: her life was of her own making. This thesis argues that punk provided 'access to the social' for women in ways that were previously inaccessible to them: the adoption of unconventional expressions of femininity and the freedom to join a band and engage in the process of music-making. The ability of Existential-punk to trigger reflexive awareness has already been discussed in detail throughout Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism. The final condition to a 'thinking thing', representationality of thought, was offered to female punks through the exchange of creativity (forming a band) and the creation and dissemination of political and philosophical thought through fanzines and engagement with wider political causes. Thus, punk subculture can be read as a form of social communication and thus a path to 'epistemic authority', a condition which women are traditionally precluded from.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Existential Feminism

Simone de Beauvoir was a French writer, philosopher, political activist, feminist (although she initially rejected the term on the grounds that it was another way of defining yourself in relation to the male [BBC Sounds, 2011]) and social theorist associated with Existentialism (BBC Sounds, 2011). She wrote novels, a play, prefaces for political/sociological occasions and philosophical essays, her most notable work being *The Second Sex* (1997) written in 1949 (BBC Sounds, 2011). The book was published to outrage due to its historical account of women's oppression, inaugurating a new philosophical field exploring sex and gender (Sandford, 2006). She studied philosophy at the Sorbonne – The University of Paris – at a time when education was becoming accessible to French women (BBC Sounds, 2011). She was an outstanding student, completing a four-year course in three years and graduating with the highest marks for a woman

in France, a record which stood for many years afterwards (BBC Sounds, 2011). In 1929, she and Sartre both sat a highly competitive philosophy agrégation exam (a civil service exam for the French public education system) and she came second to Sartre, although the examiners claimed she was the better philosopher (BBC Sounds, 2011). Throughout her life, de Beauvoir was devoted to Sartre. He was the first and most important man in her life: they were romantic and working companions, everything he wrote she read and edited, they talked continuously, and she applied much of his philosophy to her work (although this claim has been contested [BBC Sounds, 2018]). Whilst the narrative that de Beauvoir was a disciple of Sartre's persisted for many years, many scholars now agree that she was a philosopher in her own right, and her diary entries reveal that long before she met him, she was interested in the question of what it means to become a 'self' and was reading Nietzsche (the loss of God was painful for her) and less well-known philosophers who asserted that the substance of man is his action (De Beauvoir, 1963). Some even claim that her diary entries contain ideas that were later attributed to Sartre (Dykeman, 2001). She was a passionate anti-establishment figure who fought tirelessly for human rights her entire life (BBC Sounds, 2011). De Beauvoir felt very strongly that philosophy is something that should be *lived* (De Beauvoir, 1963).

De Beauvoir was interested in how a woman's consciousness is formed in a patriarchal society where her practical freedom is restricted (Barrett, 2019a). Shepherd (2018) argues that de Beauvoir adopts both an Existentialist and Marxist framework to conceptualise freedom. De Beauvoir splits Existential freedom into two components: ontological freedom (responsibility of choice) and practical freedom (external conditions to freedom), and she interprets these in a Marxist way (Shepherd, 2018). Practical freedom impinges upon ontological freedom, and like Marx (i.e., adopting a dialectical, historical materialist approach [White, 2021]) de Beauvoir asserts that in all circumstances *some* agency is possible, but agency is restricted in certain contexts (in this way her philosophy falls more in line with Heidegger than Sartre) (Shepherd, 2018). Therefore, running through de Beauvoir's work is a concern (like Marx) with material conditions, and how they can either restrict or facilitate human potential, and throughout her life she advocated for changes in legal, social, and economic conditions for women, looking towards a society which facilitates (female) human potential (Shepherd, 2018). In this way, she examines the asymmetry within the socio-economic, as well as Existential, relation between men and women (Sandford, 2006). Social institutions can serve as limitations to women's freedom – for example, de Beauvoir argues that women need contraception and abortion to fully exercise freedom (Shepherd, 2018). It is only once these practical freedoms are won that the road to ontological freedom can occur: sometimes we do not – or we do not believe – have a choice to resist or freely express our own desires, in this way, 'freedom' is gendered. The initial stage in the road to liberation for women, then, is comprised of two components: a recognition of her subordinate position within society (an awakening) and collective action. Only then can she look towards Existential freedom. Many female punks active within the 1970s recognised the need for

both societal change – through campaigns such as Rock Against Racism and Rock Against Sexism – and individual enlightenment, as the path to Existential freedom. The ways in which The Raincoats attempted to alert women to their oppression will be examined in Chapter 6.

Like Sartre, de Beauvoir did believe that all human beings are free i.e., capable of independent, creative action (Shepherd, 2018); however, the situation for women is different in that she must make choices in a world where she is not only restricted by legal, social and economic conditions, but at the level of consciousness, she is viewed by man as ‘Other’: man is the subject (the absolute), and she is the object who cannot exist for herself (Barrett, 2019a). She is defined in relation to man (Sandford, 2006; Shepherd, 2018). Sandford (2006) defines ‘Other’ as: “to be posited by another subject as an object with fixed possibilities” (p. 67). This presents a problem for women with regards to autonomy and authenticity. As discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism, when one adopts fixed possibilities, one cannot be considered ‘authentic’. Men are capable of transcendence (‘what you become’) yet women are confined to immanence (‘what you are’) (Barrett, 2019a; Shepherd, 2018). Like Sartre, de Beauvoir recognises that to affirm existence, we need another as a mirror for self-reflection and self-definition (De Beauvoir, 1997). We can only be realised through and with other human beings. She adopts Sartre’s notion of ‘The Look’ (discussed in Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism), however, de Beauvoir adds that when this occurs between men and women, mutual subjectivity cannot occur because woman avoids the battle for recognition and accepts her position as ‘Other’ (Barrett, 2019a). In this respect, not everyone is equal in an encounter.

A woman’s road to liberation, then, is complicated. For de Beauvoir, genuine emancipation (both practical and ontological) can be found within co-operative and interdependent relationships (Shepherd, 2018). To achieve liberation, two consciousnesses must meet as equals, and for this to happen, changes in legal, ideological, social, and economic conditions must occur (Shepherd, 2018). In a capitalist system, for example, freedom is unrealised for all in society: if one party is privileged materially (the bourgeoisie), reciprocal relations disappear (Shepherd, 2018). Harmony between subjects is possible and necessary for full flowering of individual freedom (Arp, 2001). Ideological changes in both men and women are also needed for women to have fair access to Existential freedom. Women are born into a set of myths about what it means to be a woman, and the notion of ‘femininity’ plays a crucial role in demarcating ‘acceptable’ behaviour and expectations for women – likeable, giving, demure, weak, docile, amiable, selfless, modest, submissive, etc (Sandford, 2006). These myths are created by the patriarchy, and many women internalise them. Transcendence, then, requires a different society (Shepherd, 2018). An important step for women is for them to become aware of what is forming them, reflect on it rationally, and resist. The ways in which The Raincoats attempt to alert women to their situation is discussed in Chapter 6. Currently, women experience life as conflict, between human existence and societal demands: they are forced to embrace womanhood and those myths created about femininity; or reject femininity

altogether, and embrace their humanity and freedom (Shepherd, 2018). Like Suchon, de Beauvoir recognises that we must educate women on their subordinate position in society. De Beauvoir thinks that women are unlikely to revolt against their oppressor because they have internalised myths about themselves, and this constrains the number of opportunities they see for themselves (Shepherd, 2018).

To obtain Existential freedom, then, woman must first examine, then change, her position in a patriarchal world as 'Other'. Bauer (2001) reads *The Second Sex* (1997) as a re-writing of Cartesian philosophy. For Bauer (2001), de Beauvoir replaces Descartes' question of 'what is a man?' with the more pertinent question of 'what is a woman?': "the power of *The Second Sex* as the founding document of second wave feminism... issues in substantial part form Beauvoir's inaugurating call for a reordering of these priorities - as though we cannot think coherently about what a "man" is, cannot make out a coherent sex-neutral sense of the term, until we address the question of what it means to be, to be called, a woman" (p. 50). Sandford (2006) puts it another way: "[woman is] obliged to declare that she is a woman, when no man would be obliged to declare his manhood in similar circumstances" (p. 63). A comparison of the Cartesian method of 'doubting' (Kenny 2010) and de Beauvoir's position is presented below (See Tab. 9).

Table 9: Descartes's skepticism vs. Beauvoir's skepticism, according to Bauer (2001)

Descartes (philosophising as a man) - doubts his opinions	Simone de Beauvoir (philosophising as a woman) - doubts whether 'woman' exists
Both relocate the source of philosophical authority from institutions to the human mind: "Beauvoir interprets the metaphysical solitude that forms the basis of Descartes's epistemological solipsism as an inevitable cost of his revolutionary, and laudable, relocation of philosophical authority from powerful people and institutions to the individual human mind... her appropriation of this alarming consequence of Descartes's method leads her to develop a powerful philosophical picture of the nature of sex difference" (Bauer, 2001, p. 51)	
Body as simply a "mechanical structure of limbs" - the body is cast aside	To be called "a woman" is to have a female body - this is tied to her identity and thus the body cannot be cast aside (material reality impinges on consciousness)
Begins from the individual as an isolated, self-contained unit - the self can be the only thing known to exist	To call oneself a woman is to begin from the idea that there are other beings like her; she is unable to doubt her existence as an embodied person in a world of other embodied people on account of the fact she is systematically oppressed on the basis of her body - the self must exist amongst other beings

Attempts to build a philosophical system	De Beauvoir sees the creation of philosophical systems as narcissistically maniacal, a pursuit which is at odds with “the feminine condition” “Truly great works are those that put the world entirely into question. Now that woman doesn’t do... she doesn’t radically contest the world, and this is why in the history of humanity there isn’t a woman who has created a great religious or philosophical system... woman, by reason of her condition, isn’t in a position to do that” (Bauer, 2001, p. 56)
Many have accused Descartes of sitting within the tradition of (male) philosophical works in which philosophers claim to be <i>better</i> specimens of genuine humanity, unjustly seizing the authority to judge the authority of another person’s words - a claim characterised by arrogance	She does not distinguish herself as a woman, but <i>counts herself</i> as one; she puts herself forward as no worse nor, crucially, better an instance of the concept than any other woman - a claim characterised by humility

‘Woman’ then is tied to her materiality (i.e., is somewhat defined by her body), recognises her existence alongside others, and must first examine her position in the world as ‘woman’ before putting the world entirely into question. The way in which de Beauvoir’s philosophy can be read in the music of The Raincoats is presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Extended Case Study: The Raincoats

The most insightful scholarship on The Raincoats – O'Meara (2003), Wilkinson (2018) and Pelly (2017) – examines their relationship to second-wave feminism. In 'Breaking Down Punk Rock's Masculinities', O'Meara (2003) reads a questioning of masculine formations in rock music in the work of The Raincoats, arguing that the band used punk's celebration of amateurism to "express feminine possibilities" (p. 300). Like many punk bands active at the time, The Raincoats rejected (masculinised) rock values such as guitar solos, virtuosity, and macho posturing (discussed in Chapter 2: Defining 'Punk'). O'Meara (2003) situates the band "squarely into punk's avant-garde, along with artists like The Slits and Patti Smith who challenged the masculine assumptions of the genre at every level" (p. 303). The band opened the closed worlds of pregnancy (Wilkinson, 2018), the home, and women's emotional life (O'Meara, 2003) to music, and O'Meara's (2003) analyses of 'Fairytale in the Supermarket' (1979b), 'In Love' (1979a) and 'Shouting Out Loud' (1981) demonstrate how the band accomplished this through the creation of complex representations of female subjectivity. These representations, however, have not been examined through an Existential-feminist lens. Wilkinson (2018) recognises the conflictual relationship between The Raincoats and feminism, noting that Aspinall was the only band member to be directly involved with the women's movement and bandmate Birch felt that the agenda of politics was forced upon her; however, ultimately, the band did give their official support to Rock Against Sexism, and "due to [their] respect for internal democracy... these differences of emphasis often had a highly productive effect on the band's output rather than remaining an unresolved source of conflict" (p. 164).

Pelly (2017) offers some general observations on the band's debut album *The Raincoats* (1979a), the chosen case study for this chapter. Pelly's (2017) observations provide a useful starting point when looking towards an Existential-feminist analysis of the band's music. Pelly (2017) notes that running through the album there is a struggle for subjectivity in that the vocals are often buried beneath the soundscape. Moreover, there is rarely a single subject presented in that three band members – Aspinall, Birch and da Silva – all have vocal input, often sharing the lead vocal line, with the women coming together collectively to sing a chorus: "there is never one person leading the way" (Pelly, 2017, p. 39). The struggle for subjectivity is interpreted by O'Meara (2003) as a loss of the subject (echoing postmodern theory, although O'Meara [2003] does not reference postmodern theory explicitly). However, considering the band's position in relation to second wave feminism presented by Wilkinson (2018), I would argue that a more nuanced take is needed: Pelly (2017) argues that the lack of single subject running throughout the album represents the fact that a woman's fight for subjectivity (represented by the burying of the vocal line beneath the soundscape) is in fact a collective goal. In alternating between individual and collective vocals, The Raincoats' work represents de Beauvoir's notions of ontological freedom (individual responsibility of choice) and practical freedom (the conditions of our freedom, which rest on the collective); moreover, this tension is never really resolved, demonstrating the dialectical relationship

between these two components of freedom that Shepherd (2018) reads in de Beauvoir's work (discussed in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism).

The voices are organised by consensus (echoing the band's respect for internal democracy), and often overlap and entwine (Pelly, 2017). The vocals, then, not only represent Heidegger and de Beauvoir's assertion that individual authenticity can only be created alongside others, but there are traces of 'epistemic authority' discussed in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism. According to Suchon, to live a fulfilling life, one must have access to knowledge derived from reasoning, and an essential component to achieving this is through 'epistemic authority' i.e., being reflexively aware of one's ideas and being able to defend one's belief against objections (Shapiro, 2018). Key to this is being exposed to a range of experiences that involve engaging with others: "engaging with others exposes us to the perspectives of others and informs our judgements by moving us to situate ourselves within that array of diverse perceptions" (Shapiro, 2018, p. 7). Not only does punk subculture provide a space within which women can engage with others and their ideas – through music, fashion, art, zines, and so on – but The Raincoats' work embodies the notion that when people come together in this way, they can engage in a dialogue that facilitates human flourishing. As Pelly (2017) notes, The Raincoats represent "what is possible when people who are different from one another listen carefully and work together – when they are afforded that chance" (p. 39).

The women all learn to play their instruments as they go, "learning to be free" through creation (Pelly, 2017, p. 38). This can be read through a Nietzschean lens: The Raincoats deconstruct the (masculinised) rock form whilst simultaneously constructing (feminised) subjectivity i.e., destruction equals creation. The process of music-making provides an outlet through which women can find things buried inside themselves, and collectively, through improv and intuition, work things out as they go (Pelly, 2017). There are many musical devices employed by The Raincoats throughout this album that represent an injection of Dionysian 'truth': timekeeping in the traditional sense is not considered in that the drums do not always dictate the beat, and instead a "short, minimal clatter of the tom-toms" is employed (Pelly, 2017, p. 39). Interestingly, a rejection of traditional timekeeping is demonstrated in a line from 'Fairytale in the Supermarket' (1979b) (a track not featured on the album): "Cups of tea are a clock / A clock! A clock! A clock!", which according to Birch is reference to the unusual way of telling the time that she adopted when squatting in London in the late 1970s (she knew if her squat-mate Simon had been home because the kettle would be warm [Pelly, 2017]). Pelly (2017) describes Palmolive's drumming as "stop-go tempos [that] simmer and erupt in accordance with their emotional content, idling and rushing like the movement of unpredictable traffic" (p. 39). Structurally the songs are often episodic, like a "rambling conversation which might go off in another direction just when you think you know where you're heading" (Aspinall quoted in Penny, 2017, p. 40). Harmonically they were unusual: odd modes are adopted, there is a dissonance in the guitar which runs through the entire album, disharmony between instruments and

vocals is embraced, as are “flubbed” notes (Penny, 2017, p. 12). Penny (2017) reads these notes as “a reflection of reality – because life requires mistakes... in order to really live, sometimes you have to be wrong” (p. 12). Like life, tempos, structures, and harmonies throughout *The Raincoats* (1979a) are unpredictable, embracing the Dionysian ‘truth’ of life. The Raincoats, then, unlike the Sex Pistols, often reject traditional (Apollonian) song structures and musical devices. In this way they are doubly oppositional (as discussed in Chapter 5: Punk as Existential-Feminism): they are simultaneously putting the world into question (to borrow de Beauvoir’s phrase) – one of the ways in which they do this is via an injection of Dionysian ‘truth’ – whilst exploring (and creating) a feminine ‘truth’. An additional ‘truth’, then, is explored by Existential-feminist-punks, explaining why The Raincoats’ music would inevitably *sound* radically different to that of their male peers. They create a private language between themselves, outside of male control. I will now offer a more in-depth analysis of five tracks from *The Raincoats* (1979a) which embody the philosophy of Existential-punk/Existential-feminist-punk most substantially: ‘No Side to Fall In’, ‘Adventures Close to Home’, ‘Off Duty Trip’, ‘Life on the Line’ and ‘No Looking’.

‘No Side to Fall In’ (1979a) nods towards the conflict between what the world expects a woman to be, and what she is: “I hear the music outside / And I am the music inside”. Moreover, it reads as an Existentialist rejection of external structures in favour of internal authority. The subject looks towards a future – albeit an unclear one – a “survival tactic when patriarchy has written you out” (Pelly, 2017, p. 67). In this way, the protagonist projects herself into the future in the Heideggerian sense, whilst accepting the present “I don’t mind today”. The lines “I hear the music outside / And I am the music inside / No side to fall in” can also be read as an acceptance of the dialectic between the collective (outside) and the individual (inside) offered by de Beauvoir through Shepherd (2018): “No side to fall in” suggests that walking the line between the two is key to women’s liberation (also echoing Heidegger). The song is reminiscent of Magazine’s ‘Shot by Both Sides’ (1978) which was written in response to singer Howard Devoto’s anxiety surrounding both sides of the political spectrum in late 1970s Britain (capturing the notion explored in Chapter 2: Defining ‘Punk’ that much punk music created during this time does not sit comfortably on the political spectrum) (Reynolds, 2006). The comparison is useful because it illustrates one of the key differences between the Existential-punk position, and the Existential-feminist-punk position: Devoto was able to explore his individual position within – and relationship to – political structures because, as de Beauvoir notes, his male privilege allows him to put the entire world into question; The Raincoats, however, are burdened with the task of a) inspiring collective action to fight for the representation of women within these structures, and b) alerting women to their subordinate position within society. ‘No Side to Fall In’ (1979a) is structured as two lyrically identical stanzas; however, the second stanza is sung a cappella (with sporadic percussion), with a musical interlude separating them. It is as though the song is simultaneously constructed (created) and deconstructed (destroyed).

'Adventures Close to Home' (1979a) is about soul searching (Pelly, 2017). Palmolive says of the song, particularly the line "Possessed by Quixote's dream": "In Don Quixote, he's totally altruistic. He reads books and thinks he's going to save the world. He goes out, he sees monsters in windmills, and he tries to straighten things – sometimes they don't need to be straightened. He makes it worse every time..." – note here her acceptance of the Dionysian messiness of life – "...Growing up, we wanted to make the world better. I had a very strong sense, from conversations in the kitchen with my brothers and sisters, about how to fight injustice, in families or in society. I was seeing myself in London – it's a different situation, but in essence, it's this crazy dream of wanting to make the world better, and dealing with my emotions, which one day tell me this and then that. One day I want to love; one day I want to hate. I was following this Don Quixote dream. Somehow saying it gives it shape. It helped me grow" (pp. 52-53). Palmolive, then, wanted to move past her Don Quixote phase: in this way, she is investigating the past in determining who she wants to become in the future (a nod to Heidegger). In rejecting her hero, Don Quixote, Palmolive recognises that authority figures and prescribed paths are ultimately a dead end – "I lost myself / Through alleys of mystery / I went up and down / Like a demented train" – and authority can only come from within: "Searching for something / That makes hearts move / I found myself". This reading is supported by a statement from Palmolive on the meaning behind the line "Don't take it personal": "I have to live my own life. I cannot live someone else's life. I had a sense that I was losing myself, and I needed to get a hold of it. I was very aware that I needed to protect that" (Palmolive quoted in Pelly, 2017, p. 52). 'Adventures Close to Home' (1979a), then, can be read as an Existential awakening.

Both 'Off Duty Trip' (1979a) and 'Life on the Line' (1979a) are inspired by news events. 'Off Duty Trip' (1979a) is the only explicitly political song on the album (and perhaps the most overtly political track in their entire catalogue) tackling the subject of rape, a collective problem for women (Pelly, 2017). It was inspired by a news story at the time about a soldier who raped a woman in a park and evaded punishment due to his status in the army (Pelly, 2017). The song is a comment on institutional privilege and the ways in which women are not protected within institutional contexts; it's also about rape culture as a whole and how everyday objectification contributes to violence against women (Pelly, 2017). Objectification – woman as 'Other', woman as tied to her body (materiality) – is central to the experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society, and rape is the most violent expression of it (Pelly, 2017). Words evoking violence to the body are used throughout: "pounding", "screams", "scuffle", "strength", "pinned up", "tough", "fight", and so on. The evocation of violence is heightened in the final verse: "Taking flesh, going to let it rip / With rings on his fingers / Sharp like the taste that still lingers". Examined through an Existentialist-feminist lens, detailing rape in such explicit detail serves two purposes: a) it may anger the listener and thus inspire them to take action against such crimes, and b) it highlights the very real way in which a woman's materiality impinges upon her consciousness. A woman will not have the capacity to concern herself with ontological freedom whilst recovering from the trauma of sexual violence. 'Life on

the Line' (1979a) was the first track The Raincoats ever played together, and was written by original guitarist Ross Crighton (Pelly, 2017). The song was inspired by a suicide at Ladbroke Grove underground station. Crighton was fascinated with "how anyone could be so desperate to want to die in such a way" (Crighton quoted in Pelly, 2017, p. 67). Although the song was inspired by a suicide, the lyrics read as a commentary on the dangers of women walking alone at night: "A feeling of being followed / A feeling of being watched / Isn't easy to define", "She put her life on the line" (in leaving the house at night, a woman puts herself in danger), "She kept trying / Trying to find / A place to hide", "She's got her back to the wall" (echoing the line from 'Off Duty Trip' [1979a] "Woman you're pinned up / On the wall in front of you").

'No Looking' (1979a) explores 'The Look' more so than any other song on *The Raincoats* (1979a). The lyrics are taken from a poem by Jacques Prévert (1900-1977), a French poet and screenwriter (Pelly, 2017). Pelly (2017) reads 'No Looking' (1979a) as the story of "a detached man who is not talking to, or looking at, or in any sense vivifying its female protagonist. It describes the emotional manipulation that occurs when a woman is silenced and ignored... 'No Looking' [1979a] gives corporeal form to this maddening sense of psychological marginalization, of not being taken seriously" (p. 82). The withdrawn man (a misogynist) steps away from the domestic sphere, enjoying his freedom. Birch summarises it succinctly: "I see it as a song about the space between two human beings seeking love and failing to connect" (Birch quoted in Pelly, 2017, p. 82). Whilst Pelly's (2017) reading is accurate, I would argue that there is another interpretation, which sits alongside Pelly's (2017) comfortably. In Chapter 3: Punk as Existentialism, Sartre's 'The Look' was examined in detail: one can gain reflective self-awareness (and thus begin a journey towards individual authenticity) when one becomes an object for another person, and this objectification (note that the word 'objectification' here means something different to that discussed in relation to the objectification of women and rape culture) can only be achieved via 'The Look'. In refusing to lend his gaze, throughout 'No Looking' (1979a) the male denies the female the possibility of objectification (in Sartrean terms) and thus her route to Existential freedom is blocked. The distance between them, physically and psychologically, is palpable. The (female) subject has no access to the male subject's thoughts or feelings, and this eventually takes a toll on her psyche. This is represented in the fifth stanza, which begins "Silently no looking / Talking to no one else" where the mood shifts suddenly: the tempo increases, the drums gallop underneath erratic vocals, and the violin, previously dejected and melancholic, becomes screechy and angular. However, the female subject overcomes her panicked state in female solidarity: together The Raincoats chant "I'm not Looking / I'm not talking", destroying the psychological isolation. The shift to first person ("I'm not looking") suggests that together they have taken back power: they no longer need his 'Look' to trigger their journey towards Existential freedom, they can find it together. The air of dejection and disdain which lingers throughout is overcome, and the track ends with "total annihilation of its own sadness" (Pelly, 2017, p. 82).

Chapter 7: Conclusions

There is a clear Existentialist strand running through 1970s British punk-rock. Existential-punk can be read as a resurgence of Existentialism in the twentieth-century through its rejection of nihilism, adoption of individual authenticity as the highest value; a tendency towards 'destruction' in order to pave the way for new conceptions of what it means to be a human being; a radical rejection of systematic thought, including religion, morality and other forms of doctrinal thinking; an insistence on critique, self-reflection and activity ('do it yourself'); and a tendency towards the Dionysian in an Nietzschean attempt to redress the balance between Apollo and Dionysus, a balance disturbed by the injection of Socratic Rationalism. This resurgence was triggered by many factors including the rise of neoliberalism, the 'death of God' in the nineteenth-century (and thus the decline in faith in traditional systems of thought within which human values can be created and contained), and anxieties surrounding the Cold War. By virtue of its subcultural nature, Existential-punk – Existential-feminist-punk in particular – recognised that human beings do not exist with absolute autonomy: the creation of the self always exists alongside the creation of another. Existential-punk created space within which Existential principles could be explored and disseminated, principally through music making and zine creation. It was a space for the disaffected to engage in a constructive dialogue with others, exchange ideas, and facilitate collective Existential freedom. In encouraging an exploration of the self, Existential-punk is conceptualised throughout this thesis as a type of – and trigger for – revolutionary personal politics, which forms the basis for collective change, whatever that may look like. Moreover, this process is "lifelong and ongoing" (Lydon, 2014, p. 4). Whilst punk both facilitated collective action and provided a space for women to develop 'epistemic authority', it often replicated the patriarchal power dynamics of wider society. Existential-feminist-punks were therefore burdened with the responsibility of examining their own position within patriarchal society as 'woman', alerting other women to their subordination, and engaging in collective action, before the process of self-creation can take place. The dialectic between the individual (ontological freedom) and the collective (practical freedom) plays out in the music of The Raincoats, a band who explicitly aligned themselves with campaigns such as Rock Against Sexism, whilst actively exploring individuality through music-making.

Musically, Existential-punk accepted its past (facticity, to use Heidegger's term) i.e., its roots in prog-rock, early rock and roll, glam-rock, folk, and Victorian music hall, to project itself onto a musical future (thrown projection, to use Heidegger's term). It neither accepted nor outright rejected its musical predecessors, working within terms prescribed by what came before to look towards something new. It was a catalyst for change: post-punk followed in its wake, splintering the genre of rock into multifarious manifestations (Reynolds, 2006). It was a focus on the present, an attempt to divert the course of both musical history and society at large. Recognising the danger in social conformity (a repression of one's true self), Existential-punk music both triggered and embodied the anxiety which, according to Heidegger, prevents

us from losing ourselves in ‘the *they*’, thus encouraging the listener to perpetually evaluate the present moment. On a subcultural level, Existential-punk neither accepted nor outright rejected the dominant ideology of 1970s Britain: it experienced itself in terms prescribed by neoliberalism. They recognised that individual freedom is the context within which humanity can flourish; however, they railed against the establishment, instead conceptualising individual freedom as an Existential pursuit, one which frees us from stifling conformity. Politically, Existential-punk was resistant to situating itself on either the Left or the Right, although Chapter 2: Defining ‘Punk’ shows that overall, it did lean towards the Left. In resisting political affiliation, Existential-punk, in a Nietzschean sense, opened up space for a revaluation of societal values. Existential-punk was a mode of critique, with deviance as its unifying principle, offering a way out for those who had lost faith in external systems of thought. Existential-punk provides a useful case study for the ways in which Existential principles play out ‘in real life’, and in this way, both philosophy and music can inform each other.

A closer fit between participant and theory would shed further light on Existential-punk, and so a project for future research would be to interview those active within the scene to examine the extent to which they had direct engagement with Existentialist texts, and the extent to which philosophy more broadly informed their work. Had this work been a class-based analysis, an examination of the ways in which punks from different class backgrounds develop Existentialist ideas differently – in a comparable manner to the way men and women do – would be a worthwhile project: this thesis provides a springboard for such discussions. Similarly, the experiences of punks on the gender and sexuality spectrum, from diverse racial backgrounds, with disabilities, and so on, are important areas for future research.

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