

## The Evolution of an Anarcho-Punk Narrative (1978-84)

Rebecca Binns and Russ Bestley

### First Wave Punk Fanzines

From its inception, punk culture as articulated through its fanzines was anti-elitist; positioning itself against self-indulgent, outmoded rock stars and the pretensions of rock journalism.<sup>1</sup> Pioneering punk-zine *Sniffin' Glue* (July 1976) and those that immediately followed<sup>2</sup> sought an authentic form of expression to relate directly with 'disaffected kids' who comprised the demographic of punk subculture. Against the hierarchical structure inherent in mainstream media, punk-zines showed their egalitarian approach by encouraging readers to submit work or start their own zines. Readers were urged to be active participants, rather than passive consumers.

Punk fanzines were liberated from many of the marketing constraints associated with commercial magazines, and as such they could foster alternative forms of communication and editorial content. This enabled their creators and readers to define their identity, political leanings and culture autonomously, rather than in response to consumerist dictates. In particular, fanzines encouraged individuals and groups, otherwise excluded from the cultural decision making process, to be actively engaged in the creation of alternative culture.

While early punk-zines were engaged with underground, punk culture and in the process helped to define it, there was no wholesale rejection of the music industry and record labels. The notion of drawing up a creed by which to live your life, which came to define the 1980s 'anarcho-punk' era, would seemingly have been anathema to earlier 'zine creators. The main ambition most early punk-zines declared (as well as their emancipatory role) was a desire to be original, subversive and exciting.

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<sup>1</sup> Punk-zines, in seeking to express the 'real' voice of punk, criticised music journalism in mainstream publications such as *New Musical Express* (NME), *Sounds* and *Melody Maker* for being pretentious, simplistic and elitist respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Notable examples include *Panache*, *Ripped and Torn*, *Sideburns* and *London's Burning* (1976), *48 Thrills*, *Chainsaw* and *Strangled* (1977).

## **A New Discourse**

The release of Crass's first twelve-inch EP, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (Small Wonder 1978), coincided with the second wave of punk. At that time, punk was being redefined in light of the commercialisation of many first wave bands; an article in *Panache* read; "*There aren't many bands around, true punk, not on the major scene anyway. The real punk bands are underground or small bands that aren't commercial or corrupt!*"<sup>3</sup>

This rhetoric around punk as a grassroots movement facing exploitation by commercial forces was therefore already articulated in punk-zines before the existence of Crass (1977-84). Crass subsequently held great sway in the direction and content of a broad range of punk-zines, particularly those whose readership comprised largely young, disaffected punks seeking renewal, after the perceived death of first-wave punk. Crass disseminated its anarchic philosophy on alternative life choices within its music, graphics and written tracts in a way that was distinct for a punk band.<sup>4</sup> This transition was captured by Tony D, writing on the release of *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*, for *Ripped and Torn*;

*"This record is an assault on all the phonies and liggers who've built up around the original concept of punk, free-loading and sucking vital energy away into their own pockets. This record blows them all back to their nests and rat holes, clearing out all the pre-conditioned crap that's been insulting our minds and calling itself 'revolutionary'."*<sup>5</sup>

Crass actively engaged with underground punk-zines, declaring them the 'real' voice of punk in comparison to mainstream outlets.<sup>6</sup> By 1980, Crass had done an enormous number of interviews for punk-zines.<sup>7</sup> The punk-zines were overwhelmingly receptive to Crass' ideas, as expressed in both their content and direction. The emerging 'anarcho-punk' discourse was communicated through verbal and visual strategies, with Crass proving to be highly influential in both the

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<sup>3</sup> 'The Message' in *Panache*, Issue 10, 1978. See also interview with Jimmy Pursey in *Temporary Hoarding*, where the Sham 69 singer suggests that the commercial death of first wave punk means that those involved for emancipatory reasons can carry the movement forward (No. 6, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Several other post-punk bands, including Gang of Four, the Mekons and the Pop Group also attempted to espouse a political philosophy within and alongside their music.

<sup>5</sup> Tony D, 'What Potent Force Blows the Ripped and Torn Album Reviewers Clear Across the Room? What Else Can it be but Crass - The Feeding of the 5000' in *Ripped and Torn*, Issue 17, 1979.

<sup>6</sup> Berger, p120.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Vague in *Vague* 6, 1980 at <http://tomvague.co.uk/vague-6/> Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

philosophical debate and its corresponding aesthetics.<sup>8</sup> Graphic design, typography and illustration styles employed by Crass to communicate their ideology – largely created by Gee Vaucher and Penny Rimbaud, both trained and experienced designers – fed into an evolving set of visual conventions that would be adopted and mimicked by other fanzine producers.<sup>9</sup> Some of these conventions drew upon established punk graphic styles, while others used the emergence of a stereotypical punk ‘canon’ as a counterpoint to signal a new, and perhaps more ‘authentic’, direction.<sup>10</sup> Like the precedents to punk independence and ‘do it yourself’, however, it should be noted that many of these visual strategies were not strictly new, in many cases drawing on samizdat and agitprop artistic practices going back more than sixty years, from Futurism to Dada, Surrealism and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century artistic and political avant-garde.<sup>11</sup> This chapter explores a range of newly evolving anarcho-punk themes between 1978-84; focusing on the evolution of new models of philosophical and subcultural discourse, along with the emergence of a distinct visual aesthetic that aimed to reflect these ideas and engagement with both commercial and radical print suppliers.

### **The Politics of Independence**

Specific actions taken by Crass, such as the addition of “*pay no more than...*” instructions to their products paralleled the already well-established punk fanzine practice of producing publications independently and selling at cost, together with a number of direct precedents within the nascent independent, punk scene.<sup>12</sup> The front cover of Crass’ debut single on their own Crass Records label in late 1979, ‘Reality Asylum’, included the instruction “*pay no more than 45p*”.<sup>13</sup> In a similar manner, a maximum price (‘70p Maximum Retail Price’) had been included on the cover of the Desperate Bicycles’ third EP, *New Cross, New Cross*, released on their own Refill Records label in

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<sup>8</sup> Gasper, Ian. 2006. *The Day The Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980-1984*. London: Cherry Red.

<sup>9</sup> See Bestley, Russ & Ogg, Alex. 2012. *The Art of Punk*. London: Omnibus Press.

<sup>10</sup> Reid, Jamie and Savage, Jon. 1987. *Up They Rise – The Incomplete Works of Jamie Reid*. London: Faber and Faber, Kugelberg, Johan & Savage, Jon (eds.). 2012. *Punk: An Aesthetic*. New York: Rizzoli. For models of authenticity within popular music, see Barker, Hugh, and Taylor, Yuval. 2007. *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. London: Faber & Faber.

<sup>11</sup> See Hughes, Robert. 1991. *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*. London: Thames & Hudson, Plant, Sadie. 1992. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. London: Routledge, and Home, Stewart. 1991. *The Assault on Culture*. London: AK Press.

<sup>12</sup> It should also be noted that major labels were equally involved with this practice, employing loss-leaders to promote their acts, with notable examples including the Flys (EMI Records), the Stranglers (United Artists) and The Clash (CBS).

<sup>13</sup> Once Crass established their own label, they adopted the “pay no more” convention. Their debut release, the *Feeding of the Five Thousand* EP on the Small Wonder label in early 1979, had not featured any price stipulation, though the reissue on Crass Records in 1981, *The Feeding of the 5,000 (The Second Sitting)* stated “*pay no more than £2.00*” on the front cover.

February 1978, and other low-pricing strategies had featured on a range of punk and new wave releases between 1977 and 1979.<sup>14</sup>

In setting up an independent record label, Crass also built on the shared experience of earlier do-it-yourself punk labels including New Hormones, Refill and St Pancras Records, together with higher-profile independent labels with distribution and retail connections such as Rough Trade and Small Wonder.<sup>15</sup> Crass pushed the 'underground' aspect of punk into more extreme territory, however, in marked contrast to the general situation post-1978 when the wider punk subculture was morphing into new wave, with its mainstream pop appeal, or branching out into what would become known as post-punk.<sup>16</sup> Post-punk bands retained varying degrees of independence from commercialism, with a loose-knit community forming a distinct *do-it-yourself*, independent avant-garde.<sup>17</sup> Crass, and the subsequent bands that would come to be called anarcho-punk, were to take this model of autonomy in a new direction, foregrounding an overtly ideological and political discourse as an inherent principle within their independent stance and committed radicalism.<sup>18</sup>

Tony D has acknowledged the debt paid to Crass in punk fanzines, many of which became increasingly politicised following *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*. He recalls;

*"Squatting became a big thing around this time, and it opened the door to the ideas of Crass who were the first to really push the idea of anarchy as a lifestyle not a theory. Crass and the subsequent anarcho bands were a shot in the arm to the fanzine world and it became a bit like the outpouring of fanzines in 1977, some just an 'I am' one-off statement and others continuing for many issues and developing ideas of anarchy, such as veganism and what that entailed."*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Examples include Alberto Y Lost Trios Paranoias 'Heads Down, No Nonsense, Mindless Boogie', Logo Records, August 1978 ("*Two for the Price of One, 75p RRP*"); the compilation *Battle of the Bands* EP, Good Vibrations, December 1978 ("*2-Single Pack £1.49 RRP*"); and Rudi *I Spy* EP, Good Vibrations, November 1979 (99p), along with several Stiff Records releases including the 1978 compilation *Live Stiffs* ("*only £2.99 RRP*") and the eponymous debut album by Wreckless Eric (March 1978, bizarrely priced at "*only 69/11d*").

<sup>15</sup> The debut Crass record release, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*, was initially released by Small Wonder. Founded by Pete and Mari Stennett, this punk-specialist independent label was run via their Small Wonder record shop in Walthamstow, East London.

<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, Simon. 2005. *Rip It Up And Start Again: Post Punk 1978-84*. London: Faber & Faber.

<sup>17</sup> Ogg, Alex. 2009. *Independence Days: The Story of UK Independent Record Labels*. London: Cherry Red Books.

<sup>18</sup> Crass. 1982. *A Series of Shock Slogans and Mindless Token Tantrums*. London: Existstencil Press.

<sup>19</sup> Email correspondence, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

Alan Rider also notes that this ideological shift also mirrored something of a generational divide;

*“One of the biggest things I noticed was how young many anarcho-punk zine writers were. Many were at school; some were just 12 or 13. It was very liberating for kids who were otherwise powerless and spent most of their time having to do as they were told. I think that’s why they really identified with anarcho-punk. In many ways, the music was secondary to the freedom to challenge and express different views and zines were actually a better and cheaper way for lots of people to do that.”<sup>20</sup>*

Indeed, the newly evolving anarcho-punk narrative encompassed a range of interrelated and sympathetic ideological positions, ranging from anti-war statements (often aligned with the resurgence of CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament)<sup>21</sup> to emerging forms of what might be termed anarcho-feminism, animal rights and advocacy<sup>22</sup>, attacks on organised religion and key debates on the nature of resistance and contemporary models of anarchism in theory and practice.<sup>23</sup>

### **Anarchy and Peace**

One of the prevalent concepts behind *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* was an alliance of anarchy with peace. Ideas around anarchy as anything other than rebellion against societal norms or anything as ‘hippie’ as peace were absent from early punk discourse. The track *Fight War, Not Wars* introduced one of several Crass slogans, which were subsequently widely pillaged within punk culture. Visually, the inserts and record sleeves, which contained anti-war sloganeering, symbols relating to anarchy, peace and the Crass visual identity along with stencil lettering, created a distinct message through their design.

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<sup>20</sup> Email correspondence, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Worley, Matthew. 2011. “One Nation Under the Bomb: The Cold War and British Punk to 1984,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 5/2: 65-83.

<sup>22</sup> Stewart, Francis. 2016. “This is the A.L.F. – Anarchism, Punk Rock and Animal ‘Rights’”, *Punk & Post Punk* 5.3: xx-xx

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted, however, that counterpoints to the emerging anarcho-punk ethos were equally prevalent, ranging from the ongoing evolution of punk and new wave to post-punk, hardcore punk, Oi! and what was then termed New Punk in the early 1980s. See also Gasper, Ian. 2004. *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980-1984*. London: Cherry Red.

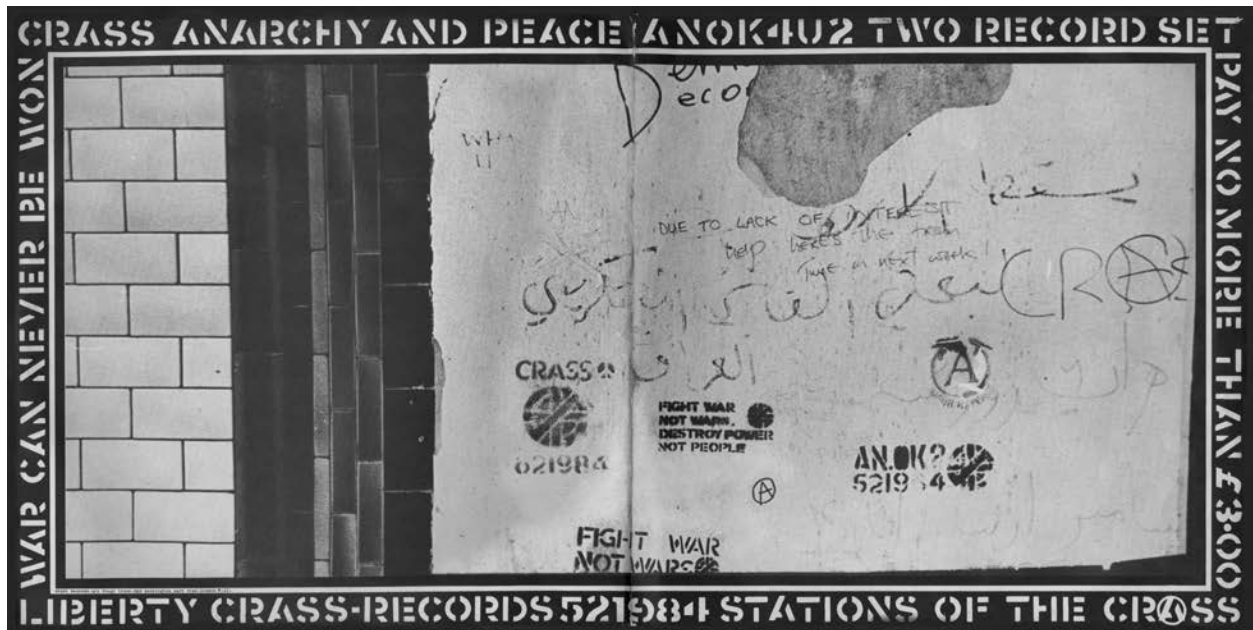


Fig.01 Crass, *Stations of the Cross* (1979, Crass Records).

This theme remained a central preoccupation with Crass' subsequent records. The sleeve of the album *Stations of the Cross* (1979) reiterated their pacifist stance in its graffiti, stencil lettering and on tracks such as *Demo(N)Crats*, which chants the Crass slogan, *Fight War, Not Wars*, over a backdrop of explosions. Crass outlined their beliefs on anarchy's compatibility with peace in an article published in the first issue of *Kill Your Pet Puppy* (KYPP) in 1980. They criticised violence as the rot underlying political affiliations of left or right persuasions. Crass drummer and songwriter Penny Rimbaud made specific reference to events at a Crass gig held at Conway Hall, where militant anti-fascists attacked skinheads, regardless of their political affiliation.

Initially at least, certain writers within the punk fanzines were critical. One reader of *KYPP* complained that pacifism was an inadequate response to state violence, while Tony D commented that Crass' pacifist stance meant that they were effectively ignoring or even sanctioning violence perpetrated by racist skinheads against their own supporters.<sup>24</sup> Following this, Tony D was invited to Dial House to discuss pacifism. He commented;

<sup>24</sup> See Buenaventura Makhae, 'Peaceful Pro-Crass-tination' in *KYPP*, Issue 1, 1980, p16 and Tony D, 'Another Direct Hit by Crass' in *KYPP*, Issue 1, 1980, respectively.

*"...Leigh and my-self went to see Crass at Dial House to discuss our views about their pacifist stance, which was printed in the first issue... A few days later we received a letter from Penny Rimbaud, a long review of their philosophy. This has to go into the next issue I thought, which meant creating a new issue and not faffing about."*<sup>25</sup>

While the fanzines generally supported Crass' aims, their tenets were often debated. Despite providing ample space in issues one and two for Crass' anarcho-pacifism, an article in *KYPP4* by Alistair Livingstone (1981) stated,

*"Violence is not totally evil, but can be used as an energy source. It's just that in our society it has become a negative thing-that violence by the state against people is okay, but by people against the state it's not... what we call self-defence, the state will call violence."*

Livingstone noted that all our freedoms; of speech, the press, to vote, to strike etc were fought for, adding, *"...we will never gain any more freedom unless we are prepared to fight for it."* He further commented, *"...perhaps it is just a confusion of terms. To me, violence is a form of energy, a form of suppressed creativity/sexuality, which in an anarchist society would find other less damaging outlets."*<sup>26</sup>

In a similar vein, an editorial by Charlie Chainsaw in *Chainsaw*, 1981 stated;

*"Although anarchy is a good ideal to aim for, it would not work because in an anarchic society it would be the easiest thing in the world for any fascist group to arm themselves and take control-although it would be impossible to bring about anarchy in this country without a well organised military coup, which would be neither anarchic or pacifist."*<sup>27</sup>

However, some interpretations describe anarchy as mental and creative transformation as opposed to politicised action. Such a position is succinctly summarised in an article in Coventry punk-zine *Adventures in Reality*. Following on from a description of society as an elastic band, which snaps

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<sup>25</sup> <http://killyourpetpuppy.co.uk/news/kill-your-pet-puppy-issue-2-febmarch-1980/> Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Article by Alistair Livingstone in *KYPP 4*, 1981, pp9-10.

<sup>27</sup> *Chainsaw*, Issue 11, 1980, p21. The Scottish anarcho-punk band Alternative, interviewed in *Time Bomb* Issue 1, 1984, p11, saw violence as a legitimate weapon against state violence. Leading anarcho-punk bands Conflict and The Apostles were central to the establishment and dissemination of this position.

back into shape after people stretch it, due to the force of "...conventions, morality, tradition, social, political and sexual conditioning" or the forces of law, surveillance and harassment, the author, Alan Rider, continues to give anarchy this definition,

"Anarchy is an apolitical state of mind, an attitude and once that's achieved, no conventions can influence it. Indeed, they seem very crude and clumsy attempts at control once you realise they are there and can spot them. The elastic band can be broken if it's stretched hard enough, the result won't be painful, but a relief, a sudden realisation of freedoms that no one had before, but didn't realise what they were."<sup>28</sup>

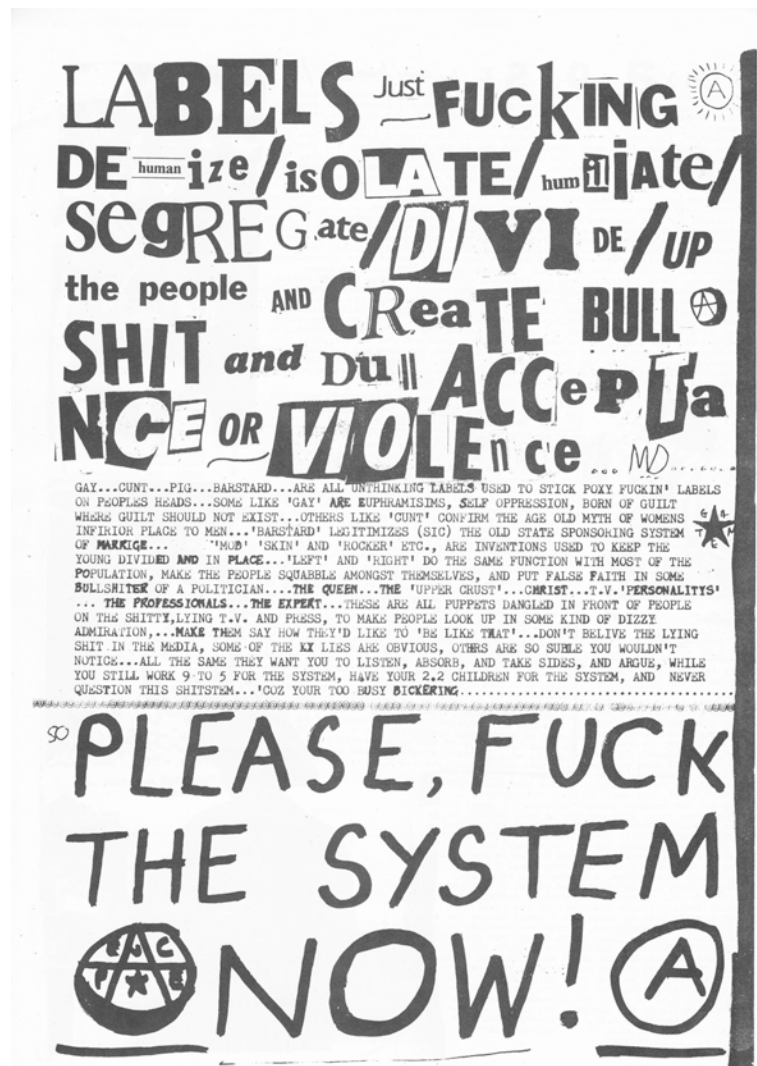


Fig.02 Toxic Grafty #5 p.15, 1980 (Mike Diboli).

<sup>28</sup> Alan Rider in *Adventures in Reality*, Issue J, 1981.



In association with an anarcho-pacifist philosophy, fanzines also began to document lived forms of anarchy, which included squatting and the rejection of conventional work. The Puppy Collective, contributors behind *KYPP*, emerged from the punk-squat scene in London. By the early 1980s *KYPP* and *Vague* produced essays on punk as an alternative life-choice and writing on revolutionary movements, alongside their coverage of post-punk bands.

### **Anarcho-Feminism**

Despite sometimes displaying inherent sexism, first-wave punk fanzines had attempted to grapple with issues of misogyny, racism and inequality, in a manner unseen in their 1960s predecessors, such as *OZ* and *International Times*. Punk fanzines provided space for debates on female emancipation and the subversion of traditional gender roles. Overall, the force of women within punk was recognised in the fanzines, as this collage of female musicians in *Panache* (1978) indicates.



Fig.03 *The Future is Female, Panache #9, 1978* (Mick Mercer).

However, in punk's early years, it took fanzines created by women to prioritise female musicians and take an anti-sexist stance. *Jolt* (1977) was involved from the outset, using grainy photos along with typed text and hand written scrawl to feature female musicians alongside the personal views of its editor, Lucy Toothpaste. Toothpaste later went on to write for *Spare Rib*, Rock Against Racism zine *Temporary Hoarding* and Rock Against Sexism 'zine *Drastic Measures*. Interviews in punk fanzines produced by women, such as *Jolt* (1977) and later *Brass Lip* (1979)<sup>29</sup> focused on what female musicians had to say rather than the way they looked and allowed the expression of views often overlooked in the male dominated music industry and press.

The preoccupation with sexism, articulated in punk culture, was accentuated in Crass' intense attack on power (and its embodiment in religion), misogynist violence and war from an 'anarcho-feminist' perspective.<sup>30</sup> Gee Vaucher's self-produced publication *International Anthem* (1977-81)<sup>31</sup> was anarchic compared to other feminist magazines in its portrayal of female oppression as just one facet of societal control. She produced the first (of five issues) on the theme of *Education*, while living in New York (1977), prior to joining Crass. In it, her painted collages combine news-footage, advertising and pornography, to critique education in its wider sense, encompassing familial, institutional and societal conditioning. Women's subordination through domesticity or as sex objects, as propagated in the mass media, was a predominant theme. *International Anthem* featured Vaucher's painted collages together with poetic texts by Penny Rimbaud. Subsequently, after returning to the UK to live and work as part of Crass, she published issue 2 in 1979 and issue 3 in 1980.

Vi Subversa also played an important role in bringing anarcho-feminism to punk with her band, Poison Girls (1976), who worked closely with Crass in the ensuing years.<sup>32</sup> The Poison Girls' magazine, *Impossible Dream* (4 issues between 1979 and 1986) was similar to *International*

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<sup>29</sup> See interviews with The Slits and Poly Styrene in *Jolt* (The Slits in *Jolt 2, Jubilee Issue* and X-Ray Spex Intervwxyz in *Jolt 3, Bumper Holiday Issue*; both from 1977) and *Brass Lip* (Issue 1, 1979), which featured extensive interviews with female musicians who adopted a more androgynous look, including the Au-Pairs (pp8-12), the Raincoats (pp3-4), the Mekons (pp18-21) and Poison Girls (pp23-27).

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that Crass have generally avoided defining themselves in anarchist or feminist terms.

<sup>31</sup> Images from issues 4 and 5 on *Ireland* and *War* respectively are in circulation although they were not published due to a lack of funds (email conversation with Vaucher on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2016). Vaucher also comments more directly on female objectification in pin-up magazines in work she produced for another self-produced, colour magazine, *Pent-Up* (1975).

<sup>32</sup> Poison Girls frequently played gigs with Crass and released two singles and one album on Crass Records (*Hex, All Systems Go* and *Chappaquiddick Bridge* respectively, all in 1980) as well as contributing 'Persons Unknown' as a joint single release with the Crass song 'Bloody Revolutions' (1980).

*Anthem* in containing montages of images, taken from various places including advertising, spliced with Poison Girls' lyrics denouncing power. Both publications were distributed via radical bookshops and alternate networks by post, while *Impossible Dream* was also sold at gigs. The feminist concerns articulated in these publications would have permeated a punk demographic to some extent, although perhaps not to the extent of the record graphics that Vaucher designed for Crass, given the far greater range and circulation of the latter.

Vaucher's second edition of *International Anthem (Domestic Violence)* was published in 1979; the year she returned to Dial House to join Crass and they released their double album *Stations of the Crass*. The images Vaucher created for both this publication and album, share her preoccupation with familial and religious oppression. Vaucher's images used sophisticated means to convey messages against war and female submission, through a paradigm that critiqued all-powerful structures. As such, she introduced a way of viewing these issues, which became influential within wider punk and anarcho-punk culture. Vaucher had already developed her anarchic-feminist rhetoric in graphics she produced for *International Anthem*, and this message was consolidated through her work with Crass, whose music linked misogyny to all institutional oppression. While the years 1979-81 saw an escalation in coverage of feminist issues in punk fanzines,<sup>33</sup> Vaucher and Crass' focus on female subordination by institutions of 'the system', including the family and Christian church, was not reflected in punk fanzines – including specifically feminist ones – at this time. However, their rousing take on feminism and its situation within an anarchic perspective, can be seen to permeate the punk-zines, following the release of *Penis Envy* (1981).

Crass seemed to pick up on the issue of misogyny being brought out into the open elsewhere<sup>34</sup> and extended the theme into extreme territory with their lyrics on this album, for which they were prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act.<sup>35</sup> Unlike earlier Crass recordings, *Penis Envy*

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<sup>33</sup> Articles in *Brass Lip* (1979) focus on male oppression and misogynistic violence, both in the music industry and in wider society. An interview with The Raincoats focusses on women in bands trying to break the sex symbol stereotype, in *Allied/Propaganda*, Issue 3, 1979/1980, p3. Welcome Women by A Male in *Don't Dictate*, Issue D, 1980, recognises the shift in punk music towards female orientated bands in the late 70s/early 80s.

<sup>34</sup> This period saw issues of misogynist, including domestic, violence, brought to the fore through the formation of the first Rape Crisis Centre in 1976 and women's refuge, Solace Women's Aid in 1975. Prominent, feminist magazine *Spare Rib* (1972-1993) disseminated ideas from the Women's Movement to a niche, but considerable demographic (its circulation was around 20,000 in the late 1970s).

<sup>35</sup> *Penis Envy* was the subject of legal persecution for obscenity. Although the conviction for obscenity was overturned by the Court of Appeal, the ban remained for the lyrics to *Bata Motel*, which highlighted the violence inherent in female sexual subordination (from Rimbaud, P; sleeve notes to *The Crassical Collection; Ten Notes On A Summer's Day*, Crass Records, 2012).

featured exclusively female vocals (Eve Libertine and Joy De Vivre). Within the predominantly male milieu of punk, Crass was going out on a limb by making such an unequivocal statement and introducing feminist ideas to punks who were often unfamiliar with them. This was reflected in the escalating amount of space dedicated by punk-zines to anarcho-feminism in the coming years.

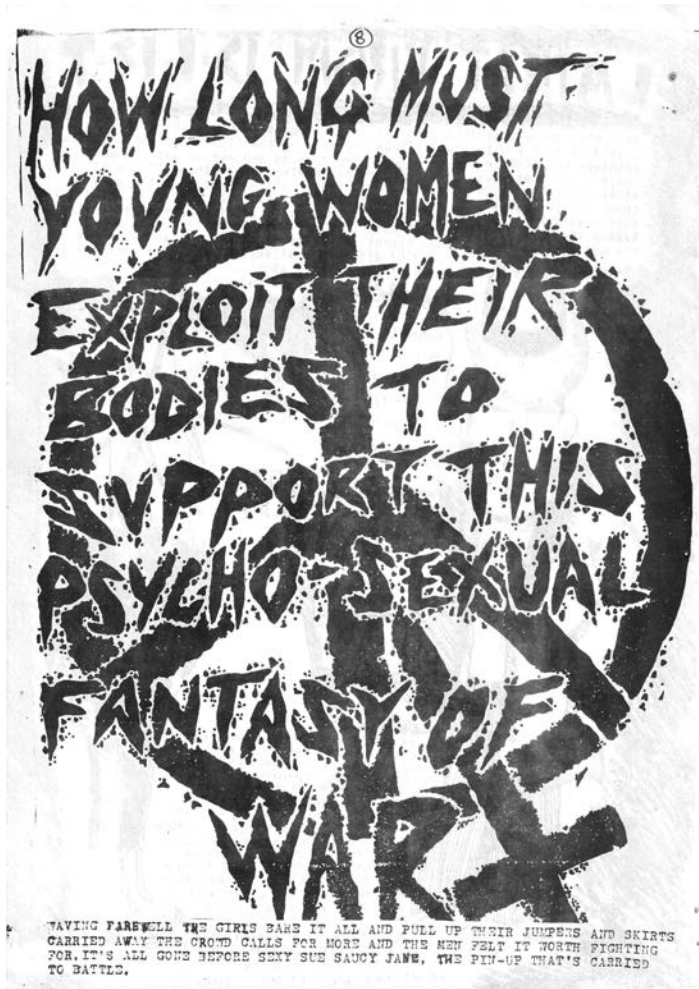


Fig.04 *Acts of Defiance* #6, 1983, p.8.

### **Anti-Thatcher/Anti-State**

An oppositional, politicised rhetoric flourished within underground, punk culture during Margaret Thatcher's first term as Prime Minister (1979-1983). Crass' third album, *Yes Sir I Will* (1983), was a virulent retaliation against four years of Thatcherism and the Falklands War. The Crass single, *You're Already Dead...*, released the following year featured Margaret Thatcher (front cover) and Michael Heseltine (rear cover) with their eyes and mouth scratched out respectively. Both figures were encircled with the text *You're Already Dead*. The insert to the record featured

information and lyrics together with Vaucher's image, commenting on the 'special relationship' between Thatcher and Reagan, which was increasingly being depicted in the media. Here Vaucher shrunk the figure of Thatcher in nappies, to emphasize the UK's dependence on the US, symbolized by Reagan, depicted as a hybrid founding American mother and bird of prey, nursing Thatcher while shitting on the world.



Fig.05 Vaucher, G, inner illustration to Crass 'You're Already Dead' (Crass Records, 1984). Gouache.

Visual representations of themes such as this were more explicit within anarcho-punk 'zines.

Thatcher's acute divisiveness exacted a bitter response from a wide range of people, and anarcho-

punk provided a forum in which an extreme, anti-Thatcher rhetoric developed. The image of Thatcher appeared with increasing frequency in the zines as a locus for vitriolic opposition.



Fig.06 *Acts of Defiance* #6, 1983, cover.

The content of punk fanzines was increasingly engaged with political events in the 1980s, such as the Miners' Strike, Government cuts, the Falklands War, the anti-apartheid movement, Rio Tinto Zinc and the UK and the USA's funding of troops, in particular Death Squads in Latin America.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> On the Miners' Strike see *Time Bomb*, interview with *Alternative*, 1984, p3. On cuts, see interview with *Alternative* in *Time Bomb*, 1984, p3. On Central America, see 'El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Death Squads = killing,

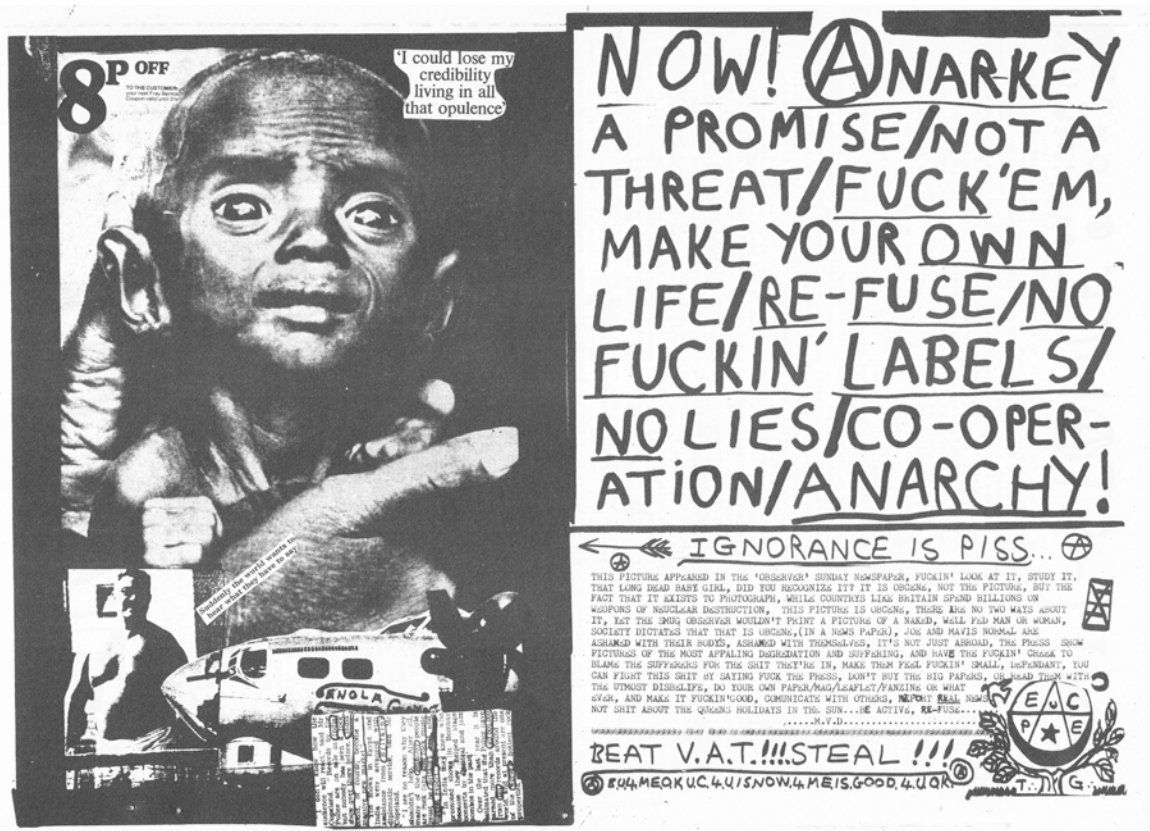


Fig.07 Toxic Grafity #5 p.32, 1980 (Mike Diboli).

There was a surge in production of (post) punk fanzines in the early 1980s, which fostered a hardening critique against the Thatcher government, while eschewing traditional politics in favour of anarchic solutions. These fanzines provided an outlet for a more oppositional, anarchic polemic, pitted against all aspects of societal control, alongside their music coverage. While Thatcherism provoked an extreme response, the ire of Crass and anarchic punk culture more widely was directed against all forms of government and state control. Crass' accusation of political authoritarianism on the left equating that on the right found a receptive audience among a youthful demographic that was increasingly disillusioned with both mainstream and far-left politics.<sup>37</sup>

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rape and torture' in *Time Bomb*, Issue 1, 1984 and on Thatcher's support of repressive regimes in SA, Ireland and Latin America (particularly Chile) see 'Repression' in *Acts of Defiance*, Issue 6, p9.

<sup>37</sup> See the lyrics to 'Bloody Revolutions' (1980) for Crass' take on politics of either left or right persuasions.

At around this time, punk fanzines were increasingly engaging with anarchist ideas in relation to concepts of state and government in lengthy tracts and articles. An article in *Anarchy* expands from a description of prison officers escaping punishment for the alleged murder of a prisoner to provide an anarchist explanation of how the justice system was inherently flawed due to its function to uphold hierarchical society. This argued,

*"The state is violence raised to a level of an institution, wielded as a weapon in the class struggle, with us as the target. It thrives on the myth of 'equality before the law' whilst perpetrating a system which ensures that society remains founded upon inequality."* In case the reader should assume that the problem was a capitalist as opposed to a socialist or communist state, the article continues, *"...It is the thing itself – the state – which is the problem, not who controls it. THEIR 'British justice' is OUR oppression."*<sup>38</sup>

### **Religion**

Another institution, which has often been decried by anarchists as alienating and oppressive, is the church. From an anarcho-feminist perspective, Christianity subjugated women in particular due to its patriarchal history, structure and functioning. Crass' obsession with organised religion manifested itself in tracks such as *Women, So What* and *Reality Asylum*<sup>39</sup> and subsequent album titles, *Stations of the Crass* (1979) and *Christ the Album* (1982).<sup>40</sup> It's also an ongoing theme in Rimbaud's poems and in Vaucher's images for Crass. As with their distinct take on feminism, Crass here allied itself with dissenters from tradition. In this case, Crass could be seen to act as a catalyst for increasing dissatisfaction with the church, particularly among the young, at that time.

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<sup>38</sup> Barry Prosser: 'Their Justice and Ours' in *Anarchy*, Issue 34, London, UK, 1982.

<sup>39</sup> *Women* and *So What* are included as tracks on *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (EP, Small Wonder, 1978), while *Women* also appears on *Stations of the Crass* (LP, Crass Records, 1979). 'Reality Asylum'/'Shaved Women' (7", Crass Records, 1979).

<sup>40</sup> This record was a double album, box set, featuring the book, *A Series of Shock Slogans and Mindless Token Tantrums*. The book included Rimbaud's's essay, *The Last of the Hippies*, which recalled the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of his friend and co-instigator of the free festival circuit, Wally Hope.



# RELIGIOUS CARNAGE

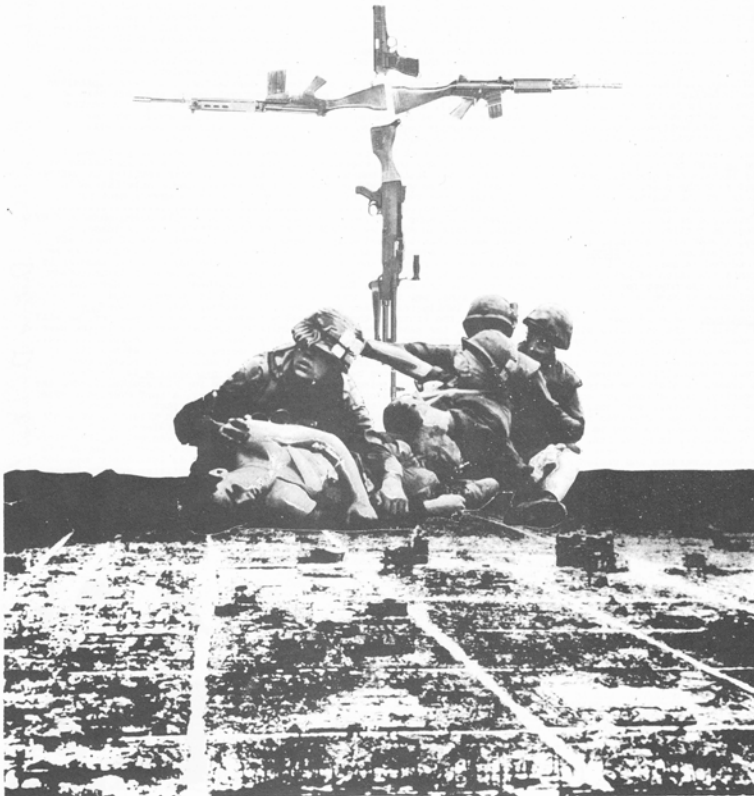


Fig.08 *Toxic Grafty* #5 p.17, 1980 (Mike Diboli).

Crass' attack on religion as an oppressive, aggressive institution, despite its declarations of peace, found an eager reception in punk-zines in the early 1980.<sup>41</sup> An article in *Chainsaw* for example stated,

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<sup>41</sup> See an article in *Acts of Defiance*, Issue 3, 1982 p15, which reads, "The Jewish religion encourages the myth that men are superior to women - it's fucking pathetic. The Catholic religion disgusts me the most... millions in the world live in poverty... while the church spends thousands on visits for the Pope." Also see This is Religion (Your Religion?) in *Chainsaw*, Issue 12, Sept 1981, pp26-27 for an article on the hypocrisy of government, church and the wealthy being the arbiters of Christian morals.

*“A recent opinion poll by one of the national daily papers showed that if you are an atheist you are more likely to be a pacifist than you are if you believe in God. Which tends to make a mockery of the ‘love thine enemy’ messages that the God squad tend to preach. Do you think that Maggot Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Co, leaders of the western world, orderers of cruise missiles, believe in God? Of course!”*

The article went on to argue that a religion’s belief in its own superiority and subsequent divisiveness made it analogous to fascism.<sup>42</sup>

### **Single Issue Politics: Animal Advocacy**

While Crass focused exclusively on releasing their own materials in 1979, from 1980 onwards their focus was arguably not just on releasing their own output, but on applying the model to other like-minded bands.<sup>43</sup> The ideas and priorities of these bands were channelled through their music and imagery. Single-issue politics emerged as a focus for more generalised opposition to globalised, hegemonic capitalism. Correspondingly, fanzines reacted, not only through the dissemination of Crass’ ideas into the wider anarcho-punk sphere, but also through the bands’ various focuses on issues such as vivisection, nuclear energy, war and organized religion.

The commitment to animal liberation shown by bands such as Flux of Pink Indians, Conflict, and the Subhumans helped to entrench this as an issue within anarcho-punk circles. This concern was expressed through their music and the design of their record sleeves and inserts. Releasing their music on independent labels gave anarcho-punk bands the opportunity to express their views without censorship or compromise. In addition to the focus of their music and associated graphics, Flux gave out thousands of leaflets on vivisection, anarchy and pacifism at their gigs.<sup>44</sup> Such strategies built upon an already well-established animal advocacy and animal rights counter-culture, where leafleting and flyers were commonplace at demonstrations and other gatherings.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> ‘This is Religion (Your Religion)’ in *Chainsaw*, 12 Sept, 1981, p26.

<sup>43</sup> Crass Records produced twenty-one albums and thirty six singles, of which twelve albums and twenty five singles were by other bands, predominantly released between 1980-84.

<sup>44</sup> Hammy, Flux in *Roar*, No 7, 1983

<sup>45</sup> In fact, this led on to other debates concerning the use of inks or photographs that hardline vegans objected to in relation to animal products such as gelatin (in film), chemicals in dyes and inks, and even the use of paper as a negative environmental impact.

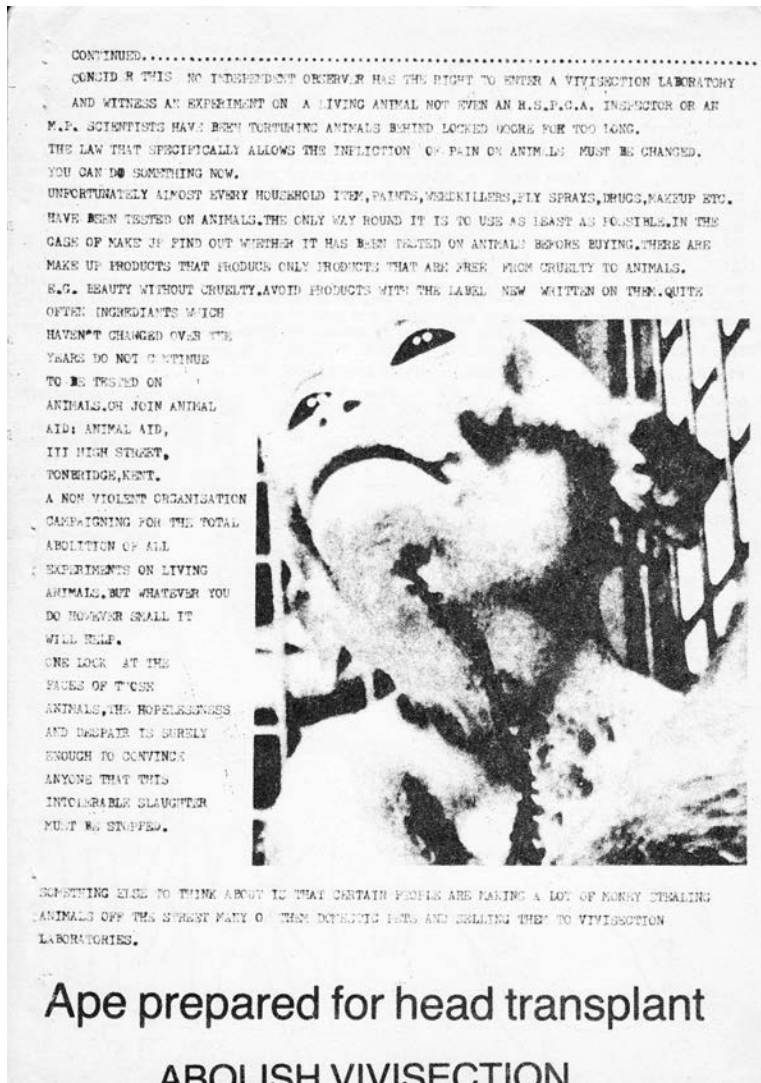


Fig.09 Fack #6 p.27, 1981.

The bands' views were also disseminated via interviews in punk-fanzines, live performances and the example they set through choices such as vegetarianism. The punk-fanzines also explored concepts of animal liberation and veganism from an anarchist philosophical perspective in in-depth articles. Such tracts articulated a moral or political standpoint regarding the exploitation and commodification of animals within a contemporary, capitalist society.

### **The Means of Production**

The more successful early punk fanzines had been forced to adopt commercial models of production and distribution, though their design aesthetic often remained distinctly DIY in style. By

the time anarcho-punk had established its own champions within the fanzine market, such models of large-scale print production and distribution were already well developed. This isn't to say that, like earlier punk fanzines, a range of smaller, low-key, do-it-yourself publications were unimportant, but that the more established punk 'zines with greater distribution (*Sniffin' Glue*, *Ripped & Torn*, *Panache*, *Chainsaw*) had paved the way for a second generation of 'zine producers in terms of production knowledge as well as audience and market (*Toxic Grafity*, *Adventures in Reality*, *Kill Your Pet Puppy*, *Acts of Defiance*, *Vague*). Anarcho-punk 'zines can, then, be seen as an extension of an already established punk fanzine milieu, tapping into existing networks and practices while at the same time attempting to present a break with the past in terms of content and design aesthetic.

Former Pink Fairies roadie Joly MacFie's *Better Badges* enterprise was to take a lead in supporting the emerging punk independent producers, initially manufacturing pin badges then extending their services to support the print production of punk-zines after investing in litho-printing equipment, as MacFie notes;

*"You could make metal offset plates for approximately 75p. I priced it out and came up with a rate of 2p per double-sided sheet for 'zines, But if we dropped in a BB ad, I'd drop it to 1p. And we took pretty much all comers. You paid for what you took, and we'd distro the rest. I always saw my role as empowering the voice of the fans vs. the industry. With style."*<sup>46</sup>

Some fanzine producers felt that the *Better Badges* 'formula' was a little too restrictive, however, as Alan Rider of *Adventures in Reality* recalls; *"...the reason I never went with the Better Badges print and distribution deal was that they had to approve of your zine and they all had the same look to them, with no variation. It was a good deal, but limiting and not for me."*<sup>47</sup> By this time, *Better Badges* employed three designers along with printers including Nick Godwin from anarcho-punk group Zounds. The *Kill Your Pet Puppy* website directly attributes the impact of *Better Badges* on the establishment of this new, more radical and politically-charged punk fanzine;

*"Kill Your Pet Puppy was at the forefront of a cultural landscape and an alternative world of squats, squatted venues and self-sufficiency that became known later as anarcho-punk... Getting the new*

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<sup>46</sup> Email correspondence, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Email correspondence, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

*fanzine out onto the streets proved a problem until Joly of Better Badges agreed to print the new publication (then title unknown) in as many crazy colours as Tony wanted.”<sup>48</sup>*

*Ripped & Torn* and *KYPP* contributor Alistair Livingstone recalls;

*“I remember with KYPP6 the first 500 (or less) we went to a community print shop on the Holloway Road and did it on a Gestetner type machine. Fanzines printed by Better Badges usually had a Better Badges half page advert in them, so you can tell which ones were printed there. Better Badges also did distribution, selling the zines alongside the badges at gigs... we printed 100 copies of KYPP6 at the Islington Bus Company, which was a community printers/community centre.”<sup>49</sup>*

Other radical print shops helped to facilitate the production of some of the more established punk and anarcho-punk ‘zines. Generally, there were few tensions between the ideology of the punk fanzine producers and printers. Graphic designer Andrew Howard, who worked at the *Islington Bus Company*, suggests a level of liberal-minded tolerance toward much of the material that the group were asked to print; “...we were used by a whole range of groups – sometimes using our duplicators, and then later our photocopiers (*Sharp copiers that produced really great blacks*). We were cheaper than most places. I don't recall that we ever refused or censored anyone – we were a left-wing collection after all.”<sup>50</sup> However, such easy collaboration was not always the case, as Alan Rider of Coventry punk ‘zine *Adventures in Reality* recalls;

*“Most of the copy shops and printers I used didn't really care too much about what I did – I doubt they ever bothered to read or look at the content. The exception was the left wing Community Print centres I sometimes used. They were cheap, but did tend to object to some of the content. I've never censored anything I've done though. The biggest example of that was when I used a body art image for a front cover. Because it was a nude figure, they refused to print it as they felt it was “sexist” (it wasn't). So I got the sleeve printed up at a commercial printers and hand collated and stapled them. Then record shops said they wouldn't stock it, which was when I came up with the idea of printing up the paper bags to put it in.”<sup>51</sup>*

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<sup>48</sup> <http://killyourpetpuppy.co.uk>

<sup>49</sup> Email correspondence, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Email correspondence, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Email correspondence, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

Tony Drayton came across similar difficulties with shops and resellers of his *Ripped & Torn* fanzine, though not with the printers themselves – though at the time his fanzines were printed by commercial printers rather than the more politically-inclined radical print shops;

*None of the printers ever refused anything I sent to them, I never thought about that happening when producing the fanzines. Rules were more set by shops who had the power to refuse to stock the fanzine. There was quite an issue when I put Raped on the cover of R&T11 as Rough Trade had refused to sell the Raped EP due to the band's name (and the name of their EP).<sup>52</sup>*

Chris Low produced several different 'zines via family contacts at Stirling University (where he could access free photocopying) and a local commercial printer in Scotland. He produced one anarchist 'zine, *Angry*, which was litho-printed at "...either Little @ or Freedom Press". This was originally intended to have been included with the Apostles *Smash the Spectacle* EP. He recalls at least some restrictions being placed on fanzine content by printers;

*"All the printers I had dealings with stipulated nothing would be printed that was 'political or pornographic'. I recall even the CND symbols I used on some pages were brought into question. To their credit, I don't recall there ever being any issue about swearing however."<sup>53</sup>*

A number of underground and counterculture magazines, including *Black Flag*, were printed by Little @ press, based in the former dockyard warehouses at Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping. Andy Martin of The Apostles worked in the print shop, and helped to facilitate access for like-minded anarcho-punk producers. It is also notable that the *Autonomy Centre*, a punk-centred anarchist community space, funded in part by proceeds from the Crass/Poison Girls split single 'Bloody Revolutions'/'Persons Unknown' (Crass Records, 1980), was established in early 1981 within the same building as Little @, as Alistair Livingstone recalls;

*"The Crass and Poison Girls benefit single for what was to become the Wapping Autonomy Centre was released in May 1980 and raised £10,000. The money was used to convert a space in a Victorian*

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<sup>52</sup> Raped, *Pretty Paedophiles* (Parole Records, 1977).

<sup>53</sup> Email correspondence, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

*warehouse beside the Thames at Wapping into a social centre. After discussion the more neutral 'Autonomy Centre' was chosen over 'Anarchist Centre' as its name. It opened in early 1981 but was a rented space without an entertainment or drinks licence."*<sup>54</sup>

Content concerns were also reflected in the choice of images. In some cases this resulted in a shift away from the earlier punk fanzine aesthetic that combined handwritten and typewritten text with photographs of bands toward more directly political concerns and the use of alternative visual strategies (collage, illustration, reportage, appropriation of images from contemporary newspapers and magazines) to reflect the change. Some of these choices reflected a deliberate attempt to move away from music-based fanzines to more politicised (and serious) 'zines, while others were driven by necessity; photographs of bands were relatively simple to source or produce, but more ideological or political themes required a more sophisticated, or at least more abstract and less directly representational, visual accompaniment.

### **(Anarcho) Punk Is Dead**

Having sustained two separate high-points, in terms of subcultural participation and commercial impact – between 1976 and 1979 and again between 1980 and 1982 with its 'second wave' resurgence – by the mid-1980s the term 'punk' was derided as tired and clichéd within the fanzines. One article, *Another Redundant Term of Abuse*, by Mark, in *Infection* 4, 1984, commented;

*"The term 'punk' is redundant; it's sick, feeble... dead... Punk may have once meant all the things I associate with it; rebellion, freedom of expression, individuality, honesty and an all alternative culture free of all restrictions; in short an environment that we can truly run wild in. Present day 'punk' shows the exact opposite of these ideals."*

Mark blames the music press, chiefly Gary Bushell and Carol Clark, and wider business interests for stifling and categorising creativity within punk. However, the stagnant situation for punk was also seen as the fault of the movement spurred by Crass. Tom Vague commented; *"...Standards dropped to an all-time low. So long as you had a Mohican and leather jacket and sung about state oppression and not eating meat, you were alright."* He continued to slate a wide range of anarcho-punk bands including Poison Girls, Flux, Rubella Ballet, Conflict and the Subhumans, adding;

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<sup>54</sup> Alistair Livingstone, 'Everyone Was An Anarchist' in Bull, G & Dines, M (eds.). 2015. *Tales From The Punkside*, London: Active Distribution. P.33.

*“This whole neu-punk thing stinks even more than Bushell’s Oi punk nightmare in a way. It’s got all the predictable talk, but no bottle. Once alive and fresh. Now dead and un-fresh. Like rotting fruit. Don’t fit into rules. Don’t follow expected dogmas and stereotypes. Take risks. Show some originality and imagination for god’s sake... Vague 82.”<sup>55</sup>*

The fanzines discussed how punk bands and fanzines that were following a Crass template were producing essentially derivative versions of their ideas. At this time, there were signs that Crass too was becoming burnt out and weary with the movement they had to a significant extent inspired. Their records were also not selling well. This time also saw conflict within Crass over their pacifist stance. Crass disbanded in 1984, thereby fulfilling their own prophecy<sup>56</sup>

### **Shock Slogans and Mindless Token Tantrums**

Anarcho-punk needs to be understood in relation to the wider evolution of the subculture. While many concerns expressed by anarcho-punk groups and ‘zine writers pre-date any kind of ‘year zero’ punk stereotype, drawing as they do upon political philosophy dating back more than a century together with many of the ideologies revitalised by the late 1960s and early 1970s counterculture in the UK and US, they should also be viewed as a continuation of internal discourse within the punk subculture itself. Through the evolution of subcultural networks of production and distribution (and the establishment of an audience and market), punk, in its broader sense, facilitated the emergence of the more radical politics of anarcho-punk. Crass had originally picked up on the debates articulated in ‘zines on punk as a grassroots movement and an unmediated form of expression and in turn fed back in their own anarchist-pacifist philosophy. From around 1980, Crass had a significant input into the evolving rhetoric and aesthetic adopted by the ‘zines. The underground media that enabled debates (and internecine rivalries) to flourish are exemplified within the do-it-yourself punk-zines and independent punk voices away from the mainstream. Punk’s model of anarchism was, therefore, a ground-up model of political discourse, with anarcho-punk ‘zines at the forefront of those debates.

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Those Not so Loveable Spikeypops’ by Vague, T, in *Vague* 12, 1982.

<sup>56</sup> Crass often stated their intention to disband by 1984 or sooner if no longer working effectively. See, interview with Crass in, *No More of That*, Feb 1981, p8.