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## Bodies: Punk, Love and Marxism

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in  
Theory and Criticism

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**Abstract:**

This thesis returns love to the purview of Marxism and punk, which had attempted to ban the interpersonal in respective critiques of abstractions. Love-as-sense—as it is figured by Marx—will be distinguished from the love-of-love-songs, and from commodity fetishism and alienation, which relate to this recuperated love qua perception or experience. As its musical output exhibited residue of free love’s failure, and cited sixties pop which characterized love as mutual ownership, American and British punk from 1976-80 will be analyzed for its interrogation of commodified love. An introductory chapter will define love as an aesthetic activity and organize theoretical and musical sources according to the prominence of the body. The second chapter considers fetishisms and the coerced body-as-commodity. The third chapter emphasizes gender, bodily inscribed alienation, and disruptions of punk’s material-immaterial cohesion. A concluding chapter employs Marxist theories of rhythms to posit atypical punk music as a spatiotemporal habitat conducive to love-as-sense.

**Key words:**

Punk, Marxism, Love, Alienation, Fetishism, Bodies, Needs, Aesthetics, Idiorrhythmy

Dancing for oneself always means learning to disregard  
the beat of the official world.

- Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*

I'm so glad that you belong to me  
Oh my darling, who wants to be free?  
- The Slits, "Love und Romance"

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## 1. Introduction: “They Have History”

### 1.1 Love (“Love Comes in spurts”)

Love is a curious subject: its importance to cultural and intellectual history cannot be denied, yet it still appears to be taboo for many theorists. As Roland Barthes writes: “Everyone will understand that X has ‘huge problems’ with his sexuality; but no one will be interested in those Y may have with his sentimentality: love is obscene precisely in that it puts the sentimental in place of the sexual.”<sup>1</sup> Too much sexual desire can result in rehabilitation for addiction; too little sexual desire may be solved with a pill prescription—now for both men and women. Love resists such instrumentalization, but still has prompted innumerable attempts at its explanation. From Aristotle and Søren Kierkegaard to Emma Goldman and Julia Kristeva, writings on love span various philosophical traditions, and the authors of these writings would be extremely difficult to dismiss wholesale. Nonetheless, objections to mentions of love in contexts deemed inappropriate appear frequently and reliably. For example, Eva Geulen’s evaluation of Theodor Adorno’s *Minima Moralia* claims that his writings on love are embarrassing, banal, and reeking of “anachronistic sentimentality.”<sup>2</sup> Especially in materialist thought, love is taken as an abstraction to be done away with. Agnes Heller observes that this regulation of feelings—including their expressed intensity and content—is common to all societies, as with the “etiquette” of mourning, for instance.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Robert Hullot-Kentor notes that prior to *Minima Moralia* (1951), in Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944),

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Geulen, ““No Happiness Without Fetishism”: *Minima Moralia* as *Ars Amandi*,” in *Feminist Readings of Theodor Adorno*, ed. Renée Heberle (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 98.

<sup>3</sup> Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Feelings* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 16.

“[u]nder the weight of bodies heaped in bulldozed graves, human warmth itself succumbed to taboo.”<sup>4</sup> Despite this position, Adorno would go on to posit love as something of a utopian peephole, therefore assigning to love both historicity and an ethical onus, as he calls for it to stand in “conscious opposition” to society with a view to a better one.<sup>5</sup> This thesis will contend with this apparent ongoing evaluation of love’s ethics, whether it is figured as utopian or “like a case of anthrax,” as Gang of Four would later suggest.<sup>6</sup>

To reiterate from Barthes, when love is considered ethically or politically unviable (as under the weight of “bulldozed graves”) it is consequently charged with obscenity. The ethical judgment of love can therefore be situated in a spectrum of disgust. It should be no surprise, then, that love takes the place of obscenity as a cause of repulsion in punk: the genre that delights in the obscene above all. In punk, birth (“screaming fucking bloody mess”), sex (“used up before your sweet sixteen/ everyone knows you were caught with the meat in your mouth”), and death (“they chopped her up and I don’t care”) typically bore no trace of sentimentality, and love became fictional “shit.”<sup>7</sup> As with the dynamism between the categories “beautiful” and “ugly”, though, we can read the process of making love obscene as the extension of a refusal: “Beauty is not the platonically pure beginning but rather something that originated in the renunciation of what was once feared, which only as a result of this renunciation ... became the ugly.”<sup>8</sup> For

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Hullot-Kentor, “Things Beyond Resemblance,” in *Philosophy of New Music*, by Theodor W. Adorno, ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxi.

<sup>5</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), 172.

<sup>6</sup> “Anthrax,” Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>7</sup> Lyrics respectively from: “Bodies,” Sex Pistols, *Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s the Sex Pistols*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 73389, 2006, CD, originally released 1977; “Caught With the Meat in Your Mouth,” Dead Boys, *Young Loud and Snotty*, Wrong 926038, 2008, CD, originally released 1977; “Chain Saw,” The Ramones, *Ramones*, Rhino 8122743062, 2001, CD, originally released 1976; John Holmstrom, *The Best of Punk Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, ed. Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann and Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 47.



many punks and theorists, obscenity displaces love, which has been refused and renounced. However, this is not a renunciation of all of love's definitions (e.g. "patient [and] kind"), but a particular constellation of qualities that fall under "love" as an umbrella term. Furthermore, given recourse to love in Adorno's corpus otherwise fixated on negativity, and the frequent covers and citations of pop's love songs in punk, this renunciation is better figured as a(n incomplete) repression.<sup>9</sup>

Many thinkers before and after Marx have taken issue with "unscientific" approaches to passions like love, and with this type of supposed irrational thought more generally—it is meant to languish, untouchable, under the banner of "abstraction". Particularly following Louis Althusser, continental philosophers have held that Marx made a "break" from his Hegelian roots "and that his later work is 'scientific' and free of this influence."<sup>10</sup> However, this view is now largely unsupported—even by Althusser, who has since corrected his earlier conclusion.<sup>11</sup> As I will explain below, the type of evidence usually cited to support such a Hegelian break should be read more carefully; for example, the major absence of the term "alienation" from Marx's later work has less to do with a renunciation of Hegel and more to do with issues of concision and clarity. Furthermore, pre-emptive commentary from Marx and Engels in defence of the place of feelings or passions in their works can be found in *The Holy Family*:

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<sup>9</sup> Punk's "pop citation" will be discussed in detail in the third chapter of this thesis; this term could include cover songs but extends to the quotation of single lines, for instance.

<sup>10</sup> Sean Sayers, *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), x-xi.

<sup>11</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, x-xi; "[I]t is very difficult to talk about Marxist philosophy, just as it would be difficult to talk about a mathematical philosophy ... given that Marx's discovery was basically scientific in nature... Marx relied on a philosophy – Hegel's – which was arguably not the one which best suited his objective ... [O]ne cannot extrapolate from Marx's scientific discoveries to his philosophy... [W]e failed to give Marx the philosophy that best suited his work [because although it] made it possible to arrive at a coherent vision of Marx's thought, [t]oo many of his texts contradict it ... for us to be able to regard it as *his* philosophy." Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, eds. François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), 257-259.

In order to complete its transformation into the “calm of knowledge” Critical Criticism must first seek to dispose of *love*. Love is a passion, and nothing is more dangerous for the calm of knowledge than passion... It is horror and abomination and maketh Critical Criticism furious, stirreth up its bile and almost driveth it insane ... [T]he beloved is a *sensuous object*, and if Critical Criticism is to condescend to recognition of an object, it demands at the very least a *senseless* object. But love is an *un-Critical, unchristian materialist*.<sup>12</sup>

Marx’s configuration of love emphasizes its place in the realm of the senses, or of perception, i.e. aesthetics. As such, Barthes could be said to have been mistaken when he wrote that “there is no system of love,” and further, that the contemporary lover can call to the various systems without answer, including “Marxist discourse ... [which] has nothing to say”—for love belongs to the aesthetic realm for Marx, and it is clear that the many systems of aesthetics always have much to say.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, punk postured at having its own “break”: its so-called rupture from pop is the Althusserian equivalent reaction to love in punk. Taking place at a historical moment in which the “dictatorship of the economy shows clearly that [it] intends to enforce [the deadly seriousness of financial transactions] everywhere,” punk excises love from sex in an attempt to cure the hangover from free love’s failure.<sup>14</sup> Both “postwar consensus society [and] wistful liberal utopianism of the 1960s counterculture” were rejected by punk, and their accompanying attitudes toward sex came under fire as well.<sup>15</sup> As it related to romantic love between heteronormative couples, sex did not fit with punk’s generally sweeping condemnation of tradition. Additionally, to punks confronted by the commodification of both love songs and bodies, these usual sites of

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<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Critique* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), 31-33.

<sup>13</sup> Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 211.

<sup>14</sup> Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 230.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Worley, “One Nation Under the Bomb: The Cold War and British Punk to 1984,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 5, no. 2 (2011), 69, doi: 10.1353/jsr.2011.0015.

love would have appeared barren. With pop's history of associating sex with "true love", it follows from the indifference or revulsion with sex seen in punk that love would receive the same treatment.<sup>16</sup> Love's intimate relationship with the pop song, and the thoroughness of the commodification of the pop song and the body worked in tandem to prompt punk to treat love as insidious.

With love's ethics in mind, the thrust of this investigation is derived from the following problematic dyad: for Marx, love is a human sense; for punk, love is a commodity. The commodity as reflective of the social character of labour implies a loaded syllogism if the commodity in question is love.<sup>17</sup> Punk artists, often noted for their sensitivity to issues of class, race, and gender, and for instigating a new inclusivity or democracy in pop musicianship, deemed love unworthy of serious treatment, resulting in their genre being recognized as "the first form of rock not to rest on love songs."<sup>18</sup> The rejection of pop's dominant commodity, the love song, was considered a component of improved rigour, sociopolitical consciousness, and artistic responsibility: "Write about what's important, don't write about love," was the direction given to Joe Strummer of the Clash by manager Bernard Rhodes.<sup>19</sup> "Scientific" Marxism and punk therefore share an origin myth catalyzed by their respective dismissals of love. Marxism's love-as-abstraction and punk's love-of-love songs, though, are both mere symbolic vessels: they do not denote love *as such*. Rather, as they were banned for the sake of rigour and rationality belonging to scientism and, traditionally, masculinity, "love" in this case carries with it the

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<sup>16</sup> Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion, and Rock 'n' Roll* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 87-88.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Friedrich Engels (Moscow: Progress Publishers: 1996), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality," in *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*, ed. Simon Frith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 52.

<sup>19</sup> Jon Savage, *The England's Dreaming Tapes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 268.

irrationality, sentimentality and emotion of traditional conceptions of femininity. The stakes we face in recuperating love after the bracketing of the interpersonal in Marxism and punk therefore involve the rehabilitation of the subject from a dated and oppressive gendered logic.

Consequently, love, unburdened from its pejorative baggage, will be constituted here as an activity carried out by and between fluid and porous subjects, rather than being situated in a fixed or static interior.

### 1.2 *Bodies ("I Don't Wanna Go Down to the Basement")*

During their interrogation of "Critical Criticism" in *The Holy Family*, Marx and Engels tell of Criticism's aim of freeing history from "its massy massiness."<sup>20</sup> This is said in the context of condemning an ephemeral so-called "Critical history," as opposed to "real history," but Marx's work overall is in agreement with a focus on the "massy massiness" of humans as a fundamental step in this shift at large.<sup>21</sup> By no means, though, does Marx dismiss abstractions from his works; certainly, they constitute a large portion of his sources of critique. In *Capital*, he would elaborate that, "products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses," but while "in the act of seeing, [where] there is ... a physical relation between physical things... it is different with commodities."<sup>22</sup> Abstractions such as those produced when we "see" value may be illusory, but they are not independent of the physical. Indeed, belief in such ethereal qualities allows for hierarchizing of the sort that established "high culture" in part via the equation of seriousness

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<sup>20</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 47.

with the mind and enjoyment with the body.<sup>23</sup> Banning the body from aesthetics seems unlikely to be proven successful or satisfactory—makers of digital musical instruments cite “imperfections,” “perturbations,” “inaccuracies,” and even “feel” as issues at hand as they attempt to “humanize” their programs.<sup>24</sup> However, it is for sure that ways by which to order and control bodies have found channels and applications through aesthetics, and this is becoming all the more problematized, as with theories of affect and the biopolitical.<sup>25</sup> A tangible instance of this is the playing of classical music in public spaces as a deterrent to crime, a sort of sonic bug-spray which is employed in the city in which this thesis was written (among others). Analysis of sensory manipulation—and the manipulation of the bodily by extension—is thus most prominently a component of socioeconomic critique in Marx’s works but can also be understood in terms of a more general critique of social order.

In addition to the perception of commodities, love also is associated with the body for Marx. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, loving is included in a list of “human relations to the world”; love is an “[organ] of individual being ... directly social” in form.<sup>26</sup> Soon after, love is referred to as a mental, practical, and human sense.<sup>27</sup> With Engels in *The Holy Family*, Marx defends love from complaints that it is “incapable of an interest in internal development,” by mocking this narrow-mindedness, since love “cannot be constructed a

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<sup>23</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 124.

<sup>24</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 152.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle introduce their book *Sound, Music, Affect* by comparing the usage of protest songs by folk artists Billy Bragg and Johnny Flynn to grime music and the pop of Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, and Cee Lo Green played during December 2010 student protests in London, UK, examining which aspects of music—even pop without explicit political messages—were rousing for protesters. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle, “Introduction: Somewhere between the signifying and the sublime,” in *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*, ed. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1-5.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 138-139.

<sup>27</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 141.

*priori*[:] its development is a real one which takes place in the world of the senses and among real individuals.”<sup>28</sup> Given the optical illusion at play with the apprehension of commodities, love posited as a sensory operation is *risky* because it is vulnerable to the same lens that shows commodities *as far as the eye can see*, including those “real individuals” who engage in this risk. Despite this subjective vulnerability, experience of music differs from an optical function in part due to the quasi-material character of rhythms. As with visually perceiving a body, even if identity or personality are not always recognizable, to hear a voice is also to sense another subject.<sup>29</sup> We can refer to Adorno again for this project’s ethical analysis: “Music is similar to language in that it is a temporal succession of articulated sounds [that] often [say] something *humane*.”<sup>30</sup> By privileging apprehension of rhythms rather than sight, which is shown by Marx, especially in *Capital*, to be a sense easily manipulated by the dominance of the commodity form, both material and abstract concepts can be analyzed with the quasi-material object of rhythm as a guide. As a unique spatiotemporal habitat for loving-as-sense, this thesis will offer examples of rhythmic configurations in punk music conducive to this active play between subjects.

The 1844 manuscripts are also the site where Marx enumerates the qualities of alienation as a critical concept, which figures prominently in the major Situationist text *The Society of the Spectacle*. Guy Debord recalls from Marx that isolation begets isolation in the economic system (alienation of human from human), and emphasizes the role of technology in the production of “the lonely crowd.”<sup>31</sup> The experience of alienation by the worker leads her to perceive more and

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<sup>28</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice,” in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 182.

<sup>30</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Music, Language, and Composition,” in *Essays on Music*, selected and with commentary by Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 113. Emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 22.

more power external to herself, and this primes her to accept her needs, desires, and overall existence as they are presented and prescribed by “the spectacle”—“a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”<sup>32</sup> Isolation confronts the worker from all directions as she is alienated from her product and prescribed isolating products in turn, “from cars to televisions.”<sup>33</sup> When Gang of Four members Jon King and Andy Gill were in their junior year there, T.J. Clarke of the British chapter of the Situationist International (SI) visited the art department at Leeds. This connection is significant given the protagonist of Gang of Four’s 1979 album *Entertainment!*: an alienated figure who reflects, “our bodies make us worry.”<sup>34</sup> King and Gill’s interests in Situationism among other thinkers influenced by Marx such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan are apparent in drummer Hugo Burnham’s description of the group’s focus as “the politics of relationships, personal behaviour, how you fit into—or not—the culture around you.”<sup>35</sup> This is further belied by the back cover of *Entertainment!*, which depicts a nuclear family with the patriarch saying, “I spend most of our money on myself so that I can stay fat,” and his wife and children replying, “we’re grateful for his leftovers.”<sup>36</sup> By situating most of this album’s songs in what the Clash have elsewhere called the “safe European home,” Gang of Four set up the particular isolation of domestic life for interrogation, with many of the album’s lyrics serving as an exposé of the bodily anxieties that spring up there. With a common origin myth based on claims to scientific rigour and rationality, the intellectual history of punk and Marxism finds confluence in Gang of Four’s Situationist critique of the body’s wellbeing as it is conditional on bourgeois complicity.

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<sup>32</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 23, 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 22, 24.

<sup>34</sup> “Contract,” Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin J.H. Dettmar, *Entertainment!* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 16, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Dettmar, *Entertainment!*, 20.

Just as the body is implicated in the loving subject's risks, then, it shares with the commodity in reflecting social conditions. As with Gang of Four's image of the fat patriarch, punks like Richard Hell enacted this relation by presenting their emaciation as proof of working class authenticity and allegiance, and by using terms denoting size as value judgments; for instance, to disparage the music of the seventies, Hell said it had "become so bloated."<sup>37</sup> The thinkers that will be engaged with most in this thesis have therefore been selected for their relevance to punk's attention to the body, which was typically impoverished or emaciated. For the Frankfurt School, such bodies would be the predictable products of capitalist production, and since they reveal no traces of overconsumption or leisure, they might actually be preferred from an ethical standpoint. In contrast, Henri Lefebvre rehabilitated the body where the Frankfurt School would have had it buried. For Lefebvre, in spaces of leisure "the body regains a certain right to use, a right which is half imaginary and half real... Nevertheless, even a reinstatement of the body's rights that remains unfulfilled effectively calls for a corresponding restoration of desire and pleasure."<sup>38</sup> Although the body is not freed from compulsions to produce and accumulate capital in spaces of leisure, it is allowed to desire and imagine the pleasure at fulfilling that desire, and a life conducive to that enjoyment can be imagined in turn. As summed up by Antonio Negri, "liberated labour [is] the child of desire."<sup>39</sup> Notably, "right to use" is translated from "*droits d'usage*," which could also be suitably translated to "rights of usage."<sup>40</sup> This rather ambiguous phrasing allows Lefebvre to refer both to the body's ability to use—as in to consume, manipulate, or engage—as well as the body's ability to *be used*, and the rights

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Astor, *Blank Generation* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 353.

<sup>39</sup> Antonio Negri, *Art and Multitude: Nine letters on art, followed by Metamorphoses: Art and immaterial labour*, trans. Ed Emery (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 49.

<sup>40</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974), 408. The full passage in French reads, "Dans la region affectée aux loisirs, le corps reprend quelques droits d'usage, mi-fictifs, mi-réels; ces droits ne mènent guère plus loin qu'une illusoire «culture du corps», qu'une simulation de vie naturelle."



accorded to it in those cases. The body, here, can be active or passive—even when it is not being used as a commodity or a mechanism of production, the body at leisure can still be *in use*.

Filtering the punk body through this French stream of thought, then, reclaims its ability to enjoy.

The direct relationship between punk and Situationism should not be overstated, however. Portrayals of punk as an appendage to political movements are precarious, such as, “Punk *consciously* carried on the path of the [S]ituationist movement and perceived the dissolution of every possible future totality. The slogan “no future” signalled that no tolerable totality would ever be possible.”<sup>41</sup> Apart from King and Gill, the Situationist movement was “consciously carried on” by Malcolm McLaren and Bernard Rhodes, managers of the Sex Pistols and Clash, respectively, and artist Jamie Reid.<sup>42</sup> McLaren would later say he bought the Situationist literature for the pictures, while Rhodes sold McLaren some SI-inspired t-shirts before co-writing and producing a bland political credo with the Clash’s dismal last album *Cut the Crap* under the pseudonym Jose Unidos.<sup>43</sup> The SI connection has annoyed John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten) of the Sex Pistols to the extent that he titled the first chapter of his autobiography “Never Mind the Situationists; This Was Situation Comedy.”<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, Lydon participated along with Gang of Four and other punks in writing on the politics of intimacy, emphasized by theorists in and around the SI like Lefebvre, Barthes, and Raoul Vaneigem. Especially in this strain of Marxism, the body rebels against the bracketing of the interpersonal that would have it

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<sup>41</sup> Franco Berardi, “The Premonition of Guy Debord,” trans. Arianna Bove, *Generation Online*, <http://www.generation-online.org/t/tbifodebord.htm>. Emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> Marcus Gray, *The Clash: Return of the Last Gang in Town* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2004), 48; David Huxley, ““Ever Get the Feeling You’ve Been Cheated?”: Anarchy and control in the Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle,” in *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, ed. Roger Sabin (London: Routledge, 1999), 85-86.

<sup>43</sup> Jon Savage, *England’s Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 30; Gray, *The Clash*, 48; Gavin Martin, “Good Ol’ Joe,” *New Musical Express* (26 July 1986), 18.

<sup>44</sup> John Lydon with Keith and Kent Zimmerman, *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (New York: Picador, 1994), 1.

silenced (with the exception of monotonous interjections relating to bodily quantifiability, e.g. sociological role calls asking the number of workers, owners, and so on). The collection of theoretical and aesthetic sources assembled here was thus determined more due to this common eminence of the body, but the actors common to both punk and Marxism are useful to keep in mind.

### 1.3 *Punk and Marxism (“Uh-Oh, Love Comes to Town”)*

Simon Frith has written of how “[w]ithin a few months of its public emergence in 1977... virtually every left paper agreed that Punk was a Good Thing.”<sup>45</sup> Punk and Marxism are frequently taken as allies, with love—tarnished by the commodification of music and musicians, and taken to be an unscientific abstraction—as one of their unifying opponents. However, for both Marxism and punk, love would seem to fit into the purview of critique: Marxism’s project of demystifying relationships between humans and punk’s return to rock ‘n’ roll fundamentals (which we can take to include the love song) leave ample space for love as an object of inquiry. This issue is made all the more complex by shared goals, strategies, and behaviours that can be identified with Marxism and punk, cumulatively aimed at the exposure and overcoming of bourgeois society. These similarities, however, are also useful for the reconsideration of love’s ethics and sociopolitical merit. Marx’s sensory or aesthetic conception of love, for example, lends itself to treating Marxist theory and punk on similar terms, so tangible aesthetic referents from punk will be used here conceptually, but not merely as metaphor. With love taken as an activity sustained by and between bodies, formal elements of punk songs will be analyzed for their capacity to represent and to *host* this activity.

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<sup>45</sup> Simon Frith, “The Case of the Punk,” in *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*, ed. Simon Frith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 68.

At this point it is useful to challenge another political association often attributed to punk, that with nihilism. As Roger Sabin outlines in the introduction to *Punk Rock: So What?* there is a distinction between the identifiable punk attitude of “negationism” and one of nihilism.<sup>46</sup> Since nihilism, its name derived from the Latin *nihil*—“nothing”—evades a static or singular definition, it is difficult to pin down as the philosophy of punk.<sup>47</sup> This nothingness may be taken to refer to an “absence, a lack, a rejection, or a denial,” but the application of these voids or resistances has a multiplicity of targets, from God to facts writ large.<sup>48</sup> As the careful curating of punk’s musical lineage, such as Patti Smith collaborator Lenny Kaye’s *Nuggets* collections of garage rock;<sup>49</sup> the communes developed by Crass;<sup>50</sup> and the Sex Pistols’ charity work all indicate impulses to renew, reform, or build, nihilism seems incompatible with certain punk efforts.<sup>51</sup> Future-oriented work refutes the widespread over-emphasis on the Sex Pistols’ phrase “no future,” and the surfeit of efforts to define punk authenticity reflects an obsession with particular *some things* much more than a gesture to nothingness.

Drawing from Crass’s commune project and Kaye’s homage to the sixties, this thesis will consider punk, love and Marxism in the context of the failure of “free love,” as disillusionment with sixties countercultures spilled into such negationist attitudes as mentioned above. This had direct consequences for the development of punk, as sex workers and strippers fed or housed

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<sup>46</sup> Roger Sabin, Introduction to *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, ed. Roger Sabin (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

<sup>47</sup> Jon Wittrock and Mats Andrén, “The Critique of European Nihilism: Interpretation, Responsibility, and Action,” *European Review* 22, no. 2 (2014), 180, doi: 10.1017/S1062798714000039.

<sup>48</sup> Wittrock and Andrén, “Critique of European Nihilism,” 180.

<sup>49</sup> Steven Lee Beeber, *The Heebie-Jeebies at CBGB’s: A Secret History of Jewish Punk* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006), 68-69.

<sup>50</sup> George McKay, “‘I’m so bored with the USA’: The punk in cyberpunk,” in *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, ed. Roger Sabin (London: Routledge, 1999), 59.

<sup>51</sup> Bob Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah: The Story of Modern Pop* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 325-326.

many band members as “the sex industry... exploded in the wake of the hippie/underground scene.”<sup>52</sup> Punk bands were therefore sometimes supported by this commodification of “love,” which can be read as the outcome of the hippies’ inability to rescue sex from the totalizing system of exchange. As Barthes cautions, “[a] great many “communes” fail because they put sex in the wrong position.”<sup>53</sup> It is no great wonder then that punk would echo suspicion of (especially bodily) pleasure found in ascetic Marxist theory typified by the Frankfurt School. However, Heller’s reflection on the consistency of Marx’s works beginning with his dissertation on Epicur resonates particularly well with punk:

[Marx] commits himself to the value of freedom; and freedom is interpreted here as the opposition of authority... Prometheus declared that he hated all gods, and when Marx quoted him, he had in mind not only the gods in heaven but also all gods on earth which included political authorities, institutional authorities or any provenance and the authority of any norm or rule the individual ought to observe.<sup>54</sup>

This commitment to freedom in Marx and punk can be rhetorically obscured as it is so often formulated in the negative, as the opposition to authority, but it creates a crucial opening for recuperating love in Marxist theory and punk aesthetics. The punk critique of “free love” failed to dissociate love from sex, reflected by such song titles as “Love Lies Limp.”<sup>55</sup> Consequently, intimacy was perceived in the context of the coercive impetus that follows from the body-as-commodity: self-awareness of one’s commodification is a meditation on unfreedom as the function of the commodity—to be exchanged—is adopted. The opposing side of this dichotomy

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<sup>52</sup> Holmstrom, *The Best of Punk Magazine*, 27.

<sup>53</sup> Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 46.

<sup>54</sup> Agnes Heller, “Marx and the “liberation of humankind”,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 9, no. 3-4 (1982), 362, doi: 10.1177/019145378200900306.

<sup>55</sup> “Love Lies Limp,” Alternative TV, *The Image Has Cracked*, Anagram CDPUNK24, 2003, CD, originally released 1978.

must therefore be another component of an ethical formulation of love, which at this point we can describe as the *willing and pleasurable* play between fluid and porous subjects.

The quality of subjective porosity that has been here assigned to love is also found in Hegel, further justifying the decision here to read Marx's oeuvre as unbroken. As to the appropriateness of dealing with love in Marxist thought, the tendency to ignore Hegel's influence on Marx after the "Theses on Feuerbach" obscures the nuances that would attribute a historical nature to love. Indeed, the Hegelian lineage of love and alienation in Marx's works reveals commonalities between these two concepts and allows for the usage of alienation as more than a critical concept or negative experience, along with the positing of love as a concept also suffused with historicity. Like Lefebvre's description of the act of love, which he calls an "*extrasocial social act*" which reaches "into the profundities of dialectical contradiction,"<sup>56</sup> Hegel calls love "the most tremendous contradiction [and] at once the producing and the solving of this contradiction."<sup>57</sup> For Hegel, love is explicitly linked to unity, and significantly, this is an apparently *extra-bodily* unity: "I count for something *in* the other, while the other in turn comes to count for something *in* me"; to be independent would be to "feel defective and incomplete."<sup>58</sup> The conservatism which made Hegel a target for criticism by Marx (i.e. not simply a well of ideas to be borrowed from on Hegel's terms) appears in his theory of love, which is accompanied by marriage and the nuclear family in the *Philosophy of Right*. However, Axel Honneth suggests that "it would have been more consistent with [Hegel's] intentions if he had not summed up his

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<sup>56</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "The Specific Categories," in *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 2014), 485.

<sup>57</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 162.

<sup>58</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 162. Emphasis added.

entire intuition of self-realization through reciprocal love in the image of a fully developed institution ... in a manner that seems fairly antiquated today.”<sup>59</sup> As such, the traditions Hegel associated with love may be unbound from it, and this unburdened formulation of love can be recognized in the works of Marx. Though Marx’s configuration differs by stressing love as a means of apprehension, or a sensing organ, it remains consistent with Hegel’s belief that love is inherently social and overcomes supposedly atomistic individuals at odds with society.

This thesis will follow in three chapters, with a focused sample of punk songs and artists from 1976-1980 accompanying each of these.<sup>60</sup> In “Opening Up to You,” the punk black leather jacket will be treated as a literal and symbolic shell that resembles the Freudian erotic fetish, the magical fetish (traced from *facticius*, *feitiço*, and *fetisso* by William Pietz), as well as the fetishized commodity as expounded by Marx, and by Peter Stallybrass in “Marx’s Coat.” Emphasis on the sociality and exchangeability of commodities will draw out the ethical consequences of the body-as-commodity, which finds resonance in the etymology of “punk”. The Ramones’ “53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>,” which narrates bassist Dee Dee’s hustling and self-awareness as a commodity, will demonstrate the subjective precarity felt by Dee Dee as he attempts to refuse refusal in a system of exchange while unsuccessfully navigating the hetero- and homonormative nuances of that system. An overview of Gang of Four’s *Entertainment!* will transport this analysis of interpersonal relations into the home, where this group interrogated the supposed privacy or impermeability of domesticity and love’s “mystery.” Building from this Situationist exposé of the seemingly benign micropolitics of the domestic sphere, a traditionally feminine

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<sup>59</sup> Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel’s Social Theory*, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 72.

<sup>60</sup> Particular songs may fall outside of this temporal boundary but will have been performed by groups formed in the time specified here.

domain, this chapter will close with a critique of the language of naturalism used by the Sex Pistols in their treatment of women in “Bodies” and “Submission” from their debut album *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here’s the Sex Pistols*. This will entail a further discussion of the capacity for agency given to the body-as-commodity, as well as a comparison to the scientific terms used in *Capital* which feign at rigour but instead relate to Marx’s network of abstractions.

The third chapter, “Eyes For You,” will draw on the practice of citation in pop and punk music, situating sixties pop songs and their punk covers and citations on either side of a shift in public discourse on sex in the United Kingdom and United States. As love displaced obscenity in punk, these covers will be considered as a sort of musical gross-out humour. The consistency between interiority and the body posited by punks, as in Blondie’s “Look Good In Blue” and Richard Hell and the Voidoids’ “Love Comes in Spurts,” will prompt further analysis of the limited agency assigned to the body-as-commodity and love’s hostile characterization in punk. With the pop trope of love as mutual ownership, the issue of reciprocity in love and the historically gendered unevenness of such unions will be considered. The general suspicion of materiality in punk will be demonstrated alongside a comparison of the receptions of Patti Smith and Debbie Harry, which will transition to the renunciations figured by the Slits on *Cut*, including the nudity on this album’s cover and their critique of the emaciated punk. As *Cut* problematized the notion of punk’s material expressions of alienation, this chapter will close with two sections on alienation and the sensory as they relate to experience, the superficiality of the fetishized body, and a re-evaluation of “seeing” and “having” in the hierarchy of senses.

The last chapter of this thesis, “You Move Me,” will tend to the theories of Barthes and Lefebvre on rhythms, and the variety of rhythms in punk. Talking Heads, the Slits, and the Clash will be analyzed as punk groups that do not always comply with the prescribed rhythms of punk

or the place of the body in relation to these rhythms. Beginning with the trinity of fetishism, alienation, and love, here I will attempt to point these processes in an emancipatory direction, with quasi-material rhythms mediating between the bodily love-as-sense and immaterial qualities of personality or subjective particularity that received greater attention in Hegelian discourse. This chapter will draw from the historicity of the senses to present Marx's theory of needs, with an exegesis of passages from the *Grundrisse* and the 1844 manuscripts, and the elaboration on this work done by Heller in order to show the significance of aesthetics in this discussion. The conscious gaps left in the music of the former two bands listed were produced by women, and the Slits explicitly argued that the rhythms in their music were feminine. As opposed to the unrelenting rhythms and speeds most typically associated with punk, which prohibit erotic or even coupled dances, alternative rhythms leave room for dialogue and reciprocity. Reciprocity and the compromise on living rhythms are directly related to love for Barthes, while the sensible nature of rhythm fits with Marx's description of love as a sense without privileging sight, as his discussion of commodities and fetishism tends to do. Love then, is seen to be constituted in material bodies with rhythms negotiated socially by those bodies. The dynamic and malleable quality of rhythms will also be shown to be resistant to the necessary exchangeability of commodities, while their transitory position between material and immaterial also upsets the usual equation of commodity fetishism, supporting Lefebvre's claim that musical rhythms have an ethical function.



## 2. “Opening Up to You”

### 2.1 *Black Leather Jacket (“So Tough”)*

The black leather jacket is a preeminent icon in punk style, appearing on at least eleven well-known album covers from 1976-79, including four by the Ramones.<sup>61</sup> Members of the proto-punk New York Dolls were photographed wearing leather jackets as early as 1973, and the Ramones’ trip to England in the summer of 1976 made “the leather-jacket-and-jeans look” a transatlantic punk uniform.<sup>62</sup> Marlon Brando in the 1953 film *The Wild One* was the inspiration for the Ramones’ leather jackets, and *Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die* (an iteration of Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood’s shop, first called Let It Rock, and later, Sex) sold biker gear inspired by James Dean.<sup>63</sup> According to Jon Savage, wearing sneakers instead of engineer boots “eliminate[ed] both the machismo and the motorcycle element” of the black leather jacket, loosening symbolic associations belonging to the 1950s such as Brando, Dean, Arthur “The Fonz” Fonzarelli in *Happy Days*, and the T-Birds in *Grease*.<sup>64</sup> The removal of the “motorcycle element” has been especially played up by members of the Clash; lead singer Joe Strummer admits to the irony of being unable to afford the *raison d’etre* of his garment in “This Is England” with the line, “I got my motorcycle jacket but I’m walking all the time.”<sup>65</sup> More

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<sup>61</sup> These eleven are the Ramones’ self-titled debut, “Rocket to Russia,” “Leave Home,” and “Road to Ruin”; the Stranglers’ “Rattus Norvegicus”; the Heartbreakers’ “L.A.M.F.”; the Buzzcocks’ “Spiral Scratch”; the Dictators’ “Blood Brothers”; the Lurkers’ “Fulham Fallout”; the Damned’s “Machine Gun Etiquette”; and the Undertones’ self-titled album. For the sake of this example, I am taking the Ramones’ proclamation that the seventies are the “end of the century” as the rationale for this temporal boundary.

<sup>62</sup> Jon Savage, “Symbols Clashing Everywhere: Punk Fashion 1975-1980,” in *Punk: Chaos to Couture*, ed. Andrew Bolton, with forewords by Richard Hell, John Lydon, and Jon Savage (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 29, 30, 32.

<sup>63</sup> Savage, *England’s Dreaming Tapes*, 122, 149.

<sup>64</sup> Savage, “Symbols Clashing Everywhere,” 29.

<sup>65</sup> Lyrics from “This Is England,” The Clash, *Cut the Crap*, Legacy/ Epic/Legacy 66419, 1994, CD, originally released 1985.

recently, bassist Paul Simonon has exhibited a series of paintings, many of which depict black leather jackets, called “Wot! No Bike?”<sup>66</sup> David Breeden recalls being thrown out of a Texan Kmart for wearing a black leather jacket in the seventies, and posits a splitting of American youth culture in that decade into two halves distinguished by textile: leather (punk) and polyester (disco).<sup>67</sup>

The leather jackets worn by punks have often been read as components or relatives of fetish wear, with “transgressive violence, sexuality and obscenity” taken as cohesive aspects of punk style.<sup>68</sup> However, the leather jacket should be treated as distinct from that category. Unlike rubber, PVC, or the unforgiving leather of a collar or harness, the texture of a leather jacket is very much contingent on how it is treated by its owner. Since the jackets owned by punks were mainly previously owned or artificial (e.g. “pleather”), the quality of the fabric would be hard rather than supple—a shell rather than a skin.<sup>69</sup> The punk leather jacket, then, distances itself from the erotic body by concealing the body instead of emphasizing it. Indeed, the prevalence of community-forming writing on punk leather jackets—referring to favourite bands, identification with anarchism, rejection of racism<sup>70</sup>—insists that the jacket does not refer to the body that wears it, but it is instead a social object: a talkative garment. The leather jacket does not share the obscenity of fetish wear’s exposure of private sexual deviance in public spaces, but it does relate to fetishism nonetheless. Rather than an erotic fetish, however, the shell-like character of the

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<sup>66</sup> Paul Simonon, “Wot! No Bike?,” *Paul Simonon*, 2014, <http://paulsimonon.com/exhibition/wot-no-bike/>.

<sup>67</sup> David Breeden and Jami Carroll, “Punk, Pot, and Promiscuity: Nostalgia and the Re-Creation of the 1970s,” *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 25, no. 1-2 (2002), 103-104, doi: 10.1111/1542-734X.00016.

<sup>68</sup> Lauren Langman, “Punk, Porn and Resistance: Carnivalization and The Body in Popular Culture,” *Current Sociology* 56, no. 4 (2008), 666, doi: 10.1177/0011392108090947.

<sup>69</sup> PVC = polyvinyl chloride, a plastic polymer.

<sup>70</sup> I have been told that a favourite phrase to write on one’s leather jacket in the 1980s in my hometown was the title of the Dead Kennedys’ song “Nazi Punks Fuck Off.”

leather jacket primes it for analysis in terms of Marx's fetishism, as it exhibits the hardening process undergone by commodities found in *Capital*.<sup>71</sup>

For Marx, the forces of capitalism crystallize into an “integument” that will be “burst asunder.”<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the black leather jacket as a symbol of masculine toughness for punks precluded another type of opening, the voluntary subjective porosity that has been identified here as a condition of loving. The “talkative” jackets speak in place of their wearers, while visual uniformity quiets or obscures subjective fluidity. This chapter will use the punk leather jacket, as a physical and symbolic shell, to analyze the nature of the commodity and its fetishism, particularly when the body wearing the jacket is the commodity at hand. This will involve a brief history of the term “fetish” and how it is taken up by Marx. Given Stallybrass's attention to the commodity and its fetishism in his work “Marx's Coat,” the jacket belonging to Marx himself will be considered along with its sociality that is emphasized by Stallybrass. A second etymological history will track the term “punk,” with an emphasis on its persistent denotation of someone who is used. As narrated by the Ramones' “53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>,” the “doubled abjection” of the punk as a commodified subject primed for exchange, but often rejected—and therefore denied their commoditized *jouissance* as exchangeable potential goes untapped—will be discussed along with its implications for agency and subjective precarity.<sup>73</sup> Finally, the interpersonal relationships involving the body-as-commodity in the domestic sphere, and in its intersection with the feminine natural-body, will be read through Gang of Four's focus on the home in

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<sup>71</sup> E.g. “... money appears in the first phase as a solid crystal of value, a crystal into which the commodity eagerly solidifies.” Marx, *Capital*, 75.

<sup>72</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 536.

<sup>73</sup> Tavia Nyong'o, “The Intersections of Punk and Queer in the 1970s,” in *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*, ed. Zack Furness (Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions, 2012), 180.

*Entertainment!* as well as two songs from *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*, "Submission" and "Bodies."

## 2.2 Fetish ("Love Lies Limp")

The term "fetish" is generally understood as belonging to two contexts, one spiritual or magical when related to political economy, and the other sexual or psychological. This section will move from the latter context before arriving at the formulation used by Marx. According to Sigmund Freud, fetishism is the process by which "the normal sexual object is replaced by another which bears some relation to it, but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim."<sup>74</sup> The object which takes the place of the "normal sexual object" may be a part of the body or an inanimate object, and it becomes imbued with a surplus created from the "psychologically essential overvaluation of the sexual object."<sup>75</sup> This process is considered by Freud to be typical at some stages, particularly when sex is unavailable at the beginning of relationships; he cites the verses which translate to "Get me a kerchief from her breast,/ A garter that her knee has pressed."<sup>76</sup> This fetishism can become pathological, however, when the fetish object is desired more than the sexual object and the "normal aim" is abandoned, or "when the fetish becomes detached from a particular individual and becomes the sole sexual object."<sup>77</sup> Freud also notes that connections between fetishized objects and the origins of their desirous qualities can become obscured and are not always traceable.<sup>78</sup> Later, however, Freud revises this variably traceable quality of the fetish and begins to attribute it to the unwillingness of young boys to give up a

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<sup>74</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *Complete Works*, compiled by Ivan Smith (free online edition, 2000), 1480.

<sup>75</sup> Freud, *Three Essays*, 1480.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 1481.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 1482.

belief in the woman's (mother's) penis.<sup>79</sup> The fetish is a “token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it,” endowing the woman with a substitute phallus.<sup>80</sup> The fetish is thus representative of a fear of male lack, but it is attributed to the woman whose biological “lack” must be obscured to put the man at ease.

William Pietz has conducted a genealogical study of the term “fetish” from the Latin *facticius*, to the Portuguese *feitiço*, and *fetisso*, belonging to the pidgin-Portuguese used as trade language in West Africa.<sup>81</sup> The relatively simple meaning of *facticius* as “manufactured” made a complex development into *feitiço*, which meant magic or witchcraft “performed, often innocently, by the simple, ignorant classes.”<sup>82</sup> *Fetisso*, still carrying the second meaning just described, made its way to northern Europe and its appearance in Willem Bosman's *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* formed the basis from which Enlightenment thinkers would use and expand upon this magical concept from Africa.<sup>83</sup> However, the term appeared earlier in voyage collections beginning in 1550 (Bosman's text was written in 1704).<sup>84</sup> Central to the fetish are its “irreducible materiality,” its power to unite “previously heterogeneous elements into a novel identity,” and its common accompaniment by the “first encounter” theory passed down from Bosman, who learned from a Guinean that any creature or inanimate object that first appeared to a person leaving their home would be fetishized.<sup>85</sup> As opposed to idols representing false gods, *Fetissos* were “quasi-personal divine powers associated

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<sup>79</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” in *Complete Works*, compiled by Ivan Smith (free online edition, 2000), 4535.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 4536.

<sup>81</sup> William Pietz, “The problem of the fetish, I,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 9 (1985), 5, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166719>.

<sup>82</sup> Pietz, “Problem of the fetish, I,” 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> William Pietz, “The problem of the fetish, II: The origin of the fetish,” *RES Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 13 (1987), 23-24, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166762>.

<sup>85</sup> Pietz, “Problem of the fetish, I,” 7-8.

more closely with the materiality of the sacramental object than would be an independent immaterial demonic spirit,” and they could be influenced by “acts of worship [or] manipulations of material substances.”<sup>86</sup> Stemming from this tradition, Lisa Freinkel sums up fetishization as the process of the “materially useful [becoming] immaterially precious.”<sup>87</sup> This mystifying or magic-making aspect of the fetish is important to keep in mind when dealing with Marx’s concept of the commodity fetish.

The perceived distinction between African and European attitudes towards objects, according to Peter Stallybrass, was that Europeans were detached from objects while Africans imagined themselves to be, at times, controlled by magical fetish objects, with the concept of the fetish being developed to denounce this type of control.<sup>88</sup> The physical proximity of fetishes to the African people who attributed power to them exacerbated this perception. However, considering the totality of commodification and subsequent universalization or democratization of fetishism, this notion of European immunity to becoming enrapt by objects is not so easily claimed. This is what Marx demonstrates in his chapter of *Capital*, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof.” In the system he describes, people witness commodities entering social relations with other commodities, with some of their qualities perceptible to us and others imperceptible.<sup>89</sup> This is mirrored in the religious world, where “productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and [enter] into relation both with one another and the human race.”<sup>90</sup> Commodities thus take on the powers of the *Fetisso*, capable

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<sup>86</sup> Pietz, “Problem of the fetish, II,” 38, 40.

<sup>87</sup> Lisa Freinkel, “The Use of the Fetish,” *Shakespeare Studies* 33 (2015), 115.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer (New York: Routledge, 1998), 185-186.

<sup>89</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 47.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

of demanding sacrifices, offerings, and worship. These demands are granted as the products of a person's individual labour—commodities—come to embody homogeneous human labour.<sup>91</sup>

Commodities “socialize” with ease because their language begins with their universal recognition of nothing but exchange value in each other.<sup>92</sup> Like the *Fetisso*, commodities create order in “political, legal, and juridical institutions ... protect[ing] against disease and misfortune [and are used as] objects of pious offering.”<sup>93</sup> This ritualized exchangeability unlimited by form or geography is at the root of the commodity's fetish character.<sup>94</sup>

It should be noted that Marx takes issue not with fetishism in itself, but as Stallybrass writes, with “fetishism that [takes] as its object not the animized object of human labor [*sic*] and love but the evacuated non[-]object that was the site of exchange.”<sup>95</sup> In other words, to instill an object with immaterial value can be perfectly acceptable, as with treasuring an object because of one's relationship to its maker. What becomes problematic is when the object is cherished only for its potential to be exchanged for money or some other commodity. We can therefore imagine how to fetishize, or to bestow with immaterial value, could be synonymous with loving in certain conditions. It is thus worth reiterating the value of using the punk leather jacket in this analysis. Like the *Fetisso*, it is worn on the body and its materiality is emphasized as it resists softening and always holds its form. As with Freud's fetish, the leather jacket can take priority over the body, and punk's transformation of the erotic into the obscene allows the jacket to outrank “normal” sexual objects in importance and legibility. Furthermore, as with Marx's commodity fetish, the punk leather jacket signals the exchangeability or anonymity of the person who wears

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<sup>91</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 50.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>93</sup> Pietz, “Problem of the fetish, II,” 43.

<sup>94</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 59-61.

<sup>95</sup> Stallybrass, “Marx's Coat,” 186-187.

it, since the person wearing it has already implicitly allowed for the recognition of the jacket to dominate the social relationship at play. The black leather jacket therefore speaks for the wearer more than they can speak for themselves, and as a commodity, this is in the colourless, monotonous language of exchangeability.

### 2.3 Commodity (“*Damaged Goods*”)

The coat appears early in *Capital* as the item chosen by Marx to illustrate the “two-fold nature” of commodities and labour.<sup>96</sup> “[W]hat defines the coat as a commodity, for Marx, is that you cannot wear it and it cannot keep you warm. But while the commodity is a cold abstraction, it feeds, vampire-like, on human labour [carried out by] concrete human bodies.”<sup>97</sup> Like the leather jacket as a shell, this consumptive process is both literal and symbolic. As Stallybrass points out, there is a concrete, physical consequence on bodies because of the labour they carry out. Additionally, commodities symbolically “consume” human labour: labour is concealed in favour of exchangeability. To return to the third theme of this thesis, then, when love is commodified, it too can be a “cold abstraction,” and feed, “vampire-like.” There is, however, a caveat regarding the social nature of commodities found in Stallybrass’s history of Marx’s coat that can aid in resisting this formulaic trap of a universalized system of exchange.

Stallybrass’s titular object of interest is an overcoat which made Marx a “suitable citizen” and allowed him entry into the British Museum’s Reading Room for his research on *Capital*.<sup>98</sup> Having needed to pawn the coat on many occasions, Stallybrass speculates that a combination of practical and social impositions barred Marx from the library: illness and cold would have

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<sup>96</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 29.

<sup>97</sup> Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” 183.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.



precluded him from going anywhere without an overcoat, but there was also the matter of the Reading Room's relative social exclusivity and the implication that a man unable to afford such an item would not have been an accepted visitor.<sup>99</sup> The social consequences for the Marx family of pawning their clothes are the ones privileged in Stallybrass's study. Like Marx's conditional entry to the Reading Room, his children could not go to school without their clothes, and his wife Jenny would not leave their home.<sup>100</sup> The commodification of the coat is complete when, as cited from Stallybrass above, its practical function is absolutely overtaken by its social function. For Marx, clothes bought privilege and respectability.<sup>101</sup> As such, the coat can be said to be the embodiment of *social* capital, and this quality seems to take precedence over the coat as the embodiment of monetary capital, especially in the case of the punk leather jacket. With the qualifier that fetishism could be directed at human labour or love, this heightened dimension or apprehension of an object's sociality suggests that subjective particularity might be communicated in some way, thus disrupting the overvaluation of exchangeability that defines commodity fetishism.

We can establish exchangeability and sociality as two fundamentally important characteristics of the commodity qua Marx and Stallybrass. At this point, it will be valuable to introduce the history of the term "punk" to demonstrate its relationship to these concepts. As Tavia Nyong'o has pointed out, "punk" was originally "African American slang for a gay man," or any man who submits to anal sex in prison.<sup>102</sup> The term's emergence in Britain seems to be its

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<sup>99</sup> Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," 184.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 191, 195.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>102</sup> Tavia Nyong'o, "Punk'd Theory," *Social Text* 23, no. 3/4 (2005), 21, 23, doi: 10.1215/01642472-23-3-4\_84-85-19.

use as a synonym for a “whore”, and later for a “rent boy.”<sup>103</sup> By the time it was applied to bands like the MC5, Iggy Pop (individually and as a member of the Stooges), and Eddie and the Hot Rods,<sup>104</sup> “punk” seemed to have taken on the association that Legs McNeil described when discussing the naming of *Punk Magazine*:

On TV, if you watched cop shows, *Kojak*, *Beretta*, when the cops finally catch the mass murderer, instead of saying, ‘You fucking asshole, I’ll kill you’, they’d say, ‘You dirty punk.’ It was what your teachers would call you. It meant you were the lowest, that you’d never get anywhere. It also meant a complete failure.<sup>105</sup>

Still alluding to its original context, “punk” had come to refer primarily to criminality, and only secondarily to queerness (or circumstantial queerness). We can gather that the malice of the insult is derived from what the police guess will happen after the criminal is detained: if they are weak (and the insult assumes this), the criminal will become someone’s “punk” in prison.

To say that punk means a criminal or a failure also means that it is abnormal. First this was a deviation from heteronormativity, and then more broadly from social and legal norms. This construction of a punk as a deviant would lead to debates about authenticity in punk communities, which are intense in part because they begin with individuals who identify with figures like Joey Ramone, who would sing that he was an “outsider/ outside of everything,” but once in a group, one can no longer be “outside of everything” and the premise of the community is shown to be self-annihilating.<sup>106</sup> This impulse of “outsiders” gravitating to punk stretched beyond the United Kingdom and United States to the Czech Republic, Mexico, Germany, Cuba, South Africa, and elsewhere.<sup>107</sup> Cultural context can therefore preclude what might be

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<sup>103</sup> Nyong’o, “Punk’d Theory,” 23.

<sup>104</sup> Savage, *England’s Dreaming Tapes*, 110.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>106</sup> The Ramones, *Subterranean Jungle*, Sire/ Rhino 7599238002, 1994, CD, originally released 1983.

<sup>107</sup> Ondřej Císar and Martin Koubek, “Include ‘em all?: Culture, politics and a local hardcore/punk scene in the Czech Republic,” *Poetics* 40 (2012), doi: 10.1016/j.poetic.2011.12.002; Alan O’Connor, “Punk Subculture in

considered default aspects of punk, such as the general rejection of anarcho-punk's idealization of personal autonomy in community-building Mexican punk circles, as observed by Alan O'Connor.<sup>108</sup> This led O'Connor to reject discussions of “*the* punk subculture,” given the obviousness of punk's plurality.<sup>109</sup> On that note, punk is often described as being an “attitude” or an “ethos” which possesses an ethics and has to grapple with issues of intersectionality.<sup>110</sup> For instance, director James Spooner recounts being constantly asked, “Are you black or punk?” and “punkademic” Michael Siciliano has wondered why a sociologist would assume the “inauthenticity” of punk from a working class Latinx neighbourhood.<sup>111</sup> So, despite McNeil's insistence that a punk was a criminal or failure based on his experiences in New York, in punk's plurality the term's initial context is the one that appears to dominate discourse on love and class—the punk is someone who is *used* and is self-conscious of that fact. It is therefore reasonable to accept Nyong'o's suggestion that “1970s punk represents the moment at which those specifically male homosexual associations [of the hustler-john dynamic] lose their exclusivity.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, punk would expose the prevalence, or indeed the universality, of treating people as commodities to be selected and used.

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Mexico and the Anti-globalization Movement: A Report from the Front,” *New Political Science* 25, no. 1 (2003), doi: 10.1080/0739314032000071226; Michelle Chase, “Socially Dangerous: Misrepresenting Cuba's Punk Rock Trial,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 42, no. 2 (2009), <https://nacla.org/news/socially-dangerous-misrepresenting-cuba%E2%80%99s-punk-rock-trial>; Lauren Basson, “Punk identities in post-apartheid South Africa,” *South African Review of Sociology* 38, no. 1 (2007), doi: 10.1080/21528586.2007.10419167.

<sup>108</sup> O'Connor, “Punk Subculture in Mexico,” 46.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Siciliano and Alan O'Connor, “Maximumsocialscience: An Interview/Conversation with Alan O'Connor,” in *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*, ed. Zack Furness (Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions, 2012), 98.

<sup>110</sup> Zack Furness, “Attempted Education and Righteous Accusations: An Introduction to Punkademics,” in *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*, ed. Zack Furness (Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions, 2012), 7.

<sup>111</sup> James Spooner, Foreword to *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, ed. Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay (London: Verso, 2011), xiii-xvii; Siciliano and O'Connor, “Maximumsocialscience,” 94.

<sup>112</sup> Nyong'o, “Intersections of Punk and Queer,” 183.

## 2.4 Exchange (“Fan Club”)

Mickey Leigh (a.k.a. Mitchell Hyman, younger brother of Joey Ramone) recalls “driving by Fifty-third Street and Third Avenue and seeing Dee Dee Ramone standing out there. He had a black leather motorcycle jacket on, the one he would later wear on the first album cover. He was just standing there, so I knew what he was doing, because I knew that was the gay-boy hustler spot.”<sup>113</sup> Nyong’o describes how the Ramones song “53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>” inspired by Dee Dee’s hustling days narrates a “doubled abjection” as Dee Dee acknowledges the audience’s “sick[ness]” with his activities as well as his being “the one [the johns] never pick.”<sup>114</sup> Dee Dee Ramone’s doubled abjection of commodification (prostitution) and rejection shows that any result of his exchangeability is unsatisfactory. At the crux of the antagonism in “53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>” is the unattainability of heteronormative masculinity. The tragicomic climax is the eventual selection of Dee Dee, and his implied murder of the john because of his compulsion to prove that he is “no sissy.”<sup>115</sup> The leather jacket he wears props up this claim as it refers to traditional American machismo and heteronormative criminality (perhaps speeding on a motorcycle instead of prostitution) at the same time as it makes him a conspicuous outsider among the hustlers: he stands out, easily identified by friends, but is “never pick[ed].” Dee Dee accidentally resists fetishistic exchangeability because his inability to navigate the heteronormativity his leather jacket advertises and the transgressive homonormative hustler-john relationship leave him in a state of limbo—as a mute commodity that cannot speak to the others since exchange value is not recognized in him.

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<sup>113</sup> Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 174.

<sup>114</sup> Nyong’o, “Intersections of Punk and Queer,” 180.

<sup>115</sup> The Ramones, *Ramones*, Rhino 8122743062, 2001, CD, originally released 1976.

This leather jacket also performs the function of the Freudian fetish. Fetish wear, as in the leather bondage and masks, rubber or PVC wear, and other equipment for “deviant” forms of sex exemplified by S&M, is related first and foremost to this definition of the fetish, not Marx’s. Fetish wear is quite direct in its relation to a male phallic fixation and wish to obscure the contradiction of both knowing and needing to *not* know that the woman lacks a penis. However, fetishization for Freud requires a “detach[ment] from a piece of reality.”<sup>116</sup> As it necessarily belongs to the realm of the symbolic, and is a fantasy, the fetish need not be so obviously sexual. The leather jacket can therefore stand in for the leather mask, harness, or collar. Symbolic of the fear of male lack, instead of achieving repression qua fetishization of a female body part or belonging, Dee Dee Ramone wears his fetish. Both the hustler-john relationship which excludes the possibility of the female vessel for a safe repression and the immediacy of the fear—rejected as a sexual object, his virility is called into question—meant that he must hold his fetish near. Now that “intellectuals [and] weaklings” were accepted in punk, and the stability of heteronormative romance had become unreliable at best and deemed non-existent at worst, the fetish that Freud saw as attributed to women is reclaimed or repossessed by men in punk like Dee Dee Ramone.<sup>117</sup> The fetishized leather jacket is therefore a buffer for the fear of male lack, especially fitting for the contexts of the hustler scene as well as male-dominated punk scenes.

The rendering of the person into a commodity carries with it the assignment for them to function as such, which is to be exchanged. The derogatory etymology of punk is reflected in self-consciousness like Dee Dee Ramone’s of one’s tacit submission to be bought and sold. However, the treatment of love in punk songs draws us back to another characteristic of the

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<sup>116</sup> Freud, “Fetishism,” 4537.

<sup>117</sup> Beeber, *The Heebie-Jeebies*, 72.

commodity: its proneness to be fetishized. As Stallybrass points out, this need not be a negative experience. Nonetheless, punk songs tend to frame love as the fetishization of a commodity, wherein the punks themselves are those commodities. The experience of recognizing oneself as a commodity is to witness one's propulsion into a system of exchange; consent is only given tacitly with the admission that one's autobiography is defined by commodification and written in the language of exchange value. The subject accompanying the body-as-commodity cannot truly be said to be willing, and this unfree subject is therefore impeded from participating in the activity of rehabilitated, redemptive love. Sean Sayers posits, "Our happiness lies not in opposing the rational to the bodily aspects of our being, but in finding ways of overcoming this antagonism and harmonising these aspects."<sup>118</sup> The fetish need not be eliminated as such, but the antagonism between body and feeling, or material and immaterial, needs to be resolved. Part of this resolution would be to reveal the "imperceptible" qualities disguised by fetishism, including the particular labour of particular individuals and the kinds of relationships springing from the unmediated recognition of such labour.

### 2.5 Domesticity ("Mirage")

If love is a commodity in punk and consequently becomes embedded in a linguistics rooted in exchange value, Gang of Four's *Entertainment!*—which possesses a *problématique* of the sociality of relationships—will be a useful site of love's analysis. For Marx, social activity is not simply synonymous with communal activity, as even work done in solitude, such as scientific work, is inherently social because of the transmission of material and language.<sup>119</sup> For Gang of Four, this is reflected in the near-solitude of the figures described in their lyrics, who are

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<sup>118</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 71.

<sup>119</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 137.

almost exclusively located in the home: the bedroom, medicine cabinet, indoor plumbing, television, and front room with its library are all singled out for questioning. On a non-album version of “Contract” (included as a bonus track on the 2005 Rhino release of *Entertainment!*), guitarist Andy Gill opines, “Pop songs normally make out that love is private. We’re not so sure about it.”<sup>120</sup> Despite Gang of Four’s reputation as a political group, only the first song of each side of the album, “Ether” and “I Found That Essence Rare,” actually mention specific political events: torture in Northern Ireland’s Maze Long Kesh prison (ongoing at the time of the album’s release) and the 1954 nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll, respectively.<sup>121</sup> Instead, the politics of Gang of Four here are meant to confront Debord’s spectacle, that amalgam of human relations mediated by images and constructs that supports the economic system and is here shown to reach into the home. This confrontation is presented concisely with a repeated couplet in “Damaged Goods”: “Your kiss so sweet/ your sweat so sour.”<sup>122</sup> The body-as-commodity harbours the contradiction of being desired as a lover but repulsive in its activity; the “sweat so sour” convinces the narrator that his experience can only be lust, not love. An advertising slogan for American cigarettes opens the song and is repeated—“The change will do you good”—until it is distorted with surrealism as Gill’s sung part sees change-as-alteration transition to change-as-coin: “Send me back/ open the till/ give me the change/ you said would do me good/ refund the cost.”<sup>123</sup> The distortion of the senses has led Gill to share a point of view with commodities, and

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<sup>120</sup> Dettmar, *Entertainment*, 64.

<sup>121</sup> “Ether” and “I Found That Essence Rare,” Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>122</sup> “Damaged Goods,” Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

as such he recognizes bodies for their exchangeability, which leads to the indignant demand for a refund in cash.

“Natural’s Not in It” expands on the same themes. King sings, “Ideal love a new purchase/ a market of the senses/ dream of the perfect life/ economic circumstances/ the body is good business.”<sup>124</sup> This sequence could very well be a collage drawn from Vaneigem’s *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, considered his response or complement to the more popular Situationist manual of Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*. While King calls ideal love a purchase and the body good business, Vaneigem more dryly writes that the “model of a human relationship [in our times] is the exchange of 12.80 francs for 750 grams of meat.”<sup>125</sup> Unlike in “Damaged Goods,” sex has been “repackaged” and is now desired. Nonetheless, this is due to a “[c]oercion of the senses”—sex is an unnatural desire in this song, which had to be socially prescribed, or marketed.<sup>126</sup> As was seen in *Capital*, the senses determine relations to the body-as-commodity, which possesses perceptible and imperceptible qualities. Since the central characteristic of the commodity is its exchangeability, bodies-as-commodities cannot be understood as having reciprocal loving relationships; recognition of a subject’s particularity would be an impractical impediment to their exchange value, in flagrant defiance to the commodity’s function. If human relations are also guided by the spectacle, then paranoia regarding the fact that “sex sells” is both logical and counterintuitive as isolation is engendered in either reaction: fetishizing bodies and seeing only exchangeability, or shunning intimacy in favour of a place in the “lonely crowd.”

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<sup>124</sup> “Natural’s Not in It,” Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>125</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 63.

<sup>126</sup> “Natural’s Not in It,” Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.



To conclude with this album, I will end with its closing track and what is perhaps Gang of Four's most celebrated song, "Anthrax," previously released with the title "Love Like Anthrax." In it, Gill delivers a mostly unintelligible speech behind King's vocal. An abbreviation of this speech on the album version of "Anthrax" is worth quoting at some length and goes as follows:

Love crops up quite a lot as something to sing about, most groups make most of their songs about falling in love or how happy they are to be in love, you occasionally wonder why these groups do sing about it all the time... These groups and singers think they appeal to everyone by singing about love because apparently everyone has or can love or so they would have you believe anyway but these groups go along with the belief that love is deep in everyone's personality and I don't think we're saying there's anything wrong with love we just don't think that what goes on between two people should be shrouded in mystery.<sup>127</sup>

Notably, on a previous release, Gill instead describes the technologies used by the band during recording sessions: both speeches are exposés. On the other hand, King's vocal, beyond comparing love to "a case of anthrax," mainly expresses confusion, for instance, "My head's not empty, it's full with my brain/ the thoughts I'm thinking/ like piss down a drain."<sup>128</sup> The project of "Anthrax" appears to be a deliberately Marxist argument about the sociality of love and the materiality of the people involved, not an outright condemnation of love, as its comparison to anthrax would suggest. This sort of argument arises in the first place because, like fetishism, love is a historical concept. Vaneigem has pointed out that "love has managed to conserve a measure of freedom," protected by the economization of time that relegated it to the "dark corners and dim lighting of the night."<sup>129</sup> While he suggests that the spectacle and its authorities cannot co-opt what people do creatively in secret, Gang of Four have not reached this conclusion of love's

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<sup>127</sup> Cited in Dettmar, *Entertainment*, 131-132.

<sup>128</sup> "Anthrax," Gang of Four, *Entertainment!*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 78428, 2005, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>129</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 222.

potential emancipatory nature because, as “Anthrax” reveals, they do not see a way past love’s resemblance to commodity fetishism.<sup>130</sup> This in turn is due to the historical definition of the love in love songs as mutual ownership, as will be elaborated upon in the following chapter. Indeed, Lefebvre, Vaneigem’s contemporary, has written of alienation that, “I know it is there whenever I sing a love song or recite a poem.”<sup>131</sup> This context of love as a mutual commodification and ownership leads to a figurative dead end in two ways: the movement of commodities in a system of exchange is arrested, but this also leads to what Barthes describes as a predicament of “fetishizing a corpse,” and loving “the bloodless form of a universal substitute.”<sup>132</sup> Love should be understood as a historically bound term, the prevalent definition of which tends to change according to socio-political context. With bodies taken as commodities, agency is barred. For subjects to enjoy the willingness, porosity—together, openness—and fluidity that have here been identified as aspects of love’s activity, the body must be wrested from its categorization as a commodity.

## 2.6 Nature (“Science Gone Too Far”)

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, the language of commodity formation in *Capital* presents it as a process of hardening or crystallization, with this theme alluding to the natural world in a number of ways. “Integument” is usually a biological term used to describe the covering of an organism, whether this be a skin or a shell.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, “chrysalis” and “crystal” are most commonly associated with their connection to the natural sciences.<sup>134</sup> In the Marxist compulsion to move from the abstract to the real, scientific language such as this serves to usher

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<sup>130</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 167.

<sup>131</sup> Henri Lefebvre, “The Development of Marxist Thought,” in *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore, 203.

<sup>132</sup> Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 71, 185.

<sup>133</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 536.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 60, 75, 84 (and elsewhere).

the analyst all the more swiftly to the materiality of things. The wealth of empirical data alluded to with the use of these terms—for instance, a crystal can reveal the heat, pressure, moisture, and mineral makeup of its surroundings, as well as its relative age—might alleviate the suspicions of those who idealize scientific rigour, but materiality and honesty are not one and the same. The body-as-commodity has been shown to bring forth the issue of agency, as punks frequently characterized themselves as unwilling participants in physical intimacy; Mark Perry of *Alternative TV* explains there is “never any incentive.”<sup>135</sup> This is perhaps complicated even further when the body and its behaviours are presented as wholly natural. Similarly to the critique of what might appear to be the relatively benign micropolitics of domesticity on *Entertainment!*, the encounter of the body-as-commodity and the body-as-natural in the Sex Pistols’ treatment of feminine sexuality reveals what is taken for granted when historically constituted conditions are presented as natural.

Appearing on *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here’s the Sex Pistols*, “Submission” is sometimes stylized as “Sub-Mission” because the song uses the description of a submarine mission as innuendo: “You’ve got me pretty deep, baby/ I can’t figure out your watery love.”<sup>136</sup> The singer repeats his confusion at the “mystery” confronting him, while musically John Lydon and Paul Cook of the Pistols have recalled that the song was a riff on the Doors, the Who, and the early Kinks, giving it a thoroughly classic rock sound apart from Lydon’s distinct fluctuating vocal.<sup>137</sup> For the song’s composition, the Pistols were given a list of words and ideas by manager

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<sup>135</sup> “Love Lies Limp,” *Alternative TV*, *The Image Has Cracked*, Anagram CDPUNK24, 2003, CD, originally released 1978.

<sup>136</sup> “Submission,” Sex Pistols, *Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s the Sex Pistols*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 73389, 2006, CD, originally released 1977.

<sup>137</sup> Lydon, *Rotten*, 231.

Malcolm McLaren including “submissive”; the play on words devised by Lydon and Glen Matlock was meant to foil the topic of BDSM they had been directed to write on.<sup>138</sup> Repeated mentions of the ocean in this thinly-veiled metaphor for oral sex were intended to be humorous and subversive, but as commercials for menstrual products were only allowed on British television for the first time in 1988, with “uncomfortable” and “indiscrete” references to menstruation still prohibited, lyrics presenting a woman’s genitalia as mysterious and unspeakable were in fact thoroughly conventional.<sup>139</sup> The marine metaphor used by the Pistols extends the traditional association of the natural with the feminine—in contrast to the logical with the masculine—while paradoxically (for this group) maintaining a semblance of etiquette by side-stepping explicit mentions of the conventionally obscene.

While “Submission” was a juvenile attempt at subversion reliant on a supposedly automatic humour in women’s sexuality, “Bodies” is more problematic due to its (semi)biographical nature. Although the lyrics seem odd enough to be just another of the Pistols’ attempts to stir up controversy—for example, “Her name was Pauline, she lived in a tree”—Lydon and Cook write that they are the true story of a “very pretty” but “dangerous and very crazy” fan who would often retreat to a treehouse on the grounds of the psychiatric hospital where she was a patient.<sup>140</sup> Lydon casually remarks that, “Like most insane people, [Pauline] was very promiscuous... She’d tell me about getting pregnant by the male nurses at the asylum or whatever.”<sup>141</sup> “Bodies” therefore seems to chronicle the abortion of a mentally ill woman who

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<sup>138</sup> Lydon, *Rotten*, 231.

<sup>139</sup> Theresa O’Keefe, “Menstrual Blood as a Weapon of Resistance,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no.4 (2006), 537, doi: 10.1080/14616740600945123.

<sup>140</sup> Lydon, *Rotten*, 235; “Bodies,” Sex Pistols, *Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s the Sex Pistols*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 73389, 2006, CD, originally released 1977.

<sup>141</sup> Lydon, *Rotten*, 235.

would have been the victim of statutory rape, or at the very least a victim of an extremely unbalanced power dynamic as a patient of those nurses. Lydon has more recently defended the album as a whole as comedy, and this song by saying: “It’s not anti-abortion, it’s not pro-abortion... It’s, “think about it.” Don’t be callous like that with a human being.”<sup>142</sup> This intent is fair, but it remains that in return for bothering the band members by writing them letters and appearing on their doorsteps, Pauline is introduced to listeners as “a no one who killed her baby” and “a bloody disgrace.”<sup>143</sup> With her sexual activity tied to her mental illness by Lydon, any claims that “Bodies” was meant to be sympathetic to Pauline are highly dubious.

In addition to the exploitative treatment of Pauline’s mental illness, it is worth noting that much of the controversy concerning “Bodies” stems from particular perspectives on reproduction and motherhood. Firstly, there are repeated protests concerning the animalism of the song’s characters: “[Pauline] was an animal,” but “*I’m* not an animal,” and neither is the “screaming fucking bloody mess” that has supposedly been aborted (that is, if the “I” figure is distinct from this third character or voice, which is unclear).<sup>144</sup> The site of the abortion is given as a factory where Pauline is “dragged on a table,” again insinuating the insignificant level of agency that has been granted to her. Secondly, despite her abortion, Pauline is twice called “mummy.” This would suggest that her choice not to give birth is irrelevant given her innate motherhood, a notion that is dealt with in Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*. The logic of “Bodies” leaves Pauline as either an animal for refusing motherhood, or a human and mother simultaneously. On similar

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<sup>142</sup> “The Sex Pistols - Never Mind The Bollocks,” Youtube video, 50:08, from a British Broadcasting Corporation documentary televised in 2002, posted by Rui Pereira 27 May 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EGLwP2SO1A>.

<sup>143</sup> “Bodies,” Sex Pistols, *Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s the Sex Pistols*, Rhino/Warner Bros. 73389, 2006, CD, originally released 1977.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

terms, Butler critiques Julia Kristeva's conception of the maternal body as "bearing a set of meanings that are prior to culture itself... Her naturalistic descriptions of the maternal body effectively reify motherhood and preclude an analysis of its cultural construction and variability."<sup>145</sup> In other words, motherhood is often constituted as always already given, natural and independent of culture, and a normal, instinctive desire for women. Unlike Kristeva, Butler questions the necessity of constructing the female body as maternal, and posits this equation as a cultural phenomenon.<sup>146</sup> She suspects that a "naturalistic vocabulary" has been used to insulate motherhood from rigorous cultural analysis, allowing desire for motherhood to be taken as automatic and instinctive instead of having been constructed or encouraged through coercive means.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, even anarchist Emma Goldman has called motherhood the "highest fulfillment of woman's nature," thus attributing a great lack to anyone unable or unwilling to be a mother, with this division granting "Bodies" its obscenity as the deviation from this nature is presented as an extreme form of alienation.<sup>148</sup> Given the importance of reciprocity in love that will be expanded upon in the following chapter and the relative unimportance of the gender(s) of those involved for this discussion, motherhood will be taken out of consideration for this argument. I will not assume anything about the particular alienation that accompanies abortion but will instead address a more general analysis of love, and given the focus on pop music and love songs that will follow, this will often bear a closer resemblance to romantic love than maternal or familial love. Following from the critique of domestic life and portrayal of women's sexuality just given, the next chapter of this thesis will further develop an analysis of gender in punk.

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<sup>145</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 103, 115.

<sup>146</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 115.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>148</sup> Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love," in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, n.p., n.d., 89.

As the commodity crystallizes the labour and social relations that foster its production, the body-as-commodity is impelled to “harden,” with the punk leather jacket functioning as a literal and symbolic shell that obscured the subjective precarity accompanying self-awareness of necessary exchangeability. However, Stallybrass points us to the possible redemption of fetishism, whereby an object or person would be recognized not as exchangeable, but as a material body infused with human labour and love.<sup>149</sup> While the punk obsession with outsider status impeded any transcendence of commodity fetishism, a focus on the body draws our attention to the relations (economic, domestic, sexual) that urge compliance with the perception of the body-as-commodity. With this lens offering little space for enjoyment or agency, and given the gendered aspect of the interpersonal that was shown here to be only incompletely-bracketed in punk and Marxism, the following chapter will more closely tend to suspicions of the material in punk, their historical context, and their presence in critical receptions of Patti Smith, Debbie Harry and Blondie, and the Slits.

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<sup>149</sup> Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” 186-187.

### 3. “Eyes For You”

#### 3.1 *Residue* (“Baby Talk”)

Not long after the “summer of love,” the Wind in the Willows (named for the children’s novel by Kenneth Grahame) released their self-titled album.<sup>150</sup> The album’s third track, a cover of the Everly Brothers’ “So Sad (To Watch Good Love Go Bad)” would become a perverse omen as earthy brunette Deborah Harry, back-up vocalist and player of the tamboura, tambourine, and finger cymbals, would go on to participate in the New York punk scene—in which love was *usually* considered “bad.” Harry, along with Chris Stein (her long-time partner and fellow member of Blondie), would eventually write in a foreword to *The Best of Punk Magazine*, “It’s like the sixties didn’t exist, eclipsed by the seventies.”<sup>151</sup> This condemnation is misleading, however: Blondie covered the Shangri-Las’ “Out in the Streets” early in their career, and an abundance of other sixties covers appeared on seventies punk albums.<sup>152</sup> The Ramones have recorded many covers, including “Needles and Pins,” written by Sonny Bono and Jack Nitzsche of Phil Spector’s production team; Richard Hell and the Voidoids recorded “All the Way,” popularized by Frank Sinatra; Siouxsie and the Banshees took on the Beatles’ “Helter Skelter”; Patti Smith’s (in)famous mutant “reworked” version of “Gloria” was written by Van Morrison, then of the band Them;<sup>153</sup> the Dictators have a hilarious rendition of Sonny Bono’s duet with then-partner Cher, “I Got You Babe”; and the most ironic and/or (hopefully) self-aware cover must be “(I’m Not Your) Steppin’ Stone”—the made-for-TV Monkees’ B-side to

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<sup>150</sup> Wind in the Willows, *The Wind in the Willows*, Fallout FOCD 2035, 2007, CD, originally released 1968.

<sup>151</sup> Deborah Harry and Chris Stein, Foreword to *The Best of Punk Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012).

<sup>152</sup> “Out in the Streets,” Blondie, *1975 Demos*, Blondie BLEP1, 1975.

<sup>153</sup> Mike Daley, “Patti Smith’s ‘Gloria’: intertextual play in a rock vocal performance,” *Popular Music* 16, no. 3 (1998): 235, doi: 10.1017/S0261143000008394.



“I’m a Believer”—performed by the Sex Pistols.<sup>154</sup> This rash of variably faithful covers is unsurprising given the DIY impetus of punk, with artists having varying degrees of musical competency, and left a legacy that is very much still alive: music critic Carl Wilson reports knowing of at least six “punkish covers” of Céline Dion’s “My Heart Will Go On,” best known for its place on the soundtrack to *Titanic*, but also appearing on Dion’s album *Let’s Talk About Love*.<sup>155</sup>

With love displacing obscenity in punk, covers of sixties love songs became a kind of musical gross-out humour. For added historical context, though, it should be recalled that the original releases of those songs and their punk covers fell on either side of a shift of opinion about sex in the United States and United Kingdom. For instance, until 1967 only married British women were legally allowed to be prescribed contraceptive pills, and in 1969 seven out of ten Americans still opposed premarital sex.<sup>156</sup> In 1970, an editor for *Playboy*, Nat Lehrman, published a popular version of William Masters and Virginia Johnson’s *Human Sexual Response*, and Ann Koedt urged feminists to recognize the connection between male oppression and the “myth of the vaginal orgasm,” which had falsely linked female sexual pleasure with reproduction and coinciding or complementary male sexual pleasure.<sup>157</sup> The BBC banned Donna Summer’s “Love To Love You Baby” in 1975 as a new understanding of female sexual pleasure

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<sup>154</sup> “Needles and Pins,” The Ramones, *Road to Ruin*, Rhino WPCR75063, 2005, CD, originally released 1978; “All the Way,” Richard Hell and the Voidoids, *Blank Generation*, Sire 7599261372, 1990, CD, originally released 1977; “Helter Skelter,” Siouxsie and the Banshees, *The Scream*, Polydor 9843511, 2009, CD, originally released 1978; “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo/ Gloria,” Patti Smith, *Horses*, Arista 18827, 1996, CD, originally released 1975; “I Got You Babe,” The Dictators, *Go Girl Crazy!*, CBS Records 5160942, 2004, CD, originally released 1975; “(I’m Not Your) Steppin’ Stone,” The Sex Pistols, *Never Mind the Bollocks Here’s the Sex Pistols*, Universal SEXPISCD 1977, 2012, CD, originally released 1977.

<sup>155</sup> Carl Wilson, *Let’s Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), 120.

<sup>156</sup> Jon Stratton, “Coming to the fore: the audibility of women’s sexual pleasure in popular music and the sexual revolution,” *Popular Music* 33, no. 1 (2014): 112, doi: 10.1017/S026114301300055X.

<sup>157</sup> Stratton, “Coming to the fore,” 112, 114.

and its aural representations led the broadcaster to claim that the song contained twenty-three orgasms.<sup>158</sup> The first punk singles were released the following year.

To reiterate, then, punk is riddled with evidence of the sixties' existence; in addition to covers, *The Best of Punk Magazine* after Harry and Stein's foreword offers additional evidence to counter the notion that it was "like the sixties didn't exist." Although co-creator, writer, and cartoonist John Holmstrom claims that he and "most people on the rock scene had a nonjudgmental attitude" towards sex workers and pornography, the "Do-It-Yourself Porno Novel" and review of pulp novel *I, A Groupie* which bookended "Debbie Blondie" as the "Punk Playmate of the Month" in April 1976 did more to affirm the sexual agency of men than to achieve anything humorous or successfully satirical.<sup>159</sup> The relative novelty and incompleteness of women's sexual liberation at this point are quite evident and reflected lyrically by Blondie, although Harry's vocal distracts from the alternating gendered points of view from which she sang. In Blondie's first two singles, "X Offender" ("I'll be sex offensive") and "In the Flesh" ("I can't wait to touch you in the flesh"), the narrator is a sexually forward woman who could be taken as consistent with Harry's image.<sup>160</sup> However, "One Way or Another" was written from the perspective of Harry's stalker ex-boyfriend ("... I'm gonna get ya!"), and "Call Me" ("Cover me with love/ ... I'll never get enough") was the theme for the film *American Gigolo*, which had Harry singing on behalf of a male "sex machine."<sup>161</sup> On a purely textual basis, then, Blondie's

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<sup>158</sup> Stratton, "Coming to the fore," 114.

<sup>159</sup> Holmstrom, *The Best of Punk Magazine*, 27, 82-88.

<sup>160</sup> "X Offender" and "In the Flesh," Blondie, *Blondie*, Chrysalis Records/Capitol 5335962, 2001, CD, originally released 1976.

<sup>161</sup> "One Way or Another," Blondie, *Parallel Lines*, Chrysalis Records 1192, 1998, CD, originally released 1978; Kembrew McLeod, *Parallel Lines* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 94; "Call Me," Blondie, *American Gigolo [Original Soundtrack]*, Polydor 813632, 2001, CD, originally released 1980; Debbie Harry, Chris Stein and Victor Bockris, *Making Tracks: The Rise of Blondie* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1982), 159.

more subversive attribution of open sexual agency to women is tempered by adherence to the status quo in which aggression and insatiability are primarily masculine traits.

Notably, given the frequent presence of sex in Blondie's lyrics, they also toyed with the punk norm of harmonizing interior and exterior. For instance, in "Look Good In Blue": "[the colour] matches your skin/ your eyes/ dripping with pain... I know what you mean/ when you say/ you've seen the end."<sup>162</sup> Professor of "punk pedagogy" Estrella Torrez concisely calls punk "the everyday *embodiment* of anger and alienation."<sup>163</sup> Likewise, Dick Hebdige describes the punk as a "super-alienated humanoid," whose body should be an extension of their social lowliness: "undernourished [with] emaciation standing as a sign of Refusal."<sup>164</sup> Elements of style like the black leather jacket serve as phenotypical proof of a dark and discontented interior. For the "super-alienated" punk, love is antithetical or else the cause of dejection, as in Richard Hell and the Voidoids' "Love Comes in Spurts." This title alone registers as a critique of the conflation of love and sex, or as the identification of the replacement of love *with* sex, further tying the punk's feeling and interior to bodily experience. The narrator of the song begins as "a child/ who wanted love that was wild," learns of love's seriousness at "fourteen and a half" ("it wasn't no laugh"), and comes to face love's apparent violence, despite his inclination to believe the contrary ("Though I now know the facts/ they still cut like an axe").<sup>165</sup> The last rhyme before the closing repetition of the song's title is that love "murders your heart/—they didn't tell you that part."<sup>166</sup> This is Hell's Song of Experience: by insisting that love "always hurts," and

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<sup>162</sup> "Look Good In Blue," Blondie, *Blondie*, Chrysalis Records/Capitol 5335962, 2001, CD, originally released 1976.

<sup>163</sup> Estrella Torrez, "Punk Pedagogy: Education for Liberation and Love," in *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*, ed. Zack Furness (Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions, 2012), 135. Emphasis added.

<sup>164</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 27, 151n.

<sup>165</sup> "Love Comes in Spurts," Richard Hell and the Voidoids, *Blank Generation*, Sire 7599261372, 1990, CD, originally released 1977.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

making it obscene with its reduction to male ejaculation, “Love Comes in spurts” positions love as hostile to both bodily and emotional wellbeing. The love which comes in spurts is serially violent.

Themes of the material and the bodily in punk will be extended in this chapter, with consideration of the pop trope of love as mutual ownership, as well as the love song’s occasional injection with politics, as they contribute to an understanding that taking up “the serious” in punk was consistent with pop rather than constituting a rupture or turn. The punk tendency to inscribe vulnerability and alienation on the body—by material means—will be discussed qua the overdependence on style in evaluations of Patti Smith and Debbie Harry’s gender politics. Moving from the widespread misunderstanding of “the Blondie concept,” a section will be dedicated to the Slits, with a note on the involvement of fear in kitsch as argued by Adorno. As was done with the terms “fetishism” and “punk” in the previous chapter, the transition of “alienation” from its usage in the works of Hegel to those of Marx will be presented and demonstrated to hold similarities to conceptions of love. This will entail Marx’s distinction from Hegel in establishing the material components of alienation’s analysis, with this chapter closing with the role of the senses in the critique of commodities and their fetishism.

### 3.2 *Pop (“Trash”)*

As was argued in the previous chapter, the body-as-commodity suffers from an incapacity for agency as it is impelled into a system of exchange. With risk attached to loving by way of subjective openness and the involvement of the fallible senses, the lover’s vulnerability is exacerbated when her play is not reciprocal. In other words, when she is fetishized as a commodity—a site of exchange—she is not apprehended or *sensed* in her particularity, and the

willing, enjoyed subjective porosity that has been used here as a working definition of love would be irrelevant and undetected without the engagement of a sensing other. This experience may be likened to welcoming a guest who cannot hear or see our words or gestures, our activity being all for naught. The fetishistic characterization of love reaches its climax in *A Lover's Discourse*, as Barthes comes to the realization that in his manner of loving he is “fetishizing a corpse.”<sup>167</sup> To his horror, any mention of his beloved presents him “in the bloodless form of a universal substitute.”<sup>168</sup> Without being privy to the intimacy shared between Barthes and his beloved, third parties reduce the beloved to an exchangeable mass—in other words, the beloved adopts the abstract commodity form. Barthes sees the sociality of his beloved as tragic because this takes place in a personality-annihilating system of exchange, yet his desire for monogamy finds the alternative—dedicated necrophilia—unpalatable as well. As Marx wrote in 1844, our alienation from human nature makes it so “[our] *mutual* value is the *value* of our mutual objects for us. Man himself, therefore, is mutually *valueless* for us.”<sup>169</sup> Barthes alone can see and value his beloved *as such*, while all others perceive his value only in his commodified form, which is his ability to mirror exchange value. Sustained ownership therefore comes to stand in for love, and is an often-used trope in pop music: “You Belong to Me,” first recorded in 1952, has since been covered by over ninety artists, including Patsy Cline, Bob Dylan, Ella Fitzgerald, and Gene Vincent.<sup>170</sup> In the Everly Brothers’ “Bye Bye Love” and Don Gibson’s “Oh, Lonesome Me” (the latter having been covered by the Everlys among over one hundred others), to lose one’s love is

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<sup>167</sup> Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 71.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>169</sup> Karl Marx, *Notes of 1844 (selections)*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 52.

<sup>170</sup> “You Belong to Me,” *Second Hand Songs*, 2015, <http://secondhandsongs.com/work/43015/versions#nav-entity>.

to become free—but this is lamented, thus supporting the notion that unfreedom could actually be preferred.<sup>171</sup>

Mutual possession seems to be the aim of the couple in love, and this is often articulated in pop music as the giving of one's self or body into a union, which was sometimes ambiguous but could be explicitly marital or (usually implicitly) sexual. For example, in the Shirelles' "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," the titular question refers to uncertainty about the aftermath of the alluded to sexual union of the couple: "Tonight you're mine completely/ you give your love so sweetly," and "with words unspoken/ you say that I'm the only one."<sup>172</sup> Similarly, "Chapel of Love" sees the declaration that "I'll be his and he'll be mine" once the narrator is married.<sup>173</sup> Assumptions should not be made about the reciprocity of this mutual ownership, however. As a strategy to rectify the unevenness in agency claimed by men and women in pop music, Barbara Bradby has identified the development whereby sixties girl groups gained more assertive voices in songs that staged conversations among women, while men had always had typically direct and proactive lyrics.<sup>174</sup> Returning to Barthes, the "corpses" situated in discourse and beheld by fetishizing lovers were more likely to be women, but the music of sixties girl groups appeared to rehabilitate these women as desiring agents, eventually prompting the Beatles—who had already covered girl groups the Shirelles and the Cookies three times on *Please Please Me* alone<sup>175</sup>—to

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<sup>171</sup> "Bye Bye Love," The Everly Brothers, *The Everly Brothers*, Emporio 587, 2000, CD, originally released 1958; "Oh, Lonesome Me," Don Gibson, *Oh, Lonesome Me*, Red Bus RBD060, 2011, digital download, originally released 1985; "Oh Lonesome Me," *Second Hand Songs*, 2015, <http://secondhandsongs.com/performance/24497>.

<sup>172</sup> "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," The Shirelles, *Tonight's the Night*, Rumble Records/ Sceptre 501, 2012, LP, originally released 1961.

<sup>173</sup> "Chapel of Love," The Ronettes, *Presenting the Fabulous Ronettes Featuring Veronica*, Sundazed 5411, 2012, LP, originally released 1964. This song was originally recorded by the Dixie Cups, but I am citing the version by the Ronettes since the song was intended for this group.

<sup>174</sup> Barbara Bradby, "She Told Me What to Say: The Beatles and Girl-Group Discourse," *Popular Music and Society* 28, no. 3 (2005): 363, doi: 10.1080/03007760500105180.

<sup>175</sup> The Beatles, *Please Please Me*, Apple/ Capitol/ Apple Corps 3824162, 2009, CD, originally released 1963. "Boys" and "Baby It's You" were originally recorded by the Shirelles, while "Chains" was first released by the

admit in “She Loves You” that “*she* told me what to say,” therefore identifying themselves as “subordinat[ed]” deliverers of girls’ messages to boys.<sup>176</sup> This transition is significant here due to the multiple connections between sixties girl groups and punk, including covers, quotations, common producers, and collaborations.

In addition to covering songs from the previous decade, punk artists’ continuity with the sixties is strengthened by the practice of what I will call pop citation. This includes the answer song (when an artist pens a reply to a prior song—their own or another artist’s—e.g. Lesley Gore’s “Judy’s Turn to Cry” as a follow-up to “It’s My Party”<sup>177</sup>), quotations, and inclusion of common characters. These last two methods are both contained in Bobby Darin’s “Queen of the Hop” in which he name-checks Buddy Holly’s Peggy Sue and Little Richard’s Miss Molly, quotes the title of Chuck Berry’s “Sweet Little Sixteen,” and refers to “My Boy Lollipop,” popularized by Millie Small.<sup>178</sup> Like the New York Dolls, who quote “Give Him a Great Big Kiss” (“When I say I’m in love, you best believe I’m in love, L-U-V”),<sup>179</sup> the Damned open “New Rose” with a line lifted directly from the Shangri-Las—“Is she really going out with him?”<sup>180</sup> This song, “Leader of the Pack,” has been called “the single most emblematic hit of the early-‘60s girl groups,”<sup>181</sup> while on the other hand, “New Rose” is considered to be the first

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Cookies; “Boys,” The Shirelles, *Tonight’s the Night*, Rumble Records/ Sceptre 501, 2012, LP, originally released 1961; “Baby It’s You,” The Shirelles, *Baby It’s You*, Rumble Records RUM2011062LP, 2014, LP, originally released 1962; “Chains,” The Cookies, *Chains/Stranger In My Arms*, Dimension 1002, 1962, LP.

<sup>176</sup> Bradby, “She Told Me What to Say,” 370.

<sup>177</sup> Lesley Gore, *I’ll Cry If I Want To*, Mercury SR-60805, 1963, LP.

<sup>178</sup> “Queen of the Hop,” Bobby Darin, *The Bobby Darin Story*, Atco 33131-2, 1990, CD, originally released 1961. Released as a single in 1958.

<sup>179</sup> “Looking for a Kiss,” New York Dolls, *New York Dolls*, Mercury 8327522, 1998, CD, originally released 1973; “Give Him a Great Big Kiss,” The Shangri-Las, *Myrmidons of Melodrama*, RPM 136, 1998, CD, track originally released 1965.

<sup>180</sup> “New Rose,” The Damned, *Damned Damned Damned*, Frontier 31033, 1993, CD, originally released 1977; “Leader of the Pack,” The Shangri-Las, *Myrmidons of Melodrama*, RPM 136, 1998, CD, track originally released 1965.

<sup>181</sup> Jeff Pike, “Shangri-La Memories: A Retrospective,” *Rockgrl* 15, May/June 1997, 22.

British punk single.<sup>182</sup> These quotations are particularly interesting for their incorporation in punk because they are each taken from songs detailing conversations among girls about the lead singer's relationship with a so-called "bad" guy. In "Give Him a Great Big Kiss," one of the defences given to the skeptical background singers is that "he's *good* bad, but he's not evil."<sup>183</sup> In both cases, the perception of "badness" or immorality is a misreading of the boy's real sadness that only his girlfriend seems to understand. Additionally, the inquisitive "is she really...?" and the declarative "you best believe" establish the need to justify one's choice of partner, which could imply a value judgment on Marx or Barthes' terms: a partner is exchangeable until the static mutual ownership of true love.

What makes the Damned distinct from the Dolls in their quotation of the Shangri-Las is that this opening line is the only part of the song that invites dialogue; its remainder is filled with "I" and "me," perhaps indicating some self-reflexivity but not properly conversational in the manner of sixties girl groups. As Dave Vanian sings that he is undeserving of his "new rose," this citation draws on Mary Weiss's teenage vulnerability in "Leader of the Pack."<sup>184</sup> But while even there Weiss's youth was not wrested from her by heartbreak, the Shangri-Las' "Past, Present and Future" is coloured by dark sobriety.<sup>185</sup> This song has been interpreted as the monologue of a rape survivor, with speech and chanting backed by Beethoven's "Moonlight

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<sup>182</sup> Jeff Griffin, "The Damned," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/johnpeel/artists/t/thedamned/>. The B-side of "New Rose" was the Beatles' "Help!"

<sup>183</sup> "Give Him a Great Big Kiss," The Shangri-Las, *Myrmidons of Melodrama*, RPM 136, 1998, CD, track originally released 1965. Another exchange between the girls of the Shangri-Las could be used to describe Damned bassist (later guitarist) Captain Sensible: "What colour are his eyes?" "I don't know, he's always wearing shades!"

<sup>184</sup> "New Rose," The Damned, *Damned Damned Damned*, Frontier 31033, 1993, CD, originally released 1977; "Leader of the Pack," The Shangri-Las, *Myrmidons of Melodrama*, RPM 136, 1998, CD, track originally released 1965.

<sup>185</sup> Weiss's sung part tells of a break-up dictated by her father, which causes "the leader of the pack," teary-eyed, to fatally crash his motorcycle.



Sonata” completely replaced singing.<sup>186</sup> When describing the past, the narrator says it was filled with “broken toys” and what “felt like love” before trailing off and moving to the present: “Take a walk along the beach tonight? I’d love to. But don’t try to touch me, don’t try to touch me, ‘cause [*sic*] that will *never* happen again.”<sup>187</sup> Punk rejected utopianism in favour of an emphasis on music’s realist function, but just as some remember the seventies as the decade of disco, songs like “Past, Present and Future” indicate that not all music of the sixties could be described as frivolous. As another example, Jon Stratton argues that in songs like “Uptown” and “Walking in the Rain,” with Jewish songwriters and producers but sung by black women, the Crystals and the Ronettes respectively presented a form of “Jewish blackface as Jews were whitened during their movement to suburbia.”<sup>188</sup> The songs of sixties girl groups had thus been grappling with political questions concerning race, gender, and sexual risk years before punks were directed to write about “important” topics instead of love.<sup>189</sup>

On formal terms, the archetypical short, fast punk song (parodied and celebrated at once with the Dictators’ 1979 track “Faster and Louder”<sup>190</sup>) was considered a reaction to the decadence of the minutes-long guitar solo, the rock opera, and the pretentious concept album that accompanied spiritual and storybook themes, as typified by Led Zeppelin’s Tolkienesque

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<sup>186</sup> Brenna Sanchez, “The Shangri-Las,” *Encyclopedia.com*, 2002, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3495300070.html>; Richie Unterberger, “The Shangri-Las: Past, Present, and Future,” *All Music*, 2015, <http://www.allmusic.com/song/past-present-and-future-mt0006571784>.

<sup>187</sup> “Past, Present and Future,” The Shangri-Las, *Past, Present and Future*, Red Bird RB 10-068, 1966, 7”.

<sup>188</sup> The Drifters, *Under the Boardwalk*, Dara MUCD 9016, 1995, CD, originally released 1964; The Crystals, *Twist Uptown*, Soul Jam 600817, 2013, CD, originally released 1963; The Ronettes, *Presenting the Fabulous Ronettes Featuring Veronica*, Sundazed LP 5411, 2012, LP, originally released 1964; Jon Stratton, “Jews Dreaming of Acceptance: From the Brill Building to Suburbia with Love,” *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 27, no. 2 (2009), 104, 120, doi: 10.1353/sho.0.0226.

<sup>189</sup> Savage, *England’s Dreaming Tapes*, 268.

<sup>190</sup> “Faster and Louder,” The Dictators, *Bloodbrothers*, Wounded Bird WOU147, 2005, CD, originally released 1978.

narratives.<sup>191</sup> When flower power idealism had been found faulty, over-serious treatment of the mythical seemed hollow. The intimacy between form and content that resonated here, however, was taken for granted with pop love songs which in fact often functioned as political allegories. Suspicion of the material was therefore a creative impediment for some punks, as with Richard Hell, who recently claimed that “[c]lothes are empty” and, as was cited above, used terms for bodily size in place of moral judgments.<sup>192</sup> A return to stylistic analysis will be undertaken in the following section, with Patti Smith’s androgyny and poetry standing in contrast to Debbie Harry’s femininity and Blondie’s pop affinities, with particular attention being paid to the relation between elements of style employed by these artists and the text of their lyrics and interviews.

### 3.3 *Femininity (“Then I Kicked Her”)*

Although the black leather jacket has been established as a punk garment, in the seventies this was a trend adopted by more men than women. Instead, Lucy O’Brien of the Catholic Girls recounts the use of bondage and fetish gear by women in punk as a means to contrast with “the backdrop of tiered flowery skirts, flicks and flares, and the crushing conformity of what it meant to be female in a Britain still tinged by post-war austerity.”<sup>193</sup> Lauraine Leblanc notes that punk girls do sometimes take on the masculine punk “uniform” in its entirety, including the leather jacket, but this seems to be applied more to fans rather than punk artists.<sup>194</sup> An exception to this

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<sup>191</sup> For instance, the *Lord of the Rings* character Gollum is name-checked in “Ramble On.” Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin II*, Atlantic 7567826332, 1994, CD, originally released 1969.

<sup>192</sup> Richard Hell, ““Punk” Couture: Insides Out,” in *Punk: Chaos to Couture*, ed. Andrew Bolton, with forewords by Richard Hell, John Lydon, and Jon Savage (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 19.

<sup>193</sup> Lucy O’Brien, “The Woman Punk Made Me,” in *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, ed. Roger Sabin (London: Routledge, 1999), 186.

<sup>194</sup> Lauraine Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls’ Gender Resistance in a Boys’ Subculture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 156.

rule is Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders, but she is also arguably the epitome of a punk woman who integrated herself into the “boys’ club,” and one of the most traditional both in terms of musical style and politics.<sup>195</sup> Patti Smith likewise adopted a masculine style but with a distinguishing caveat, as told by her friend Penny Arcade: “[she] usually [wore] a white man’s shirt, tucked in, with a Guido type of undershirt underneath. She didn’t wear a bra [and she] had all these scars on her stomach from when she was pregnant. She’d wear her pants real low and you could see all these scars.”<sup>196</sup> Smith’s presentation of mixed gendered symbols exposes the obscene and the private, and as Lauren Langman notes, a motivation of punk style is often the intention to shock.<sup>197</sup> The juxtaposition of men’s clothing with scars from a pregnancy would have been more effective in this regard than the Americana-approved criminality of the black leather jacket. As this style was developed by Smith before she became a musician in New York’s punk scene, though, rather than following from punk principles of shock or gender play, Smith’s aesthetic choices appear to have more to do with her perception of a gendered dichotomy in the production of art. Smith’s androgyny and poetry are often superficially taken as extensions of a progressive gender politics, but she was explicit in explaining her rationale for taking on masculine traits as co-requisites to artistry and control:

I didn’t have no confidence in myself. So I used to write stuff mostly about girls getting rid of their virginity... Most of my poems are written to women because women are most inspiring. Who are most artists? Men. Who do they get inspired by? Women. The masculinity in me gets inspired by the female. I fall in love with men and they take me over. I ain’t no women’s lib chick. So I can’t write about a man, because I’m under his thumb, but a woman I can be male with. I can use her as my muse. I use women.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> For instance, Hynde has taken “full responsibility” for her own rape. Krissi Murison, “Golden Hynde,” *The Sunday Times*, 30 August 2015, <http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/Magazine/article1597780.ece>.

<sup>196</sup> McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, 92.

<sup>197</sup> Langman, “Punk, Porn and Resistance,” 666.

<sup>198</sup> McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, 114.

Smith opts into masculinity, which she takes to encompass artistic agency, with clothes and mannerisms as a means of mitigating love's risk. This is evidenced by a proclivity to act like or as a man in her work: in the Jackie Curtis play *Femme Fatale*, Smith played the part of John Christian,<sup>199</sup> and Penny Arcade remembered learning during their friendship that "Patti wanted to look like Keith Richards, walk like Bob Dylan, and write like Arthur Rimbaud."<sup>200</sup> In the above explanation, Smith reflects the bellicose language of Barthes's lover—who reminds us that "[l]anguage ... has long since posited the equivalence of love and war"<sup>201</sup>—in her description of being "take[n] over" by men. Confronted with this hostility, Smith counters with masculine camouflage.

As Smith's men's clothing was vulgarly taken to be progressive, by contrast, Blondie's pop affinities were received as vacuous. Aligned with punk seriousness, Smith supposedly wanted Debbie Harry to "get out of rock'n'roll."<sup>202</sup> This is in keeping with a widespread misunderstanding that a "sex goddess" image was incompatible with deliberate artistic choices, and a failure to recognize Harry's own acting as such.<sup>203</sup> An example of Harry's calculation was her bleached-blond hair with an obvious black layer showing underneath, thus displaying ambition to Hollywood glamour coupled with acknowledged imperfections in that attempt. The first song written by Harry, "Platinum Blonde," which describes a desire to be like "all the sexy stars" by way of peroxide ends with a sarcastic comparison to alcoholism: "I'll hit the bottle, baby."<sup>204</sup> Given her working relationships and friendships with Andy Warhol and the cartoon-

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<sup>199</sup> McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me*, 92.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>201</sup> Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 188.

<sup>202</sup> Harry, Stein and Bockris, *Making Tracks*, 5.

<sup>203</sup> Leblanc, *Pretty in Punk*, 36.

<sup>204</sup> "Platinum Blonde," Blondie, *Blondie*, Chrysalis Records/Capitol 5335962, 2001, CD, originally released 1976. "Platinum Blonde" was first released on an independent 1975 7", with "Out In The Streets" (a Shangri-Las cover)

loving *Punk Magazine* writers, and that her own band (and nickname of “Debbie Blondie”) was named after a comic strip about the benign obstacles of American domestic life, it is something of a surprise that Harry’s affinity for the cartoonish and parodic was so overlooked.<sup>205</sup> She made this affinity clear in *Making Tracks: The Rise of Blondie*: “If there was one, the Blondie concept was akin to comic strips. [F]rom my point of view the idea of a drawing coming to life and stepping on the stage had a terrific surrealness about it.”<sup>206</sup> Blondie was considered by Harry to be an “amalgam” of cartoon characters to play at.<sup>207</sup> The inability to pick up on this parodic, Warholian element of the cartoon in the project of Blondie leaves Harry as an easily fetishized centrefold, however. Smith’s poor opinion of Harry is proof that not everyone was in on the joke, although Blondie’s “Heart of Glass” was explicitly in keeping with the punk trend of treating love as humorous: “it was a gas.”<sup>208</sup>

Blondie’s reception was so poor at times that Greil Marcus wrote that music critic Lester Bangs broke the last rule of the biographical genre in writing about them: “[it was] not even very nice to its subject.”<sup>209</sup> According to Marcus’s review, Bangs decided that Blondie’s success was founded on their “obliteration of emotion.”<sup>210</sup> Harry’s later comments on the narrators of her songs—the amalgam of characters that made up “Blondie”—elucidate why Bangs might have had this impression, and what was really the case. According to Harry, “[she] wanted to express situations where at one time the person had been a victim and put them in the third person so that

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and “Thin Line” on the A-side and “Platinum Blonde” and “Puerto Rico” on the B-side. Blondie, *1975 Demos*, Blondie BLEP1, 1975.

<sup>205</sup> Holmstrom, *The Best of Punk Magazine*, 47.

<sup>206</sup> Harry, Stein and Bockris, *Making Tracks*, 23.

<sup>207</sup> M. King Adkins, *New Wave: Image is Everything* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 59.

<sup>208</sup> Blondie, *Parallel Lines*, Chrysalis Records 1192, 1998, CD, originally released 1978.

<sup>209</sup> Greil Marcus, “Ripped to Shreds,” in *In the Fascist Bathroom: Punk in Pop Music 1977-1992* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 105.

<sup>210</sup> Marcus, “Ripped to Shreds,” 105.

they are removed from that situation.”<sup>211</sup> What Bangs perceived as callous irony would then more fittingly be described as a necessary emotional distance for the characters written by Harry. For instance, “X Offender”—the title toned down from “Sex Offender” to appease label personnel—opens with a Brill Building pop-inspired spoken introduction (à la “Leader of the Pack”): “I saw you on the corner, you looked so big and fine/ I *really* wanted to go out with you, so when you smiled,/ I laid my heart on the line.”<sup>212</sup> Since this could have been a prelude for any yearning love song by a sixties girl group, the expectation of a redundant teenage melodrama is developed by the listener. Blondie’s twist is that the lovelorn narrator is a prostitute infatuated with the policeman who has arrested her: he is “[a] vision in blue,” at “the trial [wearing his] badge and rubber boots.”<sup>213</sup> The prostitute’s victimhood then lies in a combination of the material and immaterial dangers associated with her profession, including her arrest, as well as the conditions that prohibit her from accessing the purity of girlish longing except through irony and “the Blondie concept.”

The unsustainability of this project is, above all, derived from the conflation of Harry with her characters. She has explained that a factor in the band’s halt in the mid-eighties was a desire for people to know she was more than a cartoon character, as it was commonly held that Blondie’s lyrics were reflective of her lived experience.<sup>214</sup> Andy Warhol’s conversation with a mutual friend is reflective of the exceptional circumstances in which Harry’s identity was immersed in Blondie’s characters by her audience: “Warhol asked a friend why Harry had

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<sup>211</sup> Quoted in Donna Gaines, “Let’s Talk About Sex,” *Rolling Stone*, no. 773 (November 1997), 91-95, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/220158462?accountid=15115>.

<sup>212</sup> “X Offender,” Blondie, *Blondie*, Chrysalis Records/Capitol 5335962, 2001, CD, originally released 1976.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.; Sandro Monetti, “Debbie Harry: ‘Staying current as an artist makes you grow’,” *Express*, 25 May 2014, <http://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/music/477948/Blondie-40th-anniversary-album>.

<sup>214</sup> Dick Porter and Kris Needs, *Blondie: Parallel Lives* (London: Omnibus Press, 2012), 221.

stopped being ‘Blondie’ and was told, “Because Debbie’s too intelligent to remain in the role of a cartoon character every day.” To which Andy replied, with some horror, “What do you think I’ve been doing for the last twenty-five years?”<sup>215</sup> While Warhol is now largely regarded as an artistic genius, and a punk contemporary like Joey Ramone would have been considered simultaneously pathetic and repulsive had the words he sang been taken to literally mean that he was a lobotomized Nazi whose girlfriends had variously been murdered in the Texas Chainsaw Massacre and kidnapped by the Ku Klux Klan, perhaps it was the easily commodified sexuality of Harry that persuaded her audience that for her, the producer (Harry) and product (Blondie’s lyrics) had to be intimately related. Smith’s equation of masculinity and artistic agency would then stand, insofar as the uncritical dissection of Harry denied her creativity, and with it, the narratives of the victims she aimed to exhibit.

### 3.4 Renunciation (“*She Cracked*”)

Two significant punk histories, Jon Savage’s *England’s Dreaming* and Greil Marcus’s *Lipstick Traces*, cite the following definition of nihilism quoted by Vaneigem from Vasily Rozanov’s *The Apocalypse of Our Time*: “[t]he show is over. The audience get up to leave their seats. Time to collect their coats and go home. They turn round. No more coats and no more home.”<sup>216</sup> The Slits were the extreme result of this subtraction of coats from punk: the band’s

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<sup>215</sup> Adkins, *New Wave*, 60.

<sup>216</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 154. The translation by Robert Payne and Nikita Romanoff is slightly different from Vaneigem’s citation: “*La Divina Commedia*[:] With a clang, a creak, and a scream the iron curtain drops on Russian history.

“The performance is over.”

The people get up from their seats.

“Time to put on your fur coats and go home.”

They look around.

But the fur coats and the houses have all vanished.”

first album, *Cut*, is infamous for its cover image of the group's three women wearing only loincloths, covered with mud in front of the countryside cottage where they had recorded.<sup>217</sup> While the leather jacket heralded the exchangeability of punks as a literal shell and a symbolic equalizer, rendering the covered bodies inconsequential, Smith and Harry similarly deferred to material components of style in order to navigate their assumed intimacy with immaterial qualities like creativity and sexual agency (which, of course, have material implications in turn). The Slits in mud, however, made the leather jacket unintelligible. The group deliberately experimented with fashions that would distinguish them from "the other women, mostly audience members in the scene," and lead singer Ari Up cut a "ferocious, frightening" figure that seemed to unnerve the men in their audiences in particular.<sup>218</sup> For the cover of *Cut*, Ari Up explained that the band "got into the countryside ... to the point of rolling around in the earth. So we decided to cover ourselves in mud and show that women could be sexy without dressing in a prescribed way. Sexy in a natural way, and naked without being pornographic."<sup>219</sup> This aesthetic time-warp would allow the Slits to speak a different semiotic language, both in a temporal sense and in terms of restating the body as the site of identity.

The Slits, however, were almost depicted in Harry's "sex goddess" image. Instead of considering them as peers of the Pistols, Malcolm McLaren wanted to manage the (then all-female) band and use them to "infiltrate the disco movement," first urging them to sign with a German disco label, and then drafting "a screenplay that envisioned the Slits as an all-girl rock

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Vasily Rozanov, *The Apocalypse of Our Time*, in *The Apocalypse of Our Time and other writings by Vasily Rozanov*, ed. Robert Payne, afterword by George Ivask, trans. Robert Payne and Nikita Romanoff (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), 277.

<sup>217</sup> Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 48.

<sup>218</sup> Brian Cogan, "Typical Girls?: Fuck Off, You Wanker! Re-evaluating the Slits and Gender Relations in Early British Punk and Post-Punk," *Women's Studies* 41 (2012), 124-5, doi: 10.1080/00497878.2012.636331.

<sup>219</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, 48.



band that goes to Mexico only to find themselves effectively sold into slavery and ultimately turned into pornodisco stars” when their eventual label, Island, offered him the chance to make a movie about them.<sup>220</sup> When punk authenticity is linked to the first releases of singles or albums, women in punk are disadvantaged as they either delayed signing record deals to avoid schemes like McLaren’s for the Slits, or simply had difficulty finding deals at all.<sup>221</sup> Since commercial strategies clearly outweighed talent in decision-making about signing punk bands to major labels, Brian Cogan guesses that “it could have been, that to many A&R people, female-fronted punk proved more daunting to sell in the commercial mainstream.”<sup>222</sup> This situation and McLaren’s disco motivations might also have been coloured by the equation of aesthetics (or “the interesting”) with the mind and hedonism (or “the enjoyable”) with the body, carried over to education and culture from the Industrial Revolution’s division of mental and manual labour.<sup>223</sup> The logic of pushing the Slits into a genre characterized as one of pure hedonism relies on making them primal beings, bodies above all else. Rather than following McLaren’s plan for them, the first verse of the Slits’ first album, *Cut*, critiques his martyr, Sid Vicious: “He is a boy, he’s very thin... [H]e has set to self-destruct.”<sup>224</sup> The figure of the emaciated addict punk is included in the critique of consumerism and everyday life levelled in *Cut*, where the Slits disrupted punk’s cohesion of form and text.

Musically, the Slits are distinct from Blondie and Patti Smith in having women fill positions other than that of the vocalist. With more than one woman in their band (other than background vocalists) during the seventies, the Slits were also consequently the only of these

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<sup>220</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, 46.

<sup>221</sup> Cogan, “Typical Girls,” 122.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 125.

<sup>224</sup> “Instant Hit,” The Slits, *Cut*, Island 8186, 2000, CD, originally released 1979.

bands having female harmonies integral to their sound. This is exemplified on “So Tough” and the piano-heavy “Typical Girls,” neither of which are typical punk songs with changes of tempo and vocals that are at times reminiscent of schoolyard chants and at others drop down into whispers. Taken with images of ferocity and sexiness, these vocal plays at girlish innocence also contradict distorted bass (exemplified on “So Tough”), sporadic and sometimes badly-mixed guitar (especially on “Newtown” and “Ping Pong Affair”), and the occasional lyrical obscenities and threats (e.g. “we pay fuck all”; “I pissed my knickers”; “[I’ll] break your neck”).<sup>225</sup> These instrumental aggressions committed by the women of the Slits allude to Adorno’s point that fear lies at the crux of kitsch (the low-brow, the cheesy), which is “the beautiful as the ugly, taboo in the name of that very beauty that it once was and that it now contradicts in the absence of its own opposite.”<sup>226</sup> As was cited in the introduction to this thesis, beauty can originate in the renunciation of a fear, and this fear is imitated in the formation of the ugly, with its “archaic [form as] the cannibalistically threatening cult masks and grimaces.”<sup>227</sup> In his musical criticism, Adorno also relates kitsch to the feminine: girls are portrayed as especially vulnerable to “sentimental tunes,” and can be “fool[ed]” by illusory emotional grandeur.<sup>228</sup> In an analogous process, the Slits are made obscene by their exposure of love’s taboo, making the most banal lines of romantic courtship sound menacing: “I’m so happy!/ You’re so nice!/ Kiss, kiss, kiss/ Fun, fun life!”<sup>229</sup> It has been stated here that love is a play, and so it stands to reason that the renunciation of love would leave an excess of playfulness to be imbued in its opposites—hatred,

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<sup>225</sup> First two lyrics quoted from “Shoplifting,” and third lyric from “Love und Romance,” The Slits, *Cut*, Island 8186, 2000, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>226</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 47-48.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>228</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Kitsch,” in *Essays on Music*, selected and with commentary by Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 502-3.

<sup>229</sup> “Love und Romance,” The Slits, *Cut*, Island 8186, 2000, CD, originally released 1979.

apathy, disgust—as is demonstrated in punk; hence love “was a gas” for sentimental, atypical Blondie, while in “orthodox” punk it was concentration camp Bergen-Belsen that “was a gas.”<sup>230</sup> With love’s taboo spilling over into suspicion of the body, the Slits are subversive in their nudity while maintaining a quasi-material element to their criticism by way of abnormal musicality, which will be elaborated upon in the following chapter.

### 3.5 Alienation (“Pretty Vacant”)

From 1843 to 1844 Marx drew from and built upon Hegel’s description of alienation. The alienation of “On the Jewish Question” echoes Hegel, “Toward a Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*” outlines the distinction between Marx’s analysis and that belonging to Hegel (both 1843), and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (as well as the “Notes of 1844” to a lesser extent) define alienation in Marx’s terms.<sup>231</sup> One of the conclusions reached in “On the Jewish Question” is that a person’s sole knowledge of her nature is “*alien* [and] illusory” when they are enrapt by religion.<sup>232</sup> However, this critical form is contrary to the origin of alienation in philosophy as the distance or separation from “the One” or God, in the works of Plotinus, a neo-Platonist, and Augustine, respectively.<sup>233</sup> In Scottish and French Enlightenment discourse, alienation became secularized and related to political economy, referring to the transfer of property.<sup>234</sup> This conception of alienation-as-transfer is left somewhat intact by Hegel, as his use of “alienation” is indicative of another type of movement, in which the “unexperienced

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<sup>230</sup> “Heart of Glass,” Blondie, *Parallel Lines*, Chrysalis Records 1192, 1998, CD, originally released 1978; “Belsen Was a Gas,” Sex Pistols, *The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle*, Virgin VJCP68057, 2004, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>231</sup> References for dates from Robert C. Tucker, “The Lives of Marx and Engels,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), xv-xvi.

<sup>232</sup> Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 26.

<sup>233</sup> Simon Skempton, *Alienation After Derrida* (London: Continuum, 2010), 23.

<sup>234</sup> Skempton, *Alienation After Derrida*, 25.

... becomes alienated [*entfremdet*] from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation [*Entfremdung*], and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth.”<sup>235</sup> As such, Georg Lukács describes Hegel’s alienation as the process of developing both human personality and the “only road to the creation of reality by spirit and consequently also to the intellectual reproduction of that reality by cognition.”<sup>236</sup> Counter to the current prevalence of negative connotations then, Hegelian alienation in fact has much to do with knowledge and the apprehension of self and reality through experience. In treating love as an interplay between porous subjects, such a process would be integral.

While struck by Hegel’s observation that alienation is the process of human self-creation vis-à-vis labour, the limbo between neo-Platonist abstraction and Enlightenment secularism inhabited by his conception of alienation is unsatisfactory for Marx. Dirk J. Struik calls Hegel’s analysis of alienation a “spooky performance,” which Marx saw as insufficient for its reference to only particular kinds of labour: the abstract labour “of thinking and knowing.”<sup>237</sup> This scope allows Marx to utilize alienation in the critical context that has become its most common form. For instance, while he has written on Hegel’s use of the term, Lukács employs alienation through much of *History and Class Consciousness* in the critical Marxist sense in which it implies something incomprehensible or unrecognizable, and possibly hostile.<sup>238</sup> Marx thus begins his critique of the *Philosophy of Right* by stating that human self-alienation “has been unmasked in

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<sup>235</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, with J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 21.

<sup>236</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), 317, 385.

<sup>237</sup> Dirk J. Struik, Introduction to *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, by Karl Marx, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan, (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 41; Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 188.

<sup>238</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 237.

its *holy form*,” and it must now be unmasked in its “*unholy forms*.”<sup>239</sup> In other words, there are material components of alienation that are missed by Hegel’s emphasis on abstract labour, and the criticism of religion as an impediment to knowledge stagnates in the realm of immateriality. As Marx continues, Germany’s revolutions at that point had been contained “in the brain[s]” of monks and philosophers, devoid of real material force.<sup>240</sup>

As mentioned above, Marx’s most methodical study on alienation is found in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. The worker’s alienation is fourfold: (1) the product of her labour; (2) the act of producing—her labour or “life activity”; (3) her natural or bodily and spiritual “species being”; and (4) her relation to other people all appear alien.<sup>241</sup> It is significant that Marx uses both of the German terms used by Hegel that are commonly translated to “alienation” in the manuscripts: *Entäusserung* and *Entfremdung*, the second of which is translated in certain texts as “estrangement.”<sup>242</sup> Other definitions of the former term are externalization or renunciation, as of rights or property.<sup>243</sup> This double meaning of alienation figures it, as in Hegel, as a transfer, but this no longer takes place as the development of self-consciousness and is instead understood as a loss, in which the worker’s labour and the products of her labour are made external and alien or hostile.<sup>244</sup> Species being or species character of humans is given as “free, conscious activity,” but comes to be taken as merely “the need to

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<sup>239</sup> Karl Marx, “Toward a Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 28.

<sup>240</sup> Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” 34.

<sup>241</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 110-114.

<sup>242</sup> Dirk J. Struik, “Explanatory and Reference Notes,” in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, by Karl Marx, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan, (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 240-241.

<sup>243</sup> Martin Milligan and Dirk J. Struik, “Translator’s and Editor’s Note on Terminology,” in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, by Karl Marx, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan, (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 58-59.

<sup>244</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 108.

maintain physical existence.”<sup>245</sup> This results in the animalistic turn that the manuscripts are well known for, in which the worker loses her ability to produce independently from physical needs and to confront the products of her labour, rendering human labour no different from the immediate necessity of the production performed by animals.<sup>246</sup> Thus it is developed by Marx in the manuscripts and later, such as in the *Grundrisse* (written 1857-58) and “Critique of the Gotha Program” (written in 1875),<sup>247</sup> that conscious, free and social labour is the transcendence of alienated labour.<sup>248</sup>

It has been pointed out that after this early period, alienation and other Hegelian terminology make only rare appearances in Marx’s writing.<sup>249</sup> This was held most notably by Althusser, who in “The Humanist Controversy” contended that a “break” occurs in Marx’s thought in 1845, beginning with the “Theses on Feuerbach,” *The German Ideology*, and continuing into *Capital*.<sup>250</sup> With Althusser having since renounced this claim as cited in the introduction of this text, it is now commonly accepted that such a break or rupture was heavily exaggerated. Given the multiplicity of the term “alienation” upheld by Hegel after its neo-Platonist, religious, and Enlightenment lineage, the complete removal of this concept from Marxism would make little sense. As Lefebvre would write in his *Critique of Everyday Life*, “There is a perpetual dialectical movement: ‘alienation-disalienation-new alienation’.”<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 113.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-114.

<sup>247</sup> Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 321; Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 611.

<sup>248</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 141.

<sup>249</sup> E.g. Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, xi; Struik, Introduction to *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 55.

<sup>250</sup> Louis Althusser, “The Humanist Controversy,” in *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings (1966-67)*, ed. François Matheron, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2003), 268-269.

<sup>251</sup> Lefebvre, “The Specific Categories,” 501.

Alienation is present in all periods of history, therefore to qualify all labour or relations as alienated is simply redundant, and not a marker of a post-Hegelian rupture. A continued use of alienation and other Hegelian language in the *Grundrisse* suggests that while it was largely edited out of the works Marx chose to publish (the *Grundrisse* is an early draft of *Capital*), his own understanding was saturated with the concept. “Alienation” also appears as late as the third volume of *Capital*, written and revised between 1867 and 1880.<sup>252</sup> Having written “On the Jewish Question” in late 1843—in which alienation and similar terms such as “alienable” are all used—this means we have at minimum over twenty years of the term “alienation” in Marx’s writing.<sup>253</sup> Robert C. Tucker upholds this explanation:

The word “alienation” may be missing, but the theme is not. *Capital’s* proletarian is still *The Holy Family’s* “dehumanization which is conscious of itself as a dehumanization [*sic*] and hence abolishes itself.” What was called “alienated labour” in the manuscripts of 1844 appears here simply as “wage labour.” Now the object of study is subjected to endless analysis in terms of the labour theory of value and to lavish documentation out of the annals of British factory inspectors’ reports, but it is the same object, and the viewpoint taken toward it is also the same.<sup>254</sup>

Again in “The Humanist Controversy” Althusser alleges that the so-called rupture sees Marx “eliminate from the field of his reflections as so many *epistemological obstacles*: Man, the Human Genus, the individual, the subject, and so on.”<sup>255</sup> However, an investigation of the subject—or rather a certain quality of subjects—is in fact one of the major unifiers of the 1844

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<sup>252</sup> *Capital*, Vol. III, Part I, chapter 5, section 1: “The relations of capital conceals indeed the inner connection [of the facts] in the complete indifference, exteriorization and alienation in which it places the worker in relation to the conditions of the realization of his own labour.” Quoted from the 1933 Zurich edition in Dirk J. Struik, “Explanatory and Reference Notes,” *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 235.

<sup>253</sup> Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” 13, 26. For additional context, Marx died in 1883, three years after revisions to the third volume of *Capital* containing the passage on alienation.

<sup>254</sup> Robert C. Tucker, Introduction to *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), xxxi.

<sup>255</sup> Althusser, “The Humanist Controversy,” 271.

manuscripts and *Capital*, and one of the utmost significance for this thesis. This quality is the possession of the senses.

### 3.6 Bodies (“Genetic Engineering”)

In the early sections of *Capital*, Marx makes use of the metaphor of the mirror. Explaining the relative form of value, he states that “the body of commodity *B* acts as a mirror to the value of commodity *A*.”<sup>256</sup> To mirror value, the body of a commodity “must reflect nothing besides its own abstract quality of being human labour generally,” and through this function all commodities “mirror” the value of all others.<sup>257</sup> This process takes advantage of the mirror’s superficiality; the supposed objectivity and truthfulness of the mirror distracts from the image’s underbelly, which in this case is the particularity of the commodity and the real human labour that contributed to its production. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s proposal of the term “*Aesthetik*” to distinguish the realm of the sensuous rests on “feeling as distinct from knowing,” privileging affective and emotional responses rather than the strictly empirical.<sup>258</sup> With Marx’s mirror, perceiving-and-feeling—which is distinct from perceiving-and-knowing—must be at play, otherwise, intuiting the value of commodities would fail to take on the second nature character it now possesses.

Proceeding with the proposed context of the aesthetic realm as mirror, Guy Debord calls the spectacle a development propelled by the economic realm for the sake of itself, “at once a faithful mirror held up to the production of things and a distorting objectification of the

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<sup>256</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 35.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>258</sup> Robert Morris Ogden, “A Definition of Aesthetics,” *The Philosophical Review* 2, no. 5 (1933): 500-501, doi: 10.2307/2179821.



producers.”<sup>259</sup> Similarly, Lefebvre describes that “an act of love ... summarizes a society... It is consummated in society and, if needs be, despite it and against it; and this is how and why it reflects society like a mirror.”<sup>260</sup> Aesthetics and love both take on a mirroring function in relation to social, political, and economic relations. For love, this is confirmed by the romantic ideal of sacrifice under capitalism: when everything can be exchanged, love is best proven by giving, and especially by giving one’s life or body (“I would die for you”). It follows, then, that this mirroring done by love and aesthetics would also reflect the commodity fetishism discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the nature of a mirror calls our attention to the superficiality of the fetishized body. Whereas some punks endowed the bodily with an explicit and cohesive relationship to subjective interiority, it was shown with the comparison of Patti Smith and Debbie Harry that this was often a misreading, while the Slits’ nudity refused this overvaluation of stylistic signs.

The section of the 1844 manuscripts that most contributes to the theory of needs as will soon be discussed qua Heller deals with the historical development of the senses. Here, Marx lists a number of “*human* relations to the world,” or senses: “seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, [and] loving” which he adds are both “organs of his [*sic*] individual being” and “*directly social*.”<sup>261</sup> The development of private property prompts all of the senses to be estranged or alienated in deference to the sense of *having*, according to Marx.<sup>262</sup> As free and conscious practical *and* immaterial labour transcends unfree labour, again Marx adds to Hegel’s ideal by asserting that humans are “affirmed ... not

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<sup>259</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 16.

<sup>260</sup> Lefebvre, “The Specific Categories,” 485.

<sup>261</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 138-139. Emphasis added to last quotation.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

only in the act of thinking, but with *all* [of their] senses.”<sup>263</sup> The connection from this argument to the later theory of *Capital* can be found in the same section discussed in the previous chapter, with “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof.” Commodities are intimately bound up with the materiality of bodies, for “it is a physiological fact that [all types of labour] are functions of the human organism,” and therefore commodities derive from “the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles, etc.”<sup>264</sup> The magical quality of commodities is not in this nature of their production, but in their ability to confound the very physiological loci of their origin. For, as Marx relays, it is the *appearance* of commodities that leads to their fetishization, with aspects that are “perceptible and imperceptible” to our senses.<sup>265</sup> Marx continues with a heavy hand to describe the function of the optic nerve, and later adds the joke “*Non olet*”—money has no smell.<sup>266</sup> If private property causes the sense of having to dominate relations to the world, it does so with the cooperation of a system of optics. As the commodity “looks upon” all other commodities and sees only exchange value, while its owner tries to rationalize the system of commodity exchange with her “five and more senses,” Marx makes it clear in *Capital* that the commodity achieves its magical nature in its manipulation of the plurality of human senses by coaxing all but “having” and “seeing” into submission.<sup>267</sup> Given this hierarchy, the following chapter will proceed with a greater emphasis on punk music as a departure from these senses, with a greater emphasis on the formal elements of atypical punk songs rather than the text that has been privileged so far.

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<sup>263</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 140.

<sup>264</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 46.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

## 4. “You Move Me”

### 4.1 *Trinity (“Some Weird Sin”)*

It has been shown so far that both fetishism and alienation are not wholly distinct concepts from love, which has been posited as a willing and pleasurable play between fluid and porous subjects. Fetishism is not inherently negative for Marx, so the object of his critique is the fetishism of exchangeability or “site[s] of exchange,” which, instead of cherishing the products of human activity or human bodies, has become the social norm.<sup>268</sup> Likewise, the concept of alienation he takes from Hegel is linked to experience and has been noted by Lukács as the process of developing human personality.<sup>269</sup> The historicism in Marx’s works allows for alienation to hold the contradiction of dividing and isolating people while also being the catalyst for “individuality, subjectivity, and freedom [to] develop.”<sup>270</sup> In this way, alienation is necessary for overcoming the fetishism of people as commodities—or to reiterate again from Barthes, the fetishism of a bloodless substitute—and for loved ones to be beheld as distinct from others.<sup>271</sup> Due to this overlap between fetishism, alienation, and love, we can identify the punk performance of alienation through bodily inscription concurrent with textual critiques not merely as a nihilist tantrum against commodified love, hippies, indulgent rock operas, and so on, but as a historical development for the love-of-love-songs.<sup>272</sup> With mutual ownership as one of the dominant meanings of love in sixties pop, to make love obscene (as in “Love Comes in Spurts”) or to announce one’s alienation because of it (as in “Anthrax”) is to expose love’s contradictions which, like those of alienation, could be transcended in a historical process.

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<sup>268</sup> Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” 186-187.

<sup>269</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 21; Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 317, 385.

<sup>270</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 13.

<sup>271</sup> Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 185.

<sup>272</sup> That is, the love *belonging* to or *in* love songs, not the affinity for love songs.

With the previous two chapters of this thesis having contended with punk critiques of love and love songs, below I will describe examples of punk songs that would belong to an aesthetics compatible with a Marxist conception of love that has been the aim of recuperation. This aesthetics will be presented as developing analogously to the historicity of needs as it has been theorized by Marx and Heller. In short, this entails the accumulation of aesthetic freedom or the allowance for artistic play as other needs or goals are met. As attaining the means of survival becomes less pressing, needs are allowed to develop an increasingly aesthetic dimension, as is first argued by Marx in the 1844 manuscripts. This progression lends itself to the role of the arts in fostering free, unalienated relationships between people—in other words, relations outside of a system of exchange. Likewise, it seems that after punk had announced its angry presence and began to issue a critique against the love-of-love-songs—which we might consider to be one of punk’s initial “needs”—songwriters made increasingly liberal moves from the prototypical punk rhythm and created music more accommodating to dance and enjoyment. This progression notably allowed for coupled movements, unlike the dances prescribed for fast punk songs. Given the space made for reciprocity in studies of rhythm by Barthes and Lefebvre, issues of fashion will be put aside in favour of music as the aesthetic object of interest. The unorthodox punk rhythms of Talking Heads, the Slits, and the Clash in particular will be analyzed, especially given the conscious gaps in rhythms created by women in the first two bands listed.

The *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, *Capital*, and *The Society of the Spectacle* all portray the subject’s relation to commodities as primarily visual, an experience in which it has become second nature to perceive exchange value along with, or even prior to, the object at hand. If we accept from Marx that love is also a sense, it would seem unwise to liken this experience to an apparently easily manipulated system of optics. There is also the component of

experience and knowledge favoured by Hegel, so the sensing of rhythms seems an appropriate bridge between perceiving the material and the immaterial. Furthermore, when it comes to analyzing relations between people, alternative punk rhythms have room for dialogue and reciprocal movements as opposed to the prototypical punk rhythms prohibitive of coupled dances. For Barthes, reciprocity and compromise on living rhythms are components of love, in contrast to the mute obedience experienced by the body-as-commodity. The quality of rhythms will therefore be shown to be resistant to the necessary exchangeability of commodities, while their quasi-material character works to upend the usual equation of fetishism as an interplay between material and immaterial substances (such as “a coat” and “exchange value”).

#### 4.2 Needs (“*All This and More*”)

In order to explain a predisposition for pop music without delving into the problematic question of taste, we can turn to sociological theories of pop, as well as the Marxist theory of needs. For one, pop music has been identified as an institutionalized coding mechanism for shaping romantic interactions.<sup>273</sup> Secondly, it is a way to identify distinctions within generations, and also a way to identify distinctions between generations.<sup>274</sup> To access the pop music of prior generations is thus in part an exercise in analyzing trends of courtship and subcultural boundaries, and therefore to bear witness to love’s historicism. According to Marx’s theory of needs, these functions of pop music are satisfactory ones. To begin with, humans have needs for things such as clothing, food, and housing. These needs can “[acquire] an aesthetic aspect, a

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<sup>273</sup> Wilfred Dolfsma, “Consuming pop music/ constructing a life world: The advent of pop music,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (2004): 433, doi: 10.1177/1367877904047862.

<sup>274</sup> Dolfsma, “Consuming pop music,” 424.

creative and free dimension.”<sup>275</sup> Eventually, “free creative activity itself becomes a need,” with self-expression and self-realization developing into requirements.<sup>276</sup> As Heller notes, beginning with the writing of Marx’s dissertation, he was committed to the value of freedom, or “the opposition of authority.”<sup>277</sup> Experimentation with musical genres, fashion, and romantic or sexual relationships rather than adherence to doctrine, subculturally-generated or otherwise, was certainly a practice of punk artists concomitant with this Marxist ideal. Furthermore, work according to Marx is any practical activity that deliberately changes the world, even in play, and realized ideally in the “free creative activity of art.”<sup>278</sup> A notable passage from the *Grundrisse* sees Marx give the composition of music as an example of “really free” working or labour, while the “Critique of the Gotha Program” names labour as life’s eventual “prime want.”<sup>279</sup> An ideal Marxist relation with an object, then, is not one of possession, but a relation of enjoyment and fulfilment.<sup>280</sup> In addition, the creation of art such as music can thus inhabit the category of labour—as opposed to leisure, or engagement with a hobby—without an economic impetus, perhaps lending some legitimacy to the historical analysis of this activity and cushioning it from any supposed inevitability of music’s commodification.

While the above related the theory of needs mainly to self-realization, of course it also entails a social dimension. Specifically, we can link the development of needs to species-being [*Gattungswesen*, also translated as species-essence], taken from the work of Ludwig Feuerbach and prominently critiqued by Max Stirner. Where the former left this essence in the mystical and

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<sup>275</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 73.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> Heller, “Marx and the “liberation”,” 362.

<sup>278</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 21.

<sup>279</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 611; Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” 321.

<sup>280</sup> Henri Lefebvre, “Marxism as Critical Knowledge of Everyday Life,” in *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore, 176.

abstract realm of “human nature,” Marx’s formulation lies closer to Stirner’s concurrent 1844 critique of Feuerbach: “only the god is changed[: who] is [Feuerbach’s] God? Man with a capital M!”<sup>281</sup> For Marx, the fact that humans can realize each other’s needs and recognize this virtue in each other means it is a given that humans reach “beyond [their] own particular need ... and that they relate to one another as human beings,” with their species-being “acknowledged by all.”<sup>282</sup> Recalling Marx’s conviction in the value of freedom, we can note that Debord claims that “[t]here can be no freedom apart from activity.”<sup>283</sup> It is thus essential that *active* creation can be free, and not just the creativity of thought. This distinction better endorses the malleable nature of punk’s aesthetics as they have been described here, including its transition into post-punk, than a doctrinaire system in which certain looks, sounds, and ideas either can or cannot fit a static category. In fact, it is arguable that “anti-doctrine” is the *only* punk doctrine. Taking into account this theory of needs and the freedom in self-realization qua art found in Marx and Heller, the well-known punk paranoia of capitalism and “selling out” becomes a more reasonable reaction. David Byrne of Talking Heads has commented, “When I later heard about bands actually paying to play in certain clubs, I knew things had been perverted in a terrible way.”<sup>284</sup> Do-it-yourself practices and insularity could have produced an environment of contained but realized “human” relationships, while pricing any component, from the venue (which Byrne calls “the rhizome”) to the performers, would immediately distort this state with a system of economic exchange.<sup>285</sup> This is not to say that this dilemma demonstrated by punks is merely a lower class

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<sup>281</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot, with a foreword by Rachel V. Kohout Lawrence (Walnut, CA: MSAC Philosophy Group, 2008), 221; Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55.

<sup>282</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 243.

<sup>283</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 21-22.

<sup>284</sup> David Byrne, *How Music Works* (San Francisco: McSweeney’s, 2012), 260.

<sup>285</sup> Byrne, *How Music Works*, 253.

problem, though. As argued by Hegel, the upper classes are also “caught up in a complex and impenetrable web of economic relationships,” and freedom from work is not freedom *as such*, following from the place of free and creative material labour in the development of human needs.<sup>286</sup>

The problem we are then faced with if exchange must be barred from loving relationships, and things are to be created in a manner that “liberate[s] the senses and allow[s] them to function in a fully human way,” is how to distribute the products of our labour.<sup>287</sup> A facet of this problem is addressed by Vaneigem’s *The Revolution of Everyday Life* in his isolation of “the pure gift” and condemnation of sacrifice. As has been posited in this thesis, Vaneigem argues that “exchange corrupts all human relationships” and he includes “sociometric units of power” in the system of exchange that guides the dynamics of human relationships.<sup>288</sup> In other words, even in contemporary “gift-giving,” there is a system of quantifying gratitude, indebtedness, and so on that must be complied with by the socially competent recipient. The dominating conception of the gift is no more than a deferred exchange, or a return, as Gang of Four would have it. Similarly, sacrifice is “diametrically opposed [to the] project of the whole human being” for Vaneigem.<sup>289</sup> With the death of pleasure seen as antithetical to revolution and what is here called “the project of the whole human being”—which can be understood as the project of affirming all of the senses and the pleasure that comes from doing so—Vaneigem calls for “pleasure [in] giving” instead of sacrifice, which is understood instead as an obligatory or

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<sup>286</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 28.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>288</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 63.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.



coerced giving.<sup>290</sup> As might be expected then, Vaneigem laments the current detachment of love from the pleasure of giving, as is evidenced by more than seventy versions of the song “Love Hurts” recorded since 1960.<sup>291</sup> The reunion of love and enjoyment in giving—pure gift-giving—is key to an understanding of redemptive or unalienated relationships.

Working backward from the pure gift, we can turn to Marx and to Heller for the conditions of such a gift’s creation. Writing on the impetus for liberation she sees in Marx’s dissertation, Heller reminds us that “[t]he “liberation of humankind” ... cannot mean liberation from all kinds of duties.”<sup>292</sup> At the same time, needs may still be evaluated on a spectrum of immediacy, but this does not render some “true” and some “false” as Herbert Marcuse would have it.<sup>293</sup> As Heller has responded, such a division based on false consciousness and the theory of commodity fetishism assumes that the judge of the “true” can trust that their perspective “transcends the society in question,” outside of history.<sup>294</sup> The necessity of labour and art is thus persistent regardless of social conditions, but their enjoyment is conditional and determined historically. This is summarized by Marx in the *Grundrisse*: “Production ... creates the consumer... [It] not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object.”<sup>295</sup> A degree of reciprocity between subject and object can be read as the blanket commodification of people and things, but this relationship also carves a potential for more frequently enjoyable, beautiful, or loving interactions. Consumption, Marx writes, “produces the producer’s *inclination*

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<sup>290</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 64, 93.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 150; “Love Hurts,” *Second Hand Songs*, 2015, <http://secondhandsongs.com/performance/2803>. First recorded by the Everly Brothers but most popularized by Nazareth.

<sup>292</sup> Heller, “Marx and the “liberation”,” 369.

<sup>293</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*, with an introduction by Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 2007), 7.

<sup>294</sup> Agnes Heller, *The Power of Shame: A Rational Perspective* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 286.

<sup>295</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 92.

by beckoning to [them]” and so the enjoyment of consuming art, for instance, subsequently prompts the continued production of art to be enjoyed by others.<sup>296</sup> In this manner, the development of needs in accordance with a growing desire for aesthetic enjoyment directly corresponds with the fulfilment of free creative labour as a need in itself. Pleasure in creation therefore comes to reckon with the blurry distinction between gift and sacrifice.

#### 4.3 Music (“See No Evil”)

An ongoing crux in attempts to organize boundaries around punk as a musical genre is its lack of sonic or rhythmic coherence. From Talking Heads frontman David Byrne’s point of view, the Clash’s musical style, provocative lyrics, and appearance contributed to a unifying logic lacked by Talking Heads:

We saw the Clash in a school auditorium in England. It was hard to make out what was going on musically, but it was obvious that the music that was emerging then was viewed as more of a coherent movement there, with the anthemic rabble-rousing aspect bringing that point home. Any rabble-rousing in our own music was buried pretty deep.<sup>297</sup>

Despite Byrne’s early impressions of them, criticisms of the Clash tend to refer to their departures from “anthemic rabble-rousing” high-speed punk. Subway Sect’s Vic Godard recalls that hearing the Clash play their cover of the reggae hit “Police and Thieves” while on tour with them “made [him] cringe.”<sup>298</sup> A more recent review of 1980 triple-LP *Sandinista!* jokes, “When people say that *Sandinista!* would have been killer as a single album, what they never go on to say (but should) is that it would have been a killer single *reggae* album.”<sup>299</sup> These charges aside,

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<sup>296</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 92.

<sup>297</sup> Byrne, *How Music Works*, 45-46.

<sup>298</sup> Savage, *England’s Dreaming Tapes*, 371.

<sup>299</sup> John Doran, “The Clash *Sandinista!* Review,” *British Broadcasting Corporation*, 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/reviews/6d63>. Emphasis mine.

*Melody Maker* writer, activist and artist Caroline Coon, who briefly managed the Clash, has spoken up for their authenticity as a punk band.<sup>300</sup> Additionally, their third album *London Calling* has been described as an “expan[sion]” of the “one-punch knockout structure of their quintessential punk” rather than a deviation from their earlier sound, which as Godard highlighted, included styles such as reggae already.<sup>301</sup>

According to Lefebvre, after Stendhal’s *Racine et Shakespeare* manifesto (1823-1825), “art became simultaneously *a way of living, a way of saying, a way of making*, and both life and the work of art were revealed through style.”<sup>302</sup> This kind of coherence has often been assumed of punk artists and punk as a whole. George McKay, in his critique of the cyberpunk literary genre’s appropriation of the term “punk,” notes how writer and critic Bruce Sterling has called the prose of cyberpunk “the literary equivalent of the hard-rock ‘wall of sound’,” while clearly unaware that the wall of sound is a studio technique developed by producer Phil Spector,<sup>303</sup> exemplified on the Ronettes’ “Be My Baby,” which Beach Boy Brian Wilson would obsess over for decades.<sup>304</sup> The mythologization of punk has led to its association with terms and practices which do not belong to it, even those as thoroughly “pop” as the wall of sound, with cohesion often taken for granted for the sake of accessing punk’s semantic weight. Conceptions of a punk unity are further complicated by regional pluralism as discussed in the second chapter of this

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<sup>300</sup> Gray, *The Clash*, 289.

<sup>301</sup> Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 474; John Piccarella, “Riffs: The Clash on Main Street,” *Village Voice*, 4 February 1980, 61, quoted in Matthew Gelbart, “A Cohesive Shambles: The Clash’s ‘London Calling’ and the Normalization of Punk,” *Music & Letters* 92, no. 2 (2011): 237, doi: 10.1093/ml/gcr037.

<sup>302</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Introductions to Modernity: Twelve Preludes September 1959-May 1961*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1995), 271.

<sup>303</sup> McKay, “‘I’m so bored with the USA’,” 54-55.

<sup>304</sup> “Brian Wilson on Phil Spector and Be My Baby,” Youtube video, 2:44, from the British Broadcasting Corporation, *Dancing in the Street*, televised in 1996, posted by Carl Nilsson, 15 June 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiScLYNAoSc>. Wilson estimates he has listened to “Be My Baby” over one thousand times. Marc Spitz, “Still Tingling Spines, 50 Years Later: ‘Be My Baby,’ a Hit Single With Staying Power,” *New York Times*, 16 August 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/18/movies/be-my-baby-a-hit-single-with-staying-power.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/18/movies/be-my-baby-a-hit-single-with-staying-power.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

thesis, problematic phenotypical readings of style as demonstrated with receptions of Smith and Harry, and musical variance from punk's outset. As one of the first punks to have been primed as a fan before contributing his own musical work, the expectation would likely have been that Mark Perry (who created the zine *Sniffin' Glue*) would make sonically recognizable punk songs. Instead, the solution to the Cretin Paradox (the punk doctrine: anti-doctrine) offered by Perry and his band ATV was to fulfill punk's mandate with the sounds of ska on "Love Lies Limp;" a Frank Zappa cover—"Why Don't You Do Me Right?"; "Alternatives," which clocks in well over the early punk average run-time at nearly ten minutes; and the lyrically anti-punk "How Much Longer."<sup>305</sup> This variety is a testament to punk's development past its critical climax, the critique of the love song. Vaneigem testifies that "Western civilization is a civilization of work and, as Diogenes observed, 'Love is the occupation of the idle.'"<sup>306</sup> After echoing this critique, music by the punk deviants—the players of ska, funk, disco, and so on—was made to thrust the love "locked in the bedroom" out of the domestic sphere and into public life, enabled by the disruption of rigid rhythms tailored for one.<sup>307</sup>

An apt description of punk dancing is featured in Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. On the dancefloor, where pop music had traditionally guided courtship, perceptible heterosexual desire at punk shows was taboo and unwelcome.<sup>308</sup> Dances included the pogo, the pose (sometimes with a 'partner' of the same gender who would mime a photographer), and the robot—each refusing spontaneity, improvisation, and sensuality in their own ways. The whole night could be choreographed, but only in jerks, jumps, lurches, or clichéd

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<sup>305</sup> Alternative TV, *The Image Has Cracked*, Anagram CDPUNK24, 2012, CD, originally released 1978.

<sup>306</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 228.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Hebdige, *Subculture*, 108.

fashion poses.<sup>309</sup> Most significantly, these dances precluded any spontaneous reciprocity. That musical understanding is both a mental and a bodily process is supported by such figures as music writer Simon Frith, ethnomusicologist John Blacking, and composer Igor Stravinsky;<sup>310</sup> with bodily responses to the rigid rhythms of early punk music entailing little to no interpersonal consideration, the audience's "musical understanding" was at least antisocial, and could even be considered stunted on these terms. Atypical punk rhythms need not be considered more intellectual, but they do possess the distinction of having space and time for the negotiation of movement. This space is a prerequisite for the integration of any punk music into the Marxist discussion of rhythms initiated by Barthes and Lefebvre.

The Clash are one of the punk bands whose music contained these sociable rhythms. Of the whole of *London Calling*, a double-record (eighteen tracks), only "Clampdown" and "I'm Not Down" have what could be characterized as standard punk rhythms—think "Blitzkrieg Bop," "God Save the Queen," or "Neat Neat Neat"—and the former has Joe Strummer drop down to a whisper, while the latter contains tempo changes that make the song more conducive to dance and improvisation, thus complicating the categorization of even two songs from likely the most recognizable punk album by cover art (Paul Simonon's bass-smashing with Elvis Presley-inspired pink and green block letters), as "punk-sounding."<sup>311</sup> Meanwhile, "Hateful" contains the girl group practice of call and answer (e.g. Strummer: "he gives me what I need," then, Jones: "what you need?") and "Lost in the Supermarket" takes the album beyond the Clash's usual departure to reggae or dub with a disco bassline. The triple-record that followed

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<sup>309</sup> Hebdige, *Subculture*, 108-109.

<sup>310</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 141.

<sup>311</sup> The Clash, *London Calling*, Sony Music 88875112701, 2013, LP, originally released 1979. "Blitzkrieg Bop," "God Save the Queen," and "Neat Neat Neat" by the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, and the Damned, respectively.

*London Calling* contains a song that even more bluntly fits the description of sociable in all of its qualities: “If Music Could Talk.” Stream-of-consciousness lyrics caption the casual rhythms of the saxophone accompanying the band; a double-tracked Strummer vocal resembles a self-contained conversation; and the song itself is a sibling of the closer of *Sandinista!*, “Shepherd’s Delight,” which was slightly altered to create the backing track of “If Music Could Talk.”<sup>312</sup> With the saxophone often alternating with the vocal for presence in the forefront, the song can also be interpreted as an exchange between the band and their guest—a “talk” involving the various instruments and Strummer’s two voices. As Lutz Jäncke summarizes, “Music automatically awakes us, arouses us and engenders specific emotions in us, which in turn modulates and controls many cognitive functions.”<sup>313</sup> Songs such as this therefore hold connections to contributing to an understanding of the negotiation and sociality that they portray musically. With love as inherently social and coinciding with the emergence of a reciprocal care, this emotional and cognitive experience gained through music is invaluable.

#### 4.4 Rhythm (“Pumping (My Heart)”)

For Mikhail Bakhtin, “[w]ithout love, time is mathematically identical, homogeneous and empty.”<sup>314</sup> This sentiment is wrapped up in the genre-defying rhythms of punk music, with the temporal strictness of characteristically punk songs coinciding with the suspicion and critique of love that has been discussed in this thesis. It should be no great surprise, then, that socially conscientious bands would also tend to produce more of what I have here called sociable rhythms. The Clash, whose interest in international relations and social welfare is testified to

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<sup>312</sup> The Clash, “If Music Could Talk,” *Sandinista!*, Epic 88725462121, 2013, LP, originally released 1980.

<sup>313</sup> Lutz Jäncke, “Music, memory and emotion,” *Journal of Biology* 7, no. 21 (2008): 4-5.

<sup>314</sup> Tim Beasley-Murray, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 86.

most consistently and effectively with *Sandinista!*, are one instance of this. We can also turn again to a band previously cited for their disruptive presentations of femininity, the Slits. The women of this group purposefully attempted to diverge from what they perceived as the “male-centric ... majority of punk music” that was present at the time of their formation.<sup>315</sup>

Significantly, the liner notes to a reissue of *Cut* describe how the band had “concluded that female rhythms were not as steady, structured, or as contained as male rhythms.”<sup>316</sup> Ari Up elaborated that this was not because of a gendered logic-emotion dichotomy, but because they perceived the “musical approach [of the boys to be] ruled by rules” more than that of the groups with women.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, the “unsteady” rhythms the Slits developed were usually not meandering or flowing according to an apprehensible logic, but severely angular. They could even be called tidal, as Ari Up would have it, if—and only if—the great threat of the tides’ severity is kept in mind.<sup>318</sup> Corners are cut, but not to be softened or rounded. The trio of voices which sometimes seems rife with competition and impatience announces the plurality at play.

The conscious rhythm-shaping on *Cut* is therefore an almost perfect embodiment of the linguistic origins of rhythm: *rhein* (Greek, “to flow”) and *rhuthmos*, usually related to *rhein* and meaning “the regular movement of the waves” but actually originating in ancient Ionian philosophy, where it was used as a technical term for Leucippus and Democritus, the creators of atomism.<sup>319</sup> For them, *rhuthmos* had meant “the pattern of a fluid element... an improvised, changeable form. In atomism, one manner in which atoms can flow; a configuration without

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<sup>315</sup> Cogan, “Typical Girls,” 123.

<sup>316</sup> Maria Raha, *Cinderella’s Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>317</sup> Raha, *Cinderella’s Big Score*, 83.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 7, 178n.

fixity or natural necessity: a “flowing” (the musical, that is to say, modern meaning: Plato, *Philebus*).”<sup>320</sup> In his 1977 lecture course on this topic—aptly coinciding with the popular emergence of punk and the music the Slits had reacted against—Barthes points out that crucially, “*rhuthmos* is by definition *individual*.”<sup>321</sup> The Slits’ refusal to unify as a chorus and their respective particular instrumental presences in *Cut* are *de facto* incidental homages to *rhuthmos*. However, vocals on “Instant Hit” and “So Tough,” for instance, are overlapped as the women repeat each other’s words—either in sequence or with the repetition deferred—demonstrating the reciprocity and porosity that can still exist amongst these atomized patterns or movements.<sup>322</sup>

What Barthes terms “idiorrhthy” can be found in the Slits’ accomplishment regarding *rhuthmos* on *Cut*. This is a “safeguarding” of *rhuthmos*, as opposed to a disrhythmy. In other words, idiorrhythmy is an accord but not a unification of rhythms, while disrhythmy would constitute a clash or an overpowering of one by another.<sup>323</sup> Barthes offers the image of a mother holding her child’s hand and walking at too quick of a pace to illustrate disrhythmy, but we can also consider fast and rigid punk rhythms permitting only the isolating dances of the pogo, pose, or robot to be of a dysrhythmic and repressive nature.<sup>324</sup> On the other hand, Slits tracks such as “Typical Girls” feature tempo changes by various instruments out of unison, with piano and guitar at times speeding up independently of each other, and the drums following this lead on occasion but otherwise keeping to their own pattern. Instead of being coerced into rhythmic unison by a normative punk format, the temporary dominance asserted by each instrument and

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<sup>320</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 7.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>322</sup> The Slits, *Cut*, Island 8186, 2000, CD, originally released 1979.

<sup>323</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 35.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.



voice on *Cut* overcomes the rule of “time-as-commodity,” under which humans are the mere “carcas[ses]” of time.<sup>325</sup> By inscribing the spatiotemporal spaces of their songs with the utmost in particularity, the Slits complicate the homogeneity of time that enables its commodification. The consequences here are significant for disruptions to a system of exchange, with time retrieved from its commodity status by the individuality of *rhuthmos*, which denies the exchangeability of these instruments and voices.

Not unlike the Slits, Talking Heads’ practices approached idiorrhythmy with Tina Weymouth’s bass punctuating each song as much as David Byrne’s peculiar vocal. Saint Etienne keyboardist and writer of *Yeah Yeah Yeah: The Story of Modern Pop* Bob Stanley attributes Talking Heads’ sound to the dynamic of “a bunch of male musicians all trying to impress ... Weymouth with their chops,”<sup>326</sup> but Reynolds suggests instead that Byrne’s “anorexic”-sounding guitar made way for Weymouth’s bass to sidestep typical instrumental hierarchies and join the vocal as the band’s main “melodic voice[s].”<sup>327</sup> Weymouth explained that the similarity in range of her bass and human voice was a strong enough “temptation to play lead parts and melodies” instead of simply keeping time.<sup>328</sup> She also considered this to be a preclusion to a major disparity between a low bass and Byrne’s rhythm guitar, which we can deem one of the band’s more idiorrhythmic principles: unique instrumental voices engaged in negotiating their respective patterns.<sup>329</sup> Additionally, Weymouth ensured that her adherence to *rhuthmos* was noticeable after production by taking a turn at the hi-fi controls whenever bandmate and husband Chris Frantz adjusted the treble to emphasize his drums.<sup>330</sup> At least compatible with a Marxist aesthetics vis-

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<sup>325</sup> Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 110; Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (free online edition, n.p., n.d.), 33.

<sup>326</sup> Stanley, *Yeah Yeah Yeah*, 424.

<sup>327</sup> Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, 159.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

à-vis Barthes's idiorrhythmic ideal, Talking Heads further fit into Marx's own aesthetic principles by refusing to adopt many punk artists' moral suspicion of beauty and producing music in line with their own set of needs by, for instance, shirking punk standards with dance, disco and funk techniques, and working with fellow "black sheep" producer Brian Eno.<sup>331</sup>

#### 4.5 *Bodies ("Adventures Close to Home")*

While Barthes and Lefebvre's theories of rhythms seem obviously applicable to music, in fact each of them address bodily rhythms in a more general sense. Barthes's idiorrhythmy and disrhythmy have been shown as concepts which measure the accord among subjects' rhythms, or that analyze a particular voice's *rhuthmos*. Lefebvre posits a spectrum of this accord as part of a science for "rhythmanalysts," in which rhythms are discursive spaces to be interpreted.<sup>332</sup> "[The rhythmanalyst] listens – and first to [their] body; he [*sic*] learns rhythms from it, in order consequently to appreciate external rhythms. [The] body serves ... as a metronome."<sup>333</sup>

Rhythmanalysis should then span beyond the biases of particular types of rhythms; Lefebvre therefore critiques the musician's reduction of rhythms to beat counts and gymnastics teachers' reduction of rhythms to "successions of movements... certain physiological energies" and so on.<sup>334</sup> Nonetheless, Lefebvre allows for some reverence of music when suggesting that the "banalities" of comparing the same note and pitch voiced by various instruments be emphasized.<sup>335</sup> As with the plurality of voices crystallized in genre-defying punk music,

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<sup>331</sup> Byrne, *How Music Works*, 62; Reynolds, *Rip It Up*, 159-160.

<sup>332</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Continuum, 2004), 11; Stuart Elden, "Rhythmanalysis: An Introduction," introduction to *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, by Henri Lefebvre, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Continuum, 2004), 3.

<sup>333</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 29.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

recognizing the individual nature of these voices is a gesture contra exchangeability and consequently against the fetishism of commodities.

Another significant facet of incorporating music in challenges to the tendency to regard bodies as commodities is the quasi-material quality of voice and rhythm, since commodity fetishism is, after all, a type of sensory confusion in which perception of the immaterial (exchangeability) comes to appear as natural. The refusal of stasis in the constant negotiation of voices in alternative punk music also represents the freedom of play and enjoyment that would accompany free creative activity rather than sacrificial work.<sup>336</sup> As Lefebvre asserts of the rhythmanalytical project, though, an understanding of rhythms should never “[lose] sight of the body.”<sup>337</sup> Perhaps reflective of this being Lefebvre’s last work before his death at age ninety, he laments that the body is “[s]o neglected in philosophy that it ends up speaking its mind and kicking up a fuss.”<sup>338</sup> Building on his *Critique of Everyday Life* essays, the rhythmanalytical project would also serve to expose the social regulation of bodies, including that which is applied or enacted during sex.

Repetition, taking on the repressive power rhythms may accumulate, can result in what Lefebvre calls “dressage.” “Humans break themselves in [*se dressent*] like animals,” he writes, and this reaches the gestures and behaviours belonging to apparently all aspects of life.<sup>339</sup> This process as it relates to sex is mentioned in his earlier works, where the contradictions spanned by the sexual act are listed: “body and soul, spontaneity and culture, seriousness and games, covenants and challenges.”<sup>340</sup> Lefebvre expects performances of these contradictions to adhere to

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<sup>336</sup> Sayers, *Marx and Alienation*, 21; Marx, *Grundrisse*, 611.

<sup>337</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 77.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>339</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 48.

<sup>340</sup> Lefebvre, “The Specific Categories,” 485.

the actors' dressage; repetition would inhibit spontaneity, while the pervasive professionalization and seriousness of so many games seem to negate the opportunities for play. The rhythms of the official world stretch beyond their proper domain, hence Lefebvre's labelling of sex as an "extrasocial social act," during which domestic life is polluted by the regulatory framework of the public sphere.<sup>341</sup> The everyday (the mundane, the repetitive) rids sex of sensuality, renders it superficial, and makes it prone to commodity fetishism as a lack of distinction between the erotic and the everyday leads to the perception of universal exchangeability.<sup>342</sup>

Such would likely be the case if sex always followed along with what Vaneigem calls "the beat of the official world."<sup>343</sup> However, an alternative presents itself with the relationship Lefebvre came to see between musical and bodily rhythms.<sup>344</sup> From the "jumble" of rhythms a body possesses, musical rhythms form a "bouquet [or] garland," especially through dance.<sup>345</sup> Musical rhythms urge the body's physical rhythms to abide by their aesthetics—thus displacing the aesthetics of regulation and commodification—and as we have seen with the Clash, Slits, and Talking Heads, these can be aesthetic regimes based on the negotiation and reciprocity of idiorrhythmy, the principle of safeguarding an individual's patterns of movement and gesture. The logic that follows echoes Lefebvre's suggestion that musical rhythms have an ethical function, including the ability to relieve one from everydayness.<sup>346</sup> From the frequent inability of punk artists to extricate love from sex or vice versa, it can be speculated that this ethical function of musical rhythms would be beneficial for both acts and especially when the two coincide. In

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<sup>341</sup> Lefebvre, "The Specific Categories," 485.

<sup>342</sup> Elden, "Rhythmanalysis: An Introduction," 3; Henri Lefebvre, "Foreword to the Second Edition", in *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 2014), 57.

<sup>343</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 157.

<sup>344</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 73.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

any case, idiorrhhythmic punk highlighting the ability of individuals to speak and move freely is at the very least a good starting point for this kind of musical influence.

#### 4.6 Love (“*In the Flesh*”)

From Marx’s premise that love is a sense, it is then fitting that so much has been made of absences of the beloved’s body. Barthes’s agonizing experience in *A Lover’s Discourse* is epitomized by the claim that his beloved is “by vocation, migrant, fugitive,” while Barthes is “nailed to the spot.”<sup>347</sup> For Heller, the death of a loved one is “existential[ly] unique” insofar as this feeling cannot be moved to the “background,” and on the terms of this thesis, this would be because the body of the beloved no longer holds the rhythms and gestures that might have rerouted the despairing feelings of the lover.<sup>348</sup> Idiorrhhythmy, it should be noted, is not meant to protect “purity”—the flowing elements are not antisocial and may make impressions upon each other, in keeping with the values of fluidity and porosity in love.<sup>349</sup> In other words, idiorrhhythmic individuals can enact Hegel’s conception of love as counting for something *in* the other, with Lefebvre’s “garland” or “bouquet” of rhythms constituting that interiority. The *rhuthmos* of the beloved influences that of their lover, and rhythmically persists *in them* and as it is performed *by them*. The bodily absence of the beloved, however, must be grieved so intensely because of the inability of a single individual to maintain idiorrhhythmy. That is to say, love conceived as idiorrhhythmic enjoyment must be a play between two or more individuals, and it is thus defined in the same way as idealized or utopian labour for Marx: as free and social creative activity.

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<sup>347</sup> Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 13.

<sup>348</sup> Heller, *A Theory of Feelings*, 16.

<sup>349</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 58.

In contrast to the unwillingness with which the body-as-commodity enters into relations of exchange, reciprocity and compromise on rhythms are components of love, which can be seen to be constituted in material bodies whose rhythms are engaged in ongoing negotiation. As progressive punk rhythms were shown to include the reclamation of time from repressive regulatory frameworks, so Frith attributes “time attention” as integral to enjoyment of music.<sup>350</sup> Music is intimately bound up with human neurology and empathy, proposed to be the prerequisites of communication of any kind.<sup>351</sup> Traces of Vaneigem’s three principles of free human relationships—“participation, communication and fulfilment”—now emerge, and will become all the more clear in practice.<sup>352</sup> As with the rhythmanalytical project, time attention should be applied beyond listening to music to detect the *rhuthmos* of an other, allowing it to enter into idiorrhhythmic play and to catalyze the enjoyment of reciprocal movement and gesture that are to be considered the nucleus of the loving sensory experience. This pleasure in activity is already projected as the apex of a development of needs in Marx and Heller, and as such places love—a social and creative activity performed by and between bodies—firmly in the purview of Marxist theory.

Maybe the Slits sum it up best in the play on words contained in their moderately faithful cover of the Motown classic: “I heard it through the bassline.”<sup>353</sup> Love or its absence can be detected in rhythms just as it can be linguistically legible, but as a quasi-material and sensible object, love can be said to more properly belong to the logic of living rhythms that Lefebvre

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<sup>350</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites*, 151.

<sup>351</sup> Byrne, *How Music Works*, 319.

<sup>352</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 184.

<sup>353</sup> The Slits, *Cut*, Island 8186, 2000, CD, originally released 1979. Marvin Gaye’s recording is most well-known, but “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” was first recorded by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, and first released by Gladys Knight and the Pips, all with Motown Records. “I Heard It Through the Grapevine,” *Second Hand Songs*, 2015, <https://secondhandsongs.com/work/6417/versions#nav-entity>.

instructs us to be attentive to in nature, social settings, and in our own bodies.<sup>354</sup> The rhythm analyst must always remember, too, that rhythms are endlessly particular.<sup>355</sup> Here we can isolate love completely from commodity fetishism and the critical form of alienation in Marxism, which rely on the exchangeability of evacuated non-objects. Bodies perceived in such a manner have been referred to as corpses or carcasses by Barthes and Marx, respectively, so the body-as-commodity can be said to have had its living rhythms stifled or obscured; it cannot be apprehended as a potential participant in the loving play between subjects. Love-as-sense governed by bodily rhythms belonging to oneself and others—which can be governed by musical rhythms in turn—holds the particularity needed to refuse commodification while engendering the Marxist ideal of the free creative production of art and the corresponding development of ever-aestheticized needs. The spatiotemporal space of alternative punk songs discussed in this chapter is conducive to the communication, reciprocal play, and enjoyment bound up with the sensation of love.

Following from prompts to re-examine the necessity of sacrifice in Marxist efforts to recalibrate human sociality, the designation of love as social labour not only dismisses the charges that love is a mere abstraction but also adds it to the discourse on the reinstitution of pleasure to Marxism. The derivation of love's understanding from musical idiorrhythmy serves to add a certain scientific angle to this analysis—insofar as tempo changes, pitches, and other variances in instrumentation and voices can be measured—without any insistence on the firmness or stasis of individual identities, which should instead be taken to be in flux and negotiation with the assortment of rhythms absorbed by and external to them. The conscious

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<sup>354</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 30.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

referrals to the historicity of both love and rhythms in punk music gesture to the development of these concepts similarly to the projected development of the aestheticization of needs, and allow us to rethink love not as mutual ownership but as free, pleasurable social activity.



**Conclusion: “Between You and Me…”**

*(“If Music Could Talk”)*

This investigation of love’s place in Marxism and punk aesthetics began with the uneasiness of theorists and musicians with enjoyment or pleasure in a system dominated by the commodity form. The portrayal of love as superfluous and obscene in contrast to the seriousness and clean logic of political economy resulted in its attempted exile from Marxist theory, and from the music of this field’s unofficial allies, the alienated punks. However, the laments of love’s absence from sex in punk songs like “Love Comes in Spurts” betrayed a sense that bodies have a stake in love’s critique, while French thinkers in and surrounding the Situationist International in the sixties and after rejected Frankfurt School asceticism, and called for Marxism to recommit itself to sensory enjoyment. Without completely discarding the move toward greater empirical rigour found in Marx’s later works, a project like rhythmanalysis permits the unity of sensory and cognitive experiences of pleasure which Vaneigem found absent from a culture demanding only intellectual enjoyment or sensible distractions. The quasi-materiality and quantifiable yet felt nature of rhythms and the music that can host them not only spans both sides of a Marxism divided into camps predicated on an Althusserian scientific rupture, but renders such a divide irrelevant.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, “They Have History,” it was outlined that punk and scientific Marxism share an origin myth which attempted to bracket the interpersonal in favour of sterile rigour. The desire to banish love as an abstraction was then complicated by its portrayal in Marx’s works as a sense, thus entangling love with the material and bodily. Situationist punks Gang of Four’s evaluation of love’s risk and the consequent implications for

the body on *Entertainment!* was used to demonstrate a unification of Marxist theory and punk principles, and as evidence of the incomplete repression of the interpersonal in punk and Marxism. A further consideration of the alliance between punk and Marxism that has often been taken for granted turned to Marx's commitment to freedom as has been emphasized by Heller, which lends itself to a generous interpretation of "punk," unbridled by cumbersome debates on authenticity unbefitting of this anti-doctrine genre. Taking into account the Hegelian extra-bodily nature of love's activity, a willing and enjoyable play between porous and fluid subjects was arrived at for the working definition of the love that would be recuperated from its other historical conceptions, like the mutual ownership indicated by the love-of-love-songs.

In the second chapter of this thesis, "Opening Up to You," etymologies of "fetish" and "punk" were given in an analysis of the body-as-commodity, with emphases on sociality, exchangeability, and agency. Dee Dee Ramone's crises of masculinity and commodification, as "53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>" chronicled his rejection by New York's johns, were used to illustrate the subject's precarity that accompanies a coercive system of exchange. The role of the black leather jacket in mollifying that vulnerability was also discussed, with this garment constellating around the Freudian and Marxists fetishes and erotic fetish wear. Gang of Four were cited again for their domestic exposé and interrogation of love as mysterious and risky, followed by the Sex Pistols' treatment of feminine sexuality in "Submission" and "Bodies." Alluded to by the traditionally feminized home that encompasses most of *Entertainment!* the Pistols developed an impermeable dichotomy of womanhood in which the sexual body is private, while the supposedly natural and maternal body is public. This problematic contrast was included in a critique of scientific language that obscures the persistent significance of the immaterial in Marxist thought, and pointed to the significance of gender that was given greater attention in the following chapter.

“Eyes For You,” then, saw a shift of focus onto women in punk as well as the sixties girl groups that were frequently cited in punk music, with these two groups situated on either side of a major transition in public discourse on sex in the United Kingdom and United States. The common description of punks as alienated, and the overvaluation of material testimonies to that quality prompted a comparison between the critical receptions of Patti Smith and Debbie Harry, whose respective styles deeply biased interpretations of their politics. Bodily suspicion in punk, exemplified by Richard Hell and the Voidoids’ “Love Comes in Spurts,” and the pop trope of love as mutual ownership downplayed the “serious” and the political that had already been present in the songs of sixties girl groups, with this superficiality being countered by the Slits’ nudity, mockery of the emaciated punk, and abnormal musicality. The Slits’ rupture of a straightforward phenotypical expression of alienation led to a tracing of the term “alienation” from Hegel (and earlier) to Marx and the ongoing presence of this concept in Marxism. This chapter concluded with a section on the sensory in Marx, including the hierarchy of the senses, and the intimate relation between the sensory and commodity fetishism.

Lastly, “You Move Me” unified the immaterial and material aspects of love’s activity through the mediation of rhythms. After love, fetishism, and alienation were shown to overlap by way of the roles of experience and apprehension in those processes, atypical or alternative punk music of the Clash, the Slits, and Talking Heads were shown to have “sociable” rhythms conducive to the perception of a subject’s particularity. A theory of needs from Marx and Heller noted enjoyed material labour as a human need, with Vaneigem’s “pure gift” added to distinguish pleasurable giving from sacrifice. Both Vaneigem and Lefebvre theorized love as it was relegated to the bedroom—reached into by repressive social regulations—including by some punks, whose prescribed rhythms and dances forbade expressions of desire. With the Slits and

Talking Heads, though, women carved out spatiotemporal gaps for sociality in agreement with Barthes's concept of idiorrhythmy, the "safeguarding" of *rhuthmos*.<sup>356</sup> The body as metronome and the ethical, guiding nature of musical rhythms as set forth by Lefebvre gestured towards the body's ability to mirror an aesthetics of negotiation and play, instantiated by alternative punk.

The Marxist consideration of music also accommodates Marx's lifelong commitment to engendering freedom, as emphasized by Heller. Where the traditional rhythms of punk repressed bodies—insofar as their movements were prescribed and more strictly regulated by temporal rigidity—its alternative rhythms privileged bodies and their potential to move in reciprocal patterns. This is the bodily form of the "pure gift": a body's *rhuthmos* (individual flow) can maintain its integrity while accounting for others, so enjoyment instead of sacrifice can follow. The plurality of voices (instrumental and human) in the Slits, Talking Heads, and the Clash, for instance, marks and decorates the temporal space of the music in which bodies can move individually or with others. This sensory experience guided by rhythms eliminates the false dichotomy of "head and heart" as music unites cognitive and emotional responses; the place for love in Marxist thought can therefore be defended on the basis of its sensibility—its ability *to be sensed*—rather than its often supposed irrationality. The defence of love should also be included on the side of enjoyment against the philosophical debate seeking to excise all pleasure that does not accompany "the interesting," which hates the sensual.<sup>357</sup> The reinstatement of the body's stake in enjoyment should and must be a prerequisite for the development of labour becoming our "prime want."<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 35.

<sup>357</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, ed. Łukasz Stanek, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 17.

<sup>358</sup> Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," 321.

From Lefebvre's conclusion that musical rhythms have an ethical function there extends an onus to reconsider any emancipatory potential in pop culture, especially given the presence of idiorrhymy in punk music written as early as 1977 by bands led at least in part by women. Lefebvre also hypothesized that rhythm might "hold the secrets and the answer to strange questions," and that by "imprinting a rhythm on an era," a group could affect real social change.<sup>359</sup> It has been shown in this thesis that punk rhythms have accompanied the critique that rendered love obscene before embodying its qualities of caring reciprocity, negotiation, and apprehension of subjective particularity. This development should be read as complementary to Marx's theory of needs, by which the production and consumption of art interplay and prompt an increasing aestheticization of needs that encourages and beckons to free creative labour. As such, we can begin to conceive of the writing of music, for instance, beyond a system of exchangeability and commodity fetishism.

To take up one last trope from love songs, to reciprocate in love is to "be true."<sup>360</sup> We can recall from the introduction of this thesis that for Hegel, love is an extra-bodily unity, and so his remark from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* echoes in pop discourse on romantic love: "The True is the whole."<sup>361</sup> As was concluded above, love as a willing and enjoyed idiorrhymic play shares with Marx's idealized or utopian labour in being free, social, creative activity. Finally, then, a word on the specific redemptive potential in music. This thesis has emphasized the historicity of needs, but Marx and others since have referred also to the historicity of the senses.

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<sup>359</sup> Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 23-24.

<sup>360</sup> E.g. "Soldier Boy," The Shirelles, *Baby It's You*, Rumble Records RUM2011062LP, 2014, LP, originally released 1962; "Take Good Care of My Baby," Bobby Vee, *Bobby Vee*, Forever Gold/ Weton FG071, 2003, CD, originally released 1960.

<sup>361</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 11.

Also socially determined, Barthes figures the senses in a hierarchy, with sight now more significant than hearing.<sup>362</sup> In this thesis, sight has been identified as the sense most manipulated by the commodity form, as the immaterial value of exchangeability coopts the sensation of beauty or colour, and any physical quality of the seen object becomes automatically secondary. Lefebvre echoes this judgement in his argument that sight's "degree of sophistication ... provides more uneasiness than pleasure."<sup>363</sup> While sight has apparently lost its trustworthiness, Barthes suspects that something in or about hearing has been repressed.<sup>364</sup> I have aimed to demonstrate that this repressed element is the apprehension of *rhuthmos*, a multiplicity of which may join in idiorhythmic play, which activates love-as-sense and sustains it between bodies. With love described as a sense in Marx, and a quasi-material thing located in bodies in Hegel, that this concept should be located in, and mediated by rhythms seems to fit the criteria presented in love's Marxist history. By wresting the senses away from their tendency to fetishize all things and people as commodities, we can redeem love's place in theory and music as a critical concept in the historical development of the senses, needs, and labour.

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<sup>362</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 79.

<sup>363</sup> Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, 41.

<sup>364</sup> Barthes, *How to Live Together*, 79.

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## Soundtrack

### *Side 1*

1. Love Comes in spurts – Richard Hell and the Voidoids (*Blank Generation*, 1977)
2. I Don't Wanna Go Down to the Basement – Ramones (*Ramones*, 1976)
3. Uh-Oh, Love Comes to Town – Talking Heads (*Talking Heads 77*, 1977)
4. So Tough – The Slits (*Cut*, 1979)
5. Love Lies Limp – Alternative TV (Single, 1977)
6. Damaged Goods – Gang of Four (*Entertainment!*, 1979)

### *Side 2*

1. Fan Club – The Damned (*Damned Damned Damned*, 1977)
2. Science Gone Too Far – The Dictators (*Manifest Destiny*, 1977)
3. Mirage – Siouxsie and the Banshees (*The Scream*, 1978)
4. Baby Talk – The Heartbreakers (*L.A.M.F.*, 1977)
5. Trash – New York Dolls (*New York Dolls*, 1973)
6. Then I Kicked Her – The Lurkers (*Fulham Fallout*, 1978)

### *Side 3*

1. She Cracked – The Modern Lovers (*The Modern Lovers*, 1976)
2. Pretty Vacant – Sex Pistols (*Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*, 1977)
3. Genetic Engineering – X-Ray Spex (*Germfree Adolescents*, 1978)
4. Some Weird Sin – Iggy Pop (*Lust For Life*, 1977)
5. All This and More – Dead Boys (*Young Loud and Snotty*, 1977)

### *Side 4*

1. See No Evil – Television (*Marquee Moon*, 1977)
2. Pumping (My Heart) – Patti Smith (*Radio Ethiopia*, 1976)
3. Adventures Close to Home – The Raincoats (*The Raincoats*, 1979)
4. In the Flesh – Blondie (*Blondie*, 1976)
5. If Music Could Talk – The Clash (*Sandinista!*, 1980)

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Kathryn Grant

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario  
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**Honours and Awards:** Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)  
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**Related Work Experience:** Teaching Assistant  
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Presentations:**

““Our bodies make us worry”: Love, domesticity and obscenity in Gang of Four’s *Entertainment!*”  
Cold War Europe and the Culture Wars, University of Sheffield  
2015

“Lef-ist Lover: Mayakovsky, and Fiction as Decadence”  
Decadence: An Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference, Dalhousie  
University  
2014

“The Pose: Reading Utopia in Mayakovsky and the Dead Boys”  
Brevity: Modern Languages & Literatures Graduate Conference,  
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