When two sevens clash: punk and autonomia
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"Germany got Bader-Meinhof," went the 1978 poster by the punk band Crass "England got punk." (Savage, 1991 p.481). But perhaps it should have read: Italy got *Autonomia*. After all 1977 was a year in which sections of youth in both England and Italy enjoyed explosions of creativity. In Germany it was a year of repression and the closing up of political space. This contemporaneity triggers questions about potential similarities between the Italian movement of '77 and the emergence of punk rock in Britain but it also masks real differences. Punk's emergence at the heart of the Anglo-American music industry ensured the rapid dissemination of its innovations and a widespread and enduring influence. The *Autonomia* movement's roots however lay in a much more heated and sophisticated political environment. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) of the 1970s was the largest outside the Communist block and had a sphere of influence in the country way beyond the ranks of its members. Through the influence of the writings of Antonio Gramsci, it had developed a relatively sophisticated political culture. The development of autonomist thought out of and against this culture led to a "thorough rethinking of Marxist theory and the more systematic creation of new theoretical paradigms" (De Angelis, 1993). This highly theorised movement developed a far-reaching analysis of the autonomous struggles that came to the fore in the sixties. It's also interesting to note the foundational role that orthodox Italian Marxism had on the development of Cultural Studies as a discipline. In particular the influence that Antonio Gramsci's ideas on the autonomy of the political had on the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. A legacy that is still discernable today. A politics developed in and against this influential political culture has the potential to be of more than incidental interest. By applying the autonomist categories to punk rock I want to bring out the connections and continuities between struggles in the political, economic and cultural spheres. In fact more than that I want to show how social struggles have pushed theory to dissolve firm boundaries between these categories. I also think that autonomist theory can help us avoid the twin traps of the uncritical celebration of popular culture that cultural studies sometimes falls into and the resistance is futile, everything is always already recuperated line into which critical theory and post-Situationist thought sometimes slips.

ITALY: THE MOVEMENT OF '77

Central to the autonomist tradition is the idea of Marxism [1] as a critique immanent to capitalism. Attempting a thorough going materialism it has tried to avoid appeals to transcendent ideas. In this sense autonomist Marxism is a philosophy of pragmatics. It's a reading of Marx that:

> *"Self-consciously and unilaterally structures its approach to determine the*
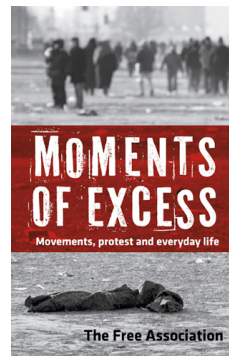
meaning and relevance of every concept to the immediate development of working class struggle. It ... eschews all detached interpretation and abstract theorising in favour of grasping concepts only within the concrete totality of struggle whose determinations they designate." (Cleaver, 2000 p. 30)

As Kenneth Surin (1996 p.181) aphorises, "The 'relevance' of Marxism is derived from struggle." To this end it is important to link autonomist ideas to the struggles within which they developed.

The history of political and social struggles in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s is not well known or documented in the English speaking world – despite their size, intensity and duration. "Some like to say that whereas 1968 lasted only a few months in France, in Italy it extended over ten years." (Hardt, Vianno, 1996 p.2). Unlike the rest of Europe the movement didn't slip back after the explosion of 1968 but heightened with the university and workplace occupations of 'the hot autumn' of 1969. In the early 1970s there was an outbreak of struggles autonomous from the trade unions and the vanguard groups both in the factories, with an iconic occupation of Fiat in March 1973, and outside the workplace with housing occupations and the self-reduction of utility prices. These struggles along, with the emergence of the women's movement, caused a crisis amongst the Marxist Leninist New Left groups who had become hegemonic in the movement after 1968. This crisis provoked some of the groups to dissolve their organisations. Most famous amongst these was the group *Potere Operaio* (Workers Power), whose leading intellectuals included Toni Negri. What followed was known as *autonomia* or the "area of autonomy;" a loose collection of usually local groups with diverging views but a common commitment to autonomous struggles and the ideas of *Operaismo* (Berardi 1980). When a new movement erupted on a massive scale in and around the universities in 1977 the autonomists were hugely influential within it. The high point of the movement of '77 was in March when for a few days the movement fought over and occupied large parts of both Rome and Bologna. (Red Notes 1979). For a moment autonomist ideas and practice became hegemonic within the Italian extra-parliamentary left, however it wasn't to last. The repression that followed through the late seventies and early eighties was unprecedented in the recent history of Western Europe. There were mass arrests, most famously the April 7th arrests of nine intellectuals including Toni Negri. According to Negri (1988 p.252) there were 3000 militants in special prisons by 1980. This was accompanied by a rising toll of people shot dead by the police, a practice legalised by the *Legge Reale* law. Crushed between the violence of the state and the violence of the Red Brigades, the space the movement had created was closed amidst a legacy of detention, mental illness and heroin addiction.

The roots of autonomist theory lie in the crisis that developed within the politics of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). A crisis, which was, provoked both internationally, and domestically. Stalin's tanks rolling into revolutionary Hungary in 1956 provoked a collapse of belief in Stalinism the world over. In Italy Palmiro Toggliatti's ultra reformist leadership of the PCI compounded this. His prioritising of electoralism became increasingly dissonant with increasing worker militancy in the 1950s and 1960s. (Lumley, 1990). A dissonance symbolised by the storming in 1962 of a Social Democratic union office in the Piazza Stauto by striking Fiat workers (Red Notes, 1979). As the struggles slipped out of the PCI and PSI's control and understanding, intellectuals around the two parties started to shift their thinking in an attempt to theorise the new autonomous struggles. This thinking eventually solidified into a current known as *Operaismo* (literally workerism) based around the reviews *Quaderni Rossi* (Red notebooks) and later *Classe Operaia* (Working class). The principal theorists were

Raniero Panzieri, Mario Tronti, Romano Alquati and Antonio Negri. They were influenced not only by this militancy against the ICP compact but also by a similar rethinking of Marxism being undertaken by the Johnson Forest tendency in America [2] and *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in France (Wright, 2001).

The concepts of *Operaismo*, later developed by autonomia, are organised around the central idea of workers autonomy. That is the potential autonomy of labour from capital and an emphasis on "dal punto di vista operaio" (the working class point of view). The orthodox Marxism that *Operaismo* was theorising against was seen as emphasising the power of capital and taking at face value the inevitable unfolding of its laws. *Operaismo*, in what Yves Moulier calls a "Copernican inversion" (Dyer-Witherford, 1999 p.65), asserts the primacy of struggle and recasts capital in a reactive role. As Mario Tronti puts it:

> *"We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first and the workers second, and this is a mistake. Now we have to turn the problem on its head... and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development follows hard behind the struggles" (Lumley, 1990 p.37)*

Inherent in an emphasis on the autonomy of labour is the danger of seeing capital as external. One of Marx's fundamental insights is the view of capital as a social relation that contains labour within it. As Marx characterises workers:

> *"Their co-operation only begins with the labour process, but by then they have ceased to belong to themselves. On entering the labour process they are incorporated into capital. As co-operators, as members of a working organism, they merely form a particular mode of existence of capital. Hence the productive power developed by the worker socially is the productive power of capital." (Marx, 1976 p451)*

For Marx capital is reliant on the expenditure of labour power to valorise itself. What lies under capitalist development is the social production of co-operative labour. However to trigger co-operative production capital must bring together large numbers of workers (Marx, 1976), which "inevitably creates the conditions in which workers can establish a social unity that is in fundamental opposition to capital" (Surin, 1996 p.197). Labour can never be totally autonomous from capital but through its constant insubordination it tries to affirm itself as independent. Conversely capital constantly tries to reduce the working class to mere labour power (Negri, 1991). For *Operaismo* this forms the fundamental cycle of class composition. Labour's autonomous struggles provokes capital to restructure the production process and the division of labour in order to reassert its command. This in turn leads to the development of new antagonistic subjectivities, a recomposition of the working class based on the new productive relations. The only possibility of exiting this cycle is the structural imbalance of the relationship; while capital needs labour, labour doesn't need capital. Instead of the familiar view of capitalism as confident and monolithic, we are left with a picture of an unsteady capitalism constantly forced to recompose itself in attempt to co-opt, channel and cap the creative unrest of human labour. (Negri, 1991)

For *Operaismo* working class insubordination is the driving force of capitalist development. Not only is the ingenuity and creativity of social labour the wellspring of capitalist production, but also capital's restructuring is a response to labours constant

attempts to escape capital's discipline.

> *"The history of capitalist forms is always necessarily a reactive history: left to its own devices capital would never abandon a regime of profit. In other words, capitalism undergoes systemic transformation only when it is forced to and when its current regime is no longer tenable" (Hardt, Negri, 2000 p.268)*

Autonomists like Negri see working class struggles and the development of new antagonistic subjectivities prefiguring the future developments in capital. "The Proletariat actually invents the social and productive forms that capital will be forced to adopt in the future" (Hardt, Negri, 2000 p. 268). Restructuring is of course closely linked to technological change. "As our friend Marx says, machines rush to where there are strikes." (Negri 1988 P.206). It was the violent refusal of technological restructuring in the post war period by the Italian Industrial working class that led the originators of *Operaismo* to examine capital's use of technology as a means of social control and domination. It was the PCI's backing for this restructuring, coupled with their inability to see the possibility of the valorisation of working class needs outside the logic of capitalism which led workers struggles to develop autonomously of the party and led many theorists of *Operaismo* away from it (Wright, 2001).

Alongside the refusal of restructuring there developed a series of struggles that came to be theorised as the refusal of work. This was a theorising of the autonomous struggles that arose in the great northern factories in the form of strikes, sabotage and work slow downs, as well as more day-to-day struggles to avoid the reduction of life to work. Epitomised by the prominent slogan of the time: "Less work, more pay." By the 1970s this term had also come to encompass a more general refusal by youth to accept the discipline of the factory. Leading to a generation with only an episodic relationship to work. (Negri, 1979) The new "social subjects" were both met and partly formed by a recomposition of capital involving the expansion of unemployment and the undermining of the mass Fordist worker. There were the beginnings of a decomposition of the old bastions of working class power. The mass workplaces were to be broken up, work was to be subcontracted out or relocated to the newly industrialising countries. Theorised as the diffuse factory this trend was in its infancy in 1970s Italy but has been massively expanded since. Presciently Tronti had prefigured this tendency (1980) in the 1960s with his analysis of the social factory. Moving away from the traditional Marxist focus on the point of production, Tronti showed how the whole of society increasingly functioned as a moment of production. His analysis of how areas of life outside the workplace were subject to disciplines traceable back to the needs of capital has only been confirmed as more and more of life has been brought under overtly capitalist social relations. Negri (2000), amongst others, has talk of this as the move from the formal to the real subsumption of labour under capital. The latter being a properly capitalist mode of production where there is no outside to capital. However instead of the pessimistic conclusions drawn by adherents to Critical Theory this tendency is seen as spreading the points of contestation throughout society. Culture then becomes an important sphere of struggle and is confirmed as a site crucial to production. The rapidly developing women's movement in Italy elaborated this concept with an analysis of the unpaid work women did in reproducing labour. This led to the demand "wages for housework" but also to an expansion of the term working class to included not just the industrial workforce but also all those who contributed to the movement against capital. This reflects the move in autonomist theory away from its early privileging of the struggles of the factory working class to recognition of the autonomy of different sectors.

The new social subjects that came to the fore in the movement of 1977, the precarious workers, the students, the marginalised, those without the traditional point of collectivity in the mass factories, had to find new expressions of their collectivity. They had to recompose in denial of their material conditions (Negri, 1979). For instance, it wasn't just students that occupied the universities but also those who had nowhere else to physically assemble. Another important point of deterritorialised collectivity was the proliferation of free radios. Radio Alice was used as an open mike to inform demonstrators of police movements during the intense fighting of February and March in Bologna. However this was merely the high point of a collectivity based around Radio Alice's reflection of the 'mao-dada' sensibilities of the new subjectivities.

> "The key to this new outlook was the affirmation of the movement as an 'alternative society', with its own richness of communication, free productive creativity, its own life force. To conquer and to control its own "social spaces" – this becomes the dominant form of struggle of the new 'social subjects'". (Negri, 1988 p.236)

The rejection of factory discipline was accompanied by the desire for the direct satisfaction of needs and the development of new collective desires. There was a huge expansion in squatted housing and the generalising of the tactic of self-reducing prices. This had started as a union tactic in the early 70s and had been generalised as a way of life by groups dubbed the Metropolitan Indians by the press (Berardi, 1980). They were so called because of their use of American Indian imagery; painted faces, feathers in their hair and the adoption of names like Tomahawk and Apache. These were the most visible wings of an area collectively termed creative autonomy, part of a more general explosion of creativity and experimentation in new ways of living. The Metropolitan Indians:

> "habitually break into shops and appropriate useless goods.... they also frequently appear at the most elegant movie theatres in groups of about thirty people, naturally after visiting the most expensive restaurants where they obviously didn't pay" (Torealta, 1980 p.102).

This lifestyle rested on a more general breakdown of capitalist discipline where the paying of 'political prices' for essential services and goods and even the 'proletarian shopping' of mass looting became widespread. Alongside this was the development of a counterculture recognisably similar to that which had developed in the US and Britain during the previous decade. Its development in Italy had been hindered by the intensely political nature of the struggles of 1968-9. However by the mid 1970s there were huge battles over the level of commodification of this culture. Autonomists organised to tear down fences around pop festivals (Berardi, 1980). There was also a widespread rejection of party discipline and the self-sacrificial role of the militant. This "turn to the personal" was inspired by the women's movement and led to Lotta Continua, the largest organisation to the left of the communist party dissolving itself in a dramatic conference in 1976 (Berardi 1980). The most iconic moment in this rejection was the expulsion of Luciano Lama, the communist union leader from the occupied Rome University on 17 February 1977. Sent by the ICP to dissipate the occupation Lama was met with an ironic sensibility that highlighted the distance between the two political cultures.

> "In the large open area of the campus where he was to speak, Lama found another platform rigged up, with a dummy of himself on it (complete with his

famous pipe). There was a big red cut-out of a valentine's heart, with a slogan punning his name – "Nessuno L'ama" (Lama nobody... or nobody loves him). Around this platform there was a band of Metropolitan Indians. As Lama started to speak they began chanting: "Sacrifices, sacrifices, we want sacrifices!"... "We demand to work harder and earn less!" (Lotringer, Marazzi, (eds) 1980 p.101)

These expressions of creativity and development of new subjectivities were theorised by the movement as positive constitutive struggles, the flip side to the more destructive and disrupted strategies of the refusal of work. In the time and space reclaimed by the refusal of work there were creative attempts at new ways of being. This linking of the self-valorisation of working class needs with the destructuration of capitalist command was a theorising of the break with the PCI and reformist thinking. As Negri puts it: "Valorisation for reformism is univocal: there is only capitalist valorisation" (Negri, 1979 p.112). The satisfaction of working class needs within the limits of capitalist valorisation had already been rejected in autonomous struggles against capitalist restructuring.

The term self-valorisation (*selbstverwertung*) was used by Marx to describe the way value adds value to itself (Marx, 1972 p.255). In a moment of inversion Negri (1991) applies that term to the working class point of view to indicate struggles autonomous from capitalist valorisation. "The self-valorisation of the proletarian subject contrary to capitalist valorisation, takes the form of auto-determination in its development" (Negri, 1991 p.162). This is intimately linked to the rejection of capitalist command: "if capitalism is successful in converting all of life into work there is no space or time or energy for self-valorisation" (Cleaver, 1992a P.130). Projects of self-valorisation should be seen as experiments in new ways of living, so that although they are in no way pure and often recomposed by capital through strategies of commodification, incorporation or outright repression they push forward boundaries and provide the basis of future experiments in self-valorisation (Cleaver, 1992a).

For Negri these experiments are the basis of communism. A view of communism that reconnects to the Marx of the *German Ideology*:

> *"Communism is not for us a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Cleaver, 1992b n.15).*

This visualisation of communism isn't the construction of a unified social project traditional in the socialist imagination. Instead communism is something that is continually launched by new forms of self-valorisation, new "lines of flight" out of capitalism. Communism is as Cleaver puts it: "the realisation of 'multilaterally' of the proletarian subject, or, better, of a subject which in its self-realisation explodes into multiple autonomous subjects." (Cleaver, 1992a P.130)

PUNK AS SELF-VALORISATION

Taken a-historically the Italian movement of mass occupations, demonstrations and riots doesn't have many surface similarities with the development of punk rock in the UK. There is some resemblance between punk and the Metropolitan Indians but the history of the two countries developed quite separately. At the time Italy was treated as exceptional, particularly the longevity of the movement (Hardt, Vianno, 1996) There doesn't seem to be any direct circulation of influence between the two movements, at least not until the

eighties when punk and autonomist influence fused in many countries, most influentially in the Dutch squatters movement and the German *Autonomes*. In Italy punk was an influence only when its popularity and use as a point of unity helped restart a movement grounded in autonomist ideas based around the *Centri Social*, "self managed, occupied social centres" in the early eighties. (Wright, 2000) However for both countries and international capitalism as a whole the mid seventies were a time of dramatic change. The oil crisis of 1973 signalled the beginnings of the end for post-war settlement. The first shoots of a restructuring of capitalism, which would undermine Keynesian policies based on harnessing old forms of working class power.

Punk was a media aware, self-conscious and self-mythologising movement from its birth. Trying to disentangle the story and meaning of such a complex and varied set of experiences is only complicated because our experience of it now is so mediated. The Autonomia movement was just as complex and given the lack of English language history it is possible to outline the bare bones of the story in only the most general and provisional manner. Punk's over-analysed status, if anything, makes it more difficult to give a definitive portrayal. Recent writings about punk (Sabine, 1999) have tended to further problematise this situation by asserting that the most 'part time' punks experience was just as authentic and valid an experience of punk as John Lydon's. Of course there are many 'lines of flight' from punk. However if we return to autonomist theory being one of pragmatics, the ultimate resort is not to a claim of authenticity but to one of efficacy.

One of the useful aspects of looking at punk as a moment of self-valorisation is to bring out the continuities amongst struggles that might not be apparent. A persistent but contentious question has been whether punk was a reaction against or a continuation of, the cycle of struggles of the sixties. Of course this comes down to how you interpret the sixties. Autonomists have interpreted them as the development of needs and desires that went beyond those that could be provided by the post war settlement. As Negri and Hardt say:

> *"'Dropping out' is really a poor conception of what was going on in Haight Ashbury and across the United States in the 1960s. The two essential operations were the refusal of the disciplinary regime and the experimentation with new forms of productivity." (Hardt, Negri, 2000 p274)*

These struggles disrupted the post-war regimes of discipline, refusing the mass factory and nuclear family structures and favouring the sort of immaterial and mobile productivity that was taken up in distorted form as the new productive paradigm for capitalism.

Jamie Reid's famous slogan "Never trust a hippy" was aimed first and foremost at Richard Branson (Reid, Savage, 1987) but it did sum up a generational anti-hippy feeling. As sixties veteran Caroline Coon says:

> *"I hadn't expected to see the idealism of my generation denigrated with such aggressive negativity, When these boys were slagging off hippies, I realized they had grown up reading about hippies in the tabloid press, and what they were doing was spouting "the shock and the filth" of the hippies. So I said ' The gutter press did to the hippies what they going to do to you'" (Savage, 1991 p.231)*

However punk was a continuation of many of the sixties ideas and themes in an anti

sixties form. What punk was reacting against was the recuperation of the sixties struggles. It was the continuation of 60s counter cultural ideas in the form of nihilism against that media creation: hippy. What punks tended to object to in hippy were the fakes, the falseness and totalitarian niceness that hippy had been reduced to; symbolised perhaps by the yellow smiley face logo. On Jamie Reid's poster for American punk band the Dead Kennedy's record "California Uber Alles" the smiley face is portrayed as masking the threat of a laid back Californian style of Fascism. This seems iconic of a certain theme in punk, the assertion of social realism against the superficiality of the smiley face. This was after all a time when the recomposition of capital was making the smug self-satisfaction of recuperated hippy unsustainable.

The form this reaction took was a nihilistic rage against the failings of the previous generation. The rejection of hippy can be seen in the earliest manifestations of punk around the club CBGB's in New York. Stylistically represented by short spiky hair and straight trousers, 'like trouser like mind' as Joe Strummer said (Sabine, 1999 p.6), but also by a stylised urbanism, violence and unpleasantness. This rejection of hippy certainly wasn't alien to the sixties counterculture. The San Francisco Diggers staged its mock funeral in 1967, proclaiming "the death of hippie, devoted son of the mass media" (Lee, Shlain, 1985 p.191). However in the CBGB's scene the negation of hippy sometimes slipped in to reactionary and even racist postures (Bangs, 1990).

In London there were a group of people gathered around the Sex Pistols who were still enthused by the libertarian spirit of May 1968. Arguably it took this reconnection of punk to its more radical predecessors to bring out the revolutionary potential in punk. The influence of Situationist ideas is usually traced through Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid's association with the group King Mob in the early 1970s (Savage, 1990). King Mob contained members who had been expelled from the Situationist International for being too influenced by the "street gang with an analysis" (Vague, 1997 p.130) Black Mask Group, later called Up Against the Wall Motherfucker. Congregating around the Sex Pistols were others influenced by the sixties: Sophie Richmond had been involved in the Situationist magazine and printing press Suburban press with Jamie Reid but she had also previously been involved with the libertarian socialist group Solidarity. Others include Bernie Rhodes the Clash's manager, John Tiberi the Sex Pistols Road manager and Fred Vermorel, friend of McLaren's and publisher of the pro-Situationist magazine *International Vandalism*. Vermorel later said of the situation:

> *"The whole Pistols thing was basically a Marxist conspiracy, which sounds ridiculous but that's what it was. You had Jamie Reid, Sophie Richmond and Malcolm sitting around talking radical politics, about how to radicalise this and that, how far can we go with this and that." (Vague, 1997 p.135)*

The level of influence they had on the band is contentious but they clearly provided a milieu of ideas around punk when it was being created and songs were being written. The affinity between punk and the ideas circulating some years earlier in King Mob is clear. Practising an active nihilism, outrageous plans were mooted, including blowing up a waterfall in the Lake District as a protest against romanticism. Reflecting the attitude: "Better to be horrible than a pleasant altruistic hippy, as a kind of undialectical over-reaction to hippy." (Wise, D. Wise, S. 1996 p. 66). This nihilism was also apparent in punk, as indicated by its name. In the early seventies Chris Gray a member of King Mob had circulated the idea of creating "a totally unpleasant pop group" (Wise, D. Wise, S. 1996 p. 67). He never got further than some graffiti proclaiming the Chris Gray Band but the idea was one of the many threads, which fed into the Sex Pistols. It was planned as a

critique of consumerism, an expose of the rubbish capitalism will commodify, an unveiling of the workings of the music industry and a repudiation of its artistic pretensions. The idea's influence can be seen in McLaren's retrospective interpretation of punk as a swindle perpetrated on the music industry. The Pistols as the anti-Bay City Rollers, a playing back of the right wing press's interpretation of punk, the media unwittingly creating its own worst nightmare (Savage, 1990).

Of course punk was more than just the machinations of a few manipulators. A group of suburban and inner city teenagers were already exploiting the gaps in pop culture to create their own style and way of life. The untutored genius of Johnny Rotten's persona is one of those things that just cannot be planned. That's the problem with the 'punk as con' narrative; the Sex Pistols were too good. Their critique was so strong it undermined all previously existing pop culture, including the position of political rock (Garnett, 1999). Greil Marcus argues that "the Sex pistols made a breach in … pop" (Marcus, 1989 p.3). By undermining the conventions of pop and rock the Sex Pistols opened up a huge liberating space. Musically, by refusing to learn to play their instruments properly, punk broke down the conventions that had straightjacketed musicians. By demystifying culture punk created a space for an explosion of self-activity. People were inspired to form their own bands, create their own fanzines or outfits or put on their own gigs. The legacy of the empowerment people felt is still with us. As Punk journalist Richard Boon says: "The threat posed by earlier punk was that intelligent young working class people would throw off the shackles of oppression! and step into history!" (Savage, 1991 p.397)

In this sense punk can be seen as a moment of self-valorisation analogous to the Metropolitan Indians in Italy. A powerful self-constituting experiment in new ways of being. Punk, through records, fanzines and gigs, can be seen as a point of deterritorialised unity amongst a constituency subject to the atomising effects of an increase in youth unemployment [3]. The ethos of 'Do It Yourself' entailed creativity outside the realm of work. This was a refusal of work applicable even to the unemployed. After all the work of the unemployed is to look for work and act as a downward pressure on waged workers demands. The point of unity provided by punk was shown most dramatically when the Sex Pistols record 'God Save the Queen' reached number one during the Queen's Jubilee week. The fact that name of the record was famously blanked out of the charts listings is indicative of the important role it played in representing subjectivities excluded from official discourse.

One of the strengths of self-valorisation as a concept is its awareness of its own limits. If we take Marxism as an immanent critique of capitalism then its application to struggles that push beyond capitalism are limited. Projects of self-valorisation must be grasped in their own terms. What immanent Marxism can do is identify the scars that projects of self-valorisation bear from their birth within capitalism. As Harry Cleaver (1992 p.134) puts it:

> "We craft autonomous environments and activities but we do so in spaces scarred by capitalist exploitation and with commodities and personalities at least partly shaped by the process of valorisation."

When applied to punk this can help identify the scars of its birth in the music industry and clarify some of the directions it was pushing in that seem to lead beyond those limitations.

One of those scars upon which punk would founder was its inability to move beyond the rock band form. Part of the motivation for punk was the experience of sixties rock stars

disappearing into stadiums and achieving demi-god status. Punk at its best contained a thrust towards breaking down the separation of band and audience. A line Greil Marcus (1990 p.240) traces back to Lautreamont's demand for a "poetry made by all". This line is identifiable in the early gigs when the audience was as important as the bands in creating the style and the attitude of punk. Indeed the audience one week could form bands and be playing the next week such was the cultural empowerment set off by punk. However unable to shed the form of bands, gigs and records the demands of the industry and capitalist valorisation gradually reasserted itself. From a feeling of bands being in it together as part of a movement there was already a creeping elitism by summer of 1976 as bands started jockeying for position in the queue for record company interest (Savage, 1991). Punk's inability to escape the scars of its birth in the music industry resulted in it having a partial critique of capitalism. Unable to see clearly beyond its origins punk posited an opposition between Independent and Major record labels. Although Independents can provide valuable space and many not for profit record companies still do, 25 years of hard experience have shown small record companies to be subject to the same disciplines as larger ones. This is not to say that if only punks had been better Marxists they'd have found a solution to these contradictions. There are no pure self-valorisations. However the autonomist identification of these contradictions as rooted in capitalist discipline helps undermine the false line in the sand between Independent and Major that is still being drawn today.

The Sex Pistols position in the mediated belly of the beast was heightened to crisis point after their appearance on television with Bill Grundy. The space that had been opened up was narrowed by the dispersal of punk's ideas through the mediated form of the tabloid story. Many of the complexities and contradictions of punk became flattened. But as Jon Savage comments:

> "That point is reached when the mass media take over, a necessary process if that movement is to be pop. Within this transaction, simplicity is inevitably imposed on complex phenomena, but there is also a fresh burst of energy released with unpredictable, liberating results." (Savage, 1991 p.278)

The Sex Pistols fought against the process of mediation by avoiding being pinned down, hiding their influences and dodging an easy identity but still the breach they had made was to some extent closed by 1979. However even in mediated form the message of punk was powerful enough to provoke a new wave of creativity that reached into even the smallest towns of the UK. After the destruction of the Sex Pistols and the co-optation of punk bands into the history of rock there remained enough space to provide new waves of self-valorisation.

Punk itself couldn't have existed without the self-valorisations of the sixties. Both practically, widespread squatting in London was a material precondition of punk, but also conceptually. "While it may no longer have been 'realistic' to 'demand the impossible', the memory of having envisioned the impossible remained palpable. It was this that perhaps made the politics of punk possible" (Garnett, 1999 p.24). In turn the space and subjectivities developed in punk provided the basis for new struggles and self-valorisations. Of note amongst the second wave of punk bands were Crass. Who, by "making the first, and only, concerted attempt to work through the nihilist archetypes of the time" (Savage, 1991 p.481), created the subculture of Anarchopunk and helped form lines of dissent that lead directly into the anti-capitalist movement of recent years. Another trajectory might be traced through the post-punk of groups such as PiL, Cabaret Voltaire and 23 Skidoo into the Acid House and Rave culture of the late 1980s.

Interestingly this line, that could be seen as a step away from overt political engagement, merged back with descendents of anarchopunk during the cycle of struggles in the mid-90s which led from the free party movement, through the protests against the Criminal Justice Act into Reclaim the Streets. Of course we shouldn't impute some teleological inevitability to all this. A line can also be drawn from the nihilism of punks negation of hippy through right wing punk bands to neo-Nazi white power rock scene of today (Sabine, 1999). The category of self-valorisation might not be so useful in analysing that trajectory.

Greil Marcus (1991 p.28) has said: "A lot of the people in cultural studies these days kind of remind me of the FBI in the fifties: They find subversion everywhere." Well autonomist theory also finds subversion everywhere but it avoids the uncritical and unspecific idea of subversion to which I think Marcus is referring. By looking at punk as a moment of self-valorisation we can pay attention to the disciplines to which it is subjected by capitalism without seeing it as always already recuperated or co-opted. Instead the analysis concentrates on of the opening up and closing down of space for future experiments in self-valorisation. This fits with my own experience of the way that lines of cultural, social and political struggles have combined, flowed, separated and merged in the lives of my contemporaries and me. Punk and Autonomia were both born as reactions to and accelerations of the struggles of the 1960s. They were contemporaneous not just with each other but also with the start of the restructuring of capitalism, which would later become known as neo-liberalism. A development, which it could be argued, was itself a reaction to the struggles of the 1960s, which had undermined Fordist institutions. Perhaps this is the reason that the problematics posed by both punk and the movement of '77 have proved such vital resources to those trying to pose alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation.

NOTES

1. I use the term Marxism while recognising that certain theoretical moves within the autonomist tradition make this identification problematic. For instance Negri's reading of Spinoza as a Pre Marx communist problematises the term Marxism. While some in the autonomist tradition have suggest that even the word communist is a "heavy identity" from which we should flee. (Viano, Binetti, (1996) P.252)

2. J.R. Johnson and F. Forest were the pseudonyms of C.L.R. James and Raya Dunayevskaya respectively.

3. "In June, (1976) unemployment reached 1,507,976, 6.4 per cent of the workforce, and the worst figure since 1940." (Savage 1991 p.229)

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