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# Performing folk punk : agonistic performances of intersectionality

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PERFORMING FOLK PUNK:  
AGONISITIC PERFORMANCES OF INTERSECTIONALITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

The overarching goal of this project is to argue that folk punk performances offer spaces where a listening audience is exposed to a radical and intersectional politics, and enable that audience to identify with those views. By considering the performances of Inky Skulls, Pussy Riot!, and Against Me!, this study looks to the ways in which these folk punk exemplars highlight elements of the radical politics of the American left and in the history of folk and punk music. In particular, this project considers the intersections of race and class, women and nonhuman animals, and queerness and anarchism, as intersecting points of ideological convergence. The secondary goals of this project are two-fold. The first aim is to articulate a performative approach to folk punk music, as a scene worthy of academic consideration. The second aim is to consider the ways in which my personal experiences at folk punk shows highlight the idiosyncratic and utopian ways in which small performatives in the genre shape the identities of audience members and fans.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE OPENING ACT

“I am an anti-Christ / I am an anarchist / Don’t know what I want but I know how to get it.” The snarled lyrics of Jonny Rotten rang out over the cold morning speakers of a Midwestern record store to the almost instantaneous rebuke of the manager: “Turn that shit off, and play the Morning Mix.” My teenage self had just discovered the Sex Pistols’ *Never Mind the Bollocks* in a bargain bin earlier that week and I could not stop listening. *Never Mind the Bollocks* captured my anger, my rage, and my knowledge that leaving Poplar Bluff, Missouri was the answer to an amorphous dream life. I have always felt different from my peers, not better, but definitely different. This perceived difference manifested itself in a deep sense of isolation and Otherness. The line about being an “anti-Christ” in the context of the “Bible Belt” struck just the right chord with me and helped me to understand what I did *not* want from my life.

After playing the CD before opening the store that morning, I could not get the songs out of my head, and in fact, “Anarchy in the UK” still has that effect on me when I listen to it. However, listening to punk was not easy to do in rural Missouri in the early 2000s. No one I knew liked punk music or anything other than the corporate radio rock of the time. I wish I could say I saw a great punk show or I read a zine and that is what got me into punk, but that is not true. The full voiced cliché of a Sex Pistols CD pulled me in.

Things have changed since then. Punk now enjoys a popular resurgence. From the pop punk of Blink 182 to the fashion industry and Hot Topic stores, punk seems to be everywhere these days. I will not address the debates regarding whether or not these artifacts are really “punk” in this document. The last thing I wish, perhaps on the earth, is to



become that kind of authoritarian on culture. Instead, I consider why punk has recently reappeared in such a ubiquitous way.

My musical taste has never been one-dimensional. Working in the record store really opened my ears, though I had a pretty good grounding in classic rock from my father. My dad listened to lots of music from the 1960s and 1970s: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, The Doors, and Bob Dylan, to name a few. For my purposes, I will spare anecdotes of the listening sessions we had at my father's bicycle shop, but there were many. I remember hearing Bob Dylan in particular, his voice dragging out the ends of his words. I thought it sounded silly at first, but the more I listened, the more I was intrigued by his long poetic story songs such as "Hurricane," "Like a Rolling Stone," and "Subterranean Homesick Blues."

I was in college before I connected Dylan's story with his love for Woody Guthrie, best expressed in the poem he composed called, "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie" which ends: "You can either go to the church of your choice/ Or you can go to Brooklyn State Hospital/ You'll find God in the church of your choice/ You'll find Woody Guthrie in Brooklyn State Hospital/ And though it's only my opinion/ I may be right or wrong/ You'll find them both/ In the Grand Canyon/ At sundown." I put that spoken poem on the CD I listened to on my drive back and forth between home and college. It was not long before I was to listening to the folk music of Woody Guthrie with equal regularity as the punk music in my collection. These formative times prepared me for my discovery of folk punk music years later in Carbondale, Illinois.

In this study, I argue that folk punk performance, situated at the intersection of the folk and punk genres, possesses a rich history of progressive and leftist politics including: race,

class, feminism, nonhuman animal rights, queerness, and anarchism. Each chapter explores a particular intersection of politics (e.g. race and class) through a live recounting of a folk punk performance, and then provides historical exemplars from folk and punk to illustrate the investment of both genres in intersectional issues. I track this history to argue that punk is not, nor has it ever been, dead. Punk is not a failed political movement, but instead one that survives and thrives through its micropolitics via connections with other musical genres and political movements. By offering a multidimensional intersectional history of the hybrid, I ultimately argue that folk punk is an agonistic performance that creates subjectivities invested in toppling a variety of oppressions.

This introductory chapter defines folk punk as a set of genre performances, as well as considers the risks of defining a genre in terms of cultural capture. After I review the pertinent scholarship of performance studies and music, I explore Jean Luc Nancy's listening as an embodied performativity and the way in which punk functions at the micropolitical level. I also introduce intersectionality as the method of this study by explicating and examining intersectionality. I conclude the chapter by previewing the remaining chapters.

### What is Folk Punk?

While my study needs definition, I hesitate to define folk punk. First, once I define the genre, or it becomes defined through its performances, the genre loses possibility. Folk punk necessitates liveliness and energy, a constant becoming. Second, folk punk is currently what I deem to be an effective micropolitical agonistic performance of resistance.

Defining folk punk brings attention to the genre which makes it more easily apprehended by the capitalist machine. As Dick Hebdige writes in *Subculture*,

As the subculture begins to strike its own eminently marketable pose, as its vocabulary (both visual and verbal) becomes more and more familiar, so the referential context to which it can be most conveniently assigned is made increasingly apparent. Eventually, the mods, the punks, the glitter rockers can be incorporated, brought back into line, located on the preferred "map of problematic social reality" (Geertz, 1964). . . those young people who choose to inhabit a spectacular youth culture are simultaneously *returned*, as they are represented on T.V. and in the newspapers, to the place where common sense would have them fit (as "animals" certainly, but also "in the family", "out of work", "up to date", etc.). It is through the continual process of recuperation that the fractured order is repaired and the subculture incorporated as a diverting spectacle within the dominant mythology from which it in part emanates: as "folk devil", as Other, as Enemy. The process of recuperation takes two characteristic forms: 1. the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects (i.e. the commodity form); 2. the "labelling" and re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups -- the police, the media, the judiciary (i.e. the ideological form). (94)

The cycle that Hebdige describes causes me to pause before writing this study at all. As a fan of folk punk music, I would like to protect it from becoming some kind of cultural Other to be socially disavowed and then commodified for mass culture. Yet, I wish to share my appreciation of the genre and celebrate folk punk's successes in micropolitical action. As such, I define folk punk only in a functional way so as to give cover to those who wish to keep the genre in the shadows.

While folk punk combines elements offered by both folk and punk, nailing down the exact combination of elements that make up the genre can become quite complex. One could perhaps create a flow chart or taxonomy: speed of play, attire, instruments, lyrical style, etc. Though such an approach might produce an archetype of the folk punk band, I am certain an archetypical band does not exist. A list like this would consider a series of bands that may match up to some parts of some definitions but may miss out on many others. The

complexity, though, does not end here. Finding bands or musicians claiming the title of folk punk is difficult, demonstrated by the fact that almost no one wholeheartedly accepts the label, as a commenter on the online zine *Razorcake* suggests:

Folk punk, acoustic punk, indie roots, alt. country, cowpunk: all these terms and more have been used to describe this phenomenon. We punks tend to get a little tetchy about labels, and any time you investigate a new musical trend or style, you're going to run into issues about what to call it. Is acoustic punk different from folk punk? Is cowpunk a variant of alt. country? Does it matter? This is the problem when you try to analyze a music scene that bucks convention and dislikes categorization. (Shay)

In addition to resisting convention and categorization, I offer a number of other reasons why the particular combination of "folk punk" is a tenuous one. First, both terms in the name are clunky and contested. While various qualifiers would allow one to make a functional list of bands and/or musicians that might be either included or excluded in the hybrid, such as instruments, lyrical topics, philosophy, ethos, economic status, etc., the list is doomed to be problematic. We might say the same for trying to make a list of "punk" bands or a list of "folk" musicians.

Focusing my research in communication studies, and performance studies in particular, provides a basis for dealing with these complex topics. Scholars in performance studies, for example, specialize in contested definitions. Strine, Long, and HopKins claim "performance" as an "essentially contested concept, meaning that its very existence is bound up in disagreement about what it is, and that the disagreement over its essence is itself part of that essence" (183). Folk punk is only partially an essentially contested concept, for its attempted definitions are less contested as they are disavowed.

Performance studies grants me the opportunity to consider the ways in which this disavowal is one of a particular ethic, and can be read as an event situated in a larger

cultural context. In order to explore these contestations, I consider definitions of folk punk in a number of lights and from a number of perspectives.

In an email interview, Chris Clavin, Plan-It-X Records founder and active folk punk musician, responded to my question of defining folk punk:

I don't think Folk Punk means anything really. I'll talk about D.I.Y. bands. To me it means no booking agents, no big label running your band and always playing all ages shows in non-corporate venues. I also equate D.I.Y. with being socially aware and politically correct. D.I.Y. bands are generally radical and far left. They are hopefully politically aware too and anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-gender bias and generally anti-establishment or at least strong believers in personal freedom. ("Interview")

Clavin's response highlights several elements of folk punk or do-it-yourself (DIY): the performative disavowal of the term folk punk, the embrace of independent music production, and the acknowledgement of the radical politics of the genre. However, as Clavin continues, his understanding of what he considers folk punk becomes clearer:

Mostly it's just an easier way to play music and meet people and make connections. There are a lot of bands that call themselves folk punk and a lot of them are not folk punk to me. To me it means acoustic and it would mean having some folk influence and some punk influence. There are a lot of jangly punk bands that people call folk punk, I would call them pop punk. There are also tons of folk bands or singer/songwriters that call themselves folk punk despite their lack of punk. I wouldn't call them folk punk, but I'm not saying it as if I think folk punk is better than folk, or than punk. I'm just getting picky about genres and words. ("Interview")

What I call "folk punk" goes by a lot of names: riot folk, anti-folk, folk punk, alt. country, crusty punk, acoustic punk, gutter punk, indie punk, indie, lo-fi punk, etc. However, I prefer the umbrella term "folk punk" because of the two-part nature of the history I seek to track, which includes many, if not all, of the other terms. One can make a direct connection between the historical ideas and philosophies in folk music to that of punks, which might explain the "folk punk" hybrid. The work of this project explicates the ways in which these connections reveal the inner workings of the people, ideas, and events that

have given rise to the phenomenon of folk punk and helped it to thrive as a popular form of music.

I am inclined to start my history in relation to existing ones like “Jeffrey Lewis Anti Folk Complete History of Punk Rock,” a *YouTube* video tracking the history of modern anti-folk and “folk punk” back to Harry Smith, an eccentric collector and artist in the 1950’s from the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Smith helped collect and produce the *Smithsonian Anthology of American Folk*, one of the first collections of the music of rural America using homemade instruments and traditional songs of the farms and hills. I might also begin my history with Alan Lomax, a folk musician, artist, and another collector of folk musicians’ work, as portrayed in John Szwed’s *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*. However, I embrace a notion of history that acknowledges folk music’s long inaccessible and complex origins. As such, any origin is an arbitrary marking, not a beginning, but a chosen place in time to start. Though I situate my study in the United States, one could reach beyond America to the native countries of immigrants who carried their impoverished situations and musical traditions to North America. For instance, how does one separate American Folk from the African banjo brought to the Americas by Africans in bondage? My boundaries threaten to bend and break. Again, theories and methods embraced by performance studies scholars and practitioners allow a certain flexibility through performance’s main components: performer, audience, text, and context. The performance event is necessarily multidimensional as recent performance studies research in music reveals.

Before I discuss the ways in which performance studies and music have influenced this study, I deem it necessary to offer a brief and arbitrary history of punk in the United States from the 1970s to today.

### 1970s

Punk in the United States began in the 1970s, though establishing an exact date is as useless as it is arbitrary. Punk, musically, was primarily a stripped down, three-chord rock-n-roll as expressed by bands like The Ramones and Television. Punk can be seen as both a response to the popular rock music of the 1970s and the outcome of the intersection of rock music and art experiments. Venues like CBGBs in New York established punk as a community held together by musical interest. The politics and fashion of American punk was less severe than that of the U.K. in the early days; however, American punk can be said to have a definite anarchist influence, especially as expressed by bands like the Germs. Anger and social frustration permeated in the lyrics of American punk; however, American punk lacked a uniting issue like class in British punk. Because of the art school influence on many early New York punks, American punk is viewed as intellectual and experimental in ways that differentiate it from other punk scenes. American punk fashion was also more simplistic, marked by torn t-shirts and tight jeans. Eventually, the fashions of English punks, Mohawk haircuts and leather jackets, caught on in both scenes.

### 1980s

Many punk bands from the 1970s dissolved by the 1980s, while others adopted monikers like “new wave” and “post-punk” as differing aesthetic avenues. The “hardcore” genre

emerges on East and West Coast, particularly in Los Angeles and Washington D.C., as an underground answer to the more popular genres in music at the time. Hardcore is marked by speed and anger in the musical performance and lyrics. Hardcore bands like Black Flag and Bad Brains were successful in the underground scene without the use of major record labels. The politics of hardcore were more radical and militant than those of the previous generation of punks. This radicalization of American punk has both a left and right leaning wing. While the majority of punks in the hardcore scene adopt a leftist perspective, right wing punk does also exist in the hardcore scene, and is mostly aligned with straight edge politics and white supremacist racism. However, this radical right wing is a vast minority in punk.

### 1990s

A number of hybrid genres take hold in the punk community in the 1990s. "Pop punk" and "ska punk" are perhaps the most successful, as demonstrated by the popular success of bands like No Doubt, Blink 182 and Rancid, as well as international music festivals like the Warped Tour. Stores like Hot Topic cashed in on punk's resurgent success in popular culture. Hardcore punk continued to thrive in the punk community, but was mostly underground. The above ground punk scene was deeply invested in indie and grunge music coming out of the Pacific Northwest, as evidenced by bands like Nirvana. One could also argue that folk punk appears on the scene in the 1990s. The Riot Grrrl movement emerges in the 1990s in an attempt to unite women of punk in ways that had previously been neglected.



## 2000s-Today

The 2000s saw punk continuing to expand to more sub-genres and hybrids, maintaining styles from every era of punk and adding new. The 2000s also saw the rejoining of indie rock and punk for the first time since the early 1990s, split between punk, post-punk and grunge, as evidenced by crossover bands like Swearin', who are popular in both indie and punk circles. The 2000s have created a truly postmodern punk in which the boundaries of the genre are constantly changing and often lack an essential notion of identity. Presently, every style of punk from the past still exists to some extent, and though the politics of punk are seemingly as left as ever, the lack of genre definition has led to a resurgence of fascist punks and groups claiming punk for the right. These battles over punk's identity will exist as long as there is punk, and will take place both on stage and off.

## Music and Performance Studies

One need not look very far to link music and performance studies. A fashionable approach takes up the charge offered by Phillip Auslander in his "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," where he argues "performance studies [. . .] has found surprisingly little to say about musical performances. The principal journals in the field seldom publish articles about music as performance or musicians as performers and only a small number of papers on these topics are presented at conferences" (1). An even more fashionable approach points to the vast amount of recent work in performance studies considering music as a subject of study to disprove Auslander's claim. However, as Jnan Blau and others have pointed out, much work exists in the ever-emerging interdisciplinary research that is popular music, ethnomusicology, performance studies, cultural studies,

ethnography, and beyond (“Trick” 1). A great deal may be gained by studying musical performances through the lens of performance studies and its myriad of methodological offshoots. In the following, I take in the lay of the musical land in performance studies as well as demonstrate the need for continued research in musical performance, particularly emphasizing folk punk musical performances.

I divide the work in popular music studies and performance into three broad categories: musical performances as cultural communicative events, methodologies and epistemologies, and subversive challenges to dominance. Of course, these categories are not always discrete, but they provide a place from which to begin. Blau’s dissertation tracks the ways scholars have studied music in *Text and Performance Quarterly* and *The Drama Review* as a means to demonstrate the study of music is a good fit for the performance studies method as articulated by Ronald Pelias and James VanOosting in “A Paradigm for Performance Studies”(1). Specifically, Blau argues that performance studies’ research on music is directly tied to the study of communication. He also marks how the study of musical performance aligns with each of Pelias and VanOosting’s criteria for performance studies including: “music as a text, music’s performer, music’s audience, and music’s event(fullness)”(20). Blau reminds us that the live performance event is a discursive and co-constructed space between audience and performer that exists because of a mutual set of commitments. Blau’s essay, “A Phan of Phish: Live Improvised Music in Five Performative Commitments,” further articulates his argument. Describing the concept of a concert, Blau includes flexibility, groove, play, risk, and reflexivity as elements representing a deeply performative and interactive communication event that requires the commitment of all parties for the success of the show (1). Blau cites a number of scholars who

acknowledge music as a communicative act in their studies of hip-hop. “The work of Dimitriadis, Wong, Delgado, and Saddik on hip hop does point to the fact that rappers do indeed interact with the culture for which, and out of which, they create” (9). This cultural attentiveness to the communication between artists and audiences is a primary concern of the performance studies scholar who studies musical performance as a communicative event.

Next, many have studied musical performances as methodologies of understanding. Specifically, the journal *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies* published a special issue on musical performance as a method of inquiry where many scholars contributed papers on the question of how the performance of music (not simply the playing of notes) is a method by which performers, directors, and audiences come to learn and know. In her essay “Music as Performance Method: 'The Score' in Experimental Performance” Tracy Stephenson Shaffer explores how her use of popular music in her show “The Life and Times of King Kong” enables particular and multiple perspectives from which to understand the icon. She encourages others to experiment with music in their own performance work.

In the same issue, Tami Spry and Chris McRae engage in autoethnographic explorations of music in performance. Spry describes her father’s experience as a jazz musician to offer an autoethnographic account of how the “swing” in jazz shapes racial and personal identity constructions. Using a similar autoethnographic approach, Chris McRae’s “Singing ‘I Will Survive’: Performance as Evolving Relationship” details his life experiences with the title song and his oscillating relationship to it through those with whom he sang (his mother versus several bands). McRae also discusses how this song has helped to mark several identity shifts in his experience.

Stacy Holman Jones' "Burnt: Writing Torch Singers and Torch Singing" engages the historiographical ways in which lyrics and performance records enable one to draw from performance. Jones explores what she calls the "collapse of person, performance persona, and character" experienced by the "torch singer" (i.e. Billie Holliday) and the ways these roles become confusing and difficult to separate for the audience and performer alike (1).

Deanna Shoemaker and Jnan Blau's takes on music and performance are perhaps the most similar to my own. Their descriptions highlight a first person audience perspective contextualized by research. Shoemaker's "Queer Punk Macha Femme: Leslie Mah's Musical Performance in Tribe 8" argues that Mah's biracial queer punk Macha femme identities play an important role in her performance work with the band Tribe 8, but the essay also displays the tensions these multiple identities encounter with one another in the punk scene. The aforementioned essay by Jnan Blau tracks the commitments comprising his experience as a Phish "Phan" and the commitments called forth in a "jam band" type of show. These essays exemplify the ways in which performance scholars have considered musical performance as a method by which aesthetic and identity performances are shaped.

The final category represented in the literature employs music as a method for the specific purpose of subversive challenges. Music is often articulated as a method by which those outside the dominant paradigm achieve voice and/or are allowed to challenge authority. This approach fits in with the general political paradigm that performance studies often purports.

Laura Lengel, Stephanie Nelson and Karina Eileraas write of the ways in which women's experiences are shaped by and expressed through music. Lengel's "Performing In/Outside Islam: Music and Gendered Cultural Politics in the Middle East and North Africa"

outlines the ways an Islamic woman's choice to become a performer in and of itself is a challenge to the structures of her culture, challenging the right for Islamic women to be fully active citizens in society. Stephanie Nelson's "Choric Communication: The Case of a Togolese Women's Musical Organization" examines the benefits and limitations of synchronized communication through speech, song, and dance. Karina Eileraas' "Witches, Bitches and Fluids: Girl Bands Performing Ugliness as Resistance" considers how "girl bands" use ugliness in album cover art, image, voice, sound, language, lyrics, stage antics, sexuality, and the body to contest gendered stereotypes and social structure.

With a similar gender focus, Fernando Delgado and Greg Dimitriadis write about the role of masculinity for men of color in hip-hop music. Delgado's "All Along the Border: Kid Frost and the Performance of Brown Masculinity" looks at the hip-hop culture of Hispanic rapper Kid Frost and his representations of masculinity in a marginalized culture. Greg Dimitriadis' study of hip-hop explores black masculinity in its relation to a music industry ruled predominantly by white, straight men.

Christopher Smith and Stephanie Marlin-Curiel explore Othered genres of music and the ways in which race and identity play out. Christopher Smith's "A Sense of the Possible: Miles Davis and the Semiotics of Improvised Performance" argues that Davis's improvised performance relied on a semiotic and ritualized space as a performance method. Stephanie Marlin-Curiel's "Rave New World: Trance-Mission, Trance-Nationalism, and Trance-scendence in the 'New' South Africa" explores how white and black Afrikaan speakers use rave culture to express and explore the complexities of identity construction and social integration in Modern Day South African alternative cultures.

Peter Kvetko and Bradley Shope explore the ways in which ethnicity, in particular Indian identity, is expressed in music's ability to travel across culture. Kvetko's "Can the Indian Tune Go Global?" deals with the emerging genre Indipop and its implications in a globalized world. Bradley Shope's "Anglo-Indian Identity, Knowledge, and Power: Western Ballroom Music in Lucknow" discusses how western-styled ballroom music and dance offer social mobility to Anglo-Indians through their unique identity constructions.

Finally, William Sonnega and Jason King write of the ways in which mainstream cultural dissemination complicates the images of bodies in a media saturated world. Sonnega's "Morphing Borders: The Remanence of MTV" examines MTV's effects on intercultural groups and their understanding of the world of globalization. Jason King's "Toni Braxton, Disney, and Thermodynamics" explores Toni Braxton's black body in her performance of *Beauty and the Beast*. These articles discuss the ways marginalized voices and traditions use and embrace musical performances to exist in and challenge the structures that maintain dominance over minority groups and cultures. They resoundingly demonstrate live performance of music as a complicated and powerful cultural critique.

With these categories of research in the field of performance studies established, my research in folk punk performance can add to the discussion of these areas within performance studies' research of popular music. Specifically, my research seeks to put folk punk into conversation with the political philosophies of its performers by engaging what Kim Seth Cohen calls non-cochlear listening. In his *In the Blink of An Ear*, Kim-Cohen argues for a hearing that does not include sound in itself, but instead calls for culturally situated and specific hearing practices. Thus, my study focuses on folk punk's situatedness, and this approach highlights the communicative aspects of folk punk music. In addition, folk punk

exists on and off the “stage.” Folk punk offers its performers and audiences particular performance strategies. Scholars may understand both performers of folk punk music and audience members as engaging in dialogic processes of meaning making. Finally, folk punk is grounded in both the folk and punk scenes often tied to particular socioeconomic positionalities directly challenging the power structures of those dominating them, everything from record labels to Statist governments. My contribution to this expanding field will be to extend this conversation beyond what is typically thought of as popular music to see an underrepresented group of musicians and fans not yet directly addressed by the research in the field of performance studies.

In particular, I seek out the ways in which folk punk shows make and have made me through my literal and figurative listening. In the next section of this chapter, I generalize this practice of self-becoming beyond my own experience and offer a philosophical approach to listening that accounts for both self-awareness and ontological changes in the self.

## Listening

Ears don’t blink. Although this phrase has recently become a cliché in writing about sonic arts, one must reckon with the concept. Acknowledging a constant sonic presence necessitates a new understanding of how the world operates or more particularly how humans operate in the world. The first distinction to be drawn is between mere hearing and listening. The film *White Men Can’t Jump* provides an example:

Sydney: What is this?

Billy: Jimi Hendrix.

Sydney: I know. Why are you playing Jimi?

Billy: Because I like to listen to him.

Sydney: That's the problem. Y'all listen.

Billy: What am I supposed to do? Eat it?

Sydney: No. You're supposed to hear it.

Billy: I said I like to listen to him.

Sydney: There's a difference between hearing and listening. White people can't hear Jimi. You listen.

While Sydney, played by Wesley Snipes, claims that Billy, played by Woody Harrelson, cannot hear Jimi Hendrix because of his race, I wonder if there is some important distinction between hearing and listening, and if so, how one might move from listening to hearing or vice-versa. Snipes' character places a superiority of hearing over listening by describing some kind of racially naturalized hearing that cannot be reached simply through effort. Snipes' character sounds like a Zen monk seeking only *effortless* effort. His position advocates for a kind of hearing that lacks agency. While I hesitate to quibble with Snipes, I must.

Salome Voegelin in *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* advocates for listening as a method of being in the world:

Every sensory interaction relates back to us not the object/phenomenon perceived, but that object/phenomenon filtered, shaped and produced by the sense employed in its perception. At the same time this sense outlines and fills the perceiving body, which in its perception shapes and produces his/her sensory self. Whereby the senses employed are always already ideologically and aesthetically determined, bringing their own influence to perception, the perceptual object and the perceptual subject. It is a matter then of accepting the a priori influence while working towards a listening in spite rather than because of it (3).

Voegelin's advocacy notes that the subject is made by the world just as the listening subject makes the world. This non-dualistic philosophy takes the process of listening beyond merely biological hearing to a place in which both self and the world are discursively produced. Voegelin argues that we must listen as a way of being, that the practice will insulate and individualize us because our subjectivity is made by the sounds we hear, as



interpreted by our ideologies and predispositions. While her work is directed toward listening to sound art, it can be extended to a general being in the world as well as more particular listening such as the folk punk show.

I call on David Beard to illustrate the point. He talks specifically about listening to music, and makes note of the need of the kind of research put forth in this project when he writes:

To argue for musical listening as central to the constitution of the subject is to face the limits of current listening research directly. To understand the role of music in the construction of the ethical listening subject, we need to understand why some theories and models of listening refuse to admit music into their accepted range of phenomena. This anxiety about whether listening to music can be understood as similar to the process we use to listen to our spouse, our boss or our political and religious leaders reveals much about how a listening researcher believes that listening shapes our subjectivity. (14)

While Beard calls for more data in establishing how these relationships are developed, he goes on to say, “listening to music, television, movies, and Internet video both structures our subjectivity and gives us the opportunity to cultivate our subjectivity” (15). Thus, he names listening “a purposive act,” one that can and should be valued, and that requires agency to take on in an active sense. Like Voegelin, Beard argues listening is key to the study of communication, “Listening can embed us in social relationships or replace social relationships altogether; in either case, it can expand or complicate our identity” (15).

In his recent essay “Listening to a Brick,” McRae claims that listening is performative and pedagogical, or at least it can be. He writes, “It is the act of listening that performatively creates this learning experience, and enacts the possibilities for understanding, feeling, and knowing the other” (334). In McRae’s terms, the performative nature of listening offers opportunity for pedagogy. McRae also argues that listening helps us come to know the Other, a way to come in contact with what is beyond ourselves.

In addition, McRae's analysis claims that the pedagogical act creates relationships, "Performative listening, as a pedagogical act, . . . is a mode of pedagogically analyzing and engaging with the constitution of various relationships and experiences in sound and listening" (334). For McRae, the act of listening creates learning opportunities. At the folk punk show for instance, one places oneself in the position where bands, audiences, ideas, and other sounds exist, opens up to the sounds of those ideas, and then, in turn, is shaped by the situation. This is an example of McRae's notion of pedagogical opportunity. In this context, everyone has the potential to be both teacher and student. While the hierarchy typically imbued in the modern classroom may make appearances, based on constructs such as authority, status, or seniority, the potential always exists for these relationships to be turned on their heads at the punk show.

While I have established that listening is important as a communicative process different from than hearing, I now turn to John Luc Nancy's essay *Listening* to understand the sort of "political listening" I advocate. Nancy provides a path to explore listening as it relates to our becoming subjects and to discursive processes. Nancy and others (most notably Derrida) have worked to move philosophy away from ocularcentric views that privilege sight as the most important sense, while seeking a plurality of senses by which to explore sonic phenomenon.

Specifically, Nancy situates listening in the resonant body, where ideas do not "make sense," but resonate. Nancy's focus on the body enables us to consider what happens when bodies listen to one another. Nancy's concept of what it means to be a human subject competes with many accepted ideas of the self. In this project, I embrace both Nancy's model of listening as well as his conception of the self (as described below) because both

offer the possibility for change at the individual level. In addition, both offer broader philosophical potential.

In “The “Senses of Listening: Beyond Signification as the Final Perspective,” Adrienne Janus argues that Nancy has long been involved in the critique of what is meant by “sense,” in many ways trying to find ways around the troublesome notions of sense that exclude the body and lead straight to *logos* or the abstract. Nancy writes, “perhaps it is necessary that sense not be content to make sense (or to be *logos*), but that it also resound. My whole proposal will turn around this fundamental resonance — that is around resonance as a foundation, as the first or last profundity of ‘sense’ itself” (19).

What I find most interesting about Janus’ account of Nancy is a discrepancy she finds in how his work has been translated into English:

For English editions of the works that figure in what I’ve termed the eccentric otocentric genealogy, if they exist at all, exhibit a startling, and indeed ironic, tendency to translate the French term “sens”/“sense” (which denotes sensual perception, signifying sense and sense of direction) as “meaning,” thereby perpetuating what Nancy will call the “anesthesia of the senses” that is associated with ocularcentricism. (185)

So even in English scholarship in the deconstructionist work in sound, logocentricism or ocularcentricism guides a great deal of the work trying to escape its bonds, demonstrating the strength of our ideological ties.

Janus explains “three senses of sense”: the intelligible, the perceptual, and the directional. She writes of the first: “The fundamental resonance of ‘sense’ as intelligible sense, signifying sense, or meaning, for example, is ‘timbre,’ the non-signifying resonance that opens and closes, envelopes and penetrates, communication itself” (191). To the question “does this make any sense?” Nancy argues that the resonance of sense is an abstract position in hearing that penetrates communication because of the shift from the

eyes to the ears. Here, the difference is represented not by the statement “I see what you mean,” but is instead understood through a more embodied sense such as touch or hearing. Here understanding goes beyond words or simple constructs where it cannot be put into words but is instead felt. “Love” would serve as a perfect example in which meaning is felt but the term “love” exceeds any word’s ability to convey.

Second, Janus explains “The fundamental resonance of ‘sense’ as perceptual, sensual sense and affect, as both self-reflexive proprioception and self-expansive apperception, is ‘renvoi’ (send-back, reverberation, feedback), the offering and return of resonance that envelopes the ‘corps sonore’ of the listening self and opens and closes the listening self as a spatially (dis)oriented being in the world” (191). While Nancy enables the body to be present, the question of what kind of body remains to be heard. Here, resonance requires a resonator: like the body of an acoustic guitar or the chest of a punk. This is also a discursive body, one that is responding and vibrating back and forth. Nancy expands this point, as the “. . . perfect condition of silence [when] you hear your own body resonate, your breath, your heart and all its resounding cave” (44). This second “sense” offers the dialogic nature of sense, that which is created in a particular moment with particular bodies present. It is the phenomenon of a joke that is hilarious to those involved at the time, but then falls completely flat, and ultimately ends with, “I guess you had to be there.”

Finally, Janus says of the third sense,

The fundamental resonance of “sense” as sense of direction, movement, and impulse is both “attaque” and “tendre”: “attaque” as the arrival of a sonorous presence, an acoustic event that hits and penetrates the listener; “tendre” as in “tendre l’oreille,” to prick up one’s ears, to be drawn or pulled in attendance to a resonance that is not immediately accessible. The movement between “attaque” (attack) and “tendre” (attendance) opens listening towards a temporally orientated being in the world (191).

This sense of direction intentionally seems to move away from rational intention but instead towards the interpolation of the sonic event in terms of the sense of hearing. It is the instinctual event of hearing sounds and becoming alive, for example, laying awake in bed because of an outside noise which might mark danger. This level of sense is affect; it changes the listener's body in a physical way.

For Nancy, listening is largely a commutative sense-making act that takes place at the level of a complex subject. Janus explains:

For Nancy's listening subject, if it is a subject at all, tends to dissolve, to fuse with and to absorb all those elements of self and world that might otherwise be termed "objects." In other words, all objects, insofar as they resonate, tend to become listening subjects. Throughout the course of Nancy's text, the listening subject becomes less "subject"-like, less human — not more substantial but certainly more textured — and, most interestingly, progressively larger and louder in volume, diffusing itself through more acoustic space and more expansive frequencies before its final diminuendo and return to itself as "corps sonore" (resonant body), as a "body beaten by its sense of body, by what used to be called its soul." (194)

Thus, Nancy's subject is not the neoliberal human rights possessing autonomous body, but instead is communicatively constructed without the assumed constraints of a physical body.

She explains further:

...our bodies must in Nancy's view have holes or be hollowed out; they have to be perforated, penetrated, stretched, strained, cut into, and out of. They have to be attacked by time, stretched or diffused in space, or, when engaged in self-reflexive listening, "beaten by [the] sense of body." For example, the body as a "resonance chamber" is the resonant space between the sounding board and back of a violin, or the little hole in the clarinet. (Janus 198)

For Nancy, the body that dissolves in terms of subjectivity is a vulnerable body, a body blasted with messages which are internalized and potentially do damage. The body is made of the same limited matter as the world.

While Janus values Nancy's criticism, she refrains from full endorsement arguing that perhaps Nancy's conception of the body is not messy enough to embrace fully the lived

experience of a body. She cites Douglas Kahn's *Noise Water Meat* as an example that pushes beyond Nancy. Kahn argues that historiographic listening enables one to understand culture:

The century becomes more mellifluous and raucous through historiographic listening, just that much more animated with the inclusion of the hitherto muffled regions of the sensorium. Yet these sounds do not exist merely to sonorize the historical scene; they are also a means through which to investigate issues of cultural history and theory including those that have been around for some time. (2)

While this historiographic listening is embodied and culturally situated, Kahn goes on to articulate that it is through a renewed investment in the embodiment of the self and in the self in terms of the arts:

Speak of the voice per se and one necessarily speaks of the body, yet the voice inhabits bodies differently. Modern Western culture typically locates the dominant operations of the embodied voice above the collarbone, attracted toward the head by the pull of fusion of thought with speech and by an unconscious that serves as a proxy for the rest of the body. Within this restructured frame of reference, traveling the distance from the brain to the mouth could be understood, among the ranks of the avant-garde, as a radical departure in favor of the body. (290)

Nancy's bodies, for all their bleeding resonant boundlessness, cohere tidily in moments outside of these communications. Kahn adds a level of complexity when calling on artists and cultural historians to consider fully the messiness that bodies necessitate, I turn to theories of intersectionality to grapple with this messiness of identity.

Nancy's listening when combined with a more radical notion of the body, becomes an embodied performativity. By performativity I mean a set of normalized actions or patterns of behavior that change over time through repetition. According to Elin Diamond,

When performativity materializes as performance in that risky and dangerous negotiation between a 'doing' (a reiteration of norms) and a 'thing done' (discursive

conventions that frame our interpretations), between someone's body and the conventions of embodiment, we have access to cultural meanings and critique. (5)

For Diamond, performance is both the doing and the thing done. Listening then becomes the norm of participation at the punk show, and the particular experience of my body participating in these punk shows is where listening becomes an embodied performativity. Participating via listening changes me incrementally over time and through repetition.

### Intersectionality

I want to consider the relationships in which these listening selves engage with each other through intersectionality as the method by which I negotiate these complex identities that often come together as folk punk by focusing on the folk and punk movements, both historical and present day,. Patricia Hill Collins writes of intersectionality as a loose grouping of practices that possess shared assumptions:

In its over two decades as a named discourse, the ideas of intersectionality have not yet crystallized into a standard canon defined by its founding figures. Rather, intersectional scholarship and/or practice seemingly pivot on a loose set of shared ideas, namely, (1) how race, class, gender and sexuality constitute intersecting systems of power; (2) how specific social inequalities reflect these power relations from one setting to the next; (3) how identities of race, and gender are socially constructed within multiple systems of power; and (4) how social problems and their remedies are similarly constructed within intersecting systems of power. (Collins 88)

Kimberle Crenshaw in the *Stanford Law Review* coined "Intersectionality" as a term and argues that intersectionality is:

a provisional concept linking contemporary politics with postmodern theory. In mapping the intersections of race and gender, the concept does engage dominant assumptions that race and gender are essentially separate categories. By tracing the categories to their intersections, I hope to suggest a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable. (1244)

Intersectionality is a way to consider the multiple oppressions faced by one or more oppressed groups, even when bodies exist in more than one oppressed group. Crenshaw's research particularly considered African American women and how the combination of their race and gender created a more intricate system of oppression. Sociologist Leslie McCall has written of the complexity that faces researchers attempting to consider intersectionality as a way of knowing or understanding the relationship between subjects and oppression. She writes:

Yet despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major paradigm of research in women's studies and elsewhere, there has been little discussion of *how* to study intersectionality, that is, of its methodology. This would not be worrisome if studies of intersectionality were already wide ranging in terms of methodology or if the methodological issues were fairly straightforward and consistent with past practice. I suggest, however, that intersectionality has introduced new methodological problems and, partly as an unintended consequence, has limited the range of methodological approaches used to study intersectionality. Further, both developments can be traced to what arguably has been a defining characteristic of research in this area: the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis. (1771)

While I take the concerns expressed by McCall seriously, her comments apply most to quantitative research. By engaging in qualitative and historiographical research, this study attempts to avoid the reductiveness of a quantitative study and some of the concerns McCall expresses. In addition, this study is not alone in approaching performance from an intersectional perspective.

Performance scholar Dustin Goltz writes of his telling of being threatened in a bar as a way into a class discussion of interesectionality, and argues that his narrative of homophobic abuse is deeply indebted to ideas of gender, race and class. But more



importantly Goltz highlights the way telling different versions of the story highlight or mask intersectional elements:

A comic frame works to foster and potentialize reflexive intersectional engagement with experience, for tragedy marks intersectionality's demise. Comedy opens a space to learn, examine, and render intelligible how intersecting subjectivities of power, privilege, and immobility shape and constrain a narrative account (and audience response). (399)

From Goltz, I gain an understanding of the precedent of intersectionality in performance and an appreciation for its ability to speak to the complexities that can occur between stage performers and audience. However, to understand intersectionality as more than just a method, according to Patricia Hill Collins, we must engage with the philosophy itself, historiographically.

Collins has contributed substantial work to reverse the erosion of intersectionality's roots in Black Feminism. She writes: "Although Black feminism was a significant factor in catalyzing the guiding frame of intersectionality, contemporary narratives concerning the emergence of intersectionality as a knowledge project routinely ignore its links to Black feminist politics of the 1960s and 1970s" (90). Some examples of the Black Feminist contributors are 1970's *Black Women*, a collection edited by Toni Cade Bambara, and a position paper "A Black Feminist Statement" written by the Combahee River Collective, a small group of African American women in Boston, which laid out a comprehensive statement of the framework that had permeated Black feminist politics,

This groundbreaking document argued that race-only or gender-only frameworks advanced partial and incomplete analyses of the social injustices that characterize African American women's lives, and that race, gender, social class and sexuality all shaped Black women's experiences. The Statement proposed that what had been treated as separate systems of oppression were interconnected. Because racism, class exploitation, patriarchy and homophobia collectively shaped Black women's experiences, Black women's liberation required a comprehensive response to multiple systems of oppression. (90)

Collins notes these works by activists that tied the labor of the academy to the work on the streets for justice. As intersectionality gained popularity in the academy, its ties to activism waned:

Ironically, as the structural contours of social movement politics of the 1960s and 1970s receded into the past, intersectionality's incorporation into the academy in the 1990s and 2000s seemingly uncoupled this knowledge project from politics. Intersectionality as a knowledge project shifted from bottom-up knowledge projects reflected in Crenshaw's ability to draw from grassroots politics, to top-down knowledge projects whose structural contours were increasingly shaped by the normative practices of the academy, and whose symbolic contours reflected the objectives, thematic content and epistemological approaches of existing fields of study (94).

For Collins, social justice is intrinsically tied to the work of intersectional knowledge projects. As such, scholars invested in activism must work to reestablish and maintain the connection. She draws from June Jordan to make the case:

Jordan's discussion of freedom foreshadows important ideas within intersectional knowledge projects, namely, viewing the task of understanding complex social inequalities as inextricably linked to social justice, or the intersections not just of ideas themselves but of ideas and actions. Subsequent expressions of black feminist thought contained an explicit analysis of the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and sexuality as systems of power that was clearly tied to social justice projects and social movement politics. (450)

Collins' desire for intersectionality's legitimacy in the academy may be compared to many performance studies scholars and the even more liminal performance projects, especially those which address popular topics like music,

By this expansion into the academy, the more fluid structural and symbolic boundaries of intersectionality as a knowledge project that were associated with social movement politics morphed into fields of study that fought for space and legitimation within academic politics. Once this change of terrain occurred, the strategies and arguments associated with race, class, gender, and sexuality shifted. (451).

These shifts fundamentally change the type of research that is completed, allowed, or

counted:

It appears that an initially holistic knowledge project became changed during its migration into the academy, with an increasing distinction made between intersectionality as a paradigm for studying complex social inequalities and intersectionality as a political project for bringing about social justice: intersectionality as a framework for understanding power relations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and others, on the one hand, and intersectionality as a framework that might catalyze social justice projects, specially those that might empower oppressed groups, on the other hand. (452)

This dissertation reconnects these now disparate arenas of the knowledge project by first exploring how the punk movement uses intersectional ideas to move toward social justice as well as offers performative advocacy by using the method as a means for calling for a way of seeing ourselves as intersectional beings, relational and dependent on one another. Specifically, I call for intersectional listening, a listening that does not gloss over the many differences that exist in a culture as diverse as punk, but that instead fully embraces those differences as a means toward creating a more meaningful world. As such, the chapters of this dissertation each focus on a particularly significant intersection of identity in the history of folk punk.

## Chapters Preview

In Chapter Two, I examine the intersection of race and class in folk punk. I focus on performances of Chris Clavin, specifically his performances with bands Inky Skulls and Ghost Mice. To begin, I describe seeing Clavin perform in New Orleans as an articulation of this intersection. In order to explore the history of race in folk punk, I utilize Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay's explication of punk strategies for dealing with race. I also consider the ways in which punk and folk music's anti-capitalist and anti-establishment attitudes have converged in folk punk.

In Chapter Three I consider the intersection of women and nonhuman animals in folk punk. Using Pussy Riot!'s performance at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Russia as an exemplar of this intersection, I argue for a conception for intersectionality that is larger than just a identity politics, one that can challenge oppression across even species lines to those treated as though they occupy similarly valued cultural space. I draw from Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming, and Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat* in order to argue that meat eating and the objectification of women's bodies are intersecting oppressions.

Chapter Four examines the intersection of anarchism and queerness. I consider the performances of Against Me!'s Laura Jane Grace as an exemplar of the ways in which this intersection converges in her anarchist beliefs and gender transitioning. In this chapter, I examine the punk performances of Against Me, Tribe 8, and MDC, and folk artists Woody Guthrie and Alix Dobkin. The chapter concludes with an examination of how both the anarchist and the queer share being labeled terrorist.

Chapter Fives argues that the agonistic performances of folk punk represent an intersectional challenge to the power structures of the modern world. In particular, folk punk and those who listen to it are shaped by performative participation in a micropolitical social movement. I argue listening is the method of participating in these agonistic communities that discursively perform on stage and in the audience. Using Kirk Fuoss's notion of agonistic performance perspective I analyze folk punk, and argue that folk punk is a model for postmodern performance in social movements.

CHAPTER TWO: INKY SKULLS:  
PERFORMING AT THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND CLASS

I wanna steal all the money in the world  
Soak it all in gasoline then light it with a match  
I think that we would see  
That we are better off without it  
I wanna be my own government  
I wanna be my own president  
I wanna be my own nation  
I want everyone to see that nobody is better  
No nobody is better than anyone else  
We are all just human beings  
And we can be in charge of ourselves. (Inky Skulls)

My partner, Jessi, and I went to the Hey Café on the eve of America's 236<sup>th</sup> birthday to see the Inky Skulls, a folk punk band I love. The Hey Café is a small cooperatively run coffee house on Magazine Street in uptown New Orleans, Louisiana. From the front it looks like any small coffeehouse with tightly packed tables, loud red paint on the walls interrupted by local artwork, and a counter that serves coffee and other beverages with an attached glass case housing baked goods. The Café also boasts a back room, which sometimes hosts shows. This small, back room also features local art. My favorite is a collage of a woman's face, her clothes made from newspaper, the background painted in stripes. It hung on the wall just over our heads from the spot we chose to watch the show, center stage and in the back, where there was a bench to sit on between bands—but I am getting ahead of myself. Behind the back room is a kitchen where items are prepared for the coffee house, and where bands can store their gear between sets. In the hallway and corresponding staircase between the front and back rooms, band T-shirts and records are sold, though they are pushed out of the way for each show. Before I learned all of these details about the back room, Jessi and I ordered coffees as the first band was starting. Called All People, they are a local band made up of four fellows. I ended up talking to the

bass player and singer later in the hallway and afterwards he gave me a DVD and a CD sampler from their record label, Community Records, which he helps run. Finally, after much lingering and chatting, the anticipated act appeared: Inky Skulls.

Typically made up of two people, Inky Skulls consist of Chris Clavin, who plays bass, and Emily Rose, who plays ukulele. Drums and guitar usually accompany Chris and Emily via an iPod; however, on this tour, a drummer and a guitar player accompanied them, so they did not use the iPod. In addition to Inky Skulls, Chris plays in the band Ghost Mice and runs Plan-It-X records. He was also previously in other bands like Ted Dancin' Machine, Operation Cliff Clavin, and many more. For the New Orleans show, Chris wore a sleeveless black T-shirt and cutoff black jean shorts fitted to his small frame. I had never seen Emily play before, perhaps because according to Inky Skulls' Bandcamp.com page, "This is Emily's first band." She was also small in stature, probably about 5' 2", and she played her ukulele without shoes. She closed her eyes as she sang and danced around; it felt like a magic ritual. Inky Skulls played a short, five-song set because they were trying to make room for the additional bands playing that night, even though they were the headlining act on the poster. Together, Emily and Chris sang my favorite songs including "My Boring Friend" and "Die Like Lions." The set went by in a blur. I had built up going to this show for a week or more, and I was disappointed to hear only five songs, but it was a perfect experience during the short time it lasted. I sang the songs loud with the band and bounced wildly with the rhythm along with the twenty or so other people for whom the early bands played, making the rooms feel completely overcrowded, loud, and sweaty. Like I said, it was perfect. Performatively, Rose played at the front of the stage and Clavin stood slightly behind as he played bass. Both members of the band sang with their eyes closed in a way that seemed

more like concentration than avoidance of the audience. The set felt a little rushed and hinted at the frustration Clavin later described to me about the show. Though the happy folky-punk music created an atmosphere of energy that echoed in the dancing of the band members and the audience, as the set ended and the bands were tearing down, the room emptied, and I felt that perhaps we all shared in a feeling that something was missing. But perhaps it was just me.

Musically, Inky Skulls are rough around the edges. Their music embraces a DIY aesthetic, which shirks the kind of studio production that would make them sound “good.” The lyrics are sung in a childlike sing-talk way that makes them easy to understand and sing along with, regardless of one’s vocal ability. The ukulele as lead instrument, as opposed to the guitar, creates lightness in the Inky Skulls’ sound that gives them almost a pop-like quality. The music is based around a simple, three-chord, and highly repetitive, musical structure. Though both members of the group play proficiently, the band is not about producing the most complex or technical music of today. Instead, the accessibility of the lyrics for sing-along, and a mood of happiness, seems to be Inky Skulls’ main inspirations.

The lyrics in Inky Skulls songs are typically written in two categories: overtly political or positively valenced mundanity. The political songs like “My Country,” (cited at the beginning of this chapter) reveal the anarchist politics of the band as they articulate frustrations with statist institutions and capitalism. Of the other songs I have labeled as being positively valenced mundanity, I would include songs like “Die Like Lions,” which sings of a life lived in line with the politics articulated in these political songs. For example, “I wanna die wild and free,” as sung in “Die Like Lions,” Inky Skulls articulates what

everyday life feels like from their perspective. These messages work together to produce albums that leave an audience with a sense of hope for a better world, and a means toward achieving that world.

As Inky Skulls played, two younger white male punks who smelled like stale cigarettes, ill-gotten booze, and dumpster sweat stood in front of us. Jaded and sarcastic, these punks made fun of everything. Several bike punks also attended, marked by the messenger bags each had in tow. The number of men and women in the crowd was nearly equal, interspersed amongst the bike punks, the younger punks, and the punk couples. Racially, the crowd appeared predominately white, though there were two bands from Puerto Rico in the audience throughout the early sets. A large portion of the audience left the Café after Inky Skulls, though a high percentage of musicians seemed to remain given the technical speak overheard between sets. Most members of the crowd seemed to know one another, with the exception of Jessi and me, as is to be expected at a small punk gathering such as a DIY show like this one.

The preceding discussion of the distinct people present at the show points to a need for clarification in any discussion of folk punk. A folk punk archetype does not exist. That is, there is no person to whom I could point and say, "S/he is a folk punk." I will not say it is impossible for someone to identify as a "folk punk," but it is something I have never encountered in my research, or in my experience at shows. Instead, folk punk as a music genre is made up of punks who borrow from both folk and punk. Thus, throughout this dissertation, I will be forced to talk about punks as the people who make up the folk punk community.



Returning to the show, Jessi and I, as a couple who obviously came in from out of town to see the show, did not quite fit in with the particular scene at Hey Café. In fact, I am beginning to feel almost too old at these shows, and much more isolated in scenarios where we do not know anyone. Several people brought in beers from the bar next door, but, contrary to shows in my past, I did not choose to drink, partially because we had to drive back to Baton Rouge, and also because Chris Clavin does not drink, and I hoped to talk to him (something I would later chicken out of because he seemed to be in a bad mood and was quick to pack up gear after the show). Another band consisted of a two-piece pair from France, and this pair also happened to replace the iPod and play guitar and drums for Inky Skulls. I did not catch their name, and they were not listed on the show posters. Next to play were the two bands from Puerto Rico: Anti-Sociales, a pop punk band, and Un Final Fatal, a hardcore band. Both sang in Spanish, which had a way of clearing out the crowd. Ten or less people attended each set, the audience mostly made up of bands that had previously played, either a sign of respect or comparison. The show ended with punk singer/songwriter Eric Ayotte. Those of us still at the venue sat on the floor in a circle while he sang his beautiful acoustic songs (I have been searching for a song he wrote to his cat ever since). At the end of the evening, I drove home buzzing, partially from ringing ears, but also with a hope that the world was gonna be okay, which, for me, only comes after this kind of art experience. But I am getting ahead of myself again.

Early in the show, Chris Clavin said something I did not expect, something I am still not sure what to do with in my narration of him as a punk hero of sorts. As Chris was finishing his set, he said, "Next up are two bands," and then "The two Puerto Rican bands, their names don't really matter." I did not think much of it in the moment, but I noticed it.

When we got outside the venue, I heard some people asking if he had really just said that? In my adoration of him, I found myself wondering if the comment was simply a joke that did not land. Now, I wonder if I have been reading so much about punk and racism lately that I am no longer a good judge on the subject? I admit: I did not leave; I did not scream out; I did not say anything; I did not do anything. I looked at Jessi who made a face, and we went to get cups of water. The next band set up, and we watched the rest of the show.

Months passed, and I struggled to determine what to do with the experience, so I sent Chris Clavin an email asking him about that evening. He responded that day to let me know he was on tour and would happily chat with me about my dissertation project, and the New Orleans show in particular, when he returned. The following is what he wrote to me when he had time to respond:

I just said that to make sure that people realized that the next bands playing were from far away and that people should stay and watch them. They are my friends and I know them well. I know they don't mind being called "the Puerto Rican bands" and I wasn't trying to lump them together. I was just doing my best to talk into the mic. It's pretty hard, especially when the show is kind of small and not living up to previous shows in the same city. I was kind of sad about the turn out. Usually NOLA is pretty full and fun. Also, saying, "please stick around for UN FINAL FATAL and ANTI-SOCIALES they are on tour, all the way from Puerto Rico" is kind of a mouthful, especially when you're feeling kind of down. I'm sad to think that someone thought that it was weird. I've said weirder things I'm sure. I don't consider myself to be very good at saying the right things. ("Personal")

At his response, I am likely to understand and forgive Clavin for what seems to be a misunderstanding by the audience members and myself regarding the specifics of the situation. As a performer, I understand the feeling of playing to a small house and finding it difficult to bring energy to a show. I do not want to sound as though I am making excuses for Clavin, and I don't read him as making excuses for himself either. I think he was having a bad night and blurted out something that could be taken out of context. However,

regardless of Clavin's speech and response, the experience brought up an important question in terms of the politics of folk punk music. How can serious political messages and criticisms exist simultaneously within jokes in folk punk? I then asked Clavin about the role of jokes in punk and satire in folk punk songs. He went on to explain:

Punks are very critical of punks. Jokes are often 'not funny' and sometimes the criticalness is too much. I do think that jokes are funny and I think I can usually tell whether the intent of the joker is trying to be funny or trying to be offensive. I do however, have no tolerance for jokes that truly offend or language that hurts people, especially when it's coming from a white man. White men are not offended easily because we have never been oppressed the way almost everyone else has been. Sadly, our free time and advantages and our access to education makes us the dominant group involved in the punk scene. So here we are, a ton of white boys, feeling rebellious and fearless (what do we have to fear really) making music and political statements and arguing over what the best words we should use to describe Native Americans. It's pretty funny. Sometimes I think we can be too insensitive to other non-white-male-people. We say things like "you can do anything you want" and "you could have just shoplifted that", not even thinking about the differences in our upbringing and cultures. Then, bands attempt satire and write songs from the point of view of an idiot/racist/sexist and it just doesn't work. Or, they write my least favorite song: the "my x-girlfriend is a crazy b%tch song". I walk out when a band plays one of those. Women are still the most oppressed of the humans. I say humans because the non-human animals have it way worse. I feel like I lost the point. I also want to say that the self-critical attitude is normal. It's like how we argue with our family more than our friends and we argue with our friends more than our casual friends, or people at work. We (humans) always attack close to home. I don't like that. A punk that makes a few dumb jokes might get ex-communicated from the scene, but down the street there is a raging Christian racist beating his kids or something. We need to focus our hate on the right people and remember that all we got is each other. If your friends are fucked up, let them know and tell them to stop being that way. Give them a chance. ("Personal")

In this response, Clavin addresses important divisive issues in the punk community. The hypercritical nature of the scene creates division in the community as a whole and trickles down to individual members. Clavin's personal knowledge of the Puerto Rican band members makes his off-the-cuff statements about their bands much more understandable, but yet I fully understand why audience members felt the need to question his remarks. I do not know Chris Clavin personally, but I have read his book *Free Pizza for Life*, and in it

Clavin articulates his political beliefs. His early bands were perpetually looking for drummers; in particular, Operation Cliff Clavin, put out this call:

Must: . . . be anti-amerikan, anti-racist, anti sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-capitalist, anti-religious, and willing to tour, record and play lots of shows. We would relocate, are vegetarian, and are not in any other bands, like punk music, don't use drugs and not an alcoholic. (*Free Pizza* 106)

In some ways, the New Orleans show still haunts my thoughts as I think about folk punk performance. Particularly, I find myself asking lots of questions: What is the role of race in the punk scene? How can a predominantly white punk scene ever sufficiently deal with its racial issues/guilt/history? Can folk punk or punk in general alleviate racial tensions? In what ways are class issues inherent to race questions in this country? And what role does class play in the development of folk punk historically? Is class a term that means anything in a country where the majority of people think that they are in the middle?

Chris Clavin's record label Plan-It-X began with the motto: "If it ain't cheap, it ain't punk" (80). Clavin and his best friend Samantha began the DIY label after, "we found out how cheap it was to make CDs and we were shocked that so many punk labels sold them for so much" (80). The majority of Clavin's book is the story of Plan-It-X and living on the road, in basements, and in cars around Bloomington, Indiana. While *Free Pizza For Life* does not make class struggle a focus of the text, it does emphasize recording and cheaply selling music to those who want to hear it throughout its stories. At one point, Chris, Samantha, and their friend Hannah try to start a record store to live secretly in during the winter. During their time as would-be storeowners, they were shocked at the capitalist demands of punk labels, including large minimum orders, possession of credit cards, and lengthy applications just to buy records (Clavin 168). When I saw Inky Skulls in New Orleans, Clavin was again living on the road in two vans, only one of which had air

conditioning. In our emails and from what I could gather from Plan-It-X's Facebook page, the tour was such that the bands continually faced small crowds and didn't make much money. Fortunately, the DIY spirit remains strong in Clavin, and he has continued to tour with Inky Skulls, and more recently with his band the Ghost Mice. Clavin has run Plan-It-X since 1994 and it still continues today, charging only \$5 for CDs, tapes, and 7 inch records, or \$11 for LPs. As a truly DIY label, Plan-It-X takes an anti-capitalist stance, putting music before profit. It remains a powerful avenue for folk punk and DIY music.

Inspired by my interactions with Inky Skulls and Chris Clavin, the remainder of this chapter seeks out the intersections of race and class in the history of folk punk and its musical ancestors. I focus particularly on the ways race and class issues have shaped the ground on which folk punk performs.

## Punk Music and Race

In the introduction to *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay admit that punk does indeed have its race problems and has, through its short history, struggled with many approaches to the questions of race and racial inclusion. Duncombe's introduction begins with the concept of whiteness:

I, like many White people growing up after the 1960s in North America and Europe, grew up acutely aware of my race. In this way I think we were different from previous generations of Whites who had been allowed the dubious privilege of thinking of themselves, at least on a day-to-day level, as raceless. Blacks, Latinos, and other "minorities," didn't have this luxury. (2)

This chapter joins Duncombe by challenging the presupposition of whites as raceless. In particular, I contrast the whiteness read in Chris Clavin's labeling of the "two Puerto Rican bands" with the erasure of race in the perhaps more insidious hypothetical, "Next up are

two bands.” In dealing with race and whiteness, punks have deployed many strategies to challenge notions of racial identity. Duncombe and Tremblay outline these myriad strategies in their writings. In this chapter, I explore four categories including: Rock N Roll Nigger, White Minority, White Power, and Punky Reggae Party. These categories represent a few of the unfortunate missteps punks have taken in dealing with racial and ethnic identities. I choose them because they demonstrate the interest of punk in questions of race across history. However, before I outline each category, I first explore the concept of whiteness as it exists within the punk community in order to situate race and explain how some of these missteps emerged.

Duncombe cites punk band X’s song “White Girl” as a glowing example of punks becoming aware of their whiteness:

It’s the chorus that gives the song its name, and it’s the chorus that still gets to me: “She’s a white girl, I’m living with a white girl.” Why would a band of White people singing to a White audience find it necessary to point out the whiteness of the character in the song? *Because it isn’t assumed.* (4)

The destabilizing move in “White Girl” labels white people as raced by their whiteness, noting that like blackness or brownness, whiteness is a racial mark or signifier carried by the body, not simply the absence of a race. Duncombe also notes this occurred in the 1980s, a time when Ronald Reagan and Margret Thatcher were attempting to re-universalize whiteness. Many punks rejected Reagan and Thatcher’s universal whiteness and instead discovered the complexity of racial identity in their own bodies, what Duncombe calls an “inchoate whiteness,”

Punk offered a space for young Whites growing up in a multicultural world to figure out what it meant to be White. What was so exciting to me at the time was the very incoherence of the definition. Against the solidifying reactionary definition of whiteness—traditional, patriotic, and (in the United States) God-fearing—punk’s whiteness was open and undecided. We recognized being White now had to be

defined, but had no firm agreement on what that definition might be. It was an *inchoate whiteness*. (5)

Inchoate whiteness acknowledges the link between a racial label and physical markings of what are often dominant bodies and questions what that whiteness means. Rethinking whiteness in these ways, in terms of signification and meaning, led to new possibilities for, and confusion about, whiteness. Duncombe notes, punks performed as raced bodies in a variety of fashions. The most troubling, manifesting in beliefs of racism and white supremacy, meant erasing and denouncing everything different from that which was dominant. Most punks like Duncombe reject these positions because to be punk is to embrace otherness. However, Duncombe also recognizes that punks could not erase their own whiteness or appropriate the race of marginalized others. He writes,

Proclaiming my race did not mean rejecting others, or pretending they didn't exist. Likewise acknowledging my whiteness with all its sins and privileges didn't have to mean denying my race and donning the skin and culture of another. In recognizing that my whiteness was not universal and in understanding that it was merely one race among many, each with its own struggles and histories, I discovered the possibility of cross-racial solidarity. (6)

Duncombe's cross-racial solidarity aligns with the advocacy my project seeks while challenging acts that re-entrench difference. In punk and radical communities, solidarity means forming bonds between affinity groups. Affinity groups are small groups of people who often share a similar interest or status on a particular issue. An affinity group may be formed or based on race. Solidarity, then, may be established by two affinity groups that consensually agree to work together on a particular issue or action, without losing their individual affinity group identities. Incredibly complex, solidarity necessitates strong lines of communication and monitoring of relationships. The differences between people or groups in solidarity cannot be elided; claiming that everyone is the same negates the

important move of acknowledging dominance and privilege, in this case of whiteness, in the first place. Duncombe explains

... the liberal claptrap we were all brought up with where all difference is subsumed under the name of universalism and what is universal ends up looking a lot like the interests of those who are the most powerful. But cross-racial solidarity, cross-cultural solidarity brings with it a big problem: it reinforces cultural and racial distinction ... In reorganizing distinction, even if the goal is to bridge difference, you inevitably end up creating fixed, contrastable, and partially essentialized, categories. (7)

Duncombe argues that globalization and multiculturalism created the racial tension of the 1980s and 1990s throughout the neo-liberal world. In particular, the racial double bind of acknowledging difference without essentializing and heightening division, created a complex landscape for those who attempted to navigate the nuances of postmodern racial politics. However, we must negotiate this double bind to avoid a politics that simply continues the dominance of the past in the name of tradition. As such, this dissertation refuses nostalgic politics and neoliberal apologetics, and instead seeks a radical understanding of race, one that is largely born out of Critical Race Theory and the 1990s.

Maxwell Tremblay came to the scene later than Stephen Duncombe and expressed the way the 1990s changed things. He writes,

The inchoate whiteness Steve felt, in the context of related racial identifications on the Left and Right, still crops up here and there in unexpected ways. However, progressive, primarily anarchist leftism has firmly settled in as punk's political operating principle, with an assumption of necessary antiracism as its corollary. (8)

While I offer an extended discussion of the anarchist politics of folk punk in Chapter Four, I note here that the politics of punk have always been intersectional and larger than any one particular issue. The antiracist position, at least in the 1990s and beyond, stands as the immediate assumption of the punk who takes the leftist politics of punk seriously. In dealing with one's whiteness, the binary of racist or antiracist is replaced with various



methods of becoming antiracists. Tremblay's experience notes the limited options available to the punk of the 1990s in terms of race ideology. He argues that the conversation about how to be punk took place on stage and in punk publications. He explains,

But by the time I knocked on punk's doors, the first two options were shut. Sure, you still got quite a bit of Inchoate White male rage from certain corners of the scene, most notably the straight edge community and the odd Nazi band cropped up here and there. However anything that smelled even faintly of misinformed or blatantly racist bullshit was usually called out either on stage or in print. (9)

Punk's rejection of racism created a scene of hostility towards race in general.

Tremblay explains the ways in which inchoate whiteness became generally understood and then disavowed through a rejection of whiteness itself. Punk's rejection of whiteness was not reflexive, and as such, became a pestilence instead of an opportunity for critical thought. He writes,

My generation of punks inherited the ideals of racial solidarity and the overarching leftism, but didn't filter through any kind of self aware whiteness, reclaimed and remade, but rather through treason to whiteness, to the very privilege that allowed us to discover punk rock in the first place. (10)

He explains that punks found a variety of ways to disavow their whiteness, in particular creating distance between themselves and what they perceived as dominant white culture, "White people we honkies white punks we something different" (10). Yet, even with this seeming improvement over inchoate whiteness, there was a fundamental lack of performative recognition in the scene of white privilege. Tremblay continues,

And yet even in the midst of this increasingly insular and rejectionist cultural sphere, white folks predominately occupied positions of prestige at shows and on zine staffs, whether it was acknowledged or more often not. This became one of the noticeable problems of White self-rejection, founded in radical whiteness and eventually forgetting itself (11).

The internal practices of the community undercut the proclaimed radical racial politics.

Thus, the performing of white privilege became central to all the institutions of power

within the punk community, not unlike the government at large. Tremblay offers a hypothesis explaining this unfortunate and revealing occurrence in the punk scene:

This muddle started out as at least two steps in the right direction: punk's political position hardened, there was a great need first to distance itself from the dominant culture and second to reverse the essentialist gesture to divorce "punk" from "White" in order to recognize the kinds of contributions of bands like Los Crudos represented. But a familiar logic ensues: White rejectionism relies on 'punk' as an ur-signifier a kind of overarching identity position that was expected of those who listened to the music and contributed to the scene, around which we could all rally and whose honor we could all defend. (12)

I would argue that the American left finds itself in this quandary today, be it within the punk, feminist, animal rights, or anarchist movements. These movements, especially punk, must move away from the ur-signifier, to create solidarity across these differences and to avoid the missteps that have plagued the politics of their pasts.

I address whiteness with an acute knowledge that all punks were not and are not white. Bands like Bad Brains and Los Crudos are just two examples of the racially and ethnically marginalized voices that have always been present in the punk scene. Nevertheless, punk has been a predominately white community in both the United States and in the United Kingdom, but perhaps only because it has been labeled as such. While this dissertation focuses on the U.S. folk punk scene and its predecessors, today, punk is a global phenomenon, and punks and punk bands exist in every corner of the globe.

Given punk's history with whiteness and acknowledging that the history of punk includes racial others, I acknowledge the ways in which this document is not without its own racial tensions. I offer four of Duncombe and Tremblay's historical punk strategies to deal with race: Rock N Roll Nigger, White Minority, White Power, and Punky Reggae Party. I focus on these four because they best illustrate and reveal the complexities of racial tensions in the punk scene as well as reveal areas to avoid for the future.

## Rock N Roll Nigger

Duncombe and Tremblay write that the first move by white punks to subvert culture was by acquiring the cultural Other's practices. They call this move the "Rock N Roll Nigger," named after the Patti Smith Group's 1978 song of the same name. The song stands as perhaps one of the most erroneously executed, but well-intentioned, dealings with whiteness in the history of punk. Duncombe and Tremblay note the song made no commercial sense for Smith; however, "It did make a lot of sense in the logic of another tradition: the history of white outsiders and their identification with racial and cultural Others" (18). They cite this tradition going back to Norman Mailer's "White Negro," an essay that articulates how the appropriation of black culture by whites served as the source of "cool" in late 1950s American society. In addition, Smith was not the first musician to take on the epithet in such a controversial way. John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1972 "Woman is the Nigger of the World" crossed the threshold years before. Lennon and Ono's song was even awarded a "Positive Image of Women" award by the National Organization of Women in August of 1978 (Johnson 40). However, the song was not a commercial success; radio stations refused to play it because the conflation of the oppression of women and of African Americans was troubling to many (Hilburn B6). Perhaps the world was not quite ready for intersectionality; or perhaps the theft of culture via appropriation was troubling even in 1972.

A recuperative reading of Smith's lyrics gives her credit for using the epithet "nigger" in order to take power away from the term, by labeling anyone outside of social norms as "nigger," including herself, a woman. Her identification with the word ideally

challenges the power of those who would continue to use the term in a demeaning way. She sings:

Jimi Hendrix was a nigger  
Jesus Christ and grandma, too  
Jackson Pollock was a nigger  
Nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger,  
Nigger, nigger, nigger  
Outside of society, they're waitin' for me  
Outside of society, if you're looking  
That's where you'll find me. (Smith)

While one can read Smith's attempt as similar to other reclamations ("queer" perhaps being the most successful modern example), society proved too much for Smith's efforts. Using standpoint epistemology, Duncombe and Tremblay argue that certain ways of knowing only emerge through lived experience or lived identity. Thus, a White Patti Smith or a White Norman Mailer claiming the subject position of "nigger," when they themselves have never lived through a situation where the term "nigger" would be applied to them by someone else, becomes problematic. Even after the song, Smith's relationship to the term would always remain metaphorical in a way that "nigger" is not for African-Americans descended from the evils of slavery. Duncombe and Tremblay include Smith's liner note where she poetically tries to overcome these positionality arguments, but largely to no avail:

nigger no invented color it was MADE FOR THE PLAGUE the word (art) must be redefined—all mutants and the new babes born sans eyebrow and tonsil—outside logic—beyond mathematics poli-tricks baptism and motion sickness—any man who extends beyond the classic form is a nigger—one sans fear and despair—one who rises like rimbaud beating hard gold rhythm outta soft solid shit-tongue light is coiling serpent is steaming spinal avec ray run hissing scanning copper head w/white enamel eye wet and shining crown reeling thru gleem vegetation ruby dressing of thy lips puckering whispering pressing high bruised thighs silk route mark Prussian vibrating gushing milk pods of de/light translating new languages and abused rock n roll and love lashing from the tongue of me nigger. (Smith)

Here Patti Smith attempts to take on the moniker “nigger,” often thought of as the worst racial epithet, or the word that carries the greatest marking of being Other. She then turns that Otherness on herself and those she deems to be outsiders regardless of their race.

While many punk bands appropriated versions of blackness, including MC5’s fan club becoming the White Panther party, few took this move to Patti Smith’s extreme. This way of dealing with racial Otherness has largely been cast aside as a misguided way to deal with the whiteness of punk. Along with the outright racism, the primary reason to reject the “Rock N Roll Nigger” approach is that it makes the idea of cross-racial solidarity impossible. Solidarity requires two parties to come together over an issue. In this approach whites appropriate the Other and never actually ask what his/her interests might be. My analysis of Patti Smith’s song and liner notes show how early punks attempted to equivocate difference.

### White Minority

Duncombe and Tremblay’s stance “White Minority” is yet another example of how many punks in the 1980s hardcore scene sought to engage racial difference. The idea of a White Minority comes from the Black Flag song of the same name, with the lyrics: “We’re gonna be a white minority / We won’t listen to the majority / We’re gonna feel inferiority / We’re gonna be a white minority / White pride / You’re an American / I’m gonna hide / Anywhere I can?” Black Flag’s “White Minority” is difficult to decipher: it could be a white power call to arms, or as Black Flag claimed, the song could be a parody of white suburban culture. Duncombe and Tremblay note that both the drummer and lead singer of the band

at the time were Latinos, and the producer of the record was black. While these positionalities do not account for the ways in which white audiences might interpret the song, they do demonstrate the ways in which the punk scene used performed race beyond simple cultural appropriation. Duncombe and Tremblay additionally discuss the inchoate whiteness represented in the song:

Whites in these countries could no longer live the fantasy of universality, where White is a given and everything else is other, particularly not in cities like Los Angeles, New York, and London. No longer assumed universal, whiteness began to be articulated as a conscious subject position. But this position was unsettled and volatile, finding versions of itself expressed both in the tide of liberal political correctness as well as the conservative revolutions of Regan and Thatcher. (45)

The idea of whiteness becoming a minority subject position offers up a version of whiteness bound to a self-imposed marginalization. In this way, minority whiteness is similar to the “Rock N Roll Nigger,” but without the linguistic and cultural theft. It is an attempt to achieve the same goal: to subvert punk culture and launch it out of the mainstream. Beyond linguistics, the performance is much the same. Daniel S. Traber argues that this tactic of self-marginalization was popular in the Los Angeles punk scene from 1977 to 1983 (82). What Traber calls “tapping into the Aura of the Other” amounts to a strategy of resistance while remaining critical of the dominant culture. However, this position has at least two problems: it reifies the necessity of the dominant culture’s existence and ignores the necessary privilege to claim one’s own particular marginalization. (83). Traber cites Craig Lee’s (guitarist for The Bags) description of The Canterbury apartments famous in the LA Punk Scene as an example. Lee says the apartments were “occupied by black pimps and drug dealers, displaced southeast Asians living ten to a room, Chicano families, bikers from a halfway house, in addition to various bag ladies and shopping cart men” (85). In his description of the people from The

Canterbury, Lee is expressing a form of similarity between the LA punks and the other residents. His comparison also attempts to draw a much larger distinction between the punks who *chose* to live at The Canterbury and the oppressive forces of dominant white society at large that marginalize minorities and limit their agency in housing and working conditions. Ultimately, the punk's privileged choice creates a divide between punk culture and those who must live in areas like The Canterbury out of necessity. Racial and perhaps even class privilege influence this ability to choose. "White Minority" is an attempt to erase difference, but differences remain fully intact despite punks' best efforts to cover them up.

#### White Power

As a strategy, "White Power" is, in many ways, the opposite of "White Minority." In the face of an increasingly multicultural world, many in the punk movement felt forced to choose between aligning with cultural and racial Others or the dominant cultural and racial groups to the exclusion of all Others. Instead of seeking to align, however erroneously, with cultural Others, White Power sought to cut ties with those Others and reclaim the dominant cultural position for whiteness. The majority of punks, especially in the U.S., reject this position. Duncombe and Tremblay note that the move to Otherness of the white minority was an intentional move to establish a subject position in the heterogeneous and multicultural world, but the White Power move was/is one that fears and fights against this realization by attempting to rearticulate and reassert white (non-Jewish) racial dominance. A large section of this movement took place in Europe (especially England) following Skinhead bands like Screwdriver.

Skinheads in England largely emerged from working class backgrounds. Their style is typically marked by tall boots, jeans, button-up shirts, suspenders, and (obviously) shaved heads, characteristic of working class factory laborers at the time. Around 1969, many Skinheads were interested in Jamaican Reggae and Dub music and this was reflected in the bands that came out of the movement, like Sham '69. Though early Skinhead music was influenced by Reggae, their sound remained distinct, resembling punk bands more than Reggae or Dub. While the music of Jamaica was highly influential for Skinheads, the National Front, a white supremacist and Nationalist organization, began attending the concerts and using the gatherings to recruit young members to their ranks. As such, many Skinheads began to associate with racist and Nationalist causes.

White Power is a stance largely ignored or mocked by the folk punk community. One of the clearest examples mocking White Power comes at the end of the song "Mouseteeth" by This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, perhaps the best-known folk punk band of our time (at least partially due to a number of incidents in which police have mistaken the band's stickers, especially when placed on bicycles, as threats against public safety). "Mouseteeth" concludes with "Oi ya stupid skinheads." "Oi" is a style of punk sometimes called "Oi punk" associated with the Skinhead movement in England. As such, "Oi oi oi" is a call made by some American Skinhead bands during their performances to mock their English Skinhead counterparts. While some Skinhead bands, especially early ones, were not racist, many were, so many, in fact, that the term Skinhead in the U.S. became synonymous with racism. Pipe Bomb's awareness and extensive political songwriting about race intentionally makes a mockery of the racist White Power movement in punk, though the U.S. Skinhead movement has declined greatly. Pipe Bomb, as they are often referred, now broken up,



made a lasting impression on folk punk music specifically through their dedication to race politics. On their record *Convertible*, Pipe Bomb covers “Strange Fruit,” the Billy Holiday classic, originally written by an American-Jew named Abel Meeropol as a poem. Pipe Bomb’s version of Holiday’s song has always stood out for me as one of the great moments in folk punk, as it deals explicitly with the issues of race in America. In the documentary *If it Ain’t Cheap it Ain’t Punk*, Pipe Bomb member Terri Johnson says, “Me and Rymodee [another Pipe Bomb member] do most of the songwriting . . . we grew up in the Deep South, in Northern Florida and all that stuff has been in our face for so long.” By “that stuff,” Johnson refers to the injustice and prevalence of racism and Jim Crow laws of the South. Pipe Bomb’s album *Front Seat Solidarity* also sings songs about Selma and calls for punks of all races to come together and make a better world. “We Shall Not Be Moved,” the classic protest song of the civil rights movement and another cover song, best showcases Pipe Bomb’s dedication to and understanding of historicity. These two Pipe Bomb songs, both historical covers, mark their appreciation for the link between modern-day folk punk music and the radical movements of the past. While “White Power” is not a stance taken frequently in the U.S. punk community, Pipe Bomb’s willingness to respond and mock that stance ensures its negative, lasting implications are not overlooked.

### Punky Reggae Party

“Punky Reggae Party” is the name of a Bob Marley and the Wailers song, and is largely recognition of solidarity between bands like The Clash and themselves. This solidarity was a dream that would unite the groups in their Otherness in relation to dominant society. By respecting difference and acknowledging common interests, or

common rejection, these groups could form more meaningful forces together than apart. On the part of the punks, this called for a “radical whiteness,” critical of itself and recognizing its privilege, but not to the point of the disavowal of the race itself. Joel Olson, member of the Minnesota-based collective Profane Existence, which produced a zine of the same name for many years, penned “A New Punk Manifesto.” In it, he calls on punks to create solidarity with those having less privilege and to work to better the lives of those in the same community. Olson writes:

However, as important as it is for us to reject our somewhat privileged backgrounds, it is also not enough. Our goal needs to be not merely to reject society, but to recreate it as well. Punk’s effectiveness up to now has primarily been negative in the sense that its primary political activity has been to criticize and reject America and everything it stands for. Now it is time to take positive action. We need to turn our anger and disgust with middle class America and creatively channel it into mass-based political action. (191)

I began this chapter with Chris Clavin who spoke of the punk community’s need to create solidarity amongst its members to fight real societal problems rather than bickering internally. Olsen’s call addresses these issues but is much larger in scope. The Punky Reggae Party speaks most closely to solidarity efforts within English punk; however, the premise of the effort is as applicable here as it would be in England and only the particulars of each interaction might differ. This move highlights the importance of understanding Otherness, but one that participates in conversation with other groups and negotiates actions in the world without any loss or exchange of identity. Solidarity is achieved by continually challenging those participating in the punk movement to be better.

On this thread, performance studies scholar Deanna Shoemaker argues that one of the intersectional elements making the members of the band Tribe 8 interesting is how they challenged the racial and gender expectations of its audience. While Tribe 8’s

queercore performances will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four, Shoemaker argues for the significance of their racial performances as well:

Lynn Payne (“Tantrum”), the band’s former African Canadian bass player, stated in *Rise Above: The Tribe 8 Documentary* (Flannigan, 2003) that she decided not to take her shirt off anymore in performance as her new “fuck you” to the audience’s expectations. Although she does not explicitly invoke race here, Payne does say later in the film that sometimes at clubs where the band was playing she would be stopped and asked “Who are you?” because she was Black. Reading these moments together, race becomes a complicating factor in Mah’s and Payne’s negotiations of how to display their bodies in performance. (303)

Other punk bands, like Los Crudos, used their native language to challenge and push the expectations of whiteness. Similarly, I mentioned at the start of this chapter the effect Puerto Rican band Un Final Fatal’s Spanish lyrics had on the New Orleans audience. Even when audience members cleared out due to the unfamiliar language, Los Crudos and Un Final Fatal represent a truly cultural Other, even if certain white punks do not understand the importance of bands singing against capitalism and war in their native tongues.

Many stories about Los Crudos highlight their use of Spanish lyrics and white punks’ frustration at not understanding the words. Music critic Miles Raymer wrote in the *Chicago Reader* “I remember hearing punks at the Fireside Bowl complaining that they couldn’t understand front man Martin Sorrondeguy’s lyrics because they were in Spanish.” Los Crudos, a band with radical politics, intentionally made singing in Spanish part of their politics. Singing in their native tongue created access trouble for English-speaking whites, allowing them to see privilege in action. At the same time, singing in Spanish also encouraged punk music for non-English speakers at a time when that was not happening on a large scale.

An anonymous writer of “Not Just Posing for the Postcard: A Discussion of Punk and the New Abolition” argues that the Otherness of the punk movement should encourage

members to seek connection with people of color in other communities, particularly those in hip-hop culture. She writes,

To all the punks, one of the most important things that could strengthen the political punk movement and create ways for White punks to understand their place in the way race is constructed, is for punks to form alliances with the hip hop community. As a culture generally made up of people of color, hip hop often espouses similar politics: anti-consumerism, anti-capitalism, DIY, and anti-corporate greed, as well as emphasizing a total lifestyle change with a soundtrack, reading material and art all its own. (198)

The band Death Grips has taken up this call not just politically, but musically. Death Grips' Stephan "MC Ride" Burnett, rapper, and Zach Hill, punk drummer, effectively create the kinds of musical solidarity called for above. The duo has also ruffled feathers at their label Epic Records by releasing their second 2012 album, *No Love Deep Web*, online for free without Epic's consent and were recently dropped from their label due to this action. This move marks the ways in which Death Grips has adopted the anti-capitalist ideals represented in the movements of punk and hip hop, and shows the lack of freedom many bands experience under a capitalist, non-punk label structure.

### Folk Music and Race

One goal of this dissertation is to describe how folk punk musical performances are shaped by the history of punk and folk communities. While I draw primarily from punk for this study, the history of folk music also deals with the complexities of racial politics. Woody Guthrie is perhaps the most well known American folk musician in history. He has written and performed some of the most famous folk songs including "This Land is Your Land," "Bound for Glory," "Union Maid," and "Pastures of Plenty." Guthrie's legacy is one mostly remembered for its leftist leanings and pro-communist messages. Known as the

“Dust Bowl Troubadour,” Guthrie sang of the harsh economic situations and class trouble Americans faced. However, Guthrie was not always as enlightened when it came to his discussions of race. Will Kaufman, a musician and Guthrie historian, retells a narrative on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Guthrie’s birth on the Internet television program *Democracy Now!*:

[Guthrie] arrived in California, I think, with the influence of having grown up in a state dominated by the Klan and growing up in a family that supported the Klan. He wasn’t all that racially enlightened when he went out to California. There’s evidence in the Archives that he would, you know, write these mock poems about Africans—African Americans are bathing on the beach in Santa Monica with the—you know, giving off the Ethiopian smell and with jungle rhythms pounding in their veins. And he’d happily sing songs using the N-word and words like “coons” and stuff like that, which were part of that white mountain tradition. And so, he’s on this radio station sometime in 1937, and he announces that he’s going to play a song from Uncle Dave Macon on the Grand Ole Opry, and Gid Tanner and the Skillet Lickers, as well, recorded it, a lovely song called “Run, Nigger, Run.” And he announces it, and he plays it. And he gets a letter from a member of his listening audience the next day. And I know that letter by heart. I’ve seen it. He says, “You were getting along pretty well on your program tonight, until you announced your nigger blues. I’m a Negro, a young Negro in college. And I certainly resented your remark. No person or person of any intelligence uses that word over the radio today.” And that letter really hit Woody like a slap in the face. He was mortified. He apologized profusely on the air the next day. He made a big point of dramatically tearing out the song sheet from his notebook and tearing it to shreds and promising he would never use that word again. And as he later said, “I apologize to the Negro people for the frothings that I let slip out of the corners of my mouth.” So this is the beginning of his conversion, I suppose, to eventually becoming one of the most ardent champions and activists for racial equality. (“Democracy”)

This story highlights an important aspect of Guthrie’s, as well as folk’s, history.

American folk music, as it is colloquially defined, is often the music of white men. Notable exceptions exist, but a great deal of folk music was written and promulgated by white men, and those men made millions of mistakes in sharing their messages and expressing their ideas. Unlike punk music, which benefited from a community based around political criticism and modern communication technologies, folk music lacked that collective voice

in the ears of artists, and as such, often had no way of challenging an artist's racist or sexist lyrics. However, as the exchange between Guthrie and his listeners demonstrates, those voices were present and sometimes were able to be heard.

### Folk Punk and Class

Chris Clavin did not talk about class on July 3 in New Orleans. However, in my later discussions with him, it became apparent that economics influence how he runs Plan-It-X. Clavin focuses on do-it-yourself, or DIY, projects. DIY is a lifestyle and a means of making music without the aid of large corporations or their extensions via technology and capital. Plan-It-X essentially consists of Chris and volunteers who sell records, CDs, and tapes for almost no profit. This DIY business model promotes the music without exploiting the artists, largely because, as Clavin says, he only records his friends. This hints at a larger belief system based on trust that can be found in the punk and folk punk scenes. As an ethos critical of capitalistic class politics, Plan-It-X challenges the now dominant capitalist business model and offers workers and members of the lower class options that simply do not exist in dominant society.

Folk music, historically created and produced by those from humble and rural economic situations, should also be examined for its approach to class and class privilege. Iain Ellis explains in his article "Resistance and Relief: The Wit and Woes of Early Twentieth Century Folk and Country Music":

Mostly performed by working-class artists for working-class audiences, pre-rock genres spoke in the argots of their respective regions and demographic audiences. Consequently, a vast panorama of styles developed across the nation in relative isolation from one another. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the burgeoning forms of blues, jazz, and swing developed within predominantly black

communities, while folk and country became the representative styles of white rural America. (161)

Within these forms of white rural musicians, song topics seemed to cover all parts of daily life, especially focusing on hardships. Ellis's article points to the humor used in folk music to deal with the difficulty of life:

For both black and white working-class communities, personal and collective hardships were omnipresent realities that they could not know, the Great Depression years (as well as the years prior and after) defining a sweeping class condition of scarcity and struggle. The musical representatives of these sub-cultures responded to their woes in myriad fashions, though all drew from a survivalist humor of some kind as a coping mechanism. (162)

Ellis also notes that American folk music was primarily the music of white rural communities. Not so unlike punk, there was an attitude of aggression and frustration expressed in the music of American folk:

Within white rural communities, folk singers tended to address their hand-to-mouth hardships with "ain't-gonna-take-it-anymore" resistant protests aimed squarely at the "oppressive" institutions and systemic forces they deemed responsible. (162)

This attitude has been celebrated in American history from the fighting of the British to the organized labor victories of the 1930s; like the story of America, folk music has older, European roots. Ellis describes the folk music of this country as the music of poor immigrants:

The folk music of America is a by-product of the nation's poor European settlers and the music they brought with them. That such music has stood the test of time speaks to the stability and conservative character of the rural outposts where it gestated and mutated through generations of global immigrant interactions. Folk's longevity is also a reflection of it being a storytelling vehicle, a source of oral history in narrative form; it is literary at its core. (163)

Folk music tells stories, particularly of rural whites in America, and these stories are linked to the particular times and places in which the songs are conceived and sung. Through the lens of performance studies, folk may be defined as an aesthetic and performative form that

communicates history to an audience. Folk music seeks to challenge and change the ways in which we interact with the problems of the present through sharing the history of the past. According to Ellis, folk music is a musical rejection of the prefabricated American dream, a challenge to the dominant forces expressing the notion that capitalism has failed to offer the opportunity it promised. Ellis shows that folk music is grounded in principles of social justice and has been used by many to advocate against class inequalities.

The history of folk music— both prior to and throughout rock’s heritage — is a history of struggle over the concept and reality of the American Dream, how its promises have often gone unfulfilled and its social justice principles found wanting. Its point-of-view is that of the underdog, whether in its most traditional form from a working-class perspective, or more recently from black, gay, female, or other perspectives that represent identity positions of subjugation within the broader society. To a youth untamed by adult compromise, his/her antenna fixed to receive and respond to the hypocrisy of the parent generation, the spirit of folk music can be the very lifeblood of youth rebellion. (163)

Pete Seeger, another famous folk musician of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, took a strange path to his position in musical history, including being tried by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. The accusations lobbed at Seeger claimed that he performed for Communist and labor union parties. Seeger gave a memorable speech to the committee and largely refused to answer questions, and yet managed to avoid being held in contempt of court, though he was blacklisted like many other artists of the era. Biographer Alec Wilkinson tells a story of Seeger’s early career when he was a member of the vagabond puppeteers:

“The bulk of their appearances were at picket lines and meetings of dairy farmers who were on strikes against milk wholesalers. The farmers would sometimes sit in the fields and shoot holes in the scab milk trucks. . . For Strike meetings, the puppeteers had skits in to which they would insert the names of local farmers. . . . between acts he would step out front and sing “The Farmer is the Man” and a cotton farmers song adapted to “one dollar milk and forty cent meat.” (56-7)

Seeger’s dedication to union causes and anti-capitalist causes, as well as his modest income in the early days, planted him deeply in the center of a number of conflicts, but perhaps



more than anything else, directly in the middle of the intersection of race and class politics. Near his home in Beacon, New York, Seeger was scheduled to play a show to help fund a poor Harlem school. The KKK destroyed the stage the day before the concert. When the concert was held again, racist whites lined the roads, police blocked exits, and many threw rocks at the cars and buses of concertgoers headed down the road for 25 miles. Seeger's work on these causes, education, race and class issues, even at great personal expense and risk, makes him a hero and inspiration figure for folk punk today.

Seeger's ability to inspire change and imagination is best illustrated through his view that music is a participatory event, and in most of his singing engagements, he asked the audience to sing along. He famously sang Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land," including the lost verse, shown below, at President Barack Obama's first inauguration. The lost verse is Woody Guthrie's slam against capitalism:

*Was a high wall there that tried to stop me  
A sign was painted said: Private Property,  
But on the back side it didn't say nothing —  
This land was made for you and me.*

Punk and folk punk is the music of poor and/or working class people. While most scholars of punk recognize this statement, many associate class issues in the formations of English punk. This is due to a number of factors: England's society is a place in which class is more easily identifiable and more caste-like in structure. Much of the existing punk literature focuses on England as the beginnings of punk, a claim with which I take issue but do not address in detail in this document. Of this, Bruce Dancis writes, "British punk often concerns working-class themes, particularly youthful unemployment and the lack of opportunity that come out of the life experiences of the musicians. In the United States

punk rock has little of the class dimension, the social protest it does contain often seems postured” (63). I find this generalization hard to swallow, and one that drips with Anglophile tendencies that would celebrate the punk of one place over another. In stark contrast, Andy Lewis writes:

[T]he inept bumbling offered by most of the UK’s punk bands at this time could not compare [to the Dead Kennedys]. In fact, the focus of articulation and intelligent hardcore was switching to the U.S. . . . and to this day the U.S. has remained its most fertile breeding ground. (4)

So as to avoid bias, if one were to examine a current issue of the punk publication *Maximum Rock N Roll*, one would likely find that the great majority of punk bands are now found throughout the world, including in Japan and Brazil, but even in the 1980s and 90s, the scenes in England and the U.S. were diverse. Like this history, trying to pin down a single origin for punk is a fruitless task. In its earliest times, punk as a worldwide phenomenon may appear to have been most active in the U.S. and the U.K., but punk has long been a global affair. Of this global punk era, sociologists Malott and Pena write:

However, punk rock was not exclusive to straight white men. People of African descent, Latina/os, white women, lesbian women of various ethnic racial groups, and gay men have all appealed to the punk rock aesthetic, largely as a reaction to both the dominant punk aesthetics and the ideas, values, and beliefs of dominant societies. (24)

I hesitate at labeling all punk music as reactionary. The word, in the current neoliberal context, typically denotes a discrediting move that takes away from punk’s inventiveness. However, punk may be reactionary in a more positively-valenced version of the term. In particular, punk music has long been a music that draws attention to the situations artists find unacceptable in society. For example, punk artist Alice Bag has made education reform her life’s work.

Alice Bag's *Violence Girl* tells her story of growing up in poor neighborhoods of East Los Angeles and going on to become a punk star in the early LA scene. Bag's book highlights the ways in which her economic status affected her life and music. Bag (born Alicia Armendariz) was the lead singer for a number of early LA punk bands, including The Bags. In *Violence Girl*, Bag describes the confluence of effects enabling her to perform with rage and anger at audiences while aggressively yelling lyrics into the microphone. An essentially intersectional figure, Bag writes about the many dualities she experienced as a poor Mexican-American:

Through this seemingly vapid sport of lucha libre, I learned to understand the concept of duality at an early age. It was the same kind of duality that I experienced when I realized that I both loved and hated my father, that a rudo – a villain – could also be a good guy. It was as much a part of Mexican culture as eating a sweet apple with salt and chili or celebrating the bleak inevitability of death by making brightly colored sugar skulls with your name on them. (50)

Bag's account of duality demonstrates the kind of work required of the intersectional figure. Like Pete Seeger, Bag is an activist who makes music a part of her larger political project.

As mentioned, a great deal of punk music deals with class issues. However, in the 1980s punk shifted from a general affront to popular culture to more targeted criticism and took a decidedly anti-capitalist turn. While folk was known for espousing unions and communism as economic philosophies, punk and hardcore especially, took on a more radical economic and anti-capitalist tone. Bands like the Stiff Little Fingers, Social Distortion, and Bad Brains wrote songs that expressed the evils of and exploitation inherent in the capitalist system.

Craig O'Hara writes in *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise* "The Punk movement was originally formed in nations holding capitalist, pseudo-democratic policies.

Because of this, capitalism and its problems became the first target of political Punks. Homelessness, classism, and exploitation seem to be some of the results of a system built on greed” (58). The political nature of punk as described by O’Hara has taken many forms including the DIY philosophy expressed by Clavin and Plan-It-X Records. Chris Clavin has been in over 20 bands in his musical career. While I began this chapter with a discussion of Inky Skulls, I first encountered Clavin’s music via his band Ghost Mice. My favorite Ghost Mice song is titled “Free Pizza for Life,” which begins:

I’m gonna write this in a book one day / but for now this song will have to do / It’s about the lengths you and I were willing to go to / to get some free food / It was 1990-something I can’t remember / I’m bad with dates / you and I were living in my van / everything that we had we had to take.

Eventually, Clavin wrote the book he promised (I have cited it a number of times throughout this chapter). More importantly, the song marks the beginning of a story about an economic hardship that drives the characters, Chris and Samantha. We learn from the book that the characters are forced to endure extreme measures to be able to eat. “We stole checkbooks / and credit cards / signed signatures that were not ours / slice after slice we ate / pizza every night / we always shared it with our friends / gave the driver a mighty tip / in our simple minds we had / a slice of a paradise.” The measures they take to subvert the capitalist system of exchange are marked not only by theft from corporations, but also by a willingness to share the rewards of their transgressions. This communitarian ethic, performed in the mighty “tipping” and “sharing” of the bounty, demonstrates a self-reliance that challenges stereotypes of the poor, often put forth by those with a great deal of privilege.

The song concludes with an apology from Chris to Samantha because the police eventually caught her. However, Chris also ends the song with an acknowledgement that ethics, when faced with certain necessities, refuse the binary of right/wrong: “sorry you’re the one they caught / I wish it coulda been me my friend / I’m not saying we were wrong / and I’m not saying we were right / all I know is what we want / Free Pizza For Life / Free Pizza For Life / Free Pizza For Life / Free Pizza For Life / Free Pizza For Life.”

“Free Pizza for Life” represents a class performance in folk punk, by focusing on the clever strategies of those who wish to avoid and subvert the system, yet it is also a cautionary tale portraying the consequences of stepping out of line. For Clavin living outside of the expected system of capitalism and general society is also projected into the future in the Inky Skulls song “Die Like Lions”:

I wanna die with empty pockets / let the gold melt through my jeans / there’s no reason to keep it / cause I can’t take it with me, / money in the bank seems like money gone to waste / when you’re deep down in your grave / there’s nothing left for you to save. / I wanna die worn out and desperate, / I wanna die tired and hungry. . . I wanna die wild and free

For Clavin, to die like a lion is to die outside of cultural expectations in terms of money and possessions. This sought freedom can only be possessed outside of these restrictive structures, at least in the experience of many punks and cultural Others.

Famous for their refusal to use electric equipment, Ghost Mice always play acoustic.<sup>1</sup> While Clavin has worked to remain a cultural outsider and Other, his status as the quintessential punk has been at times inscribed by others referencing him, covering his songs, and attending his musical festival in Bloomington, Indiana.

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<sup>1</sup> According to their website: “We play 100% acoustic. We never use amps or mics (except at Plan-It-X Fest and on Oct. 28, 2006 for The fest V)”

Tao Lin's *Shoplifting from American Apparel* makes an important mention of Chris Clavin's band Ghost Mice near the end of the novella, when the character Joseph was living with Clavin in Florida. "They walked toward the University of Florida to see Chris' band Ghost Mice . . . Joseph and Sam watched Ghost Mice and another band and went back to Joseph's house and sat in Chris' room and listened to Joseph's new CD" (82-83). This reference to Ghost Mice, and Clavin in particular, marks a kind of cultural currency and showcases the notion that his ideals are well known in the folk punk community and beyond.

## Conclusion

A close analysis of the intersection of race and class begins with one Inky Skulls show but requires much more than a single performance of any kind. Understanding this complex intersection requires the performer/audience to acknowledge the various kinds of privileges that exist and that have historically existed within these musical communities, in particular whiteness and class privilege. These privileges have allowed punks and folk musicians access to services and safety nets that were/are not available to racial and economic Others. Second, understanding the intersection of race and class in folk punk requires an appreciation of the particular histories and conflicts of groups within the historical movements that make up folk punk's roots. In this chapter, I have outlined some of the particular racial and class strategies that community members have attempted in the name of solidarity, as well as highlighted those attempts harboring ulterior motives. While the strategies I include reveal my own idiosyncratic interests and privileged access to these communities, I do not speak for the entirety of punk or folk music communities. Instead,

this chapter draws from exemplars of the best and the worst in order to offer the audience ground on which to explore the world from its own standpoint and to seek out its own particular brands of solidarity.

Folk punk bands perform at the intersection of race and class. Chris Clavin's bands, including Inky Skulls and Ghost Mice, embody performances that sit in the center of these intersections. In fact, Clavin himself functions as an intersectional figure in folk punk. The history of punk and folk music's involvement in issues of race and class is ripe with exemplars. These examples include the aesthetic acts of an Inky Skulls show in New Orleans, Los Crudos' Spanish language lyrics, Death Grips' combining punk and hip-hop, Patti Smith's troubling lyrics, Black Flag's song "White Minority," This Bike is a Pipe Bomb's mockery of Skinheads, everyday performances of DIY production, and Los Angeles punks living in The Canterbury Apartments. These performances, both aesthetic and everyday, highlight the depth and breadth of the intersectional performances of race and class in folk punk music.

CHAPTER THREE: PUSSY RIOT!  
PERFORMING AT THE INTERSECTION OF WOMEN AND NONHUMAN ANIMALS

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away  
Put Putin away, put Putin away  
Black robe, golden epaulettes  
All parishioners crawl to bow  
The phantom of liberty is in heaven  
Gay-pride sent to Siberia in chains  
The head of the KGB, their chief saint  
Leads protesters to prison under escort  
In order not to offend His Holiness  
Women must give birth and love  
Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!  
Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!  
Virgin Mary, Mother of God, become a feminist  
Become a feminist, become a feminist  
The Church's praise of rotten dictators  
The cross-bearer procession of black limousines  
A teacher-preacher will meet you at school  
Go to class - bring him money!  
Patriarch Gundyaev believes in Putin  
Bitch, better believe in God instead  
The belt of the Virgin can't replace mass-meetings  
Mary, Mother of God, is with us in protest!  
Virgin Mary, Mother of God, put Putin away  
Put Putin away, put Putin away. (Pussy Riot!, "Punk Prayer")

Pussy Riot! kicked their way into the punk world consciousness in brightly colored masks, dresses, boots, and tights. Pussy Riot!'s performance of "Punk Prayer" on February 21, 2012 at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow was not their first, nor was it their last. "Punk Prayer," however, is the most infamous exhibition by the feminist collective band. Five members of Pussy Riot! entered the Cathedral that February and made their way to the altar; this is significant for many reasons, primarily because women are strictly forbidden in the Russian Orthodox Church (Scholder 15). Upon the altar, the five members danced, kicked, knelt in prayer, pumped their fists, and sang, all while experiencing immediate and unrelenting efforts by the church's nuns and guards attempting to stop the



explosive performance. During this time, other members of the collective actively videotaped the events, which lasted for roughly 40 seconds in total.

An investigation into the incident led to the immediate arrests of three members of Pussy Riot!: Maria Alyokhina, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, and Yekaterina Samutsevich. The three sat in pretrial detention for five months before their blatantly sham trial, when they were officially convicted of “hooliganism” and “blasphemy.” All were found guilty initially, though only two of the women, Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina, would serve the two-year sentences in a harsh Siberian labor camp.

I did not witness Pussy Riot! play at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Like many Westerners, I was only made aware of Pussy Riot! via the now famous YouTube videos the band released, set in the Cathedral, an old Byzantine church, embellished with many gold statues and ornate details. The first video, entitled “Punk Prayer,” is an edited version of the original performance that includes the song “Put Putin Away,” dubbed over the top of the visuals from inside the Cathedral. The other video is simply the unedited film of the performance from inside the Cathedral. This second film was the original source material for the “Punk Prayer” broadcast. In both videos, the members of Pussy Riot! don their now famously recognizable costumes, brightly colored dresses and tights with boots and vibrant balaclavas covering their faces. They are seen dancing and playing guitars and singing, as well as performing bows and crossing themselves. Their interchangeable uniforms, traded at the conclusion of each performance, mark the collective identity of the band as well as conceal the individual identities of its members. However, the trial revealed that at least one of the defendants had her mask ripped from her head by members of cathedral security. In the footage, one can see security personnel are trying to stop the performance

as nuns hold back crowds at the wings, including the cameraperson shooting the film as she tries to get close enough to capture the events.

Musically, Pussy Riot! sounds like aggressive punk guitar riffs and drums supporting loud and yelled lyrics, though in some performances like “Punk Prayer” these sounds are juxtaposed with choral singing and accompanying piano. The aggression of the vocals to my non-Russian speaking ears is perhaps enhanced by my lack of understanding and familiarity with the language. However, as Pussy Riot! has described themselves as influenced by Riot Grrl and Oi, it seems a natural assumption that the aggression I hear is present for those more familiar with Russian as well. To speak of Pussy Riot! musically is difficult, in that the members of the band at any given performance change, and the sound the band produces is also subject to change. However, there is a remarkable consistency in the band’s recorded songs and videos.

Lyrically, Pussy Riot!’s music is politically precise in its targeting of people and institutions the band seeks to challenge. “Punk Prayer” for instance, takes on Vladimir Putin and his ever-growing political collusion with the Orthodox Church. The song calls on the Virgin Mary to “put Putin away,” and calls out the leader of the Orthodox Church as well. Because of the band’s site-specific performances, the subjects of their songs change frequently to meet the need of their particular locations. Yet, the band always focuses on feminist themes and fighting authoritarian politics and corruption. Since the trial and sentencing of the jailed members of Pussy Riot! the band’s work has shifted to highlighting the injustice the group has faced, as well as promises to remain politically effective and present.

The world became engrossed in the Pussy Riot! controversy, and many, like me, closely monitored the detention, trial, and appeal process as it unfolded. I spent countless hours watching the band's videos, listening to their songs, and reading ongoing news reports. The message was clear: Pussy Riot! was being railroaded for speaking publicly about corruption in Russian politics, and for their beliefs in feminism. As enthralled and enraged as I became watching the events unfold, the whole thing also seemed so far away, and I felt it was difficult to find ways to help. I bought a "Pussy Riot!" patch with a masked face on the front and sewed it on my denim vest. I donated to the legal defense fund and bought the book *Pussy Riot!: A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. In contrast to actual events, these acts seem futile.

Pussy Riot! is a performance art group of feminist punks consisting of 12 to 15 anonymous members formed in August of 2011. Many might compare their acts to the now famous Guerilla Girls, an activist theater collective, comprised of anonymous members in gorilla masks, which began in New York over twenty years ago to create performances to fight sexism and racism in the art world. Interestingly, according *Vice Magazine*, members give credit to the Riot Grrrl movement for inspiring their activism and community building (Langston, "Meeting").

While I discuss Riot Grrrl in more detail later in this chapter, it is another movement of punk or post-punk feminism, considered to be a response to the sexism and sexual violence faced by women in and out of the early punk scene. Sara Marcus's *Girls to the Front* places Riot Grrrl's beginnings around 1989. Riot Grrrl particularly addressed the sexual violence and rape prevalent during this time, which went largely ignored by mainstream culture.

Comments from the trial highlight the feminist focus of Pussy Riot!. In the following instance, Nadezhda Tolokonnikov, known to the American press simply as Nadya, focused on the word “feminist” when given the opportunity in court to ask witnesses questions. One can also see the highly one-sided nature of the trial Pussy Riot! received in the following dialogue: “Nadya: Is feminist a swear word? Witness: It is if it's said in church.” Then she asks a different witness: “Do you find the word feminist insulting? Witness: I do. For an Orthodox believer it is an insult, an obscenity.” “Nadya: Do you know what the word feminist means? *Judge disallows the question*” (Scholder 50-1 emphasis in original). In her opening statement to the court, Nadya describes her feminist politics in further detail:

The punk band Pussy Riot!, to which I belong, is a musical group that conducts unexpected performances in different urban spaces. Pussy Riot!'s songs address topical political issues. The interests of the group members are political activism, ecology, and the elimination of authoritarian tendencies in the Russian State system through the creation of civil society. (Scholder 41)

While feminism is a primary concern of Pussy Riot!, several statements from the band like the ones above lead me to argue that their stance is intersectional. Arguing against the charge that the performance was inspired by religious hatred, Nadya says, “It is not easy for me being cynically and cruelly labeled with feelings I have never experienced toward any living being on earth” (Scholder 45). These moments of mentioning ecology and all living beings on earth mark a reference to the planet and species beyond the human as Nadya opens her case to the judge.

Given these concerns, I also note that Mahsa, one of the members who stood trial, is a vegan and was not given appropriate meals during the trial. In fact, she passed out from hunger during one of the days of trial. In response, People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals (PETA) member Alicia Silverstone created an online petition and included in it a letter she wrote to Vladimir Putin that reads:

Dear President Putin, I have been following the trial involving three members of the band Pussy Riot!. As a vegan myself, I was deeply concerned to learn that one of the women, Maria Alekhina, who is a vegan, reportedly collapsed from hunger during a court session. I respectfully request you to ensure that vegan meals are available to Ms. Alekhina — and all prisoners.

Regardless of the trial and its outcome, I'm sure you can agree that everyone has the right to show compassion and refrain from harming animals by being vegan. May I please have your assurance that Ms. Alekhina will have access to vegan foods?

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.

This concern for the welfare of animals represented by veganism, highlighted by the vegan advocacy from the West represented by Alicia Silverstone, marks a convergence of interests at work in Pussy Riot!: a deep concern for women and nonhuman animals.

This chapter explores the intersections between the oppression of women and nonhuman animals as represented and fought against by folk and punk music historically, as well as folk punk today. Pussy Riot! functions as an excellent example, as musician and music scholar Vivien Goldman writes: "Though they are best known as a band, Pussy Riot!'s music is rarely discussed. It is vigorous melodic punk, with choruses that ring like folk music. Their urgency energizes" (143). Thus, Pussy Riot! may be called a folk inspired punk band, if not an outright folk punk band. In various interviews, several members of Pussy Riot! have claimed to be inspired by the "Oi" punk movement, which could easily be viewed as the British version of the American folk punk movement (Langston).

Performance studies scholar Barbra Browning marks a metaphoric relationship between Pussy Riot!'s actions and their use of ski masks or balaclavas: "Every point delivered in Samutsevich, Tolokonnikova, and Alyokhina's closing statements at the trial

introduced, in fact, an opening: gashes in a mask—eyeholes ripped open for seeing clearly, a mouthhole for speaking truth. Once you rip these holes open, there's no going back" (137).

This chapter offers a consideration of the intersection of women and nonhuman animals via the process philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. After I describe becoming-woman and becoming-animal, I illustrate folk punk's potential as becoming-music.

### Becoming-Woman

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* argues for a radical shift in the ontological assumptions that humans make about the world, and perhaps more importantly about their own identities. The most important shift is one from stable structures, beings, or territorializations in the Deleuze and Guattari lexicon, to deterritorializations and becomings. The anti-capitalist project of Deleuze and Guattari is the focus of this mission as they seek a way to avoid what they deem the essential quality of capitalism, capture. For Deleuze and Guattari, "becoming" is a tactic to avoid capture; through "becoming" identity instead of a solidified being, one becomes more difficult to apprehend, indiscernible and anonymous. One of the ways Deleuze and Guattari argue for indiscernibility is to move to the in-between spaces of otherwise solidified dualisms, for example, the dualisms expressed between male and female or between human and nature. Deleuze and Guattari offer contested dualisms as a tactic to point to the problems of dualistic thinking and binaries, which can be generalizing and limiting. Of course, aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's argument have drawn criticism from some scholars, most notably feminists, as the pair ultimately resorts to dualisms for the sake of criticizing binaries, whether in jest or ironically. I address this criticism further after I introduce the concept of becoming-woman.

Film scholar Amy Herzog points out that Deleuze and Guattari argue for a political move in their notion of becoming, particularly the ways in which becomings are always toward a minority position:

The movement that is becoming is always political for Deleuze and Guattari. Because it creates an indiscernibility between molar identities, and because it initiates unnatural coupling between otherwise distinct groups, becoming is a powerful means of dismantling those identities. Becoming is always a becoming-minoritarian, and it opposes the unified subject with the notions of multiplicity. Each molar identity is molecularly reassembled through its encounter with another, and thus while it makes sense for a dominant identity such as a man to enter into becoming-woman or a becoming animal, it is impossible for a minority identity to become-man. (183)

Herzog explains that the reason becomings move to the minoritarian position is to evade capture:

Becoming is thus always becoming-other. It involves the meeting of two disparate entities who form an alliance or assemblage toward the realization of some goal. Becomings reassemble the core components of these molar identities, the very specificity of their bodies, forming unnatural unions that rupture, transect, and take flight from those stable positions. (183)

Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of the wasp and the orchid to clarify their point.

They explain that even though these species are separated by biological classification, they have developed a relationship in which they are essential to one another, and because of this moment where they are in contact they form the wasp-orchid assemblage, or as Deleuze and Guattari write, "A becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp." (10). In these moments of connection between the orchid-wasp, the beings form a singular identity, neither orchid nor entirely wasp, living at the middle in a block of time between two points that would represent either as a distinct individual. "The line or block, does not link the wasp to the orchid any more than it conjugates or mixes them; it passes

between them, carrying them away in shared proximity in which the discernibility of points disappears” (294).

While Deleuze and Guattari explore a number of becomings in their text, they argue that becoming-woman must always come first. “Although all becomings are already molecular, including becoming-woman, it must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman” (277). Becomings move from the molar, steady state, or static notion of self, to a process-oriented philosophy. These are not mimetic moves or impersonations, but are actual metamorphoses, and thus becoming-woman exists as the move to the first minority. Through this stance, Deleuze and Guattari argue that women, actual historical women who face the greatest oppression in the world, are the first minority of becoming. Herzog notes that feminist scholars, most notably Irigaray, challenge the notion of becoming-woman because of its potential of erasure by enabling the male to take over the woman.

Not surprisingly, the concept of becoming-woman has been met with suspicion by feminist scholars. The privileging of becoming-woman as the first threshold in a larger series of becomings presents the central difficulty for many critics, especially the demand for women, whose status as subjects has been so historically unstable, must be first to relinquish subjectivity. (185)

However, Herzog notes that criticisms like these, while important, miss the potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s argument. Herzog parses out the beneficial and truly feminist potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming:

The concerns expressed by Irigaray and Jardin are serious ones. At the same time, there is a degree to which they underestimate the potential Deleuze and Guattari might have for feminist projects. Despite some significant problems with the manner in which Deleuze and Guattari frame the concept of becoming-woman, their objective is clearly to dismantle binary notions of gender, and indeed of the gendered subject itself. (Herzog 185)



While I explore queerness in Chapter Four, Deleuze and Guattari use the operating binaries of culture to challenge cultural gender structures while simultaneously critiquing them.

Brian Massumi foregrounds the benefits of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy in terms of gender:

The feminine gender stereotype involves greater indeterminacy ("fickle") and movement ("flighty") and has been burdened by the patriarchal traditions with a disproportionate load of paradox (virgin/whore, mother/lover). Since super-molecularity involves the capacity to superpose states that are "normally" mutually exclusive, Deleuze and Guattari hold that the feminine cliché offers better departure point than masculinity for a rebecoming-supermolecular of the personified individual. (104)

Art becomes the answer to the criticism that becoming-woman generates. In particular, Herzog argues for an art that disrupts the flows of culture that dominate existence. Her argument does not seek to remove the bodies of real life women, but instead to come to understand the complexities in which all bodies exist, and seeks in Deleuze and Guattari a terminology that makes that possible. Herzog writes,

[I]t is essential to distinguish between actual, lived bodies, discourses that construct and control those bodies, and forms of artistic expression. While these forces intersect and interact with one another, the movements and trajectories of each are neither their identical, nor equivalent. Art can present a provocation, a shock that makes thought possible. An artistic work that opens or disassembles the body, circulating images that can be read in light of the "body without organs" or "becoming-woman," is not asserting that actual bodies are irrelevant or that discourses that control actual bodies can easily be dismantled. On the contrary, the embedded, pervasive nature of these discourses demands that artists and philosophers radicalize their means of expression—images, thoughts, and words—as weapons against those molar forces that territorialize and fix the body. (204)

Becoming-woman in this way is a first step to understanding oneself not as a set of standard deviations from some prescribed "normal." Instead, becoming-woman is acceptance of the radical individuality of the self and the ability of that self to live in a contradictory world. While Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the positionality of

women is essentialist and lacks necessary nuance, it does give credit to women for having a more complicated position in the world than men. From this complex position, one that entails the incongruities of real life, the hope is that modernist certainty about oneself dissipates. This becoming-woman resembles a postmodern self, as we have come to know it, a self full of contradiction and fragmentation, constructed as an amalgam of social, familial, individual, and cultural forces. From this positionality of becoming-woman, folk punk music may be an art that shakes audiences from their slumbers.

### Becoming-Animal

One of the most well known becomings, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is becoming-animal. While not the premier becoming, becoming-animal is one of the most radical. Becoming-animal disrupts the duality or binary between humans and nature. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the nature side of that dyad is associated with multiplicity and affect. They write, "Becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity" (239). Becoming-animal is not a progress or a regress narrative, and is not an advocacy for neo-primitivism, like that advocated by Terrance McKenna or any 1960s "back to the land movement." Deleuze and Guattari state, "To become is not to progress or regress along a series" (262). The goal of becoming-animal is not the process of devolving into an animal nor is it a process of imitating animals. Deleuze and Guattari posit:

For if becoming-animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not "really" become an animal anymore than the animal "really" becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which becoming passes. Becoming can and should be qualified as

becoming-animal even in the absence of a term that would be the animal become.  
(238)

The text recalls the earlier goal of Deleuze and Guattari's project of avoiding capitalist capture. To help readers understand their rationale about the structure of the assemblages of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari submit the rhizome as a biological metaphor as it stands opposed to the arborescent:

Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiations. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to or lead back to, "appearing," "being," "equaling" or "producing." (239)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is a way to describe how we are composed. As process philosophers, Deleuze and Guattari recognize the human self is not merely an object but is instead a series of processes or loci of intersecting forces. Deleuze and Guattari use the plant metaphor, "A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicals. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes" (7). The rhizomatic way of being is different from the arborescent (tree-like) or what Deleuze and Guattari call *genealogical* ways of being or thinking about being. In this distinction, their take on genealogy and arborism (as in, the family tree model) indicts hierarchies and linear methods of understanding, as well as organic, natural beings. Deleuze and Guattari explain the rhizome is not hierarchical, is not singular, and is made up of multiple forces that come together in multiplicities. "All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this 'plane' increase with the number of connections that are made on it" (9). This flatness

comes from an egalitarian notion in the field of forces at work in a being; the resultant being, like the tuber, can appear at any location in the plane where connections are made.

Multiplicities are not defined by the elements involved but rather by the interstice, the space in between the elements, which simultaneously both connects and separates these elements; it is what links them and separates them, incessantly forging and dissolving the relations between them. What ultimately defines a network or a multiplicity is neither their opposition to tree nor the number of their elements but rather the infiniteness of relations that constitute what they are. (Erikkson 34)

For Deleuze and Guattari, beings are networked kinds of multiplicities. Similarly, for network theorist Kai Eriksson, the making of connections allows for the appearance of emergent qualities to become meaningful. The connections between forces or substances allow for meaningful understandings of matter and thus, agents. The self contains multiplicities of forces, influences, and connections to other people. Beings may not always be consciously aware of the ways in which these forces are present or working in themselves. One might think of the Internet as a rhizomatic structure, as advocated by Bonta and Protevi, who argue that this world view lends itself to an understanding of a political philosophy challenging the structures of power: “The reference to the subterranean nature of the botanical rhizome is intentional in DG’s use of the term, because it is meant to evoke the hidden network quality of interlinked forces that have adapted to resist the striating forces of the surface and air, and particularly the hierarchized State” (134). Bonta and Protevi’s “striating forces,” terms used by Deleuze, describe segmentation and hierarchy, a sectioning off of the ability to make connection, which the rhizomatic structure avoids.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the natural world is based on a rhizomatic structure. They do not deny that trees and other tree-like structures exist, but their idea of the wild is

based in their concept of the rhizome. The wild, then, is nature represented by instinct and creativity, those characteristics that humans should, but are often reluctant to, introduce into their lives. These ideas of wild characteristics are represented by many species in Deleuze and Guattari, but in particular, they mention the rat, the louse, and the wolf. They write:

The wolf is not fundamentally a characteristic or a certain number of characteristics, it is a wolfing. The louse is a lousing and so on. What is a cry independent of the population it appeals to or takes as its witness? Virginia Woolf experiences herself not as a monkey or a fish but as a troop of monkeys, a school of fish, according to her variable relations of becoming with the people she approaches. (239)

The becoming-animal is a becoming of the writer as well, as demonstrated above by the talk of Virginia Woolf. With both word play and seriousness, Deleuze and Guattari tell writers that they should write like a rat:

Then a strange imperceptive wells up in him: either stop writing or write like a rat. . . . If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becoming-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc. We will have to explain why. Many suicides by writers are explained by these unnatural participations, these unnatural nuptials. Writers are sorcerers because they experience the animal as the only population before which they are responsible in principle. (240)

To write like a rat is then to be responsible to the metaphoric rat (not the particular rat that might run across one's floor); instead, we are to be responsible to the rat that lives inside the writer herself. For Deleuze and Guattari this becoming-animal is affect:

For the affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic, it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel. Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one's bread like a rodent. (240)

Thus, becoming-animal is the realization of one's own animalness or connection to the wild and creative spirit, and as such the writer is connected to the animal. In process philosophy, the ontological make up of everything is the process of becoming. Therefore, the properties

of a becoming are the sum of the affects created in the assemblage of the component parts. One might think back to the orchid-wasp. Like becoming-animal, writing demands a becoming whether one is writing poems, songs, or books.

No art can be imitative or figurative. Suppose a painter “represents” a bird; this is in fact a becoming-bird that can occur only to the extent that the bird itself is in the process of becoming something else, a pure line and pure color . . . imitation self destructs, since the imitator unknowingly enters into becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which she imitates. . . . The painter and the musician do not imitate the animal, they become-animal at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed, as the deepest level of their concord with nature. (304-5)

While Deleuze and Guattari are discussing animals, most would argue that they deal exclusively with abstract animals. Donna Haraway, at perhaps her most glib, disavows the idea of becoming-animal as presented in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. Haraway’s displeasure stems from her perception that becoming-animal does not sufficiently deal with the mundane everyday relationships between humans and nonhuman animal species. She writes, “The pack, or pure-affect animals, are intensive, not extensive, molecular and exceptional, not petty and molar—sublime wolf-packs, in short. I don’t think it needs comment that we will learn nothing about actual wolves in all this” (“When Species” 29). I do not think this was ever Deleuze and Guattari’s point, though neither does Haraway as she continues,

I know that D&G set out to write not a biological treatise but rather a philosophical, psychoanalytic, and literary one requiring different reading habits for the always nonmimetic play of life and narrative. But no reading strategies can mute the scorn for the homely and the ordinary in this book. (“When Species” 29)

Haraway’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s approaches differ in at least two ways: the first is what Deleuze and Guattari mean by becoming, and the second is a difference in what they mean by animals. In terms of becoming, while Deleuze and Guattari’s goal seems to be one

in which a self discovers an affect within nature or from a situation, Haraway's idea of becoming *with* animals deals with how we can ontologically exist in a more meaningful way with the critters with whom we cohabit the planet, in a radically more external way. While I think this interior/exterior dichotomy is something that violates Deleuze and Guattari's schema, I mark it only to highlight the distinction, not propose it as a "real" difference. Second, in terms of animals, Haraway correctly notes that Deleuze and Guattari are speaking of animal affects and packs much more often than particular animals, the way in which she speaks of the dog who live with her. While her quotation above demonstrates she understands the point, I fear that her criticism is too quick to write off the potential of Deleuze and Guattari for real animals.

Haraway's criticism misses the productive potential in Deleuze and Guattari's process philosophy. Just as Herzog found the radical potential for animal rights projects via Deleuze and Guattari, Haraway might too find productive kinship with Deleuze and Guattari. Haraway's *When Species Meet* is a posthuman project to learn to become *with* nonhuman animals and in particular with the mundane everyday animals and "critters" (as she calls them) that live in the muck of the world. Haraway asks how we can become beside them. While Deleuze and Guattari's representation of animals is pure affect, the characteristics of animals as multiplicities allow useful metaphors that represent the escape of capture, via real animals' speed and evasiveness.

One might compare Pussy Riot!'s costuming and confrontation upon the Cathedral of Christ the Savior to becoming-animal in the speed with which they moved into their places and attempted to avoid capture by the authorities, even with a desire to linger long enough to achieve their goal. Their camouflaged bodies made them difficult to spot as

individuals: they became a pack, in this way indistinguishable. Finally, Pussy Riot! went to the Cathedral to make music.

### Becoming-Music

Like the discussion of becoming-animal and art, Deleuze and Guattari pay special attention to music in their notion of becoming:

We find the same zigzag movement in the becoming-animal of music: Marcel Moré shows that the music of Mozart is permeated by a becoming-horse, or becomings-bird. But no Musician amuses himself by “playing” horse or bird. If the sound block has a becoming-animal as its content, then the animal simultaneously becomes in sonority, something else, something absolute, night, death, joy—certainly not a generality or a simplification, but a haecceity, this death, that night. Music takes as its content a becoming-animal; but in that becoming-animal the horse, for example, takes as its expression soft kettledrum beats, winged like hooves from heaven or hell; and the birds find expression in *gruppetti appoggiaturas*, staccato notes that transform them into so many souls. (304).

This move to become-music is a move to specificity, or this-ness. For this quality of becoming music, Deleuze and Guattari use the term “haecceity.” Haecceity moves from general qualities of the wild to particular qualities of particular animals, above represented by the kettledrum hoof beats and *gruppetti appoggiaturas*. While becoming-music is a particular relation between an art form and the becoming-animal of its writer and performer, becoming-music is also a moment tapped into creativity beyond the self and beyond imitation. Deleuze and Guattari expand the notion of music beyond the symphonic. Like postmodern artist John Cage, they seek the music in all sounds,

Music dispatches molecular flows . . . music is not the privilege of human beings; the universe, the cosmos, is made of refrains; the question in music is that of a power of deterritorialization permeating nature, animals, the elements, and deserts as much as human beings. The question is more what is not musical in human beings, and what is already musical in nature . . . human beings are hardly at an advantage, except in means of overcoding. . . that is even the opposite of having an advantage . . . nature opposes its power, and the power of music, to the machines of human beings,



the roar of factories and bombers . . . it is necessary for the non-musical sound of the human being to form a block with the becoming-music of sound, for them to confront and embrace each other like two wrestlers who can no longer break free from each other's grasp. (309)

Like becoming-animal, becoming-music is the human tapping into a kind of natural occurrence. In becoming-animal, the human taps into speed, instinct, and creativity. In becoming-music, the human taps into the rhythms of that nature, not as an organizing pattern or underlying superstructure, but as the opposite. The tendency of humans to seek structure is the fault of societal overcoding Deleuze and Guattari mention. Instead, the refrain is the means by which deterritorializations, or changes, become possible. Thus, becoming-music connects the machine sounds to nature's music where specific patterns or habits can be changed and interlocked.

Pussy Riot!, as a band, as a group of artists who collectively make music, become-music when they tap into the rhythms of the planet. Their music, as it calls out examples of domination and oppression in Russia, creates new becomings in its listeners. Pussy Riot! brings together the sounds of liberation and the noise of guitars and amplifiers, becoming-music just as Deleuze and Guattari describe.

## Punk and Women

Punks have long faced the accusation that their music is nothing but noise. The incredible speed, volume, and distortion used in punk are a few ways I define it as becoming-music. The oppression of women and nonhuman animals are inextricably linked throughout history, and surprisingly, a history of punk brings these issues to the fore.

Since its beginnings, punk has been associated with the performance of radical left white males. While I would challenge those notions in a number of nuanced ways, that

stereotype functions as a tool of exclusion for minorities, especially for women. In the following section, I discuss some of the contributions of punk women, not as a tokenism but to demonstrate their essential presence in punk. Yet, I also want to note ways the male forces in punk function to maintain women's exclusion. I begin with Patti Smith.

Patti Smith's first poetry reading at St. Mark's Church in Manhattan holds a respected place in punk performance lore. In her recent book, *Just Kids*, she writes of this performance on February 10, 1971,

We finished with "Ballad of a Bad Boy" accompanied by Lenny's strong rhythmic chords and electric feedback. It was the first time an electric guitar had been played in St. Mark's Church, provoking cheers and jeers. As this was hallowed ground for poetry, some objected, but Gregory [Corso] was jubilant." (182)

The performance created record contract offers and interview requests, all of which she turned down, at least at that time. Smith's singing and writing of the "Ballad of a Bad Boy" is important to note here, since this first punk poetry performance engaged in the gender-bending, deconstruction of the man/woman binary. While Chapter Four focuses more on queerness, punk began by altering assumptions of gender norms, where bands like the New York Dolls donned make-up and high-heeled shoes, as did other glam and punk acts. Smith's gender ambiguity from "typical" female, in terms of her fashion and haircut, marked her as a force to be reckoned with in the world of punk and feminism. Smith has long been interested in the advocacy of women in the world, as she writes in the "Notice" at the beginning of her *Babel*:

...heroine: the artist, the premier mistress withering in a garden graced w/highly polished blades of grass... release (ethiopian) is the drug...an animal howl says it all...notes pour into the caste of freedom...the freedom to be intense...to defy social order and break the slow kill monotony of censorship. to break from the long bonds of servitude-ruthless adoration of the celestial shepherd. let us celebrate our own flesh-to embrace not ones race mais the marathon-to never let go of the fiery sadness called desire. (10)

Smith has long been considered a precursor to, or grandmother of, punk. Her poetry and songs celebrate the strength of women, even in the face of a male dominated scene like punk, though not overtly as a feminist. She writes:

Most of my poems are written to women because women are 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. ("Please"114)

While Smith does not identify as a feminist here, she does stand as an important female figure of punk. Her defiance inspired a generation of women who struggled to figure out how to be both punks and feminists.

While women had been a constant in the punk scene, as the 1980s became the 1990s, many punk women were looking for a change. For many, Riot Grrrl promised the change they sought. While Riot Grrrl was not exclusively a music genre, in the early days in Olympia, Washington and in Washington, DC, the two early centers for Riot Grrrl, the Riot Grrrl movement initially focused on making music. As such, this chapter examines the relationship between musical performances of Riot Grrrl and feminist punk.

According to Sara Marcus, Riot Grrrl started around 1989 as the feminist world was facing an ever-growing crisis: of coming to terms with the controversies of sexual harassment, visible through the Clarence Thomas hearing; rape, as studies were repeatedly showing a rise in the rape rates in the U.S.; and abortion, as the Supreme Court heard cases attempting to overturn *Roe v Wade*. These issues, which still resonate today, demanded a response that, according to the Riot Grrrls, old guard feminism simply was not answering.

Demographically, Riot Grrrls were, on average, in their teens and twenties and largely came out of punk scenes to address not only the gendered violence they faced in

general society, but in the punk and radical scenes as well. Decentralized Riot Grrrl groups gathered around weekly meetings, zine making, direct action protests, and starting bands. Bikini Kill and Bratmobile are two of the most notable bands that came out of the early Riot Grrrl scene, both having roots in DC and Olympia. Kathleen Hanna is perhaps the most famous Riot Grrrl force. The lead singer of Bikini Kill, Hanna was given the Riot Grrrl ringleader title in the media, an undesirable nomination for a participant in a decentralized and nonhierarchical movement. For Hanna, Riot Grrrl meant finding a place to express the anger and artistry she had struggled to combine in her young life. She worked as a rape counselor while in college, and in her first Riot Grrrl meeting, she found many women had similar stories of sexual violence in their pasts. This led Hanna to continue to do similar work with women after each show while on the road as well.

On stage, Hanna was the wild front woman of Bikini Kill. She sang and growled aggressively into the microphone and performed other stage antics including writing words like “Slut” and “Incest” on her bare flesh, wearing revealing clothes, and flashing or mooning audiences. Despite her offbeat onstage persona, her politics were also evident in Bikini Kill's shows. Hanna demanded that women push their way to the front of the punk scene, both literally and figuratively, to make the space safer for them away from the moshing men in the audience. She also used the time between songs to talk about Riot Grrrl meetings, invite local chapters to talk about their own meetings, and offer spoken word performances about her beliefs about Riot Grrrl. Marcus writes,

Kathleen's voice was undeniable, her stage moves provocative . . . On the line “This is my ass,” she whirled around, bent over and flipped up her dress to reveal the pale globe of it . . . Later while Billy handled some guitar trouble Kathleen sang a snip of Hall & Oates—“Oh, here she comes; watch out boys she'll chew you up”—and segued into a Patti Smith style Spoken word piece. (115)

The lyrics of Bikini Kill's Riot Grrrl Anthem "Rebel Girl" echo Hanna's wild and humorous performances:

When she talks, I hear the revolutions  
In her hips, there's revolutions  
When she walks, the revolution's coming  
In her kiss, I taste the revolution  
Rebel girl, Rebel girl  
Rebel girl you are the queen of my world  
Rebel girl, Rebel girl  
I know I wanna take you home  
I wanna try on your clothes oh.

## Folk and Women

Folk music also possesses a history where male dominance has too often been the norm. Folk songs have regularly portrayed women as sex objects, inferior to men. However, these generalizations are obviously not universal truths. One female artist, Gerri Gribi, has made it her mission to set the record straight.

Gerri Gribi stands as a unique woman in the history of American folk music. In particular, she set out to do something in which few people in the history of folk music seem to be interested: finding songs that celebrate women, as opposed to portraying them in a negative way, as was/is the norm. Gribi's website reads:

Disturbed by the fact that all the "women's" traditional songs she knew or heard portrayed women negatively, she set out to recover songs that showed women in a more positive light. With resources ranging from the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture, to a porch in West Virginia (and most recently, the Internet) her research has unearthed songs which portray our foremothers more realistically as workers, creators, survivors and dreamers.

Gerri's recorded music includes her album *The Womansong Collection*, which features traditional folk and protest songs like: "The Cruel Yout," "Single Life," "When I Was A Fair Maid," "Cotton Mill Girls," "The Crafty Maid's Policy," "Hushabye," "Sister Thou Wast

Mild and Lovely," "Equinoxial and Phoebe," "The Old Maid's Song," "Cruel Youth," and "Union Maid." The song "Union Maid" is of special import to me as a song of women's empowerment. The lyrics go:

There once was a union maid, she never was afraid  
Of goons and ginks and company finks and the deputy sheriffs who made the raid.  
She went to the union hall when a meeting it was called,  
And when the Legion boys come 'round  
She always stood her ground.  
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union,  
I'm sticking to the union, I'm sticking to the union.  
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union,  
I'm sticking to the union 'til the day I die.  
This union maid was wise to the tricks of company spies,  
She couldn't be fooled by a company stool, she'd always organize the guys.  
She always got her way when she struck for better pay.  
She'd show her card to the National Guard  
And this is what she'd say  
You gals who want to be free, just take a tip from me;  
Get you a man who's a union man and join the ladies' auxiliary.  
Married life ain't hard when you got a union card,  
A union man has a happy life when he's got a union wife. (Guthrie)

Many original folk songs exist without a known author, but I note this song, originally written by Woody Guthrie, known as being a poor father, because Guthrie saw the strength of women enough to put it into song and it had a lasting power. As a historian and performer, Gerri Gribi does presentations across the country called "A Musical Romp Through Women's History," in which she plays these songs and others, telling the stories behind them. Of her project Gribi says:

I'm a historian by training, and I've been singing folk songs ever since I was a little girl. One day in the late 70's, I realized that all of the "women's" songs I'd ever heard told one of two stories: They were either about young women who, unable to get the man they loved to marry them, went down to the river and drowned themselves, OR they were about women who, having married the man they loved, found out he wasn't the peach they were expecting him to be, so they went down to the river and drowned themselves! Then of course there were the murder ballads, in which somebody else killed them...

These songs portrayed our foremothers as helpless victims at best, and as co-conspirators in their misery at worst. While they are a valid part of the tradition, they need to be balanced with other images if we are truly to understand woman's role in American history.

Gribi argues that these songs are essential to keeping and understanding women's roles in society because folk songs are primary tools for understanding the history of common and overlooked people.

Why care? Because folk songs are the legacy, the diaries, of everyday people, the kind of people who didn't have the leisure time or education or money to leave their history behind in written records; i.e. the people who are generally ignored by history books. Songs like "When I Was a Fair Maid," in which a woman disguises herself as a man to sneak into the British navy. Or "Equinoxial and Phoebe," in which a young pioneer husband swaps roles with his wife for a day and discovers that "women's" work is more than he can handle! In "The Crafty Maid" (which first appeared in London in 1860) a woman uses a bawdy double entendre to outwit an assailant, and steals his horse to boot. Women demand the right to vote in "Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be," and a black slave woman protests her situation in "All the Pretty Little Horses." In the haunting Primitive Baptist hymn "Sister Thou Wast Mild and Lovely," women lament the death, but celebrate the life, of a departed friend.

These positive images of women that Gribi finds in these songs are rare in folk music and more importantly in folk music scholarship. A Google search for "feminist folk music" revealed surprisingly few results. This highlights the importance of Gribi's efforts, because the knowledge she performs is fundamentally lacking from even easily accessible forms of information.

### Folk Punk and Animal Rights

While folk music, perhaps because of its popularity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has less of a relationship to animal rights than its younger sibling punk, the genre has had a few vegetarian and animal rights activists among its ranks.

Emmylou Harris began her musical career as a folk musician. She learned the songs of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez while in college, and later sang them in New York City coffee

houses in Greenwich Village. While Harris's pursuits have moved on from folk music exclusively, she has remained an activist throughout her career, performing and advocating for feminism at the Lilith Fair concerts in 1997 and 1998. Additionally, Harris has been a mainstay advocate for a landmine free world, an issue affecting women and girls globally. Most recently, Emmylou Harris's attention has turned to advocating for nonhuman animals. She is an active member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and has established an animal shelter in her home town of Nashville. Perhaps her most notable activism attempt is her billboard campaign for PETA advocating a boycott of Kentucky Fried Chicken because of its abuses of chickens. While Harris has not sung specifically about her animal rights beliefs, she stands as an important reminder of the underlying radical politics at work throughout the folk music genre. In addition, her politics also illustrate the intersectional linkages between feminism and animal rights.

Punk has a long and vigorous history of vegetarian and vegan politics offered through its performances as well as calls to end vivisection (animal testing) and a general belief in animal rights. While not every punk band has shared these views, a great number have. One of the most long lasting and important bands that advocated for a number of intersecting issues, including animal rights, is Propaghandi. Propaghandi was formed in 1986; founding members Chris Hannah and Jordan Samolesky have been together ever since. (They released a new record called *Failed States* in 2012.) Perhaps one of the most revolutionary aspects of Propaghandi is that they have always listed books and other resources inside their records for fans to explore their politics, which includes animal rights, and now do so on their website. In fact, Canadian-based Propaghandi has long been involved in supporting animal rights' causes including supporting veganism and



institutions like the Sea Sheppard Conservation Society. When asked how their songs get the messages of animal rights across, Chris Hanna said,

To be honest I think the most effective thing we've had on our records - as far as something that really jarred listeners into thinking seriously about how humans treat animals -- was something we didn't create; it was the audio of a farm-worker kicking and beating a downed, defenseless pig that we put before the song 'The Purina Hall Of Fame'. Many people have mentioned that that really affected them. More so than any of our songs, that's for sure. (Velvet)

Many punk bands like Propagandi, especially hardcore punk bands, have taken up the cause of animal rights today and highlight these issues in the lyrics of their songs. For instance, in Corrupted Ideal's "Don't Wanna" they sing, "Don't wanna support no pointless slaughter/Don't wanna eat no rotten meat/Don't wanna carve no holiday turkey/Like the sitcom morons on my TV." Similarly, Citizen Fish's "Flesh and Blood" sings not of holidays (like the turkey-obsessed Thanksgiving) but of the distance we as consumers have from our eating habits. "The meat you eat is wrapped up neat/You didn't see it bleed/And what you kill does not fulfill/ Your dietary needs... You could feed a lot of needy/People with the grain they feed/To cows." Finally, New York's Youth of Today sing of the ways in which meat eating is a mark of lack of empathy and compassion in society in "No More": "Meat-eating, flesh-eating, think about it/So callous to this crime we commit/Always stuffing our face with no sympathy/What a selfish, hardened society."

The history of animal rights in music largely follows the feminist notion of the "personal is political." Punk music possesses a real focus on animal rights and the rejection of personal consumption of animals as food. These examples from both folk music and punk rock highlight a general focus in the direction of animal rights.

## Conclusion

By comparing women and nonhuman animal rights, I do not intend to place women's status below that of the human man. While the human animal in Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming is positioned atop some in a hierarchical pyramid, my posthumanist position argues for leveling the hierarchies of being in order to establish a world of true equality. I am joined by many others in this project. Donna Haraway's *Primate Visions*, for example, establishes the fertile ground of discussions for possibilities of these intersections particularly as they have affected science and primatology in particular.

Haraway writes,

... primatology is about an order, a taxonomic and therefore political order that works by the negotiation of boundaries achieved through ordering differences . . . The two major axes structuring the potent scientific stories of primatology that are elaborated in these practices are defined by the interacting dualism, sex/gender and nature/culture. Sex and the west are axiomatic in biology and anthropology. Under the guiding logic of these complex dualisms, western primatology is simian orientalism. (10)

Simian orientalism draws from Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, the idea that Western culture has treated the historical Orient as a quaint and unchanging place, marking it with a primitive bias and assuming superiority to that culture. Haraway's argument is that the relationship we have toward primates is based on the same hierarchies and speciesism (as opposed to the racism of Said's Orientalism). Haraway also ventures into the realm of science fiction, in order to argue the ways in which primatologists' explorations of the relationship between primates and humans can be expanded. In particular, Haraway argues that the male bias and racism have been erroneously tied deeply into their accounts of primates and how this can be countered with science and speculative fictions. She writes:

My placing this account of primatology within SF--the narratives of speculative fiction and scientific fact--is an invitation for the readers of *Primate Visions*--historians, culture critics, feminists, anthropologists, biologists, anti-racists, and nature lovers--to remap the borderlands between nature and culture. (15)

Haraway notes how the field of primate science leading up to the 1980s had been male dominated. The male perspective was treated as universal and unbiased. However, when women like Jane Goodall became leaders in the field, the science got better because they were better able to counter the problems that male scientists missed, particularly the behavior of female primates. According to Haraway, one of the primary ways research shifted was in the notions of hunting in early human societies. Prior to women's contributions, a majority of primatologists argued for the primacy of hunting as the means by which male humans got food, though no research supported it, according to Haraway. Female primatologists emphasized the importance and primacy of female gathering, which led to what we now call hunter-gatherer societies, even if they were primarily gathering societies by both genders.

Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* argues that the intersection of nonhuman animal treatment and the treatment of women in society is an issue to be taken seriously. Her argument stretches from the linguistic practices that allow women and animals to become absent referents to the way in which that linguistic construction manifests itself in the everyday lives of women and nonhuman animals. "Elemental aspects of feminism and vegetarianism intersect" (170). For example, Adams discusses how the linguistic shift from naming animals to naming meat creates a differing set of ethical relations to that animal, such as how the body of a pig becomes "pork" or "bacon." She argues that the same system renames women as objects in order to justify sexual violence and popular consumption of their images in media.

Like Haraway, Adams marks how the early stories of human behavior impact our current conception of both gender roles and animal meat consumption. She asks, "What is it about meat that makes it a symbol and celebration of male dominance? In many ways, gender inequality is built into species inequality that meat eating proclaims, because for most cultures obtaining meat was performed by men" (34).

In discussions of meat eating as the site for contestation parallel to sex, Adams argues, "Of special concern will be the cultural representations of butchering of animals because meat eating is the most frequent way in which we interact with animals" (40).

While discussing the ways in which even radical feminist discourse has participated in the subjugation of nonhuman animals, Adams highlights the ways these discourses have relied on images of butchering to describe sexual assault and rape, "Because of this dependence on the imagery of butchering, radical feminist discourse has failed to integrate the literal oppression of animals into our analysis of patriarchal culture or to acknowledge the strong historical alliance between feminism and vegetarianism" (46).

To make the comparison complete, Adams argues that the ways women and nonhuman animals are treated exist in the same three-part cycle: "I propose a cycle of objectification, fragmentation and consumption, which links butchering and sexual violence in our culture" (47). Objectification occurs when each are made into an object: the nonhuman animal when turned into farm units or the woman to sex object or object of desire. Fragmentation occurs when the animal is literally cut into pieces in the factory farm or processing plant and the woman in the advertisement is shown as sexualized parts of herself presorted (for example, a pair of naked legs, detached from a body, used to sell a designer shoe). Finally, humans consume the nonhuman animal as a meal, and the woman's

sexualized, fragmented parts are consumed in exploitative forms of pornography or advertising.

Adams pulls no punches as she compares the treatment of nonhuman animals to racism, sexism, and homophobia, “Meat eating is to animals what white racism is to people of color, anti-Semitism is to Jewish people, homophobia to gay men and lesbians, and women hating is to women” (70). This posthuman move avoids speciesism at the most basic level and recognizes that these oppressions are stemming from the same source domination in society.

Adams also calls out the tendency of many scholars to ignore the signs of alliance between feminism and vegetarianism. She writes, “To cover the gaps in interpretation, I propose not only was vegetarianism a response to theoretical understanding of animal rights, but it also resonated with feminist theory and experiences” (146). She cites Beverly Harrison who highlights the role of embodied knowledge to the vegetarian feminist project, “If we begin, as feminists must, ‘with our bodies, ourselves,’ we recognize that all our knowledge, including our moral knowledge, is body-mediated knowledge . . . Failure to live deeply in ‘our bodies, ourselves,’ destroys the possibility of moral relations between us” (146).

The ways in which embodied accounts of knowledge are carried over into the realm where meals become the performance of one’s ethics inspire me as a performance scholar. She continues,

Animal bodies carry meanings; these meanings can be perceived even when they have been transformed into meat. Our bodies express meanings through food choices. The killing of animals for food is a feminist issue that feminists have failed to claim because of the charged atmosphere of vegetarianism and the structure of the absent referent. Being in touch with the vegetarian body restores the absent referent and body-mediated knowledge. (165)

Noting that the nonhuman animal body is also bound up in the knowledge-making process, and that it is through our interactions too often driven by consumption, we can parse through the meaning of bodies and discover an intersectional ethics between humans and nonhuman animals.

Pussy Riot!'s performance, and subsequent imprisonment, including their inability to acquire ethical meals while in prison, highlights the ways issues of feminism and animal rights can overlap even in a single folk punk performance and can be wrapped into the political realm of today's oppressions. In response to Pussy Riot!'s imprisonment, Kathleen Hannah of Bikini Kill wrote on her blog an entry called "Seriously They are in a Fucking Cage!" In it she writes:

Young girls write me all the time asking "How do we revive Riot Grrrl" and finally I have an answer...What if people all over the world started their own performance groups, bands, art collectives, etc... and called them things like Pussy Riot! Olympia. Pussy Riot! Athens Greece, Pussy Riot! Paris, etc....And maybe if this trial turns out as the prosecutors want it to, with the women getting at least 3 years, we all play benefits and go to Russia en masse under the banner that we are all Pussy Riot!, Yoko Ono could be in Pussy Riot!, Patti Smith could be wearing a mask next to a troupe of girls from Tennessee storming the Cathedral of Christ the Savior screaming "We are all Pussy Riot!!!!"

Pussy Riot!'s performance harkens deep into the history of folk and punk music, and because of this, Hannah sees their work as an important opportunity to rekindle the spirit of Riot Grrrl today.

In this chapter, I have analyzed the Pussy Riot! performance at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow in order to explore the intersectional politics of women and nonhuman animals. In particular, I called upon Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman, becoming-animal, and becoming-music to articulate the shared position of oppression between women and nonhuman animals. Then, I offered exemplars of the punk and folk

music genres involving feminism and nonhuman animal rights. I concluded with Carol J. Adams to show how the instrumentation by which society oppresses women and nonhuman animals takes the same form, and how veganism is a means to a more feminist future.

CHAPTER FOUR: AGAINST ME!  
PERFORMING AT THE INTERSECTION OF ANARCHY AND QUEERNESS

You watched in awe at the red,  
White, and blue on the fourth of July.  
While those fireworks were exploding,  
I was burning that fucker  
And stringing my black flag high,  
Eating the peanuts  
That the parties have tossed you  
In the back seat of your father's new Ford.  
You believe in the ballot,  
Believe in reform.  
You have faith in the elephant and jackass,  
And to you, solidarity's a four-letter word.  
We're all hypocrites,  
But you're a patriot.  
You thought I was only joking  
When I screamed "Kill Whitey!"  
At the top of my lungs  
At the cops in their cars  
And the men in their suits.  
No, I won't take your hand  
And marry the State.  
'Cause baby, I'm an anarchist,  
You're a spineless liberal. ("Against Me!")

I yell along with the above song "Baby, I'm an Anarchist" every time I hear it. So when Jessi took me to see Against Me!, the Tallahassee-based anarchist folk punk band, for my birthday in 2010, I could not have been more excited. They were playing a free concert at the "Live on the Levee" series in St. Louis, Missouri as the opening act for the Silversun Pickups. My old anarchist friend Scott had ridden his motorcycle the three hours up from Springfield to join us, so the three of us were on a birthday mission, with Against Me!.

I met Scott working in a bicycle shop nine years ago. On his first day, he showed up singing Against Me! lyrics and talking about being a punk. Apparently, he left high school without graduating and had come to Springfield to live with his grandmother. I remember



trying to make a joke about Scott on that first day, something like, “He’s so punk he thinks even he is a poser.” We still talk about it every time we get together. Scott and I became close friends and hung out just about every day for the next few years, until I left Springfield for graduate school. During that time, we listened to internet radio, argued about music, saw shows, and fixed a lot of bikes. I used to take credit for everything Scott knows about working on bikes, but that is just not true. Everyone in the shop loved Scott, and he picked things up from all of the mechanics. He also told me a lot about punk. I sold Scott the first guitar I ever owned, but being the guy that he is, when he moved to Australia a few years later, he gave it back. I still have it today.

Scott arrived just an hour or so before the show. We had a couple of beers at Jessi’s apartment, sitting on her front stoop waiting for the city bus while we finished the last of our drinks. We knew the concert was free, but we also knew the drinks would be outrageously expensive. We were all broke, so we filled a flask with whiskey and put it in Jessi’s purse. As the bus pulled up to the park where the show was being held, I noticed security checking bags and purses, so I tucked the flask in my pants and walked right through the gates while Jessi’s purse was searched, a small rebellion. Once inside, we bought a single beer, shared it, and when it was finished, Jessi took the flask and filled the empty beer bottle with the whiskey. Then she hid the flask back in her purse. We passed around our makeshift whiskey bottle and had a big time.

We began the show behind the barriers separating the free concertgoers from those with VIP passes. The VIPs sat directly in front of the outdoor stage which was eight or ten feet off the ground. They sat on gray chairs in neat rows going back 200 feet or so. A blue hospitality tent sat beside the seated audience. We, along with most of the other fans, stood

around the VIP area as Against Me! took the stage. The crowd of about one hundred was a strange mix of half clean punk rockers dressed in black, indie rock fans, and older folks just out for a nice evening in the park. We only had time to hear one song from behind the barriers before what I thought was a cop tapped me on the shoulder. He asked how many people I was with. Thinking he was interested in the flask, I told him I was alone. He then said I was “rocking hard enough” to earn a VIP pass, so I quickly altered my story to include Jessi and Scott. He looked a little confused but gave us all the necessary badges.

Once inside, we found a small, eclectic crowd of people, others like us who had been invited to the front stage area because of their enjoyment of the band (or probably to fill the obvious gaps between paying audience members and those cordoned off in the free areas). The seated squares who had paid for their tickets were less than enthused by the sudden influx of people wildly dancing and screaming at the band. Against Me! played an array of songs including “Teenage Anarchist,” “Pints of Guinness Make us Strong,” “High Pressure Low” and many others off their newly released *White Crosses* album, which came out one month before the show on Sire records. As everyone danced and grew increasingly more intoxicated, the crowd got wilder, and we eventually passed the bottle to whomever wanted a sip while dancing with us. In fact, Scott’s picture wound up in a local St. Louis magazine, showing him in a crowd of people we did not know and without his shirt (but thankfully still wearing his faded denim overalls). The onstage performance was pretty calm and seemingly distant from the members of Against Me!. Tom Gabel sang from the middle of the stage wearing dark sunglasses, while the other members, including new keyboardist Franz Nicolay, were spread throughout the sides and back third of the stage. The stage was so tall, it was difficult to feel close to the band. They sounded so similar to

their album recordings that something did not feel live about the show. However, the audience more than made up for any lack in the liveliness of the band. We were dancing and singing along with every song, and a real camaraderie was formed by those of us there to see Against Me!. The best moments were those when the audience, Jessi, Scott, and I would be dancing and singing, trying to climb the fence to get closer to the stage. Like routine, someone would be told to climb down by security, and the process would repeat. After Against Me! played, we decided to leave the crowded park given that we were drunk and kept losing Scott. We left before the Silversun Pickups got going, but we ultimately saw the show we came for.

Against Me! consists of several guitars, a bassist, drums and keyboards. They play with a fast-paced rocking spirit while maintaining a sing-a-long characteristic in their lyrics. Their music is also based around three-chord rock riffs, though are the most polished of the folk punk bands that I discuss in this dissertation. This is perhaps due to the fact that they have been around for a long time, and are considered a quintessential folk punk band, especially for their early records. However, it is difficult to talk about Against Me!'s music in any kind of simplified or essentialized way, because the band has constantly continued to experiment and change over the years. Many fans have been troubled by the changes in Against Me!'s sound in the last five years, as they signed on to a major record label and added greater production quality to their music. However, their forthcoming record has been promised as a return to the older, rougher Against Me! sound, and many fans are excited to see how the band continues to evolve.

Like the evolving music of Against Me!, the lyrics the band offers have not been of any single theme. The band has remained incredibly political, with early songs like "Baby

I'm an Anarchist," discussing anarchist politics to newer songs like "White Crosses" which takes on pro-life stances against abortion, singing of the crosses for the unborn outside of churches, "I want to smash them all." Tom Gabel's singing these political lyrics has been a real draw for the band since the beginning, with his ability to growl and yell lyrics as well as sing beautifully.

Also controversially, Against Me!'s lead singer Laura Jane Grace (formally known as Tom Gabel) made the news recently when she announced she was beginning gender reassignment therapy. *Rolling Stone* reporter Josh Eells writes of the name change,

For most of the band's history, Gabel has been officially credited as "Tom." But he's always been "Tommy" to his family and friends, and he prefers it right now because it sounds less masculine. Once he starts fully presenting as a female, though, he'll go by a new name that he picked out. The last name, Grace, is his mom's maiden name. The middle name, Jane, he just thinks is pretty. And his first name is the one his mother would have chosen. "It's Laura," he says.

Despite this breaking news, many have noted that there were always hints in the lyrics of Against Me! songs written by Tom. For instance, lyrics from "Searching for a Former Clarity," confide, "And in the journal you kept by the side of your bed . . . / Confessing childhood secrets of dressing up in women's clothes / Compulsions you never knew the reasons to." In a song called "The Ocean," off the 2007 album *New Wave*, Tom sang, "If I could have chosen I would have been born a woman / My mother once told me she would have named me Laura / I would grow up to be strong and beautiful like her / One day I'd find an honest man to make my husband."

Laura thought she had completely outed herself in that song. She was surprised that it did not receive much attention, and the band still tours through Laura's transition. She told Eells from *Rolling Stone*,

I have every intention of continuing down this road full steam ahead. But in order to undergo full sexual-reassignment surgery, I'd have to live fully as a woman for a year, and have something like a year of therapy. So I don't want to get too excited about this potentially life-fulfilling thing, when all these hurdles are still up.

In a later interview with Decca Aitkenhead of the *Guardian*, Laura acknowledges that coming out in *Rolling Stone* was a bold move but that it felt natural,

There's a certain amount of normalizing that happens when you do it in a fashion like that. I felt like the first time we played on a late-night TV show in the States – for my parents that was a moment when they were like: “Oh, that's what you do.” It legitimized what you did. So when you have something like *Rolling Stone* that you can hand to someone and be like, “If you have a question after you read this, feel free to ask me,” was a great thing to have. As opposed to having a million and a half conversations.

At the show in St. Louis, I was unaware of any of this. Tom played in black Ray Ban sunglasses and a black T-shirt and jeans. The show was amazing! In reflection, the performance of *Against Me!* that day in St. Louis represents the ways in which folk punk continues to adapt and remake itself in the face of an ever-changing political world. In this chapter, I consider the ways in which anarchists and queer identified people intersect in the complex history of folk punk music. In the conclusion of this chapter, I argue that the particular intersection of anarchism and queerness in the performance of folk punk is the terrorist.

## Anarchism

Anarchism is a philosophy colloquially associated with chaos, martial law, and bombs. While historical anarchism has been, and at times may still be, tied to violence, those accounts present a limited view of the potential anarchism presents as a legitimate political philosophy. However, even if some of these accusations are true, anarchist thinker Mikhail Bakunin says, “The passion for destruction is a creative passion too” (2). Here I

want to counter some of the generic assumptions about anarchism by exploring recent literature on the topic. I begin with a brief introduction to anarchism.

I provide a functional definition of anarchism as a foundation to talk about it in a meaningful way. Philosopher Todd May writes: “. . . for anarchists, the concentration of power is an invitation to abuse. Therefore, anarchists seek political intervention in a multiplicity of irreducible struggles” (13). Here, anarchism must overtake the simplistic idea of a single struggle, whether it be class, race, the State, capitalism, or any other single issue, and instead take on the complexities of oppression while simultaneously challenging the creativity and freedom of subjects in a society, not to mention the need to challenge the self-interested notions of subjectivity itself. Noting this complexity, David Guerin, in the forward of his *No Gods No Masters* writes that anarchism is alleged to be: “essentially individualistic . . . incapable of unity . . . nostalgic . . . sinning through childish optimism . . . incorrigibly petit-bourgeois . . . in a word reactionary” (3). Thus, anarchists strive to overcome being characterized as naive and misguided by highlighting that beneficial anarchism is a move away from individualistic concerns and a move toward a communal or assemblage-based conception of society and its subjects. Perhaps the world’s most famous anarchist and women’s advocate, Emma Goldman, defines anarchism as “The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary” (50). Goldman does not overtly name the state as the ultimate enemy of the anarchist, though she also does not encourage anarchism’s cooperation with the state. Instead, she critiques government that disenfranchises citizens via human laws. Thus, she leaves open the possibility for an account of anarchism within states that do not follow the

precedent or assumptions of current governmental structures, i.e. states that would maximize liberty are preferable to those that would minimize freedom. Similarly, *CrimethInc.*, an “ex-worker’s collective” that publishes books and how-to guides on anarchism, calls anarchists to:

Stop thinking of anarchism as just another “world order,” just another social system. From where we stand, in this very dominated, very controlled world, it is impossible to imagine living in a world without any authorities, without laws or governments. No wonder anarchism isn’t usually taken seriously as a large-scale political or social program: no one can imagine what it would really be like, let alone how to achieve it—not even anarchists themselves. (34)

*CrimethInc.* asserts our thinking must become local, focused upon the oppressions affecting particular subjects that can be dealt with by means of direct action. Elinor Ostrom, in *Governing The Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, seeks methods for “how a group of principals who are in an interdependent situation can organize and govern themselves to obtain continuing joint benefits when all face temptations to free-ride, shirk, or otherwise act opportunistically” (29). Ostrom outlines ways to deal with the sorts of human nature or natural capitalism arguments that often plague anarchists when thinking about how to deal with “common pool resources.” Ostroms’s work shows how thinking about these situations must move to a more collective model, one that does not consider humans to be essentially self-interested, and one that examines the actual flows and conjunctions in society that allow these tendencies to be expressed. This move toward the particular conditions within a state, understanding society as something other than a necessarily hierarchical state filled with repressed creativity, enables a turn to the historical musical traditions of folk and punk, as they share explicit and implicit philosophical, political, and artistic assumptions.

Folk and punk music have long been connected to the radical philosophies of the left. Woody Guthrie and his outward socialism, as well as his recording of a record for infamous anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, serves as an example of this history. Bands like Against Me!, MDC, and Crass have expressed anarchist tendencies in punk for more than thirty years.

The intersection of queerness and anarchy abounds throughout the history of folk and punk music. In 1921, the state of Massachusetts falsely tried and convicted Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian Americans, of murder and robbery. As a result, they were sentenced to death. Sacco and Vanzetti were accused of robbing and killing two men who were carrying the payroll for a shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts. The two were convicted largely based on falsified evidence, and perhaps the most damning, because they were anarchists. After an extended appeals process, they were executed by the State on August 23, 1927. In 1977, Massachusetts's governor Michael Dukakis issued a statement decrying the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti and cleared their names. Dukakis's statement proves that this story is not just anarchist lore, but instead an incredibly dark chapter in America's extrajudicial treatment of anarchists. According to the documentary *Sacco and Vanzetti* directed by Peter Miller, no trial has inspired so much art from paintings to songs. Moe Asch commissioned Woody Guthrie in 1945 to write and perform the *Ballads of Sacco and Vanzetti*. Guthrie ultimately recorded the songs, but he was never satisfied with the results, which led Asch to release them in unfinished form. The *Smithsonian Folkways* website celebrates the album:

Woody Guthrie was one of the twentieth century's greatest poets and songwriters, and his songs about Sacco and Vanzetti include some of his best songs. The murder trial of Sacco and Vanzetti was one of this century's most controversial. Sacco and Vanzetti's story was dramatic; their front-page trial was filled with dubious procedures; and the years of appeals and their eventual execution led to protests around the world.



These beautiful songs are perhaps best represented by the tune “Red Wine,” a song that recalls the history of Sacco and Vanzetti, from the pair’s move to Mexico to form a commune and avoid military service in World War I to their police capture for carrying guns on a trolley car. “Red Wine” sadly celebrates their lives and chastises the injustice of their execution:

Oh, pour me a drink of Italian red wine, / Let me taste it and call back to mind /  
Once more in my thoughts, once more to my soul / This story as great, if not greater,  
than all. . . . There’s been a killing and robbery / At Slater Morrill’s shoe factory; /  
You two gents are carrying guns, / And you dodged the draft when the war did come.  
/ Yes, oh yes, ‘tis so, ‘tis so, / We made for the borders of Mexico; / The rich man’s  
war we could not fight, / So we crossed the border to keep out of sight. / You men  
are known as radical sons, / You must be killers, you both carry guns. / I am a night  
watchman, my friend peddles fish, / He carries his gun when he’s got lots of cash.

“Red Wine” tells the whole story of Sacco and Vanzetti’s arrest to their deaths in the electric chair in Boston. Sacco and Vanzetti were killed for being radical, for being anarchists, and for being immigrants. Guthrie’s lyrics demonstrate his disgust for the situation some twenty years later. His songs reveal his great frustration with the system, which as a communist, he must have shared with Sacco and Vanzetti.

While folk music giant Woody Guthrie remembers anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, punk also plays a role in valuing anarchy. As Craig O’Hara writes in *The Philosophy of Punk*,

When it comes to choosing a political ideology, Punks are primarily anarchists. There are few who promote the continuation of any form of capitalism or communism. This is not to say that all Punks are well read in the history and theory of anarchism, but most do share a belief formed around the anarchist principles of having no official government or rulers and valuing individual freedom and responsibility. (56)

MDC stands out as an example of a punk band committed to anarchist beliefs. MDC, also known as Millions of Dead Cops, started in the Austin, Texas punk scene and originally went by the name The Stains. In 1982, they moved to San Francisco and changed their

name, primarily because four or five bands at the time were also using the name The Stains. The name Millions of Dead Cops was inspired by a number of instances of police brutality, as lead singer Dan Dictor explains,

We played LA and the cops were brutal... We started saying fuck those Dead Cops. The cops killed a friend of mine and Al's in college named Tate Bryant over a drugstore break in, that was in 1975. We always had issues with the cops. I was a little kid watching the 1968 Democratic Convention where the cops were beating everyone including Dan Rather. Cops hassling people was an everyday occurrence. If you are of a certain age you experienced it. Anyway, at a Black Flag show in 1981 at the Cookoo's Nest we really started in about the cops and how they sucked, then back home in Austin, Buxf Parrot of the Dicks suggested Millions Of Dead Cops and it stuck.

With each album, the acronym for MDC changes, (for example, "Millions of Dead Children" and "Multi Death Corporations") but because the first was, "Millions of Dead Cops," the name stuck. MDC is known for their leftist and anarchist positions, particularly by their songs that advocate against capitalism ("Buy or Die," "Corporate Deathburger," "I Hate Work") and government ("Dead Cops/ America's so Straight," "Who's the Terrorist Now," and "No Place to Piss"). While the band has gone through a number of line up changes, Dan Dictor has remained the lead singer and constant leader of the band since the beginning. When they moved to San Francisco, they met Jello Biafra from the Dead Kennedys, who would later release several MDC records on his Alternative Tentacles record label. MDC hooked up with the Dead Kennedys to tour the United States and Europe in 1982. In an interview with online zine *Punk '77 Thru Today* Dictor says:

The Rock Against Reagan Tour in 1983 was about 35 shows basically sponsored by the Yippies. They were free, politically motivated shows held on many state capitol steps and public spaces of one sort or the other and fused punks with regular activists and various progressive people. These were fun fun heady days. I thought punk was gonna conquer the world and it did as a fashion and then later as a music thang but I thought politically it would do it much quicker. We would defeat Ronald Reagan and the military industrial, multi death corporation/complex.

After MDC toured with the Dead Kennedys and completed the *Rock Against Reagan Tour* the band went to the United Kingdom and befriended Crass, a well-known anarchist punk band from England. Crass then released MDC's *Multi Death Corporations* in the UK.

An intrinsically intersectional philosophy, as evidenced by the collaborative nature of the bands previously mentioned, anarchism requires the solidarity of reaching across differences in order to challenge the roots of oppression. As an anarcho-punk band, MDC sought to create solidarity particularly as animal rights activists, queer activists, and anti-racists. Through lyrics and live shows like the *Rock against Reagan Tour*, MDC outwardly performs their multi-issue anarchist ideology. The various MDC variations (Millions of Dead Cops, Millions of Damned Christians, Multi Death Corporations) show that the band continued to evolve and develop without being limited to just one issue.

## Queerness

The word "queer" has undergone a radical transformation in the last 30 years. Queer theories and queer identities use the term "queer," once a slur, and repurpose the word in an act of linguistic and identity defiance. Queer theory refuses binary notions of male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, and instead revels in radically alternative understandings of one's positionality beyond such terms. Queer theory also challenges heteronormativity and narratives that structure dominant society to exclude sexual identities and practices beyond what is considered "normal" or "natural." Queer theory and activism highlight and question actions that seek to normalize and enforce heterosexual gender performances and object desires upon others.

Queer theory began as a literary theory, through works such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's examination of the homoerotics of Willa Cather novels, often overlooked by

heteronormative culture. In recent years, however, work inspired by queer theory touches nearly every academic field. David Halprin elaborates on the use of “queer” theory:

Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it refers. It is an identity without essence. ‘Queer’ then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative—a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men, but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalized because of his or her sexual practices.

To be queer is to identify with practices and positionalities that exist outside of culturally assigned and commodified positions. These practices and positions might include sexual acts themselves, objects of desire, or gender performance.

Transgender/transsexual persons have long been a central focus in queer theory. According to Judith Butler, in *Bodies that Matter*, queer must be in a constant state of becoming in order to avoid recreating hierarchies and power dynamics that solidify the identity of queer the way in which gay and lesbian identities have so often been solidified. “[Queer] will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes, and perhaps also yielded in favor of terms that do that political work more effectively” (229). Using Deleuze’s terms, Butler argues queerness is a becoming. This forever becoming-queer functions as a minoritization in the self-articulated move to recapture the identity of queer often devalued by society. One becoming-queer must constantly shift in order to adapt and to avoid becoming a stable identity, according to Butler. Butler’s acknowledgement of a fundamental lack of steady foundation in queer identity marks a stance against the concretizing of a particular queer identity, for when that identity becomes recognizable it would cease to be truly queer.

Like Butler, Annamarie Jagose acknowledges a concern for the future of queer because of its fuzzy delimiting of identity boundaries, particularly the ways in which cooption would make it a less desirable stance for the queer to avoid capture. In the Deleuzian sense,

The most commonly voiced anxieties are provoked by such issues as whether a generic masculinity may be reinstalled at the heart of the ostensibly gender-neutral queer; whether queer's transcendent disregard for dominant systems of gender fails to consider the material conditions of the west in the late twentieth century; whether queer simply replicates, with a kind of historical amnesia, the stances and demands of an earlier gay liberation; and whether, because its constituency is almost unlimited, queer includes identificatory categories whose politics are less progressive than those of the lesbian and gay populations with which they are aligned.

As queerness continues to evolve, the necessity to counter any conservative impulse that would commodify or make that which is queer easily identifiable increases. Politically, this radical approach is perhaps best represented in the trans community. In particular, trans folk employ queer theory and activism to gain power and liberation. According to the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionary (STAR) manifesto, “transfeminism believes that we construct our own gender identities based on what feels comfortable and sincere to us as we live and relate to others within given social and cultural constraint” (89). As a third wave sexual liberation organization, STAR responded to Stonewall with a demand for a truly queer politics:

STAR advocated for an inclusive gay liberation that strongly embraced Trans rights, nurtured homeless street youth, and worked to create a communal trans family unit. They worked to dismantle the very state institutions of a capitalistic society that they deemed responsible for their oppression. In a publication by STAR they noted in closing “We want a revolutionary peoples’ government, where transvestites, street people, women, homosexuals, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and all oppressed people are free, and not fucked over by this government who treat us like the scum of the earth and kill us off like flies, one by one, and throw us in jail to rot. This government who spends millions of dollars to go to the moon, and lets the poor Americans starve to death. (94)

Although STAR and other advocacy groups espouse intersectionality, Laura Jane Grace's decision to transition physically is fraught with contention and difficulty. J. Rogue in *Queering Anarchism* writes, "[H]aving encountered a lack of understanding of trans issues in radical circles, I feel it important to note that not all transgender people choose to physically transition, and that each person's decision to do so or not is their own." (29). The complexity of the decision about transition becomes a prime example of the relationship between the personal and political. Queer politics work to complicate how each person must make his or her own decision to fit individual needs. The political nature of individual decisions recurs throughout the literature.

In the space between anarchy and queerness, oppressed and alienated minorities create and exemplify a variety of tactics which may be appropriated for the benefit of the dominant. The linkages and solidarities between queer or anarchist identities and positionalities create a web of invention and solidarity that may function to avoid the statist, heteronormative, and capitalist capture of identities. These anarcho-queer movements continually create everyday and aesthetic performances that push the bounds of what is acceptable in order to deter those who would seek their erasure via cooptation. Folk and punk music have been locations where queer persons have sought these alternatives and allegiances.

As one of the few genres that embrace a truly queer politic, punk music offers much possibility. This is not to say those who queer-identify do not make music in every genre. However, queer punks have carved out a musical niche where they may celebrate their positionalities, confront heteronormative culture, and discuss the difficulties of queerness through a subgenre of punk called queercore. Performance studies scholar Deanna

Shoemaker's "Queer Punk Macha Femme: Leslie Mah's Musical Performance in Tribe 8"

looks at the various performances in the band Tribe 8's music and shows. Shoemaker explains queercore:

The queercore movement arose in the early 1990s within hardcore punk bands partly in response to 1980s heavy metal artists appropriating gay drag practices in heterosexist ways. Numerous lesbian bands, influenced by punk music and riot grrrl practices, used queercore to promote their brand of "90s dyke culture" (O'Brien, 1995, p. 265). Tribe 8 ex-band member Slade Bellum explains queercore in explicitly political and feminist terms: There is a support network [of women] . . . we are connected with each other and we're trying to help each other out. We're trying to do tours together, we're trying to connect with each other . . . and network on a lower level. (Juno, 1996, p. 56) Queercore emerged within a grassroots scene and functioned more generally to queer supposedly "straight" punk music and encourage more queer musicians and fans to get involved. (299)

Shoemaker's historiographic tracing of queercore's roots in other punk and feminist genres highlights the ways in which queercore is a response to the punk scene (similar to my broader argument that punk is a response to a culture largely unresponsive to subversion). In addition, the grassroots and DIY nature of queercore harkens back to early punk when the music was simply punks playing music for other punks. Queercore music is by and for queer identified people. Shoemaker describes Tribe 8 as more an expression of queercore:

Tribe 8's music is heavily guitar and percussion driven, and Breedlove's vocals, which vacillate between exaggerated parody and spokenword rant, often sound more like a three-chord yell rather than any actual melody. The band's punk speed metal sound is often intercut with rock-inspired psychedelic interludes; this constant shift in rhythm and style never lets the audience get too comfortable. Typical of punk music, the songs are very short, creating explosive bursts of energy that resist rock music's iconic and indulgently long anthems. (300)

Like the definitions of queer above, Tribe 8's music vacillates between styles, marking the becoming-queer that is so essential to queer theory in general and queercore in particular.

Tribe 8's music is also queer in content, and employs a biting and postmodern irony and satire to queer heteronormative culture. Shoemaker continues:

Tribe 8's songs typically flaunt explicit lesbian sexual practices, position drug use as a coping mechanism in a homophobic culture, celebrate various forms of symbolic vengeance against male violence, Republican politics, hetero male-centered pornography ("Dead Clothed Girls" plays off of the slogan "Live Nude Girls"), and employ playful inversions of pop culture references ("Tranny Chaser," a bittersweet ode to drag queens who ultimately reject lesbian advances, ends with "Silly faggot, dicks are for dykes"). (301)

Tribe 8 has since broken up, but they were wildly popular in the queercore scene.

While their target audiences were primarily other lesbians, they developed a number of punk followings. Like any punk band, they knew that some in the audience did not know what to expect and might be downright hostile to them.

In response to the hostility Tribe 8 faced in life, they took various forms of expression on stage. Shoemaker highlights one in particular as articulated by Tribe 8's lead singer, "I cut off a rubber dick [in performance] in the context of talking about gang rape" (301).

Rebellious expression via performance is not completely limited to the queercore genre. While this document has described folk as a highly traditional, and at times conservative, musical genre that has often treated women poorly, a thread in the genre inherently bucks the system, and the system includes heteronormativity. A number of folk artists throughout the ages rise above folk's conventions and use folk music as a tool for revolutionary change. One such folk artist is Alix Dobkin.

Alix Dobkin is a lesbian folk musician, feminist, and founder of the record label Women's Wax Works. In a recent interview with "Queer Music Heritage," a radio show based in Houston, Texas, the host JD Doyle says of Dobkin:

Since 1973 Alix has been the most visible lesbian feminist in the women's music community. She's even been called "head lesbian." And this stems not only from her music, which includes some classics, but also from her speaking and writing, because over the last almost 30 years she has been a continuing force, performing,



doing workshops and contributing articles to our major publications. I mentioned that this started in 1973, because in that year she formed her own record label, called Women's Wax Works, and produced the first album entirely produced, engineered, financed, and performed by lesbians, and the first to have international distribution.

In the same radio interview with "Queer Music Heritage," Dobkin explains her folk past and her desire to record her music for women and lesbian audiences in particular:

I had wanted to make a record album all the years I was singing folk music in the Village and the Midwest touring in the folk music circuit in the 60s, the mid-late 60s. I hadn't for many reasons. I just wasn't slick enough or something. And so when I started writing women's...music for women in particular, lesbians in particular, and about myself and my life as a feminist and a lesbian, I had all these...I wrote these songs and a lot of women wanted to hear them. And so it was an idea whose time had come really I feel like "Lavender Jane Loves Women" was just a product of the times, just like the women's liberation movement, the second wave of women's liberation, was a product of the times, and it was all connected. So there was a lot of demand for it, a lot of excitement. Women were coming out by the droves. Whole dormitories were coming out in colleges.

Dobkin applies to her music that fundamental DIY drive most often associated with punk music, underlining the notion that music can and should be made by and for those who need to hear it. Her dedication to an all-women-production, from the writing and singing all the way down to the recording and mixing of the record, shows an admirable dedication to DIY philosophy. Dobson's work demonstrates a folk interest in finding queer voices as a means to advocate for the progressive politics so necessary in the struggle for queer liberation, as articulated by Halprin and STAR above. In this way, Dobkin ensures that we don't forget queer-identified people exist in every musical genre, and have for a long time.

## Terrorists

Anarchists and the queer-identified have long been subject to physical and rhetorical attacks from statist, heteronormative culture. A new way in which states define

these groups as outsiders and enemies of culture is to label them “terrorists.” While anarchists have long been considered terrorists, as demonstrated by the “trial” of Sacco and Vanzetti, since the 1999 Seattle WTO protests this label has been applied at a much grander scale to anarchists throughout the country even to this day. Subsequent arrests following a series of Seattle-based vandalisms in May 2012 led to young anarchists being forced to testify about their political beliefs before secretive grand jury investigations. Those not forthcoming were placed in jail for contempt. These investigations turned out to be nothing more than governmental intimidation and witch-hunts and did not lead to the discovery of the actual perpetrators. The anarchists’ homes were searched on the pretenses of confiscating black clothing and anarchist literature, completely unrelated to the vandalism that took place. Now, those who identify as queer have become “terrorists” on equal footing as these disadvantaged anarchists, simply due to Otherness.

As a word, “terrorism” defies definition and is used against the oppressed as a ubiquitous tool to the advantage of the oppressors: the United States, Israel, and much of Europe. The oppressed nations have, as of late, primarily been identified in the Middle East. Edward Said’s theory of orientalism argues that this racism in the Middle East has ancient roots, and has been used by powerful nations to oppress those less fortunate. This chapter argues that the label “terrorism” is simply the newest tool for marginalization in the arsenal of dominant superpowers.

In *Green is the New Red*, Will Potter considers the myriad definitions of terrorism:

In their seminal work, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide*, first published in 1984, Alex Schmidt and Albert Jongman identified 109 definitions of terrorism. They divided them in twenty-two categories, dissected them, studied the pieces, created tables about common elements, and spent more than one hundred pages discussing their meanings. Even after completing this volume, then revising it, the authors say they had still not found an adequate definition. (37)

Yet, even with this definitional difficulty, Potter calls terrorism a word that requires definition, primarily to avoid governmental abuse. Potter argues that while there is no consensus on a definition of terrorism, in order for government and courts to function appropriately and to the benefit of society, they must develop their own definitions, or at least create shared understandings of what terrorism might mean. Following a lengthy description of discrepancies within the U.S. government's terrorism definitions, Potter argues:

most definitions of terrorism share the following three principles: (1) Terrorism is associated with the unlawful use of violence or threats of violence by non state agents. (2) Terrorism is intended to instill widespread fear in the civilian population beyond those targets. (3) Terrorism is used to force a change in government policy. (38)

According to Potter, terrorists need to be defined, more so than terrorism, so as to protect citizens from the government and a potential overcorrection in the direction of a police state. Here, one might compare the ways terrorism functions for the state to the ways queer functions for the individual. The state uses the vagueness of terrorism's definition to apprehend and further oppress people who might trouble that government at any given moment. This persecution functions at an arbitrary level; thus anyone can become a terrorist. Alternately, the definition of queerness in Judith Butler's terms needs to remain open to help citizens avoid normalizing discourses that would be used to recreate the exploitation of those falling outside of the expanding realm of "acceptable" identities. Will Potter's research highlights the ways in which this loose definition of terrorism has been used to label and attack animal rights and anarchist organizations as terrorists.

Jasbir K. Puar, in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, links Deleuze's thinking to queerness and terrorism. In fact, Puar's work ties performance,

queerness, and terrorism together by articulating the particular assemblages that function to make up current understandings of the term terrorism. First, I develop the link between performance, anarchism, and queerness to explain the particulars of performance and terrorism.

The history of performance reveals investments in anarchist practices, though few have themselves claimed to be anarchists. RoseLee Goldberg writes in *Performance Art*:

The history of performance art in the twentieth century is the history of a permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established forms, and determined to take their art directly to the public. For this reason its base has always been anarchic. By its very nature, performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. (9)

While this passage may not look like a formal anarchist philosophy at work inside of performance studies or performance art, it opens the door to the possibility of an anarchistic approach within the field. Goldberg describes the anarchic nature of performance that refuses to accept authority and demands that art push the boundaries of good taste and creativity. Many of the artists featured in Goldberg's history challenge various institutions of the State, capitalism, and gender inequalities. Performance functions as a useful lens with which to consider anarchist performances by punk bands. First, performance has a rich history of indirect anarchism, and second, performance has an investment in the cultural production and practices involved in creating a more equitable world.

However, some performance groups do openly claim anarchism as a guiding principle. Black Mask, which eventually becomes Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers, is one such group. Black Mask created political protest performances including shutting down the Museum of Modern Art in 1967. Formed in 1966 by painter Ben Morea and the poet Dan

Georgakas, Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers were groups drawing on historical art movements cited by Goldberg in her *Performance Art*, including: Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism. The group's actions engaged in a number of performative tropes including street theater, disruption of everyday performances, and violence against police. While these groups took on the art world as an establishment, they did so with a knack for performance and demonstrated a dedication to both anarchism and performance.

A large body of work has connected queerness and performance, in particular, the ever-growing field of solo queer performance. In *O Solo Homo*, David Roman and Holly Hughes discuss the prevalence of queer performance art in the 1990s: "Queer solo performance is booming. The field is so diverse—diverse in terms of its artistic form and content, and diverse in terms of the identities of those performing—that it challenges any effort to define it" (1).

Roman and Hughes also reference right wing attacks against the National Endowment of the Arts, made famous by the trials of the NEA 4 including: Tim Miller, Karen Finely, John Fleck, and Holley Hughes herself. Of the event Hughes writes,

Prior to 1990, few Americans outside of the big-city art ghettos had even heard of performance art, much less seen it. Then the likes of Reverend Donald Wildmon, Ralph Reed, and, of course, Senator Jesse Helms latched on to it. On TV, through mass mailings, and in full-page newspaper ads the leaders of the religious Right served up soundbite-sized descriptions of performances they usually had not seen. The NEA was bleeding the American people so that artists could show off their privates, smear themselves with chocolate, cross-dress and splatter the audience with HIV-positive blood. (8)

Tim Miller is perhaps one of the most prominent and prolific queer performance artists of the 20th and 21st centuries, performing around the country at colleges and community centers, doing workshops and performance art pieces, including a workshop and performance he did at the Hopkins Black Box here at Louisiana State University in 2010, in

which I was a participant. RoseLee Goldberg says of Tim Miller “Many artists reclaimed performance as a mechanism for grassroots activism, and in the hands of Tim Miller. . . it became the most effective means to publicize political and social issues” (143). While Miller is an excellent example of queer political work, weaving body art and narrative into beautiful performances, hundreds of examples exist which demonstrate the relationship between performance and queerness.

With this said, I wonder if the intersection of these performances of queerness and anarchism are found in the “terrorist,” as articulated by Jose Esteban Munoz’s description of performance artist Vaginal Davis’s “terrorist drag.” Building toward her argument for terrorist assemblages, Jasbir K. Puar cites Munoz’s discussion of performance artist Vaginal Davis:

Jose Esteban Munoz’s writing on the “terrorist drag” of the Los Angeles based performance artist Vaginal Davis bizarrely harks to another political era, as if it were long ago, when the notion of terrorist had a trenchant but distant quality to it. Munoz argues that Davis’s drag performances, encompassing, “cross-sex, cross-race minstrelsy” are terrorist on two levels. Aesthetically Davis reject glamour girl feminine drag in favor of ground level guerilla replacement strategies” such as white supremacist militia men and black welfare queen hookers, what Munoz calls “the nation’s most dangerous citizens.” This alludes to the second plane of meaning, the reenactment of the “nation’s internal terrors around race, gender, and sexuality.” (xxiii)

For Puar, Munoz connects issues of race, gender, and sexuality to the most “dangerous” citizens in our culture: “terrorists.” These performances challenge socially acceptable categories, and as such create the terrorist drag, the ultimate boundary-crossing and fear-inducing performances. Puar continues:

Munoz’s description of this terrorist drag appropriately points to the historical convergences between queers and terror: homosexuals have been traitors to the nation, figures of espionage and double agents, associated with communists during the McCarthy era, and as with suicide bombers, have brought on and desired death through the AIDS pandemic (both suicide bomber and gay man always figure as

already dying, a decaying or corroding masculinity). More recent exhortations place gay marriage as “the worst form of terrorism” and gay couples as “domestic terrorists.” (xxiii)

By highlighting Munoz’s comparison of queer gender and identity performance to that of terrorism in the eyes of the state, Puar notes how those in power have strategically dismissed the work of minorities and those not fitting into convenient boxes on forms. Solidarity functions as the mechanism by which those facing similar oppression can offer support without identifying with the other group. Puar’s work contributes to this study by illuminating the nearly invisible links between queerness and terrorism in the eyes of the state. Puar asks succinctly “Clearly one can already ask: What is terrorist about the queer? But the more salient and urgent question is What is queer about the terrorist? And what is terrorist about queer corporealities?” (xxiii).

Puar asserts that gender plays a major role in the relationship between terrorists and queer bodies, describing the ways in which failed masculinity has come to be representative of the terrorist,

The depictions of masculinity most rapidly disseminated and globalized at this historical juncture are terrorist masculinities: failed and perverse, these emasculated bodies always have femininity as their reference point of malfunction, and are metonymically tied to all sorts of pathologies of the mind and body—homosexuality, incest, pedophilia, madness and disease. We see for example the queer physicality of terrorist monsters. (xxiii)

Beyond the pathologizing of terrorist bodies, Puar also writes of the mystery and secrecy of these bodies:

... the terrorist is concurrently an unfathomable, unknowable, and hysterical monstrosity, and yet one that only the exceptional capacities of U.S. intelligence and security systems can quell. This unknowable monstrosity is not a casual bystander or parasite; the nation assimilates the effusive discomfort with the unknowability of bodies, thus affectively producing new normativities and exceptionalisms through the cataloging of unknowables. Concomitantly, masculinities of patriotism work to distinguish and thus discipline or incorporate and banish, terrorist from patriot. It is

not that we must engage in the practice of excavating the queer terrorist or queering the terrorist; rather queerness is always already installed in the project of naming the terrorist; the terrorist does not appear as such without the concurrent entrance of perversion, deviance. (xxiii-xxiv)

For Puar, the terrorist's secret identity necessitates a reliance of the citizenry on the government. Calling on the metaphor of the closet, Puar argues that the unknowable body of the queer terrorist sets up the conditions by which the state is the only institution that can tell patriot from terrorist. In particular, the ways in which governments have articulated the queer terrorist body is bound up in imagery of the decaying or feminine male body to bestow characteristics of the terrorist in a way to weaken and justify oppression against it. This combination of governmental authority and sanctioned abuse based on the recognizability of identities creates a system where those labeled as queer or terrorist suffer similar fates. Out of a voyeuristic demand to reveal these identities, governments also seek to erase them through labels like queer and terrorist.

An example of how this unknowable figure is understood might be how the word "coward," is applied to acts of terrorism. "Coward" is used to decry the secret ways in which the terrorists have evaded capture by the state. Whether through underground meeting strategies, non-hierarchical organization, or the literal wearing of masks, those with privileged access within the system have long decried the use of any concealment of identity in acts of social protest of change. This matrix of relations implies that those who shoot and standoff with the government would somehow be patriots fighting face to face, while those who fight to conceal their identities must be terrorists. However, the transparency of this move to labeling anything unknown as terrorist, reads as a state reclaiming its sovereignty and power over those who would challenge its power. For Puar,



this challenge to power is not just macro-political, but it has micropolitical ramifications in the state's ability to limit the possibilities of individuals' identities.

## Conclusion

Against Me!'s Tom Gable released a solo record in 2008 called *Heart Burns* on which he recorded the song "Anna is a Stool Pigeon." The song tells the story of Eric McDavid, an environmental activist who was entrapped by an FBI informant named Anna. She worked her way into the community of activists and convinced the group to gather supplies to blow up the Nimbus Dam in California. Anna also seduced Eric, and then turned him over to the FBI before any illegal action had occurred. Gabel sings,

Eric fell in love with an FBI informant  
Shared his dreams of revolution  
Now he's sitting in solitary confinement  
Be careful what you think  
Be careful what you say  
It might be used against you in court one day  
Well Anna thinks she's a hawk  
She's just a fucking snitch

Gabel's song marks the way in which folk punk speaks to the intersection of queerness and anarchism by also dealing with terrorism. Gabel's performance of the song specifically links anarchism and terrorism by citing the anarchism of the group of activists and comparisons made between this group and actual terrorists groups during their trials.

The second verse of the song articulates the particular ways the activists are compared and made into terrorists highlighting the ways in which Anna's actions ultimately made the illegal action possible. The song goes on:

The headlines called them the believers  
Comparisons were made to a terrorist organization  
Well Anna had the car, Anna paid the rent

Anna helped find the recipe to make the explosives  
She encouraged her friends to follow through with their plans  
They were gonna build a bomb and blow up the Nimbus Dam  
Their conversations were being recorded  
They didn't know it but Anna was an FBI informant

Gabel's depiction of Anna's work in the song takes a strong perspective in the outcome of the trial. In a YouTube video of Gabel playing the song, he calls the treatment of McDavid a "trumped up" charge, and asks for those interested to seek out the Support Eric McDavid website for more information. Gabel challenges the labeling of McDavid as a terrorist, and in doing so implicitly asks the audience to reconsider what it means to be a terrorist.

Gabel's performance of "Anna is a Stool Pigeon" and Laura Jane Grace's recent transition to presenting as female offer an opportunity to see the ways in which the politics of anarchism and queerness intersect where cultural others are oppressed. While I do not argue for one gestalt moment of these intersections in Grace's stage performances, when considered over time these performances allow for an understanding of the ways in which terrorism has become the tool of the powerful that makes these oppressions more similar than they are different.

I keep a photo of a crowd of people hanging above my desk. One member of this group is holding a sign that reads: "Benjamin Haas is a Terrorist." On May 9, 2011, I walked to the parade grounds at LSU to give a speech, after having announced I would burn an American flag in protest of the university's and the local police's treatment of Isaac Eslava.

On May 1, 2011 President Obama announced to the country that a team of U.S. Navy Seals had killed Osama Bin Laden. The next day, Baton Rouge residents awoke to news that the LSU campus' War Memorial Flag had been burned during the night. Over the course of the next days, a student, Isaac Eslava, was identified as the suspect and surrendered

himself to Baton Rouge Police custody. I read the papers constantly during these events, and was particularly disgusted by the ways in which the press, including the local papers and TV stations, were covering the story. The stories convicted Eslava before he was even charged with any crime. Particularly, the racist comments below each article enraged me. The state charged Eslava with multiple felonies.

I found the way the university and state handled the situation to be unacceptable, believing the university should handle the matter as an internal disciplinary action, considering Eslava's was a victimless crime. So I requested from the Dean of Student's office permission to burn a flag in the parade grounds in solidarity. Many questioned the necessity of burning the American Flag in this situation.

The university granted the permit on May 4<sup>th</sup>. At about 5 p.m. that evening, I posted a Facebook invitation to all of my friends for my event. By 7 p.m., the news of my potential flag burning had hit numerous conservative websites, forums, and email lists. I began receiving death threats via email and telephone. I was never called an anarchist, but I was called "faggot" and "queer" quite often in those threats.

I did not burn a flag, partially because the threats became real when pictures of my house appeared on a local LSU fan website and the State Fire Marshall refused to grant me a permit, one which is not required for any football game tailgater. I took this as a State sanctioned method to silence free speech. Instead, I prepared a written statement:

Funny Facebook said that there were only going to be 64 of you. I initially began this flag-burning protest to defend due process for students and suspected terrorists alike; to call on LSU and universities across the country to defend basic human rights and avoid putting students into the criminal justice system when it can taken care of internally. Solidarity means standing with those who are treated as guilty until proven innocent, instead of the other way around. That's what freedom is: standing with those who express their constitutional rights in ways that may be unpopular especially the accused and the marginalized, no matter the consequences.

In the name of peace, there will be no flag-burning today. This country and the flag that flies over it stand for freedom, democracy, love, peace and the ability to question our government. But today, it feels like it's just about hate and violence, I have received more than 100 threats on my life and on the lives of those I care about. But I also received numerous calls of support from those who agreed with me, military veterans, and even those who said they disagreed with the method I proposed but wanted to show me their support, and for that I am thankful. We can be better than this. We may disagree on what forms of dissent are appropriate and what the proper forums are to voice them, but the important thing is that we come together and defend the right to dissent at all, especially when this country has asserted its ability to declare anyone an enemy who has a different opinion than the majority. I feel what is missing most from the United States is a sense of community, love, and acceptance of the differences we may have about issues in the world. If I had one wish for today, it would be to make the world a more peaceful place. Peace.

When I arrived on the parade grounds the next morning, *The Daily Reveille*

estimated 2,000 people were already gathering, mostly to heckle and threaten me. I was only able to give two sentences of my prepared speech before I was ushered away by police, more interested in the free speech of the mob that had formed around me (if hurtling water balloons and tobacco chew counts as speech) than my own.

Much later, I wrote a poem about, and not about, that day for an online contest asking writers to compose a poem using as many words as possible off the Department of Homeland Security's taboo word bank. This is a list of words determining if online messages are deemed worthy of surveillance, particularly when queried via online search engine. Here is the poem I submitted:

On the day I became a terrorist there wasn't a nuclear meltdown or pipe bomb explosion.  
There was a radioactive and over-fished ocean, but that had nothing to do with me.  
I am not sure what I was wearing, probably something denim.  
I didn't buy white powder, fertilizer, meat, birds, or bacteria.  
I didn't sneeze, scream, get sick, slink down an alley, or see the dentist.  
There were cops, but there are always cops, and no shots fired.  
On the day I became a terrorist the sun came up on Bagdad, Jerusalem, New York, Coney  
Island, L.A., the Mississippi River, El Paso, San Diego, Bogotá, Tokyo, Baton Rouge, Tripoli,  
Kingstown, and almost everywhere else too.  
I probably checked my email, drank a cup of coffee, and read the news.  
Someone made a paper airplane, and pretended it was a crop duster.

There wasn't a hurricane, tornado, swarm of locust, lightning storm, earthquake, blizzard, typhoon, wildfire, brown out, mudslide, or flood covered by the media.  
I drove my car and regretted not being on my bike.  
For me the clouds were still in the shapes of animals and cartoon faces.  
There was distant smoke, but if you ignored it, you could convince yourself it wasn't there.  
On the day I became a terrorist I wasn't subject to denial of service online or at a restaurant.  
Someone drank a car bomb, smoked marijuana, and snorted cocaine in a bathroom.  
I wasn't stockpiling a weapons cache or plotting with my radical friends.  
I didn't own a single vest.  
And I have no idea what was going on in the PLO, Tamil Tigers, CIA, Hezbollah, IRA, Department of Homeland Security, FARC, Tea Party, Al Qaeda, KKK, or anybody else.  
I talked with small number of people on the phone.  
I doubt I said the word "jihad," unless I was talking about music.  
I ate a salad with home-grown tomatoes, and had a glass of port.  
There were children dying from the self-interested decisions of old men, and I did nothing about it.  
I didn't cover my face, throw a brick at a window, do any looting, or judge anyone who did.  
On the day I became a terrorist bridges spanned, buses and subways ran, and still some people cried.  
Someone lost their grandfather's pocketknife in airport security.  
There was drilling into the crust of the earth, and gas leaks in several apartments.  
I thought that power lines must have seemed like the industrial revolution's cat's cradle.  
And I counted the tiles on the bathroom floor, while someone else was held hostage.  
A suicide bomber changed her mind, and nobody ever knew.  
Something was so much fun somebody said it was a riot.  
On the day I became a terrorist there was just the sound of rustling papers and pens dragging across paper, signing bills into law and silence. boom.

## CHAPTER FIVE: NO ENCORE

We're kids building models of a world that we might wanna live in.  
And sorting feelings in our stomach—is this liberation or starvation?  
But have we made it anywhere at all if the dishes are never done?  
If we can't live without dishwashers, how would we live without cops?  
And you're asking me, who does the dishes after the revolution?  
Well, I do my own dishes now I'll do my own dishes then.  
You know it's always the ones who don't, who ask that fucking question.  
(Wingnut Dishwashers Union)

I am not a punk. I love punk music and culture, but in a lot of ways I found them too late to be a true punk kid. As I approach my Thirtieth birthday, I listen to many punk records, I wear skinny jeans, I have various clothes covered in patches, and I am learning to play the guitar and banjo. I am an anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, animal rights activist, vegan, anarchist, and queer ally. I believe punk is a mindset of being *radically* individual, more so than any of the particular practices or fashions associated with what is commonly known as punk. Yet, I struggle to explain how I interact with punk culture as well. I am not sure how to mention the amazing compilation record of folk punk Mountain Goats covers or the debt I have to a woman in Canada, whom I have never met, for introducing me to a million obscure bands and selling me patches. There is no way to include all these things or these people who have changed my life in revolutionary ways.

I live in Baton Rouge now, a city where I have been to exactly one punk house show, to see the bands Thistle! and Cottontail. In November of 2012, Jessi and I went to this house show mainly because it was the only one I have ever been invited to since moving to Louisiana. Folk-pop duo Cottontail headlined the show followed by folk punk band Thistle!. We arrived at the bungalow apartment and discovered droves of young people standing around drinking forties and smoking. On the way inside, someone commented on my denim jacket with the patches as being very “hardcore,” but once inside, Jessi and I just sat

on the back porch by ourselves, petting the scraggly dogs and only talking to a couple of people sitting right next to us. The majority of the crowd was either extremely standoffish or so drunk they were incapable of any meaningful exchange. We were offered beer and hits of various smoked drugs, but after Cottontail played, I felt ready to leave and did not feel much like imbibing. I felt old and like an outsider. This community we infringed upon all knew each other -- we were just observers. This is my point: being a punk in a scene is work. It means showing up; it means being present, and for years now I have chosen to funnel my energy into books, theatres, and writing, rather than crashing house parties.

Punk is about street credibility; however, I have never been able to find a real home in a punk community. My academic investments have forced me to sacrifice a great deal of what it would take to become a full-fledged punk. I am not sure if I will ever be a punk. All of this aside, I can comfortably say punk has changed my life. The in/out dichotomy to which even I fall victim marks a philosophical contradiction in a culture that claims to welcome all misfits and social outcasts. In punk, I found a place where the anger I often feel is accepted and even celebrated. I found a place where it is okay to be different, and I found a place where it is fine to disagree with everyone I know.

In this chapter, I situate the folk punk show as the location of possibility for becoming, demonstrating what this community offers those who seek a radical politics. In particular, I argue that folk punk shows open participants up to the possibility of a utopian experience, or more importantly, opens them up to becoming-punk. This possibility is accomplished through engaging the embodied performativity of listening as articulated by Nancy. I also argue that punk identity is shared at the punk show as a location of agonistic performance. Then, I explore the ways these listening subjects encounter Jill Dolan's

utopian performatives when in the presence of agonistic performance. Next, I consider punk as a social movement invested in micropolitics. I conclude this study with an articulation of the ways in which the exemplar performances from previous chapters, *Inky Skulls*, *Pussy Riot!*, and *Against Me!*, have worked on me as part of becoming-punk.

Of course, people exist who have not had a positive experience with the punk community, and who see it as some kind of conformist cult of mohawks, leather jackets, and safety pins. As someone who has spent a great deal of time with punk, going to shows, listening to bands, and being drawn to the books I find, I have trouble imagining that negative take. Though I cannot speak for the entirety of the punk movement, as a fringe group, punk suffers at times from its own inclusivity. Punk scenes come and go and people change and disagree about issues that destroy communities. In addition, a single person may completely taint the experience for other people. Punk's abrasive aesthetic edge makes confrontation seem inevitable. The best punk communities have means to deal with these kinds of disagreements, but some do not. Thus, people leave the scene, forget their positive experiences, or feel the need to denounce the totality of punk because of local, isolated incidents. I do not wish to say punk is a special kind of community, as it has made real mistakes in terms of its approaches to race questions and gender issues in particular, as I have outlined in this study. However, to judge an entire community by a singular experience is too broad, whether that experience was positive or negative.

As an essentially intersectional genre, folk punk anticipates conflict and seeks solidarity as a way to productively address it. In Chapter One, I argue folk punk enables one to see the political intersections at work in the culture. Chapters Two, Three, and Four offer particular intersections of race and class, women and nonhuman animals, and queerness



and anarchism, in order to illustrate this point. As an intersectional genre in and of itself, folk punk performs a variety of intersections which may not reveal themselves in their entirety in a single performance. Thus, the method of this study has been to seek exemplars to point out significant intersections at work in particular performances. In fact, the lines of intersection drawn in this dissertation could be delineated differently, but the particular exemplars represented here are directed by the performances in which I invested as audience member.

In the introduction, I posit the subject is constituted through its listening in the world. This constitution includes the listener's body. As a scholar interested in punk, my understanding of the genre and its intersectional politics was developed through my listening at shows. The idiosyncratic nature of my (admittedly limited) list of intersections has become inescapable from my experience of the folk punk scene. I was an anarchist and a vegan before any of these shows; however, I may not have understood the ways in which these movements were linked to queerness and feminism were it not for my experiences with folk punk. Through these unique and experiential links, I have come to understand solidarity as a means to deal with conflicting values and political investments.

Disagreements are unavoidable in a community that operates in so many registers and is involved in so many issues. Folk punk continues to find ways to deal with these disagreements so as not to elide the differences between the participants involved. As such, I view the folk punk community as one invested in solidarity politics.

## Agonistic Performance

Kirk Fuoss's "Performance as Contestation: An Agonistic Perspective on the Insurgent Assembly" articulates a performance criticism paradigm based in a world in conflict. Indebted to agonistic rhetorical approaches that consider the ways in which messages of advocacy are inherently confrontational, Fuoss claims these confrontations are essential to healthy democratic practice.

The agonistic perspective assumes that conflict based on difference is inevitable in a democratic system. Given what I have identified as the typically radically democratic or far-left ideas at work in folk punk, I propose that we can understand how conflict resolutions based in disagreement can avoid eliding difference through the agonistic perspective.

Political theorist Chantal Mouffe writes about the goal of democracy generally:

Instead of trying to design the institutions which, through supposedly "impartial" procedures, would reconcile all conflicting interests and values, the task for democratic theorists and politicians should be to envisage the creation of a vibrant "agnostic" public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted. This is, in my view, the sine qua non for an effective exercise of democracy. (3)

Mouffe argues that democracies need vibrant subcultures that work out problems in localized exchanges, with no need for the modernist pretense of objectivity. Instead, these exchanges engage in a radically subjective process of debate. This sphere already exists in the vibrant punk community throughout the world, where groups feel free to disagree about what they want and have necessary discussions. Rhetorical scholar Robert Ivie extends Mouffe's argument, showcasing the need for those having opposing viewpoints to work together to avoid reaching a moment where no solution can be reached by a single arbitration system:

When politics produces agonistic exchanges without creating enemies, democracy is

achieved momentarily, however fleeting that moment proves to be. Yet, the burden of resisting dehumanizing discourses, I want to suggest, falls squarely on the many who are ruled by political elites rather than onto the elites who govern in place of and over the citizenry, thus necessitating the practice of a humanizing style of democratic dissent under the shadow of the modern warfare state. (454)

The punk community's self-regulation, particularly in matters of anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, anti-cruelty, and anti-violence stances, exhibits this kind of responsibility.

Democracy appears in the agonistic performances of the folk punk show.

For Fuoss, agonistic performance exists in three dimensions:

Three dimensions of performance contestation: the direction of effectivity (whether the performance maintains or subverts the status quo relations of power), the mode of effectivity (the strategies through which this directional movement is transacted), and the spheres of contestation (the levels at which these strategies are operationalized, whether textual, spatial, or conceptual. (332)

Punk music's goal is often to subvert or wake up the masses to the existing relations of power and injustice. Folk punk shows offer multiple levels of contestation through lyrics, venues, and ideological messages.

For Fuoss the performance of these contestations are not haphazard, they are moments performers construct messages that challenge the status quo. He introduces three assumptions implicit in the agonistic performance perspective. Of the first, he writes,

First, cultural performances make things happen that would not have happened in that way, to that extent, in that place, at that time, or among those persons had the cultural performance not occurred. In short, cultural performances are not merely objects of aesthetic contemplation but more importantly sites of sociopolitical competition. (332)

In this first assumption, the political end goal is of greater import than the aesthetic means of the performance itself. However, the aesthetic qualities of the performance will affect the nature of the message's appeal for many audiences. With this assumption of the primacy of effectiveness, the performance critic can then focus her efforts on the political outcomes of

the performance. Fuoss continues:

Second, cultural performances move the social formation in which they occur and of which they are a part in one of two directions, either toward a further entrenchment of status quo values and relations of power or toward a loosening of status quo values and with redistribution of status quo relations of power. (332)

From the agonistic perspective, a performance must be analyzed, at least in part by its outcomes. As historian Howard Zinn writes, “You can’t be neutral on a moving train” (1). The same seems to be true for the agonistic performance critic: performances are either invested in the maintenance of the status quo or in changing it. While this binary logic risks being overly reductive, the necessary complexity is added to the equation when one considers the variety of tactics and directions opposition to the status quo can take. The variety of intersecting issues present in any performance, as highlighted by this study, also works to avoid an overly simplistic articulation of the politics of performance.

As a third assumption of agonistic performance, the critic credits or faults the performer for the outcomes of the performance. “Third this directional movement occurs as a result of strategies that human agents operationalize and, further, these strategies operate either in cultural performance themselves or in ancillary activities related to them, such as talking about performances prior or after their occurrence” (332). The performer’s responsibility does not extend to conditions like the weather impacting audience size, for instance. However, his or her responsibility extends to what that performer does with the audience who attends.

I deploy the agonistic perspective to consider folk punk performances, because folk punk is a political musical endeavor engaging in tactics to change the world. The agonistic framework considers a performance’s effectivity, and in particular the direction, mode, and spheres of contestation for that effectivity.

## Performative Utopia

The live folk punk show makes identities. Performance scholars have long known the power the theater possesses. However, performance's power cannot be universalized, nor is it present in every performance, for every audience member. The particulars of a performance, including the performer, audience, text, and context, all play a role in the effectivity of performance. Highlighting the role of the performer, Richard Bauman writes in *Verbal Art as Performance*:

The consideration of the power inherent in performance to transform social structures opens the way to a range of additional consideration concerning the role of the performer in society. Perhaps there is a key here to the persistently documented tendency for performers to be both admired and feared—admired for their artistic skill and power for the enhancement of experience they provide, feared because of the potential they represent for subverting and transforming the status quo. Here too may lie a reason for the equally persistent association between performers and marginality or deviance, for in the special emergent quality of performance the capacity for change may be highlighted and made manifest to the community. (305)

As a deviant and outsider to culture, the punk performer on the street is feared by the status quo. We recognize the punk's potential to radicalize life through her everyday performance. She achieves this through her politics, practices, and fashions. Because punk represents a challenge to power in our society, that of the state, capitalism, heteronormativity, etc., society continually marginalizes punks. On stage, a punk's everyday practices become aesthetic performances with the power to influence and inspire others. A punk inspires her young audience to question authority.

The folk punk show offers opportunities for the powerful relationship between the punk and her fans to develop. This is important for several reasons. First, most punk shows are all-ages; kids can see bands that perform radical messages. Second, punk, especially

folk punk, is a youth culture with a unique understanding of historicity, as evidenced by the use of folk music structures and instruments. Finally, the punk show offers a space where those in the process of becoming-punk or testing out their ideas can convene with others with similar ideas to create and exchange. Here, punk maintains its ability to change and adapt to particular situations.

Each chapter of this study began with a description of a folk punk performance in order to help those who have not attended a show gain a greater understanding of becoming-punk. In *Utopia in Performance*, Jill Dolan argues that these details in the punk performance create opportunities for becomings to occur. She argues that, “. . . live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagining that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world” (2). For Dolan, within these performances, the small moments, what she calls the utopian performatives, have the potential to grab the audience and change them forever. However, these performatives are not universals that a writer could point to for any audience to accept. Of this point Dolan explains that, “. . . finding utopia in performance is of necessity, idiosyncratic, spontaneous, and unpredictable” (5). The earlier descriptions of Chris Clavin’s awkward turn of phrase or Laura Jane Grace’s singing of “Baby, I’m an Anarchist” function for me as utopian performatives, yet they might not for others.

Most importantly, the utopian performative calls the audience beyond the moment in which they currently exist:

Utopian performatives describe small but profound moments in which presence calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of

our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense.” (5)

One feels these intense moments in one’s body. In Nancy’s terms, the body resonates with the systems of understanding constitutive of self-vibrating. Like Dolan, the performatives I consider “allow fleeting contact with a utopia not stabilized by its own finished perfection, not coercive in its contained, self-reliant, self-determined system, but a utopia always in process, always only partially grasped, as it disappears before us around the corners of narrative and social experience” (6). The listening self theorized by Nancy encounters the becoming of Deleuze and Guattari in that neither the self nor the world sought are stable objects. Instead, utopia is not some place in the world or a site of the world but a motion toward a quality desired.

For the punk at the show, these politics, (expressed in the all-ages show, the lyrics, rants, etc.), represent real political action for those already participating in these ideologies, and rehearsals for those experiencing the ideas for the first time. Dolan writes, “The affective and ideological ‘doings’ we see and feel demonstrated in utopian performatives also critically rehearse civic engagement that could be effective in the wider public and political realm” (7). These performances and rehearsals create bodies prepared to go into the world and advocate for the leftist issues represented in the show. The punk show, like the theatre, is often a safe space for particular ideologies to be tested and expressed in ways that create opportunities for activism or radical ideals later in life.

### Punk as a Social Movement

Punk is not dead. It has never been dead despite Crass’s declarative “Punk is Dead.” In fact, punk is everywhere. Punk publications have exploded in the last two years. In *The*

*Atlantic*, David Greenwald argued that 2012 is “the year that Punk Broke Back,” primarily because of a resurgence of indie and punk convergences. Greenwald cites the band Swearin’ from Brooklyn as a particularly successful example of this intersectional success story. Similarly, Jonathan Van Meter’s “Rebel Yell” highlights punk’s influence on high fashion, in light of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s new exhibit on punk fashion. A number of music writers including the *Guardian*’s John Harris have also been enthralled as evidenced by recently released photos depicting the presence of punks in Myanmar. These punks have faced extreme measures by authorities trying to keep them off the streets and from making their music. As a global phenomenon, punk exists on every continent and in nearly every country on earth.

Many books have come out in the last two years about punk, especially from people like Alice Bag and Ed Sanders describing their early days in the punk scene. The exact number of books released in the last few years seems impossible to track given the nature of independent publishing popular in the punk scene, but I count at least 65 published from 2011-2013 alone. While books about punk have been popular for a long time, at least for a select group, a recent bump in their production demonstrates two things. First, my study is a timely one and taps into punk’s current cultural wave. Second, punk history is well documented, and as such, this study is not the definitive history of punk. Instead, I argue that folk punk has been ignored by many of these histories and should exist alongside these historical documents of punk proper.

Punk is and is not a social movement. Punk rock may be called postmodern social movement, perhaps most similar to the Occupy Wall Street movement. Like OWS, punk does not possess a singular list of goals. Different people within punk have all sorts of ideas



about what it should be/do. Because of these complexities, scholars and critics have difficulty defining punk as a movement. In fact, punk may not be defined in terms of success and failure as have social movements of the past. Frederick D. Miller in “The End of SDS and the Emergence of Weathermen: Demise Through Success” argues that the ways scholars talk about social movements has been in flux since the 1950s. However, he claims the primary goal of a social movement is social effectivity, “Most social movements consist of a variety of social movement organization that with varying degrees of cooperation or competition, seek to mobilize people and press demands” (304). The social movement strives to achieve some kind of practical success, often in terms of policy or laws. Thus, if punk was judged by the standard for a successful social movement through the attainment of the entirety of goals, it would be a failure. For example, if punk’s ultimate goal is destroying governments and capitalism and these systems are still intact, does this mean punk is a failed social moment? If that were the case, if the total success of a movement meant achieving its most radical goals, then every social movement in the United States has failed. For instance, feminism failed at passing the Equal Rights Amendment. Does that mean feminism is a complete failure? Because racism still exists, we do not call the Civil Rights movement a complete failure. So this measure of success seems unreasonable. As such, I seek another way to talk about what makes a successful social movement.

Most Americans today owe a debt to movements like feminism and civil rights. While women and minorities have more to gain in terms of true equality, how have those social movements benefitted these individuals? This study locates change at the micropolitical rather than the macropolitical. As a social movement, punk changes the lives of individuals who adopt some version of the movement’s goals and ideals. In feminism, a

similar move from the macropolitical to the micro happened through consciousness raising meetings and is described by the slogan “the personal is political.” Both attempted to teach individuals that personal knowledge and actions matter in terms of feminism and that these individual actions can create change in the world. Just as activists articulated these feminist messages in books and meetings, the punk performs activism at the show.

Others, however, see success differently, falling back on older notions of social movements. Music critic John Roderick’s “Punk Rock is bullshit: How a Toxic Social Movement Poisoned our Culture” in *Seattle Weekly* says:

What I’m talking about is “punk rock” as a political stance, punk rock as a social movement, punk rock as a fashion trend, punk rock as a personal lifestyle brand, and punk rock as a lens of critical appraisal. The shadow of punk rock has eclipsed countless new dawns under its fundamental negativity and its lazy equation of rejection with action.

While Roderick claims to have grown up punk (a claim I believe), he asks readers to forget punk and the negativity he associates with the scene. This call makes a certain kind of sense if one thinks of punk in the 1970s in terms of its rejectionist nihilism articulated in common phrases like “no future.” However, Roderick focuses on the “anti” parts of punk labels and lists what he calls its “pseudo-values”:

We internalized its laundry list of pseudo-values—anti-establishmentarianism, anti-capitalism, libertarianism, anti-intellectualism, and self-abnegation disguised as humility—until we became merciless captors of our own lightheartedness, prisoners in a Panopticon who no longer needed a fence. After almost four decades of gorging on punk fashion, music, art, and attitude, we still grant it permanent “outsider” status. Its tired tropes and worn-out clichés are still celebrated as edgy and anti-authoritarian, above reproach and beyond criticism.

In actuality, I understand Roderick’s criticism. Punk can appear to be a self-regulating culture focused on criticizing its own members instead of social enemies. Chris Clavin spoke similarly about the need for punks to focus on the real problems of society.

Experientially, on the other hand, I believe Roderick's claims fail to capture the micropolitical potential of punk. For me, punk represents real values and ways in which to live my life, and I do not find a reason to write off all of punk. Instead, I recognize the need to continue to do the work in the movement. Punks must overcome this permanent outsider status rather than accept it and give up. Roderick further indicts punk, saying progressive virtues in culture have been made in spite of punks:

The positive things that transpired in the culture of the past 40 years happened *in spite* of punk, not because of it. Punk didn't end racism, sexism, or homophobia; it didn't stop factory farming, the New World Order, or the massive success of Creed. It did not inconvenience a single one of its stated adversaries despite being on the front lines of everywhere. Needless to say, nor did it bring about "Anarchy," thank God.

Roderick's statement projects the clichéd version of anarchy that has nothing to do with punk today. Punk does not attempt to take over the world and make everyone a punk. If that were the case, the problems of exclusion Roderick discusses earlier in the article would not exist. I disagree with Roderick for a number of reasons, but I also realize that those who take these conservative positions (like "anarchy is bad" and "punk is just destructive nihilism because it calls for a revolutionary ethic") demonstrate society's fear of radical change. This position exerts a chilling effect on dissent. While revolutionary punks like Pussy Riot! rot in Russian prison camps, music critics sit in their comfy apartments and decry punk's methods. I would like to recall Wingnut Dishwashers Union's lyrics which opened this chapter, "Well, I do my own dishes now, I'll do my own dishes then / You know it's always the ones who don't, who ask that fucking question."

Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay take a more hopeful look at punk as they cite the words of The Clash's front man Joe Strummer,

The future does remain unwritten; the past, as usual, still demands some accounting for, and punk rock is no exception. Whatever punk's political failings may continue to be, the punk scene has engaged in extensive, lively, and contentious debates surrounding issues of racial identity. The trouble is, they have taken place in far-flung and diffuse modes of cultural production . . . . Because for all the ways the punk scene has fucked up and gotten it wrong, it has changed, shifted adapted, and sometimes gotten it right. The future is unwritten. (16-17)

If the future is unwritten, punk has the potential to change the world in terms of race, class, gender, identity, species, and political beliefs.

### The Performances

The Inky Skulls' show in New Orleans was an agonistic performance that stands out in terms of its dealings with race and class. By engaging Chris Clavin's comment about "the Puerto Rican bands," I highlight the difficulty of race talk in the punk community. In particular, my analysis begins with the performer Clavin himself and the ways the text of his speech emerged from his white body. One reading might argue that Clavin's performance upheld a status quo for racism or ethnocentrism. However, after talking to Clavin, his performance becomes more complex. If one is to consider the context of the event—a disappointing show attendance, awkwardness on the mic, and a personal relationship with the bands, one discovers different kinds of antagonisms hidden by a simple reading. There are other issues at work pointing to the multiple ways race functions in the folk punk community. First, two bands on stage that night did not sing in English. These performances challenge the racial stereotypes of punk as a purely white art and highlight racism in culture today. These performers' bodies of color and their spoken Spanish text create agonistic performances that clearly challenge the status quo in society at large and in punk as a whole. These performances use strategies of resistance and

obfuscation as a means to challenge society. This document articulates the profound ways this evening inspired me to reflect on these complex questions and the ways messages can be read and interpreted. As a performance critic, I find myself certain that these performances made a difference in how I think about race. In that way, they succeeded in being politically effective.

If I consider class as expressed in the show, then the tactics of the performance can be seen to address the anti-capitalist nature of folk punk. The bands played in a small back room with a disappointingly small audience dwindling down to about ten people for the final act. The small merchandise table sat out front where records, CDs, and t-shirts were available for modest prices. After the shows, the bands could be heard talking about riding in two vans, only one of which had air conditioning. In addition, the bands received no assistance from roadies to carry their equipment. I saw one of my punk rock heroes packing his gear into vans. These scenes work together for me in the tiny sweat-stained performance memory to show a political performance challenging the norms of capitalist rock in both obvious and subtle ways.

However, a conversation with the last act, Eric Ayotte, stands as my utopian performative memory. I have been to a lot of shows: punk shows, indie shows, and performance studies shows. Rarely do the pleasantries of after-show talk with performers leave me with a memorable moment. Jessi and I were talking to Ayotte about being vegans and the difficulty of travel. He paused and said, "Veganism and animal rights were really important to me once, but now I have a hard time picking just one issue to care about. Now I am concerned about human rights, animal rights, and the environment." A light bulb came on—of course I can care about more than one issue! I have cared about more than one

issue for my entire life, but in rooms of people we are so often asked, “What is your one issue?” Perhaps Eric Ayotte is responsible for the intersectional approach of this study.

Pussy Riot’s performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow is perhaps the most agonistic performance I describe. The lyrics of “Punk Prayer” particularly call out Vladimir Putin and ask the Virgin Mary to take him away. Pussy Riot’s lyrics may be the most meaningful sphere of contestation. The location of the Cathedral performance (where women are not allowed to be, much less sing protest songs and dance) challenges the social conditions of patriarchy in modern day Russia. The strategies of guerilla performance—wearing masks for anonymity, and short performance durations—highlight the ways in which Pussy Riot! attempted to downplay the particularity of the performers themselves, focusing the attention not on the identities of the performers, but instead on the content of their messages. The attention shifts from the context of the performance as a whole, to the performers themselves and their skills, at the trial, where the eloquent speeches and beauty of the members became the center of news stories. While it might be tempting to argue these performances failed in terms of affectivity, as Nadya and Maria are currently in prison, the overwhelming public support from around the globe, including formations of local Pussy Riot! chapters, songs, books, and art dedicated to Pussy Riot!, speak to the amazing ways this performance influenced people across the globe.

Once the public learned of the vegan politics of Maria, the link between feminism and nonhuman animal rights became clearer. The protest for nonhuman animal rights emerges from the broader context of the performance, as Maria’s sickness is revealed in court. While her veganism is a personal choice, Alicia Silverstone’s letter and the national media attention brought Maria to the fore, introducing her to many who might never have

considered veganism before. While I do not think the focus on her veganism or illness were as important as Pussy Riot!'s advocacy for feminist politics in the "Punk Prayer" performance, I am convinced it is still effective.

The audience of this performance intrigues me because of the limited way people heard about the events. Because Pussy Riot! is an insurgent performance art group, an intentional audience could not be present at the performance itself. The only way to view their performances are through the YouTube videos they produce. This mediated relationship to the audience magnifies the performance of Pussy Riot! and makes it possible for people like Madonna to make shirts saying "Free Pussy Riot!". People in Moscow can wear these T-shirts to concerts. The artist Peaches can record a song also called "Free Pussy Riot!". Hundreds of bands can boycott Russian cities on their own tours to protest the trial. Pussy Riot!'s savvy use of social media is tantamount to understanding their agonistic performance practices.

At first glance, Against Me!'s performance in St. Louis does not appear as agonistic as the others. However, in terms of anarchism, the band's open political advocacy via the text of songs like "Teenage Anarchist" and "Baby, I'm an Anarchist" challenges the dominant paradigm of American governing. At the show, Tom Gabel did not say much to the crowd, though I felt a part of a community in the audience, even with demarcated areas to stand and a great distance between the band and us. Most of what I recall regarding this show is about my dear friend Scott and the other random people we met in the crowd. In this way, Against Me! brought together a group of individuals and fans of similar ideas and taste, in order to give us a good time. That is exactly what we got.

The more interesting agonistic performance related to *Against Me!*, however, is the one that does *not* happen that evening in St. Louis. The meaningful agonistic performance becoming was Tom's transition to Laura Jane Grace. As a place where transgender performance has rarely been open and visible, the punk scene adapts through Laura Jane Grace. Laura Jane Grace's public transitioning marks the punk performance's continuation after the lights have fallen on any one particular night on stage. Grace's interviews in major magazines, appearances on MTV, and *Against Me!* performances create a world where those who feel oppressed by social gender norms find possibility in a role model. Laura Jane Grace embodies one of the most agonistic performances of all.

Finally, the intersection of queerness and anarchism as the terrorist manifests as a more recent experience of mine. I am not sure if I thought about terrorism the day I saw *Against Me!* play, but I performed at an intersection of punk and terrorism through the protest I offered in May of 2011. My own actions and subsequent poem illustrate both agonistic performance and punk as utopian performative in my own becoming-punk.

## Conclusion

There are many folk punk bands I do not talk about in this study. I have struggled throughout this process with the limiting scope of any project of this nature. However, I want to recognize the ways this study is really just the beginning, opening a door in performance and music scholarship. As I argued above, the approach of this project necessitates a complex and sustained argument now winding to a conclusion. Future research is possible and even necessary.



In particular, intersectionality in music and punk studies offers a plethora of opportunities to focus more particularly on various intersections within music scenes. My study hopes to establish the groundwork, making room for future work that would add to the intersections I introduce, particularly the ways in which disability studies, ageism, and environmental issues can and must be woven into the mesh of these intersecting populations of punk and music studies.

I draw lines of intersection as seen from my position, a position of privilege, which I interrogate and deconstruct in this document (and hopefully in life). Future projects wishing to take up this approach should follow the ever-evolving state of folk punk music and the ever-increasing number of hybrid and intersectional genres. I hope my text establishes sufficient historical work such that new studies can focus more intensely on the style of the current folk punk music scenes through the continental U.S. and beyond.

Defiance Ohio says it best in the song "Enough,"

Whether records we sold to fill some demand  
Or the rapid deployment of 10,000 men,  
Did we do it to make this year better than the last  
Or are we fooling ourselves with some outdated rhetoric?  
He said: "Well these are our friends and we, and we're not like them."  
But I thought the difference was we might stop if we can.  
When I think to stop when enough is enough,  
Or when we think to stop when enough is enough,  
When I want to stop when enough is enough,  
Then I might just sleep at night.  
So with one hand in a fist,  
Please keep one hand in the air questioning  
"What does all this have to do with me?"

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