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## Mémoire de Maîtrise (Mention Bien)

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La stratégie des  
apparences comme moyen  
d'expression : le  
mouvement Punk et ses  
répercussions en  
Angleterre



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*To John Ramsey*

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# INTRODUCTION

Punk. A word to describe an amount of mingled and interwoven matters, all converging toward anger, cultural revolution, aberration, disease and strivings. Strivings for well-being, a state of everlasting teenage always on the verge of being caught by the hellish conformism of submitted adults.

An explosion to begin with, the punk movement was marked by successive phases and definitely dead as such when punk music could no longer evolve and became painfully sad.

But the movement can be said to be, from a cultural point of view, one of the most-not to say the most- important phenomenon of the 1975-1985 decade: an anger so strongly expressed in the face of England but a way of dealing with expression typical to the English soul.

So there came the young blood but this blood was turning gray and England saw her youth taken by a kind of frenzy, a disease, metamorphosing the young into bewildering shapes, making one wonder.

And wonder, translated into public opinion after the media process, kept the general attention focused on the punk movement and amplified its scope up to exaggeration, with all what this may imply.

Punk became a state of being, a stereotype, before being stuck like a picture in the book of contemporary myths - the myth of an epoch, and the pride of belonging to a famous group.

But this was before fashion and commerce had taken hold of the movement and brought about a new mentality among a youth that wanted to remain young. All these aspects are to be considered as separated and polarized elements all agreeing to make the patchwork of what is called the punk movement. The ironical piece of this patchwork is though a paradox: punk cannot be punk if it is given both a status and a name. So all that can be analyzed are the germinations out of a punk seed bound to be destroyed by its own bearings. As punk could only be a confusing concept, its extension would necessarily encompass paradoxes and absurdities. But only as such could it annoy. Besides, as there was neither punk "party" nor explicit punk rules, one has to refer to a voluntary return to tribal instincts than to any codified type of behavior when dealing with the movement, as some of the attitudes-"attitude" being a key word-were as much conscious as unconscious, these later notions brewing behind the scene of art-the art of self invention. An approach to the movement can only be very subjective, as it is both recent and still at work. To sort out what will be remembered by History is thus not worth being given a try. In this study, certain sides of the subject won't be considered as such as the problem of drugs, known to bloom every-where dissatisfaction and difficulties in mastering one's life successfully are felt. Drugs are undoubtedly mixed with punk but punk doesn't lose signification without drugs. Few punks were real drug-addicts. What could lead to drug-taking is thus to be taken into serious account. Despair was certainly one of the major elements of the movement but mainly as an ingredient for the building of some bomb blowing in hope. Through the punk movement, it is a

new and peculiar jolt of the underlying problems of the modern world that occurs. A desire for change, such as the hippies' some years ago; the new way of dealing with society when society no more provides answers, prospects and spiritual growth. Punk is above all the existential crisis of a generation. Conformity growing in scope until it embraces and stifles everything leads to anxiety, a basic disposition which grips the whole person, making one aware of one's estrangement from being, feeling completely threatened. But this sets free liberating forces. The punks felt threatened by the danger of living a life of unauthentic existence, that very life that psychology and the social sciences regard as a life of normalcy. The purely functional or organizational man thus becomes the archetype of the unauthentically living man, holding conformity as a fetish. The break from thoughtless conformity is then necessary for the birth of an authentic living personality. Without being explicitly expressed, for people to be authentic was for punks to be creative in spite of the ultimate futility of creation and art. The return to a tribal kind of life through squats, to a certain precariousness of being coupled with one's self-invention, through clothes and appearance all converge toward a desire for spontaneity and an escape from the social shackles and to the joy and frenzy of feeling alive. Together with the social aspect of the movement, ideological hints and a survey of the history of youth since the sixties can help to understand the punk problem and punk mentality.

But there are aspects of the movement that would rather belong to the field of art criticism and this is why the problem of the punk outfit and stylized appearance will rather be seen and interpreted from a psychological point of view. To decide where the limits of the subject stand and when to replace generally accepted ideas by personal feelings is part of a necessary search for objectivity. But this work, nevertheless, cannot be but a subjective approach to a contemporary phenomenon situated as much in imagination as in reality; and a story told.

# *CHAPTER 1*

## **1. THE BEGINNINGS AND PROMISES OF THE PUNK MOVEMENT**

### **A. The economic and social context**

#### **A.1. 1975-1977, English European record of inflation and unemployment**

During the mid-seventies, England was in a real bad state as regards economy. Inflation was there the European record and unemployment was rapidly increasing. Greater London and the Manchester-Liverpool area were but hot points where difficulties were sharply felt.

Parallel to the economic problems, the development of mediatization, the spreading of culture and the crumbling of traditional ethics of work were highly infiltrating the most disadvantaged sections of the population.

As industrial progress tends to destroy the stability of tradition and settle new values and possibilities to change one's destiny, social mobility increases: the individual no longer has any fixed limits of expectation with which to curb his appetites and ambition. From these two data, expectations and the impossibility to fulfill them arise dissatisfaction and disillusionment.

To be young and poor in 1975 was to choose between working in a factory or unemployment, keeping in mind some promises for a better life.

This, the young individual cannot stand. This is the starting point for the great scaffolding of contradictory values that is the coming punk movement.

Sociopsychological studies are normalizing facts of society and reducing the individual to a victim or a mentally ill person.

Anomy is defined by sociopsychologists as a form of cultural chaos due to an imbalance between the approved goals of society and the legitimate means to attain them.

The sociologist R.K. Merton (1957) describes several types of response to anomy, of which, perhaps, the more serious is "retreatism" or contracting out. This refers to individuals who repudiate the whole frame of reference of conventional society, rejecting both the goals and the means.

These self-determining outcasts are but an alternative to criminality but are labeled criminals. Punks fall into this category, if a first definition is needed.

*It's not much fun to be young today. If you think otherwise take a look at yesterday's jobless figures. Is it any wonder if youngsters feel disillusioned and betrayed? Is it any wonder if they turn to anarchistic heroes like Johnny Rotten? In the plight of the young, Britain is now beginning to reap the bitter harvest of inflation. A brave new generation of talent and purpose is turning sour before our very eyes.*

*Editorial, Daily Mirror, June 22, 1977*

#### **A.2. The British educational system as a source of troubles**

Huge numbers of fifteen-year-olds are released on to the labour market with insufficient



training or preparation for anything but dead-end jobs.

A lack of status, due to their exclusion from grammar school promotion since the age of eleven brings resentment against the so-called establishment, and a feeling of being pushed around and exploited by authorities occurs. Generally speaking, frustration is rather the lot of the boys and girls who quite succeed in studies but in schools of lower status, not entitled to open for them the doors of social elevation than of most of the working-class kids, whose disregard for school cannot bring any resentment.

Hedonism seems to be the most frequent reaction of the youth, compensating boredom and aimlessness by extravagant spending on pop music and exotic clothes.

But there are groups that deviate from and positively reject the morality of the others. They create what can be called sub-cultures.

Maybe finding the effort to adapt middle-class standards too great, or worthless, some of them react by repudiating these values altogether, holding up to ridicule conventional respectability and morality. The common motive behind these forms of anti-social behavior is to annoy the representatives of both the former notions.

That is not to say that the young rebels fall into criminality and try to get what they wish by illegal means. The ideal of the super manly tough guy, intolerant of personal affronts, contemptuous of sentimentality, regarding women as objects of conquest and queers as targets of abuse has much in common with the traditional gangster hero, a model followed by real delinquent offenders. The values rejected by sub-cultures are traditional models as a whole, as well as anything bearing an uniform.

This forms the basis for punk behavior. Further developments or like ideologies and conglomerations of ideas from diverse origins couldn't but find their true substance in paranoid feelings towards the establishment.

### **A.3. Unemployment as a source of creativity since the 60s**

The advent of the craze for beat music, in the early sixties, channeled the angst and boredom of the youth into an artistic form of expression. Delinquency was diverted, as much as possible, into forming musical groups, practicing and trying to create something audible. The English government felt this to be a good means to bring new horizons to the unemployed youth, and, in the end, in the form of the Beatles exports, a national financial asset.

The development of musical creation and rock&roll was then both a government's weapon against youth rebellion and a means of expression for the youth against the establishment, thus progressively growing into a near political force. From this antagonism can be extracted most of the controversies relative to the punk movement, as will be developed in another chapter.

But what matters at first is that youngsters had then something they could relate on as being their own, a field to explore where they could bring their sensitivity and which could occupy their mind.

The only thing left when being unemployed is to hang about idly or to create. The rock&roll heroes being showed as models to the youth and thus idolized, as the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison and many others brought an international climate of youth solidarity and the feeling of belonging to a generation with values of its own; thanks to publicity and the business of music industry. The not-yet-punks inherited the

rock&roll tradition of creativity which, coupled with a general feeling of boredom and anger, frustration and disappointment, wait and imPatience coming from contradictory reasons, brought the seeds for further reactive self-creativity.

## **B. A generation waiting for something new**

The young dropouts have grown up, forming a new generation, an energetic potential seeking an identity and juggling with the models in store from the recent past. But the inheritance of a tradition of anti-establishment activities from now conforming people leads to an acknowledgement - an acknowledgment of failure, and emptiness. A movement is born: It calls itself the punk movement.

### **B.1. Disappointment in front of the hippy failure**

The hippy movement was characterized by protest and contesting. The punk movement is characterized by consternation - consternation in front of the failure of protest and contestation, facing the conformism of non-conformism.

Hippies had built a fictive paradise where values they considered as good were fighting against evils: peace VS war, love VS hatred, and revolution VS capitalism. The famous slogan of 1968: "Run, comrade, the ancient world is behind you." was their watchword. In the mid-seventies, it no longer bears signification, as there seems to be no direction to follow. The hippy revolution is dead and the ones who try to resist the fatal erosion of time have become intellectual decadents, aesthetes, or subscribe to Amnesty International. The intellectuals have lost their opium, their convictions. Only emptiness remains. The inventive leftism has completed its agony, scattered. What could be called a massive "flip" (as a new word is necessary for a new situation) is the compost where flourishes the punk, the seed for a reactive behavior, willing to draw a quick line on the former generation. From now on, its kindnesses will be seen as illusions and its apathetic becoming as a failure. The sick and waiting sub-cultural new generation will call itself punk; punks are all the sick finding themselves a family.

*I haven't seen a hippy in two weeks, that's something. They were so complacent, they let it all-the drug culture-flap around them (...) Yeah man, peace and love, don't let anything affect you. Let it walk all over you 'alit don't stop it; we say "bollocks"*

*Johnny Rotten, November, the 19th 1976.*

### **B.2. Amazement in front of the harnessing of yesterday protesters by the government**

The mid-seventies saw the figures of the recent past progressively give up the energy of their beginnings, being invested by governments and taken over for commercial purposes. The decadence of the rock empire was sorely felt by the new generation.

Elvis Presley's rock&roll had become a syrupy drone, staged in front of a stalls of old girls, and Frank Zappa the musical reference of an intellectual bourgeoisie; Mick Jagger, who had become a multimillionaire, was regularly seen with the most luxurious sex-symbols; even Andy Warhol, considered as the instigator of modern fashions and rock&roll attitudes, was having dinner with Farah Dibah, speculated and displayed an

homosexuality that no longer bore the slightest hint of subversion. By 1974, there was a kind of rock aristocracy. The underground was buried: the gap between these old-young and the young was too deep.

Along with the stars, all the like-hippies were felt as harnessed and perverted by the so-called system.

These revolutionaries of the past were now holding high functions in society and - supreme shame - some of them had become teachers, shouldering in their turn the responsibility of sanctioning. The hippies retrained in business were then the art directors of record companies, attached to their psychedelic musical values, and would actually block the way to new forms of musical expression. Committed journalists, ex-leftists, amassing misinterpretations, would denounce punk as being nazi resurgence.

For the rising generation, only one solution: to destroy this decrepit paternity, this invested rock&roll, as would be a bourgeois inheritance in a Central American revolution. No more Elvis, Beatles or Stones: Sandinista!

The notion of a youth as rebel by definition, consistent and unique tribe, endowed with a political power thanks to consumption (the Beatles were decorated by the M.B.E. distinction - members of the British Empire - because of the massive exports of their records) needed blowing out: all this meant nothing but a vile collaboration with what was criticized at first, in the mind of the average punk rocker.

### **B.3. A need to build new values**

The stars of the late sixties had made possible a climate of protest and self-expression. Mick Jagger was like a show graph dancing on the rubbles of youth-troubled capital cities, retracted behind a sly teenage anagram of false anti-establishment savings. The revolution of bands like the Rolling Stones wasn't originated by real convictions, only by a salted amateurishness and dandyism. "Street fighting, man!" was just echoing the general events around the world in 1968 but not compromised in any true ideology.

What had at first seemed to be honest was now totally discredited: all that had been the foundations of the hippy credo was falsified and a desire for authenticity sharply felt.

The ground was cleared for the punk movement to settle and dictate its terms, compressing all the miseries of the seventies.

As the hippy preferred to escape from the ugliness of the world by means of drugs and psychedelic music, the punk would then increase that very ugliness and return to a wide primary rock&roll, advocating urban guerrilla warfare as an exhibition rather than as an armed organization.

But there is a shameful relation between hippies and punks, the latter wishing to start again, but on new basis, what the formers could not have achieved.

The attitude of the punk towards his hippy elder brother is inspired by passion. This led him to adore all that had been hated before. He would ironically say: » *I love the bomb* " and affect to admire totalitarian regimes in order to wallow in what they both hated.

These contradictions are difficult to come with and appear under various shapes.

A few anecdotes can illustrate this point:

Malcolm McLaren said, in 1976, "*never trust a hippy*" while Johnny Rotten talked as a real leftist hippy: "*In this society, if I conform, I'm sure that at 30 I'll be working in a*

*factory, with a wife and two kids. And the only thing left for me to do would be to kill myself."*

In 1969, at Woodstock, a young hippy, being asked about the bad weather by a journalist said: *«It must be the C.I.A.»* In 1977, Joe Strummer, being asked about drugs, stated: *" We think that hard drugs are a weapon used by the C.I.A. to destroy revolutionaries and people willing to do something."*

What can be noticed is a common feeling of persecution, a same paranoia in front of the State, characteristic of leftist speeches.

It is not by chance that hoodlums called punks "zip-hippies". Both had in common a desire to fight against the established order, and a more or less honest and delirious denunciation of society.

But the punks wanted to blow away the whole seedy, self-indulgent story. They wanted something new, something they could call their own. Influences? No way. This was a regarding with utter distaste all that had gone before.

If the figureheads of the punk movement had opened up to influences, they would have opened up to the possibilities of failure, the same failures to which they associated the sixties bands.

In 1976, being nothing was still being a hippy. In 1976, it was possible to be again: being nothing was being a punk:

*"I am the one who is nothing because society has no room for me."*

*A young punk*

## **C. The Sex Pistols: a detonator**

The punk explosion, even if not expected by its instigators, needed to appear and break as a wave of corrosive lava if it was to bear any significant shape serving its purpose.

It was to shock, annoy and provoke reactions within society as a whole.

This need was represented in the form of a punk-rock group: the Sex Pistols.

### **C. 1. The genesis and substance of a tremendous new wave**

#### **C.1.1. The group. The facts**

Relating the story of the punk rock group would be an endless questioning about one's own subjectivity, as what has been felt and written by the Press about the Sex Pistols was very subjective, inspired by passion, and depended on individual ways of understanding facts and statements.

What can be said without opening the way to criticism is that the four members of the band and their manager, Malcolm McLaren, braided a whole tissue of contradictions.

In a way, this banned too quick a definition and any conclusive codification of the provided elements.

*"A group whose sensation reeking activities have so often resulted in perverted and overly biased viewpoints."*

*Nick Kent , N.M.E.*

The band was at first composed of Glenn Matlock, Steve Jones and Paul Cook, musicians, and a singer, Johnny Rotten (Lydon). Glenn Matlock was rapidly to leave the group because of his differing opinions and looks, to be replaced by Sid Vicious (John Beverly).

They had met Malcolm McLaren, who was to become their manager, in his avant-garde Kings Road shop, in London. Their true aim was to create something different from all what had been done before-a new rock&roll, destroying the sophistication built step by step by their "older brothers" -and to blow up the existing belief that a great amount of musical notions and practice was necessary in order to perform on stage and play relevant music.

They wanted to return to the original not-yet-perverted Rock&roll, characterized by a true communication between the audience and the performers - participation being the key word. Everyone should be given the feeling that they could get up on the stage and do just as well, if not better, than the band already up there.

To achieve all this was to communicate one's anger and belligerence, to shock and insult the public in order to arouse a responsive attitude.

*"But the last pop phenomenon called punk makes all the rest look like nursery rhymes. It is the sickest, seediest step in a rock world that thought it had seen it all. Leading the cult is the group Sex Pistols -a bizarre band preaching the new rock religion of violence and anarchy."*

*Daily Mirror, December 1976.*

*We like noise  
It's our choice  
It's what we wanna do  
We don't care  
About long hair  
I don't wear flairs  
Don't believe in illusions cos  
Too much is real  
So stop your cheap comment  
Oh don't pretend cos I don't care  
Oh we're so pretty, oh so pretty vacant  
And we don't care."*

*The Sex Pistols. Pretty Vacant.*



The Sex Pistols

### *c.1.2. Johnny Rotten: a punk star*

*"Singing in a band? I just thought woooopee! A bumpkin like me who can hardly be bothered to talk!"*

*Johnny Rotten*

Johnny Rotten couldn't be ignored, regarded just as some hooligan who swore. The most casual observer was dragged into a love-hate relationship. There was something about him, deeper than his bad behaviour, which went beyond looks. He had the extraordinary ability to enrage his audience: he was a charismatic star.

*"I want people to start something - to see us and start something - or else, I'm wasting my time."*

*Johnny Rotten*

What he wanted was for people to be creative; what lied behind his chaotic exhibitions was an unformulated watchword: "Do it yourself." (This phrase is besides what is now mainly thought of as being the decisive notion of punk's influences).

*"You have no future, nothing. You are made unequal. Most of the time the kids who fight back don't use their brains and it's wasted. Join a band is one thing, or teach yourself another. It doesn't take very much (...). The Pistols are presenting an alternative to apathy (...), I am being myself and that's all I ask of anyone. Anarchy is self-rule and that's better than anything else. We want to be people, people with a mind of their own."*

*Johnny Rotten*

Johnny Rotten had the complete unpredictability that gave the Sex Pistols their extra edge, "he enunciated each word with the clarity of a branding iron."



*"It's great, it's startlingly harsh, loaded with cynical irony and too concerned with urban reality to appeal to those settled into the thrill of romance."*

*Caroline Coon. Reviews of the new singles. Melody Maker. November 1976.*

*"The great ignorant public don't know why we are in a band. It's because we're bored with all that old crap - like every human being should be (...). There'll always be something to fight. All those silly bastard s- the Melody Maker -telling us what band to like every week; and they go off like sheep and rabid dogs and do. The brainless generation."*

*Johnny Rotten*

Johnny Rotten later shared fame and real stardom with Sid Vicious whose tragic story is another matter and will be considered in another chapter.



## **C.2. The explosion of the Sex Pistols. The popular press reactions and further consequences**

The Sex Pistols' behavior, outrageous looks and statements caused much ink to flow. Maybe if scandal sheets hadn't exploited and amplified incidents that didn't deserve such a fuss, the Sex Pistols' way would have been totally different. But these reactions demonstrated that in the puritan England of 1976, the upheaval between generations was bound to grow if the rift wasn't considered seriously - and thus that the punk strategy was a successful one.

### **c.2.1. The facts and how they were welcomed by the press**

Because of their growing popularity, the Sex Pistols were invited to an interview at Bill Grundy's Today program on Thames TV.

**Bill Grundy:** I'm told that the group have received 40,000 pounds from a record company. Doesn't that seem...er...to be slightly opposed to their (deep breath) anti materialistic view of life?

**Sex Pistols:** No. The more, the merrier.

**B.G:** Really?

**S.P:** Oh yeah.

**B.G:** Well, tell me more, then.  
**S.P:** We've fuckin' spent it, ain't we?  
**B.G:** I don't know, have you?  
**S.P:** Yes, it's all gone.  
**B.G:** Really?  
**S.P:** Down the boozier.  
**B.G:** Really? I want to know one thing...  
**S.P:** What?  
**B.G:** Are you serious or are you just making me...trying to make me laugh?  
**S.P:** No, it's all gone. Gone.  
**B.G:** Really?  
**S.P:** Yeah.  
**B.G:** No, but I mean, what you're doing...  
**S.P:** Oh yeah.  
**B.G:** Are you serious?  
**S.P:** Mmmm.  
**B.G:** Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, have all died...  
**S.P:** They are all heroes of ours, ain't they.  
**B.G:** Really? What, what were you saying, sir?  
**S.P:** They are wonderful people.  
**B.G:** Are they?  
**S.P:** Oh yes, they really turn us on.  
**B.G:** Well, I suppose they turn other people on?  
**S.P:** That's their tough shit.  
**B.G:** What?  
**S.P:** Nothing, a rude word. Next question.  
**B.G:** No, no, What was the rude word?  
**S.P:** Shit.  
**B.G:** Was it really? Good heavens. You frighten me to death.  
**S.P:** All right Siegfried...  
**B.G:** What about you girls behind?  
**S.P:** He's like your dad, isn't he, this geezer; or your granddad.  
**B.G:** Are you worried, or are you just enjoying yourself?  
**FAN:** Enjoying myself.  
**B.G:** Are you? Ah, that's what I thought you were doing.  
**FAN:** I've always wanted to meet you.  
**B.G:** Did you, really?  
**FAN:** Yeah.  
**B.G:** We'll meet afterwards, shall we?  
**S.P:** You dirty sod. You dirty old man.  
**B.G:** Well, keep going, chief, keep going. Go on, you've got another five seconds, say something outrageous.  
**S.P:** You dirty bastard.  
**B.G:** Go on again.  
**S.P:** You dirty fucker.  
**B.G:** Whaaaaat a clever boy.  
**SP:** What a fucking rotter.  
**B.G:** (turning to face cameras) Well, that it for tonight.  
The other rocker, Eamon, I'm saying nothing about him, will be back tomorrow. I'll be seing you soon. I hope I'm not seeing you (*to the band*) again. From me, though, good night.





**THE PUNK ROCK HORROR SHOW: BILL GRUNDY IN FOUR-LETTER POP OUTRAGE  
TV FURY AT ROCK CULT FILTH.**

*A pop group shocked millions of viewers last night with the filthiest language ever heard on television. (...) "He (Bill Grundy) should be sacked for encouraging this sort of disgusting behaviour." said James Holmes, lorry driver.*

*Lead story, Daily Mirror. December 2 1976.*

**TWO-WEEK BAN ON GRUNDY OVER FILTHY SHOW  
WERE THE PISTOLS LOADED? PUNK ROCK GROUP PLIED WITH BOOZE.**

*TV presenter, Bill Grundy, was suspended for two weeks yesterday as a probe was started into four letter words used in his show. And the row grew yesterday as it was claimed that the punk rock group involved, the Sex Pistols, were loaded with drink before going on the air.*

*The Sun, December, the 3d, 1976*

But there were the Sex Pistols' lyrics that most gave the press cause to take offence:

*God save the Queen  
The fascist regime  
They made you a moron  
A <sup>P</sup>otential H bomb  
God save the Queen  
She ain't no human being*

*There is no future In England's dreaming.*

God Save the Queen, *The Sex Pistols*,  
1977

*"What's burning up the kids? A disturbing report on the amazing new cult - punk rock -the spitting, swearing, savage pop music of rebellious youth, is weeping teenage Britain. Today, after a silver Jubilee week in which the Queen's popularity has never been higher, she is the subject of attack by a punk group. (...) Too chain stores are refusing to stock the record. Concert promotions have been cancelled (...). But such is the new found and disturbing power of punk that nothing can stop the disc's runaway success:"*

*Sunday Mirror. Front page lead. June  
12, 1977.*

Or else:

*I don't wanna holiday in the sun  
I wanna go to the new Belsen  
I wanna see some history  
Now I got a reasonable economy.*

*Holiday in the Sun.*

*" Capital Radio banned the Pistols' current single "Holidays in the Sun" on the basis that the song likens Belsen to a holiday camp."*

Even court action was taken to decide whether the word "bollocks" was to be legalized, as the title of the Sex Pistols' album was *"Never mind the bollocks, here's the Sex Pistols."*

*"Great, Bollocks is legal! Bollocks! Bollocks! Bollocks!"* laughs Johnny Rotten.

As a conclusion to this Point that doesn't deserve any further comments, let it be added an anecdote related by one of the members of the managing people:

An interviewer from Yorkshire TV asked me if I was (SIC) anything to do with the Sex Pistols:

*"I've been waiting here for over an hour. How can I get to speak to the group or Mr McLaren?"* he asked.

*"Very unlikely."*

*"We cover a much greater area than Thames TV."* he remarked with a knowing smile.

*"I'll tell Malcolm you're here. Shall I tell him you want some swearing?"*

He smiled again.



**c.2.2. E.M.I., record company**

E.M.I. is one of the most important record companies in England. It had signed a recording agreement with the Sex Pistols.

*"E.M.I. and the Sex Pistols have mutually agreed to terminate their recording contract.*

*E.M.I. feels it unable to promote this group's records internationally in view of the adverse publicity which has been generated over the last months, although recent press reports of the behaviour of the Sex Pistols appear to have been exaggerated."*

*From the group Public Relation Department. E.M.I. limited, January, 6, 1977.*

*There is unlimited supply  
And there is no reason why  
I tell you it was all a frame  
They only did it cos of the fame.  
WHO? E.M.I. Unlimited supply  
E.M.I. there is no reason why.  
E.M.I. Fools Too many people have the suss  
Too many people support us  
An unlimited amount  
Too many outlets in and out.  
WHO? E.M.I...  
And sir and friends are crucified  
And you thought that we were faking That we were all just money making  
You do not believe we were for real  
Or you would lose your cheap appeal?  
Don't judge a book just by the cover  
Unless you cover just another  
And blind acceptance is a sign  
Of stupid fools who stand in lines-like E.M.I.*

*The Sex Pistols. E.M.I. Unlimited edition.*

*"The question of acceptable content of records has become increasingly difficult to solve-largely due to the increasing degree of permissiveness accepted by society as a whole (...).The Sex Pistols have acquired a reputation for aggressive behaviour which they have certainly demonstrated in public. There is no excuse for this. Our recording company experience of working with the group, however, is satisfactory (...).E.M.I. should not set itself as a public censor, but it does seek to encourage restraint."*

*Sir John Read, Chairman.*

### C.3. Malcolm McLaren: a concept conjurer

In order to stage all these exuberant outbursts, a character is needed: he is called a manager.

Malcolm McLaren had studied in an art college. He was imbued with ideologies relative to the sixties and, as he recognizes, very impressed by the French students' revolutionary riot in May 1968. There are much diverging viewpoints about McLaren. Some see in him a Machiavellian who harboured the frustrations of teenagers, sucked in their venom and "turned a youth poison into his proverbial wine.»

He is said to be the one whose business instinct begs questions regarding the integrity of the whole punk rock movement, who carefully exploited the unexpected success he had helped to create.

Others would consider him as a kind, of genius:

*"Malcolm? Great. Goes off like a firecracker in all directions. Fights for what he believes in, too. A lot of people would have liked to see him down at one point. Probably still would. Because he was a threat to their established little bleeding empires; you know, progressive twiddle, etc."*

*Ron Watts. Promoter of 100 Club. London*

But the story brings us to New York, where McLaren unsuccessfully tried his hands managing the New York Dolls-considered as one of the main source of inspiration for punk. There he saw Richard Hell (singer of a band called Television) and was greatly taken by his spiky colored hair and rags held by safety pins. Returning to London, gathering his scattered visions of rebel aesthete, he began to look for a rock band which could be propelled straight out of a porn horror movie onto the world stage.

It is also in New York that he heard and stored the name "Sex Pistols", originally that of a New York street gang. What Malcolm basically wanted was a rumbling, anarchic and noisy energetic rock scene, as hadn't been seen in England since the mid-sixties.

He now declares that punk was a response to the torrent of overproduced disco and European techno pop.

There seemed to be no unifying concept, no artist manifesto between McLaren and the Sex Pistols, save this: *"The only sympathy we had for each other is that we hated everything else."*

His statements reveal a sort of megalomania that could explain his desire for fame and the fact that he nearly considered the punk movement as being his own creation.

*"In London, you can never - as in the U.S. - physically feel revolt. Here, everything happens inside. To expose this visually and make it work is the rule of the game. (...) This is why it worked with the Sex Pistols. What we were after wasn't so much clothes as the idea behind-and the idea became the Sex Pistols. To make the attitude work, the obvious platform was rock&roll. In England, music has always been used to foreshadow a visual revolution and a piece of history. I thought that considering the manager as an artist would be interesting."*

*Malcom Mc Laren*

What can be issued from these contradictory statements and opinions is left to one's own subjectivity. Whether Mc Laren was sincere or not doesn't matter in the end. That the

whole story could have been staged like a "Great rock&roll Swindle" (a movie about the Sex Pistols, by McLaren) is nothing compared to the prospects it opened up to a generation condemned to unemployment and despair, waiting for an attractive spot on the horizon of creativity.

The punk movement highly overtook McLaren on his left side. The Sex Pistols ended with a "bang", as a self-respecting-bomb:

*"The management is bored with managing a successful rock& roll band. The group is bored with being a successful rock& roll band. Burning venues and destroying record companies is more creative than making it."*

*The management*

The morale was safe.

*"Well, I think it's more interesting to be hated than to be liked. It's a more invigorating idea."*

*Malcolm McLaren*



*Malcom McLaren*



The Great Rock&Roll Swindle

## *CHAPTER TWO*



## **2. NATURE AND VARIETY OF THE PUNK MOVEMENT: ATMOSPHERES AND KEY FIGURES.**

### **A. From the power of rock&roll**

#### **A.1. In the beginning was rock&roll**

The sixties were when rock&roll exploded to hoist and settle youth as a driving force behind social transformations. The generations issued from the after-war baby-boom then decided that they had their word to say and the right to claim the advent of a coming new age.

A true religion was being created, with its prophets and, as time went on, its apostles.

May 1968 came only after rock&roll had foreshadowed social protest theories and created an atmosphere that made them possible. Rock&roll conveyed and brought consciousness into the average young mind, linked and organized ideas in a fresh way, not yet ruled by definitions.

Rock&roll is a testimony of images and sounds that could by itself tell the story of the changes at work in society during the last twenty years. Considering it as a mere entertainment and deceitful spectacle would be an open door to misinterpretations and a reducing rationalization of phantasmagorical visions and commentaries upon the world. Contemporary history has conveyed social subversion through the disc industry without even being aware of doing so, and cannot thus be considered without its sound track.

The liberating dream of the sixties was shaped by rock music, like a concept scattered in a number of groups, working at its realization.

Music helped to voice the American teenage despair in front of the Vietnam War, and that same teenage anger facing all the centralizing powers that had settled down their dictatorship upon mentalities.

Music has always been - sometimes coupled with true poetry - the best means to communicate feelings and emotions rather than ideologies. But what is maybe the true aim of authentic rock& roll - that is to say a music not built in order to please the masses, shaped by commercial purposes- is to convey the idea that freedom and subjectivity, along with not restricted thought and personal expression, are the only way to be. Money is not to dictate its terms upon art.

Rock&roll is thus walking a tightrope, menacing to fall every moment in the trap greedily prepared to welcome it. It though cannot avoid shapes and traditions, basis and snobbism; it must conform to some established standards. The first explanation for this comes from the impossibility to manufacture something out of nothing. There is a permanent struggle in rock&roll, a fight to avoid codification and standardization. As soon as a value is codified, it is taken over by commercial exploitation, parodied and highly broadcasted. This is why it has to flee each second towards a boundless horizon.

Rock&roll goes with time and submits to a race between the grab of unifying and established simplifying powers and the desire to be an independent entity; a freedom-thirst cult.

The political power thus benefits from pop music but Rock& roll is invested with powers skimming politics.

*"It is assuredly one of the few spaces where a mass of people can participate to a form of expression that, helped by the number, necessarily becomes political. (...) It works to create an atmosphere, to foreshadow - even doomly - the operating changes at work, and to reflect in the same time wide world events out of kindergartens."*

*John Savage.*

Edward P. Thomson, an English historian now the charismatic leader of the British anti-nuclear movement was the first to mention some cultural resistance transmitted by rock& roll, inside his society.

His argumentation was founded upon the law of the number:

*"We are many, they are few"* and the ability of rock music to create a link and focus the diffuse feelings of people unaware of the power they potentially have to change the destiny of a country.

Rock&roll, once its importance recognized, no longer appeared as a possible refuge but could act as a catalyst, and voice buried hopes.

*"We want the world and we want it now!"* Jim Morrison was shouting in 1967. This was to put America and Europe upside down, and become the watchword of the international revolution of 1968.

Rock&roll trends thus always burst forth under the invincible blazing of youth, to suddenly explode, or spread in an endless and tiresome process. Those who feel when the time has come to retire are only a few, and decades are punctuated by these fleeting entities that only exist in the moment, facing the glory, death and pain of those who live in the selective and greedy eyes of other people.

## **A.2. Punk rock**

As was already mentioned several times, punk rock was a strong reaction against the acceptance of one's apathy and feelings of failure in front of the dying fever that had accompanied former desires to change the world. As such it would have to be violent and aggressive, and has often been termed a "negative naiveté". But this is the side the press picked up and labeled as "punk». Originally, punk bands were widely different musically. It was just easier to clump them together and picture an image. So then, some groups became that image.

The link between all the protagonists was only a question of attitude and instinct, a desire to annihilate the settled science of sound proceeding from the explored field of the sixties atmosphere - a will to reaffirm the power of rock&roll to free itself from any chain.

Everything came from the fact that punks saw a lack of authenticity behind the established rock star syndrome, a lack of anything they might relate to, and something too far removed from the everyday experience to make any sense at



all.

The Sex Pistols were a rock force but had said as much as they could possibly say in their own format. Those who saw the punk trash as the ultimate form of expression would demand that their music remain the same without any form of extension, or in their eyes, of compromise. But to others, it would necessarily have to alter in order to keep its freshness, to retain its interest on a purely musical basis. So as time went on, punk lost its initial impact and became a rock&roll bandwagon, as much as any other trends in music.

*"When those of us who are committed to the creation of Aural Sculpture can no longer tolerate the prostitution of sound that is proliferating around us, it is time to speak out. The musicians of our time are harlots and charlatans, who use science without being scientists and abuse art without being artists. We are witnessing the demise of music. So be it. The world must prepare itself to herald the advent of Aural Sculpture whose presence can now be shared with the fortunate few who have the ears to hear, the vision to see and the intelligence to comprehend. Wait. I feel something stirring. Are we witnessing the birth of a sculpture? Within the confines of these concentric grooves, an immaculate conception is about to take place. Listen. Can you hear? The catharsis of the birth is almost too much to bear. It is emerging, its glistening form, its voluptuous curves. Harken to the ecstatic crescendos of the newly born, spreading to fill the vacuum of your pathetic little lives. (...)*

*The Stranglers*

To reflect the wide range of trends the punk movement embraces, no rule can dictate any term. What is felt as being punk or not is left to one's own subjectivity. The Sex Pistols and The Clash are though impossible to dissociate from the punk movement, as they are now part of a myth and will stay as such. They are lingering pictures in a phantasmatic rock&roll culture. They were completely different from each other, though, and are thus to be considered as such.

But there were many other bands bearing significant inventiveness.

As the present project isn't to make an inventory and to comment upon every shade on the punk palette, a third group, which also marked the stream of rock&roll history, will be considered: Joy Division.

## **B. The Clash. 1977**

*"(...) A music that'll stay beyond the punk ejaculation: out of all these groups with a heartrending sound and a destructive attitude, only The Clash hold the road ten years later."*

*Francois Jouffa. Liberation.*

### **B.1. The voice of slums**

The Clash was a punk group led by Joe Strummer, the voice of slums and ghettos.

They built a huge scaffolding of values new to rock&roll, where some are surely tempted to see a certain "boyscoutism", not in apparent harmony with the mood relative to punk.

But through them, and particularly their singer, this is the whole manifesto of a youth obstinately "squatting" the life they are refused to live that is expressed. This is the begging of a question: what can a kid from slums do at all? Play in a rock band, dose himself in the toilets, or survive in the gray foam of deceitful days?

*Drag yourself to work  
Drug yourself to sleep  
You're dead by the neck  
Up by the middle of the week  
Face front we've got the future shining like a piece of gold  
But I swear as we get closer  
It looks more like a lump of coal  
But it's better than some factory  
That's no place to waste your youth  
I worked there for a week once  
But luckily I got the boot.*

*All the Young Punks. The Clash.*

*The towers of London, these crumbling blocks  
Reality estates that the heroes got  
And every hour's marked by the chime of a clock  
And whatcha gonna do when the darkness surrounds?  
You can piss in the lifts which have broken down  
You can watch from the debris the last bedroom light  
We're invisible here just past midnight.  
The wives hate their husbands and their husbands don't care  
Their children daub slogans just to prove they lived there  
A giant pipe organ up in the air  
You can't live in a home which should not have been built  
By the bourgeoisie clerks who bear no guilt  
When the wind hits this building, this building it tilts  
One day it will surely fall to the ground  
Fear is just another commodity here  
They sell peeping-holes to peek when we hear  
A bang on the door resoundingly clear  
Who would really want to move in here?  
The children play faraway, the corridors are bare  
This room is a cage, it's like captivity  
How can anyone exist in such misery?  
It has been said-not only here  
Allianza dollars are spent  
To raise the towering buildings  
For the weary bones of the workers  
To go back in the morning  
To be strong in the morning.*

*Up in Heaven. The Clash*

## **B.2. A more thoughtful way**

Those who are perpetually in research for cultural references would consider The Clash as being one of the only punk groups to have been able to articulate thoughtfully what they felt and to give the movement a definitive political

signification.

The Sex Pistols' lyrics were undoubtedly naive, but only as such could they have fit with a music that was intended to act as a flush upon the past. They expressed strong emotions and these didn't need any further research in the field of deep thought. The Clash gave the movement its human proportions and introduced the hint of solidarity necessary to bring a real meaning to the word "punk" and its tentacular spreadings.

*"Joe Strummer skinned human dog, master of the revolted and humanitarian cramp, epileptic politician, salivary rocker. (...) But how hard it is to fight like this on the field of passion in the same time as in the field of conscience."*

*Francis Dordor. Decibels contre  
Maggie. Revue Autrement*

*London calling to the fareway towns  
Now that war is declared and battle come down London calling to the  
underworld  
Come out of the cupboard, all you boys and girls London calling now  
don't look to us  
All that phoney beatlemania has bitten the dust London calling see we  
ain't got no swing 'cept for the ring of that truncheon thing The ice age  
is comming, the sun is zooming in  
Engines stop running and the wheat is growing thin  
A nuclear error, but I have no fear  
London is drowning and I...  
Live by the river  
London calling to the imitation zone  
Forget it brother and go it alone  
London calling upon the zombies of death  
Quit holding out and take another breath  
London calling and I don't wanne shout  
But when we were talking I saw you nodding out  
London calling see we ain't got no highs Except for that one with the  
yellowy eyes  
The ice age river  
London calling yeah, I was there too  
And you know what they said? well some of it was true  
London calling at the top of the dial  
After all this won't you give me a smile?*

*London Calling. The Clash.*



This song can be compared to the mood relative to T.S Eliot's *Waste Land*, and especially to the following passage:

*The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind crosses  
the brown land, unheard.  
The nymphs are departed  
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights.  
The nymphs are departed  
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors  
departed, have left no address.*

*By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...  
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,  
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud nor long.  
But I my back in a cold blast I hear  
The rattle of bones, and chuckle spread from hear to hear. (...)*

*T.S. Eliot. The Waste Land. The Fire Sermon*

*For the very first time ever  
When they had a revolution in Nicaragua  
There was no interferences from America.  
Human rights from America!  
Well the people fought the leader  
And up he flew  
With no Washington bullets what else can he do?  
And if you can find an Afghan rebel  
That the Moscow bullets missed  
Ask him what he thinks of voting communist  
Ask the Dalai Lama in the hills of Tibet  
How many monks did the Chinese get  
In a war torn swamp stop any mercenary  
And check the British bullets in his armoury. QUE? SANDINISTA!  
In these days nations are militant  
We have slavery under government In these days in the firmament I  
look for signs that are permanent In these days with no love to give  
The world will turn with no one left to live.*

*Washington Bullets. The Clash*

### **B.3. White riot**

Words without music lose most of their power and The Clash had the ability to create a musical atmosphere perfectly fitting the words. "White riot" was their watchword.

As they felt alone in their revolt, punks were considering themselves as a sort of ethnic minority. No wonder this was to bring them closer to other minorities, such as the blacks, and thus the Reggae movement. What is radiated by The Clash musical hints is a reggae mixed with punk, what could be felt as the music for the expelled from the new society.

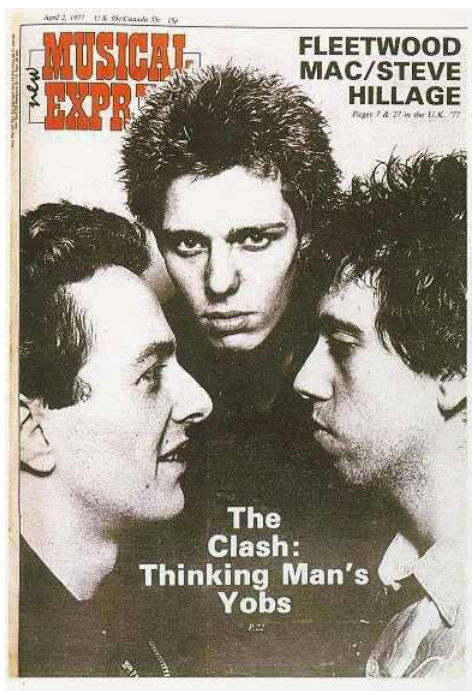
The story of Reggae music and its meanings is a long one. Rastafarism is a kind of political religion characterized by the seeking of lost roots, the hatred of the white world pro-slavery and colonialist lot - and the transplanting of the Jewish myth of wandering - told in the Bible upon the deported enslaved black people.

*(...)See the world that you have built with your shoulders of iron  
See the world but it's not yours say the stealers of Zion  
Geneva, Wall Street, what makes them so fat?  
Well, well, me and you better think about that  
Till humanize is equalize, put down the tools.*

*The Clash. The Equalizer*

*(...)  
White youth, black youth  
Better find another solution Why not phone Robin Hood  
And ask him for some wealth distribution?  
Punk rockers of the U.K.  
They won't notice anyway  
They're all too busy fighting  
For a good place under the lighting  
The new groups are not concerned with what there is to be learnt  
They got Burton suits  
Ha, you think it's funny  
All over people changing their votes  
Along with their overcoats  
If Adolph Hitler flew in today  
They'd send a limousine anyway.  
I'm the all night drug-prowling wolf  
Who looks so sink in the sun  
I'm the whiteman in the palais  
Justa looking for fun*

*Whiteman in Harhmersmith Palais. The Clash*



The Clash

## C. Joy Division

### C.1. The northern way

For it was strong and powerful, and because of its reverberations through the press,

the punk explosion - these young rebels crying out their anger with aching guitars, drums and words - carried far beyond London's limits. By 1978, the movement became a national fever, mainly reaching densely populated areas where socio-economical problems are the more sharply felt. With that fiery hotheadedness of youth, a real punk generation was being created, with its bands, places, slogans, values, rituals, dances, looks and tendencies.

Where uneasiness rumbled, the movement developed and muffled, to then explode. Manchester wasn't an exception to the rule and became a center where it considerably expanded.

It couldn't have been else. Manchester is the second British industrial area. But its part is declining, its industries breathless, its walls gray and cold, its atmosphere smoky, reflecting a paralysis from which it attempts to drag itself with great difficulties.

This is behind these walls that the "no future" generation took refuge before bursting out. Manchester had no reason for being jealous of London and had bands that made the city move: The Buzzcocks, Penetration, and The Panics...to mention the most famous.

But the best was still to come: the birth and accession of a unique group whose members, music, lyrics, and also whose approach were going to build out new criterions and mark the eighties with unforgettable creations: Joy Division.

The name of the band suggests pain and horror, as it was the name given to the groups of prostitutes visiting German soldiers in nazi camps during world war two.

For the members of the group, music was an art not to be enslaved under any recording contract and their crusade against freedom restrictions is an exemplary one. They considered that a contract should be an artistic and financial assistance, which would allow them to become professionals, and not a dirigist ruling agreement.

So even if approached by record companies, they refused to sign and went on rehearsing and playing little gigs till they met Martin Hamnett, their future producer and friend. The rewards of their infallible will to prove that a real artistic contract was possible -a collaboration with caring people who would support them without interfering in their creations- were then at hand.

People who felt this need, insuring the band with a correct basic salary and a complete artistic control over their productions, created a new label: it is called Factory.

### **C.2. Feelings: a cold wave**

Joy Division wanted their music to be inspired by the London punk boom but also by the strength, the madness and spirit relative to the Stooges, a famous American band of the sixties now considered, along with its singer Iggy Pop, as one of the main source of inspiration and influence to punk.

They had the desire to make the punk limits crack and project their feelings into an original world filled with strong and personal tonalities and atmospheres. The band thus brought a new breath, opened perspectives and even gave hopes to a



production that was stagnating between anger and statements, sayings progressively losing their strength because they were only statically violent. The members of the group had the ability to transmit waves of feelings through songs that wore the apparent simplicity of despair and the strength of simplicity. Expressed through the vocabulary and grammar of sound, the individual crisis of identity, bearing the meaning that life is an inner experience, is revealed in such a catching way that sadness and despair seem to also carry the seeds for further hopes. A poet like T.S.Eliot would have felt at ease in this atmospheretical world of loss, moral and emotional suggestion, where dead values seek a new birth. Joy Division seem to move in the lost world of the after-war hanging the ruins of past values on the branches of leafless trees.

*Don't speak a false facade  
Failure of modern man  
To the centre of our face he dived  
Has a hold on a nose of red  
Grew up in a hall of steel  
Made the image of your fathers son  
Not to an inner feel  
He was thought of as the only one  
He no longer denies  
All the failures of the modern man  
He no longer decides  
Sees the failures of the modern man  
Wise words and sympathy  
Tell the story of our history  
New strength gives a real touch  
Sense of reason make it all too much  
With a strange fatality  
Fade the spirits of a lesser man  
Some other race could see  
In his way he was the only one  
He no longer denied  
All the failures of the modern man  
Sees the failures of the modern man  
Now that it's right to decide  
In his time he was the total man  
Taken from Caesar's side  
Kept in silence just to prove us wrong  
No, no his God decides  
All the failures of the modern man  
No, no longer denies*

*All the failures of the modern man.  
Failures. Joy Division*

*Seen the real atrocities, buried in the sand  
Stockpiled safety for a few  
We stand holding hands I  
Living in the ice age (2)  
Nothing will hold, nothing will fit  
Into the cold, no smile on your lips  
Living in the ice age (2)  
Searching for the another way  
See them hide behind the door  
Live in holes and disused shafts  
Hoped a little more  
I-Living in the ice age (2)  
Nothing will hold, nothing will fit  
Into the cold, no smile on your lips  
Living in the ice age*

*Ice Age .Joy Division.*

*Is this the gift that I wanted to give  
Forgive and forget's  
What they teach  
I'll pass through the deserts and wastelands once more  
And watch as they drop by the beach*

*Passover. Joy Division*

*(...)  
See what we can find  
Valueless collection of hopes  
And past desires  
(...)  
Now that I've realized how it's all gone wrong  
Got to find some therapy  
(...)  
Got to find my destiny before It gets too late.*

*Twenty-Four Hours. Joy Division*

*(...)  
What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish?  
Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water (...)  
(...) These fragments I have shored against my ruins*

*The Waste Land T.S.Eliot.*

### **c.3. Licht and Blindheit. (Light and darkness)**

Even the recording ways were studied in order to participate to the atmosphere Joy Division were venting through words, music, and melodies.

Martin Hamnett's production put a veil between the group and their music, compelling the listener to discover - and not consume- to an intimate relationship, a receptiveness necessary to a real approach of the compositions.

The power of the works is such that without any publicity and commercial manipulations Joy Division's creations crossed the channel.

In November 1979, two French artists from Rouen, Jean Francois Jamoul and Jean Pierre Turmel got in touch with the group - who agreed to give them the exclusivity on their latest compositions, "Atmosphere" and "Dead Souls", considering as interesting to take part in a production originated by different sensitivities and perceptions.

Both songs became part of an artistic project. Turmel set Joy Division among French and German thinkers and, through quotations, in the context of European romanticism while Jamoul, by the means of two lithographies, exposed the duality between light and darkness, relative to this movement and Joy Division's thought processes.

This conceptual work, combining music, painting and literature, is known under the



label "Sordide Sentimental". But its diffusion was limited to 1578 copies.

After having avoided every facility and also all the commercial traps, Joy Division were thus unanimously recognized.

*Walk-in silence  
Don't walk away-in silence  
See the danger-always danger  
Endless talking-life rebuilding  
Don't walk away  
Walk - in silence  
Don't turn away-in silence  
Your confusion my illusion  
Worn like a mask  
Of self hate  
Confronts then dies  
Don't walk away  
People like you - find it easy  
Aching to see - walking on air  
Hunting by the rivers, through the streets,  
Every corner abandoned too soon  
Ste down with due care  
Don't walk away-in silence-  
Don't walk away*

*Atmosphere, Joy Division*

*Someone take these dreams away  
That point me to another day  
A duel of personalities  
That stretch all true reality  
And keep calling me  
They keep calling me Keep on calling me  
They keep calling me  
When figures from the past stand tall  
And mocking voices ring the hall  
Imperialistic house of prayer  
Conquistadores who took Their share  
And keep calling me  
They keep calling me Keep on calling me  
They keep calling me Calling me, calling me (2)  
They keep calling me  
Keep on calling me They keep calling me(2)*

*Dead souls, Joy division*

## **D. A punk hero is a dead hero**

### **D.1. Victims**

These three groups represent the birth, life and death of the punk movement, the progressive growth of an idea, a feeling, visiting landscapes of the soul where trees of values, lakes of tears and seas of hope organize a coherent painting, an impressionistic collection of fragments linked by the dream that life could be different.

These groups picture commentaries upon the world, clumped together under the punk denomination because they all reflect conflicts, crisis and refusal. They convey and make possible the hope that fate could be fought, that there could be an alternative to acceptance. They are part of a system of values brandished high and strongly by a mythic family, a youth seeking solutions to existential dejections. There the press sees a teenage crisis and hammers a flag bearing a spotty face, as publicity would do with Dutch colors on a Gouda cheese.

But when this youth rebellion turns out to be a tragic story, with suicides and disillusion, when the staged and sometimes shocking behaviors reveal a true despair and prove the whole frame to be sincere, only remain silence - and questions.

#### **D.1.1. Ian Curtis**

On Saturday the 17th of May 1980, the night before Joy Division's departure for a tour across the U.S., which was to complete their recognition and enrich their success, the singer Ian Curtis goes back home in Macclesfield, where he was living with his wife and kid, and hangs himself. Silence. Wonders. Ian Curtis was a charismatic singer and an artist whose talent, impact and deeds deserved more than to become a myth to worship. But the media built around his death a whole tissue of hypothesis, peering into his life to present the public with useless explanations. And thus Ian Curtis became a doom myth.



Ian Curtis

#### **D.1.2. Sid Vicious, media star**

*"I'll probably die by the time I reach 25. But I'll have lived the way I wanted to.»*

*Sid Vicious*

Sid Vicious (John Beverly), from the Sex Pistols, had reached the heights of fame as an anti-hero carried on stage by his hair, enhancing the colors of the group by indecent exhibitions of self-wounding and demented behavior, thus representing the perfect punk specimen to the «general public».

*"I've got absolutely no interest in pleasing the general public at all. I don't*

*want to because I think that largely they are scum and they make me physically sick. Because in my opinion that is like 99 per cent of the shit you find in the streets who don't know a fucking thing. (...)I hate television and everything to do with it. It's the worst. It's depressing, it frightens me. The way they fucking kiss arse, you know what I mean? So why do it? I hate insincerity. If you do something, you should do it because you like it and you want to do it. Cos anything you gain is just a load of hogwash anyway. What do you do with money, for instance? I can think of one thing to do with money, one thing. That's what I do with all my money. Every halfpenny of it."*

*Sid Vicious*

The following press extracts sum up Sid Vicious' tragic story:

### **VICIOUS IN A TRANCE. SEX PISTOL IS NEAR COLLAPSE AFTER 'I DIDN'T STAB HER' CLAIM.**

*Sex Pistols Sid Vicious almost collapsed in court yesterday when he was accused of murdering his blonde girlfriend Nancy Spungun.*

*The twenty-year-old spiky-haired punk star seemed to be in a trance as he was led into the New York court by a detective. Before his appearance, Vicious denied killing Nancy, a 20-year--old American go-go dancer.*

*His lawyer, Joseph Epstein, contradicted a police claim that the punk rocker had confessed, saying: "There is no basis for that report."*

*From Leslie Hinton in New York.*

### **STAGGERED**

*In court, Vicious was helped to a chair as he staggered and buckled at the knees. His body shuddered periodically as he spent the rest of the ten-minute hearing with his head resting on a table.*

*Throughout, he seemed oblivious to the proceedings as he was formally charged with murder under his real name, John Simon Richie.*

*If convicted, he faces a prison sentence of 20 years to life.*

*Punk rock friends of Vicious sat in court during the hearing. Singer Jerry Nolan wore earrings made of animal's teeth, a silver skull ring, and brass studded bracelets.*

*A toy silver six-shooter hung from his studded belt.*

*Half a dozen other friends with him were dressed similarly.*

*Front page lead. The Sun. October, 14, 1978.*

### **SID VICIOUS DIES IN DRUG DRAMA - MUM FINDS HIM IN HIS GIRL'S ARMS**

*By Chris Buckland and Stuart Greig.*

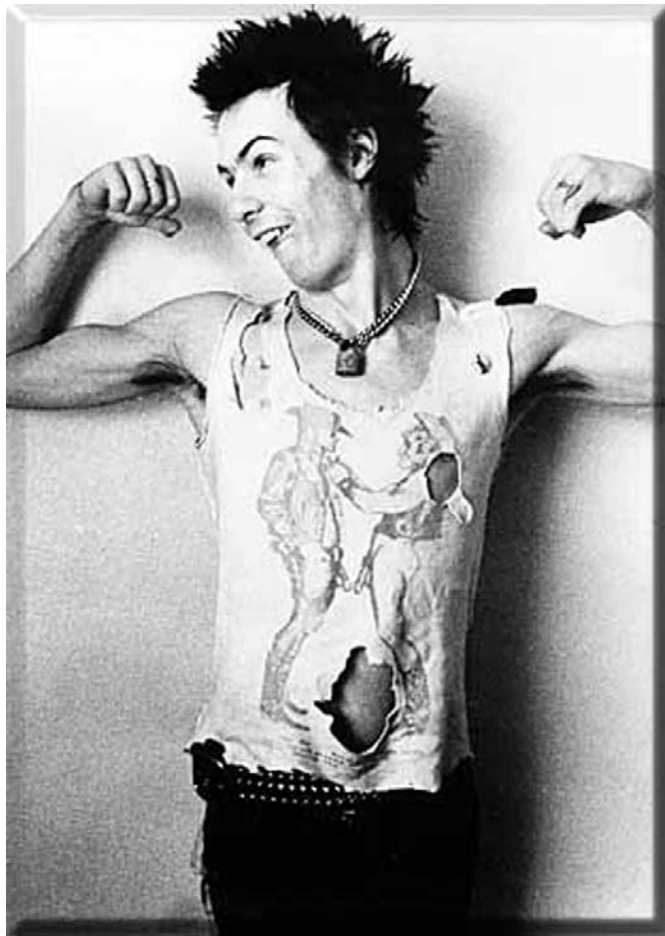
*Sid Vicious, the tormented star of punk rock, died of an overdose of*

*heroin yesterday.*

*He was found naked in the arms of his later girlfriend In her New York flat less than twenty four hours after he was released from jail on bail.*

*His mother, Mrs Ann Beverley, took the couple a cup of tea in bed and frantically tried to wake Vicious. The girlfriend, Michelle Robinson, was completely unaware that he had died while they slept.*

*Front page lead. Daily Mirror , February,  
3 1979*



Sid Vicious



Sid and Nancy

## D.2. The building of myths

### OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT WRITES:

Top show biz moguls and personalities were convicted last week of eating Vicious Burgers at New York's prestigious Studio 54 Disco in court hearings last week, after the latest of a series of Vice Squad raids on the playground of the idle rich.

Virgin record company boss, Richard Branson, 37, TV personalities Dick Clark, 55, David Frost, 42, and several journalists, including Michael Watts, 38, editor of a music paper, were seen consuming several burgers each in what has been described as "an orgy of vampirism». "It was horrific!» said clugoe

Richard DeNunzio of Brooklyn,» they had several corpses in their mouths». More showbiz and media names, including some well-known news reporters, are expected to be convicted as the hearings continue.

The last few years have seen an increase in this bizarre cult of vampirism, of which the Vicious Burger is only the latest example. Vampires are noteworthy for consuming star corpses in the form of burgers in the mistaken belief that some of the star's charisma will rub off on them: sadly, as you can see, these attempts are doomed with failure and these cultists deluded.

The cult is said to have begun in the 50S with Dean Burgers: these were very rare, and contained bits of Porshe wreckage and sunglasses. Those cultists still alive who tasted them said "they were tough but tasty.» Perhaps the worst outbreak of vampirism in recent years before the Viciousburger scandal was discovered when an attempt was made to steal Presley's body from the grave by occultists: the bode was already stolen! It now appears that it was minced down and turned into bizarre cult food, Presley Burgers. These are said to be very expensive (1000 dollars a throw) and high on fatty contents, but it still didn't deter the thrill seeking showbiz crowd: Mick Jagger was said to have eaten several before his recent Wembley concert. Heavy prison sentences imposed in Canada on Keith Ri'hards, another vampire, stopped the spread of this disgusting cult, but with the present Viciousburger scandals it seems to be flourishing.

And even now, there are confirmed reports of Curtisburgers (Ian Curtis-Joy Division), gristly burgers with hints of rope and marble. There is no truth, however, in the rumor that Hitler burgers are available: they were only available post-war, and reserved to VIP's.

From the Jamie Reid Collection. Victoria and Albert Museum

Death has always put a veil of respect and glory over stars.

The conflict between being an eternal neo-God and a fleeting entity, destroyed by time, shows itself in full light when stardom is concerned. People like to believe in truths that remain unchanged for ages, values they can relate to without suspicion because they are a legacy of the past, or because they are suddenly stiffened by death and thus become museum pieces, henceforth unchangeable. Death cults and morbid worships imbue our civilizations with the frequent recurrence of fatal processes and the reasons for this are left to psychologists' investigations. But there

is perhaps another question to be raised and whose importance is not to be lessened by rationalizations: why has hero-worship turned into anti-hero-worship? Is it because heroes no longer exist or because the new heroes are but anti-heroes?

The next chapter will show how punk is deeply connected with the intricacies of this problem, crucial to our societies.

Punk wouldn't perhaps have been taken seriously if it hadn't carried its dead victims in its arms. This sadly gave weight and credibility to the spontaneous movement.

But apart from these tragic aspects, punk undoubtedly opened the strongly locked doors of musical and self-expression, conveying the seeds for a youth creative assertion. Poverty was no longer to be a barrier - or an excuse - for apathy. From then on it would be possible to create freely and be heard without having to conform to rigid standards. The State partly lost its monopoly over music productions. Anyone would be able to create his own label and to promote, help and support the ones in whom he had faith, because creativity was in the street and because streets listened to creativity. But in order to understand the motivations embryonically lying behind the punk scene - the deep unformulated and partly unconscious origins of their credo - digging in contemporary thesis and thinkers' feelings is necessary.

*When the people listen to you don't you know it means a lot  
'cos you've got to work so hard for everything you've got  
Can't rest on your laurels now  
Not when you've got none  
You'll find yourself in a gutter  
Right back where you came from  
Someone told me being in the know  
Is the main thing  
We all need the security  
That belonging brings  
Can't stand on your own in these times  
Against all the odds  
I don't want to act uncool  
At all the other sods  
You slap your back and pretend  
You knew about all the things  
That we were gonna do What you gonna do,  
What ya gonna do when it's over  
You're on your own now  
Don't you think that it's a shame  
But you're the only one Responsible that's to blame  
When ya gonna grow up and act  
And be yourself 'cos pretty soon  
You'll find yourself nailed to the shelf  
Grab it while you can, but don't ever relax,  
'cos there's always Someone gonna stab your back  
What you gonna do, what you gonna do When it's over.*

*Joy Division. Novelty*

## *CHAPTER THREE*



### **3. DIGGING MENTALITIES: THE PUNK MOVEMENT AND IDEOLOGIES**

This was already mentioned: the punk movement expressed fears - an anguish in front of an unpredictable future, and a despair resulting from the decay of traditional values. The individual glimpsed himself as caught in this closed universe. As a result, there was a will to put these values up side down, as they weren't worth respect any longer.

Worldwide history then became a colorful trunk from which scraps are extracted without apparent coherence.

The visual aspects of the question will be closely considered in the next chapter.

One can nonetheless wonder about where those feelings come from, and if there are any strong trends of thought impregnating our modern consciousness, for which the punk movement could be understood as the catalyst.

#### **A. No More Heroes**

##### **A.1. A deeply changing society: the loss of ancient myths**

Some twentieth century thinkers, such as Oswald Spengler, say that our time is characterized by the passage from culture to civilization. There would then be a dropping away of Culture forms.

We would thus be living in a gap, the transitive period necessary for internal revolutions. This would lead the individual to diffusely feel that very emptiness and thus convert it into a mythic no-man's-land, only way to make the whole process bearable. Poems such as T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* reflect this arid earth where people live a life-denying existence, caught in the bankruptcy of the present. This world looks like an incoherent place where ancient myths no longer function, destroying its identity. What was once thought to be true no longer bears any signification; we lack this ability to understand signs and to react intuitively. There is a feeling of universal ruin brought about by the collapse of certainties. These certainties were that life was getting better, as new discoveries were imbuing man with the sensation that the world would be understandable one day. But as science develops and industrial progress invades nearly all the living spaces, men become aware that the key for a broader insight is not forthcoming. Man is then pinned between decaying myths and a growing angst. Myths take the sad shape of broken things. J. Campbell compares this situation to that of North American Indian tribes, when, toward the close of the 19th century, the buffalo were disappearing to allow railroad lines to be laid across the country. The buffalo-hunting Indians were then deprived of their food supply and would have to submit to life on the reservations.

From this, a new religion of inward visionary experiences became suddenly fashionable throughout the Indian West. Mescal and drug cults were then replacing the old central concerns and symbols as a rescue to the human well being, bringing apparent meaning to their lives.

*"However» writes Campbell, "When the symbols provided by the social group no longer work, and the symbols that do work are no longer of the group, the individual cracks away, becomes dissociated and disoriented and we are confronted with what can only be named a pathology of the symbol."*

Punks felt close to these Indian tribes, expelled from their lives by the invaders and reduced to a state of near nothingness, exotic spectacle to be glimpsed with remorse and intrigued wonders.

The punk imagery largely borrows symbols from tribal and fetishist paths, of which Mohawk-like hairstyles are the more characteristic.

These ways of perceiving reality are not new, as shows the following poem, written in 1921 by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack of conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.  
Surely some revelation is at hand.  
Surely the second coming is at hand.  
The second coming!  
Hardly those words out  
When a vast image of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A glaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches Bethlehem to be born?*

*The second coming, William Butler Yeats,  
1921*

## **A.2. Never follow leaders**

### **A.2.2. Anarchy**

"Never follow leaders" is a punk slogan. There is, as was said before, a rejection of any state authority and leadership in the punk credo.

This has to do with anarchy, when freedom is the value to be favored and placed above any other notion. The ideal society can only be the one where authentic existence is experienced - and authentic life is freedom-fed.

In the punk consciousness, there is a piling up of converging beliefs, but no true planned ideology. The link between all the values selected and felt as being worthy for punks are the ones picked up in the wideness of mental plains and selected because they bear the stamp of unrulable items.

It thus could be said that punks' ideology is compressing a generalized "no ideology"

cry, compelling to gather and reorganize all the yet untouched, unruled and unused things, or use the conventional ones in a diverted way, depriving them from any credibility. This is called subversion.

From this thought process are stemming irreverential attitudes toward the representatives of public order, rejection of army-like notions, and the ridiculing of State leaders (cf. Sex Pistols' *God Save The Queen*).

As a result, anything that could lessen individual freedom is to be destroyed, whether in a parodical way or by cynical sayings.

*Got a deadly toy  
To brainwash your boy  
An egocentric muscle thug  
Kicks butt on screen like a brat outa hell  
Bullshitter in the Indochina shop  
Pull the string in his back, we win the war  
That we never should have started at all  
A cabbage patch terrorist to call our own  
Who rewrites History with a machine gun "Don't think about it kill it"  
That's what we teach your child  
Rambozo, Rambozo, Rambozzo, the clown  
To draft age kids  
It sure looks like fun  
Kill them all  
And let God sort them out  
Like video-games-no mess  
Just fuel for a mass lapse of common sense  
You can be Don Quixote  
We'll dice you with our windmill blades Brawn over brain  
Means a happy ending  
GI Joe in the cereal bowl  
Grey shrapnel-flavoured chewing gum  
Mass murder ain't just painless  
Now we've made it cute  
Rambozzo, Rambozzo, Rambozzo the clown  
War is sexy  
War is fun  
Iron ego  
Red Dawn  
Be a wolverine. You'll rule the hills  
Just get some guns and cherios  
And kid can conquer Libya  
Just steel a fighter plane  
Look who came home in a wheelchair  
V.A. Hospital they don't care  
We're the machine  
You're just a toll  
Who fell for the myth of Rambozzo the clown*

*The Dead Kennedys. Rambozzo the Clown*

### **A.2.2. Nihilism**

The bases of the punk credo have much to do with a nihilistic view of life and society.

The word "nihilism" was first used in Russia in the 19th century and the ideology was developed by economists calling into question the very basis of society. They extolled a most absolute individualism, man's freeing from all subjections and all dogmas, religion, government, moral standards or family. Nietzsche's "radical nihilism" stems from the collapse of the traditional values of western metaphysics

issued from Plato and Judeo-Christianity. "God is dead" and man discovers that no nothing is true of what had been taught to him. The traditional scale of values - good, evil, justice, charity, etc. - is based upon the resentment of the weak and the slaves. The connection between the loss of a traditional mythic system of beliefs and the negation of leaders is thus deep. As long as an epoch was keeping faith in the transcendence of language and in God, master of all transcendence, doubting about signs was considered as an intellectual terrorism. Once the ancient myths broken, God lost his prevailing impact upon mentalities. He could be felt as the brandished figure who, used by leaders as a tool to settle their dictatorship, is displayed through the picture of Christ in order to render worthy and necessary the agreed human sacrifices. The discredit is thus transferred from religion to any bit of power-carrying entity existing in our societies. As monarchy by divine right could no longer exist, the sense of respect no more could survive and turns to a sense of humiliation thrown like a ball of resentment at the face of a ruling class seen as a necessary evil by the ideology indoctrinated ones and as an aberration by anarchists. For nowadays, the western leaders of men, instead of basing their lives upon sovereignty, are the navels of a scattered power based upon others' bits of sovereignty. As a consequence, we all would be the representatives of slavery without masters.

*I am the antichrist  
I am the anarchist  
Don't know what I want but I know how to get it  
I wanna destroy The passer-by  
cos I Wanna be  
Anarchy (...)*

*Anarchy in the U.K., the Sex Pistols*



*Born from some mother's womb  
Just like any other room  
Made a promise for a new life  
When your time's on the door  
And you trip to the floor  
And you feel you can touch  
All the noise is too much  
And the seeds that are sown  
Are no longer your own  
Just a minor operation  
To force the final ultimatum  
A thousand words are spoken loud  
Reach that gun to fool the crowds  
When you walk down the street*

*And the sound that's so sweet  
And you wish you could hide  
Maybe go for a ride  
To some picture arcade  
Where the future's not made  
A nightmare situation  
Infiltrate imagination  
Smack of past holy wars  
Fight a war with broken laws  
The leaders of men  
Born out of your frustration  
The leaders of men  
Just a strange infatuation  
The leaders of men  
Made a promise for a new life  
No saviour for our sakes  
To crush the atrocities of hate  
Self induced manipulation  
To crush all thought  
Of mass salvation*

*Leaders of men, Joy Division*

The denouncement of war prevailing among punks is as much originated by the nausea that war inspires to any human being than by the consternation felt at considering the way leaders of democracies use such means as religion to render war worthy. As the basic argument put forth by democrats is that they make life happier, and because punks reject this very style of life and see lies behind the staged game of international relationships, democratic leaders are the subjects of the bitter criticism.

As anticipation to the next point, let's quote the situationist Henry Vaneigem, in order to make a comparison between his statements and a punk song:

*"Are we condemned to the state of well-being? The level-headed ones won't fail to regret the way in which is led the contesting of a program which, from Khroutchev to the Dr Sweitzer, from the Pope to Fidel Castro, from Aragon to the late Kennedy, is unanimously approved. (...) Whatever reason put forth: better world, the Great Beyond, socialism or an enchanting future, the agreed suffering is always Christian, always... Everywhere the official claiming bear as a watermark the disgusting effigy of the crucified man, everywhere comrades are made to wear the militant martyr's crown. The good cause mixers prepare with the spilled blood the sausages to come: less flesh for bullets, more flesh for principles."*

*Henry Vaneigem*

*Hey!  
Yo!  
We're the United States Marines  
We know you've all been killing each other  
For at least two thousand years  
But we're here now  
To protect the family  
Of Christian heroin warlords  
Most friendly to the west  
So you knock out this fighting  
Or we'll tell mom  
Ever notice news  
Is stage& like TV wrestling shows*

*With Reagans and Kadafis cast  
As cartoon villain and heroes  
Or those wildlife "documentaries"  
Where a lion from a zoo  
Kills a dear tied down ahead of time  
At the perfect camera angle  
We are gathered here today  
To take photos of the president  
Pretending to mourn these brave young men  
Who came from Beirut  
Gift-wrapped in body bags  
A truck bomb blew them to bits  
We knew they were silting ducks  
We sacrificed them-Aztec style  
So we could use their dead meat  
To cook up war fever back home  
So make sure you take a lot of pictures  
And slant your news on the way  
Just like in wild kingdom*

*We first tied down the prey  
We want people boiling for revenge  
In their living-rooms  
So we can go play and shoot them up  
Anywhere we choose  
And you can cash in  
Without public asking questions.*

*Potshot round the world. The Dead  
Kennedys. Bedtime for Democracy*

### **A.3. A need to build new values**

These former ideas are the basement of the punk house. But as punks weren't all culture-imbued beings, and because many different factors could bring to seemingly throw out education and wear the punk shape, no true rationalization of the movement can be worked out.

Let it be added that punk was an anti-everything movement. As such it was also anti-definitions, anti-established trends of thought, anti-formulated ideologies. But those who gathered under the punk banner were those who felt common drives and instinctively wanted to convert their despair into solidarity.

What can be wondered about is where the roots of these trends in contemporary consciousness do lie and how they can be at work in the punk atmosphere and creations - and not to find an absolute definition for biased facts, distorted truths, and purposely shaped fashions.

If something strange bursts out suddenly, without any expressed explanation else than bits of sentences which, taken apart look like a meaningless refusal or the latest discovery of fashion-makers, one is allowed to ask how all this has come about and if there could be a consistent feeling behind fashion, resentment, visually exposed anger and "revolted" youth normalcy.

The punks repudiate all the society-made heroes as a whole and invent themselves, attend concerts where their own figureheads, parodies of the crucified Christ, sing and sonorously trample underfoot their education.

Punk concerts were characterized by violent physical out burst known as "pogo dance" and a symbolic spitting found its way from stage to audience and vice versa.



There was a need to build the heroes of the new society, but this society is a self-non-organized tribe and the heroes are jokers, lunatics and look like historic fools and jesters - With an added anger.

This comes from the lack of authenticity the punks saw in the fabricated heroes of our time, all playing parts in movies or in life.

These mirage-like entities are called Tintin, Gary Cooper or Prince Charles, or play in soap operas. They exist to picture various ranges of lifestyles and ways of comprehending society. They embody dreams, goals, hopes, and are settled above the average citizen, lingering in the waters of mediocrity, thus offered as a model to our own mediocrity.

The punks threw away these creatures to bring about their own anti-heroes. These wear the shape of the sick society they criticize.

The way society was felt by punks is mainly expressed through the situationist theories, as the following point will show.

*Whatever happened to Leon Trotsky?  
He got an ice pick  
That made his ears burn  
Whatever happened to old Lenny?  
The great Elmyra and Sancho Panza?  
Whatever happened to all the heroes? (2)  
Whatever happened to all the heroes?  
All the shakespeareos?  
They watched their Rome burn  
Whatever happened to all the heroes?  
No more heroes anymore (2)*

*The Stranglers, No more heroes*



## **B. The Situationist theory**

### **B.1. From Situationism to punk**

The feel and look of punks owed much to Situationism. Punk can be considered as a time bomb carefully engineered twenty years before its explosion ending with the sound of a wet banger - or as the last jolt of a theory bound to get lost in the doom intricacies of the collective subconscious. Situationism grew out of the early 50s Lettrist movement, a kind of avant-garde "reductio ad absurdum" founded by the Rumanian poet Isidore Isou.

The Lettrists declared that since even words had been bankrupted by modern life, they could return to individual letters. They also had an elaborate contempt for the whole post-war consumer society, ridiculing its social absurdities, cultural sterility

and mass-produced banality.

In 1952, a group of Lettrists broke up a press conference given by Charly Chaplin at the Ritz Hotel. "*We believe,*" they explained, "*that the most urgent expression of freedom is the destruction of idols, especially when they present themselves in the name of freedom.*"

"Culture" was a dirty word to Lettrists, as was "work".

So they invented the art form of "psychogeography". This entailed wandering the city for days in clothing provocatively painted with slogans. They were in search for repressed images of desire: instances of disorder, rebellion, wonder, madness, play. Guy Debord, with some other former lettrists, inaugurated the Situationist International, which, proudly adopting the style of "intellectual terrorists", developed a scathing theory of modern life.

Uniting the Dadaist and surrealist visions of art, they were preaching what they called a "supercession" of art.

They wanted to create situations within life with the fluid and unbounded possibilities of art. Looking for the unstable margins of culture, its points of crisis, they hoped to insert their presence as catalyst for catastrophes so definitive that they would make all retreat impossible. The situationists offered no program; they stood only for unlimited social autonomy and unbridled self-gratification. Their favourite readings were *Alice in Wonderland* and the Marquis de Sade. They thus inspired one side of the events in May 1968, which, apart from neo-Marxist claimings, found the walls of Paris sprayed with situationist slogans, like, for instance:

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO FORBID. DOWN WITH THE NAZARENE TOAD. I TAKE MY DESIRES FOR REALITY BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN THE REALITY OF MY DESIRES. IMAGINATION TAKES POWER. WE'LL HAVE A GOOD MASTER AS SOON AS EACH ONE IS ONE'S OWN.

ALONE FIRST, SHOWING SOLIDARITY AFTERWARDS AND FINALLY. LIVE WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS OR DEAD TIME. SCREAM, STEAL, EJACULATE YOUR DESIRES...

But once famous, the situationists fell into vicious internal disputes and were reduced to their founder member, Guy Debord, who eventually announced himself disgusted by his own celebrity and disbanded the movement in 1971..

The footnotes of the story tell that in the mid-sixties, one of the few British situationists was Chris Grey, an aristocratically mannered intellectual. In an idle moment, he said that he could call on at least 30 trained and combat-hardened street fighters. Hearing this exciting development, Guy Debord rushed across the channel to inspect the troops. He was then directed by an embarrassed Chris Grey to the home of one Dave Wise and, bursting in, discovered Dave lying on a sofa watching "Match of the day" with a can of beer.

Such idle truck with the state's one-way communication system annoyed Debord who became furious when Dave Wise informed him that the guerrilla combat unit was he and his brother Stuart. Throwing books all over Wise's flat, Debord raged back to Paris. As a consequence, Chris Grey was expelled from the Situationist International. So then Chris, Dave and his brother (both art college lecturers) founded King Mob (after the 18th century Gordon Rioters), a band dedicated to anti-cultural activities like smashing up Wimpy bars or defacing the work of State-



recognized artists. They were mostly highly educated people. King Mob also announced that the avant-garde of the British working-class were football hooligans, and they proselytized amongst Hells Angels, Piccadilly Circus Junkies and skinheads.

Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid<sup>1</sup> - who was to become the Sex Pistols art director - gravitated in these circles in the aftermath of 1968, and it was with Chris Grey that Jamie Reid published the influential first English collection of situationist writings, *Leaving the Twentieth Century*, whose graphics clearly anticipate the Sex Pistols' imagery. Such were the Influences which, percolating through Malcolm McLaren's boutique in King's Road, gradually influenced the visual side of the early punks -and eventually of the Sex Pistols.

## **B.2. The denunciation of modern society and the tactics of criticism**

*"That thought looks for its materialization is not enough, reality must also look for thought."*

*International Situationist*

The basic belief shared by the situationist movement members was that man was meant to live intensely, in endless pleasure and awareness that what is worthy of one is worthy of all. And above all, there was a law standing: always act as if there never should be any future.

But the modern world is inhabited by surviving men, scattered in the mechanisms of hierarchically settled powers, a combination of interferences, a chaos of oppressive techniques only waiting for the meticulous robotisation of robotized thinkers to organize themselves.

Passivity is raised to the status of a principle: the sadness of leisure factories where one has to pay in order to dully consume the goods produced in the boredom that makes leisure desirable.

The main shout of situationists was: "When will you at last cease to identify yourselves with the definition you are reduced to?» The aim was to awaken man to the absurdity of life in such conditions.

This was the basis for a theory of modern life criticism that had to be displayed in its own language:

*"(...) the language of contradiction, which must be dialectical in its shape as well as in its contents. It is a criticism of wholeness and History. It is not a degree zero of writing but its inversion, not a negation of style but the style of negation."*

*Guy Debord*

As there were no changes to expect from groups based on quantitative recruiting and mass parties, only a micro-society whose members would have a common will

for radical thinking, kept in a state of permanent efficient practice would gather chances of being shining one day with enough strength to free the potential of creativity of a great amount of human beings. This idea was to transform the medieval warriors' tactics of anarchists and terrorists into a modern strategy. The situationist Raoul Vaneigem explains the chaotic state of our societies as follows:

*"The realization plan arises from the passion for creation, in the very moment when subjectivity swells and wants to rule over everything. The communication plan springs from the passion for love, each time beings discover within themselves an identical will for conquests. The participation plan comes from the passion for play, when the group helps to the realization of each. Isolated, these three passions are perverted. Dissociated, these three plans are falsified. The will for realization becomes a will for power, sacrificed to the plan and to the part played, ruling over an universe of constraint and illusions. The will for communication turns to be a permanent objective lie, which, based on relationships between objects ,gives out to semiologists the signs they dress up with a human appearance. The will for participation organizes the isolation of each in the crowd and creates the tyranny of community illusion."*

*Raoul Vaneigem*

As everyone wants to give victory to his subjectivity, the union between men must be based on this shared desire. No one can strengthen his subjectivity without any help from others, without help from a group that has itself become a centre of subjectivity, faithful reflection of the subjectivity of its members.

The Situationist International is the only group to have decided to support radical subjectivity.

### **B.3. Poetry, creativity and the cult of teenage.**

*" Whenever the will to live isn't spontaneously issued by individual poetry spreads the shade of the Nazarene crucified toad."*

*Raoul Vaneigem*

For situationists, poetry is the revolutionary action par excellence, what gives birth to new realities, the accomplishment of the radical theory.

In the laboratories of individual creativity, a revolutionary alchemy transmutes the base metals of day-to-day life into the purest gold. They see in the revolted fractions of youth the precursory signs of a largest subversion that will incorporate in its wholeness the ones who more and more feel the impossibility to live, and thus the prelude to the coming revolutionary epoch.

The very realization of art, and more specifically poetry, is to be found in the streets, on the walls...and love is seen as subversive a notion as the refusal of constraints and social subversion are seen as poetry.

The apolitical violence of the young generations, their contempt for supermarket culture, art, ideology are considered as positive attitudes bearing the seeds for further hopes. As a result, the individual realization will be characterized by an "everyone for himself" collectively

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<sup>1</sup> Malcom McLaren and Jamie Reid are already mentioned in Chapter 1, C3 and Chapter 2 D2

understood. Poetry coupled with individualism are thus the true revolutionary notions. Real poetry doesn't care about poetry, for situationists. It lies in a style of life, gestures and a search for this very style. Everywhere repressed, poetry blossoms everywhere. Roughly held back, it reappears in violence, makes riots complete, gets involved with revolt and spreads over great social feasts before being assigned a forced residence in the hagiographic Culture by bureaucrats.

Any form of artistic expression also allows to feel around for new forms of unrest and cautious propaganda which could open the ways of the creative spontaneity of men, proving that in a falsified department, creation is the only gesture that carries its own critique.

There are no bounds to creativity and no end to subversion, they say.

#### **B.4. A search for non-compromised purity. Denunciation of the society of the spectacle.**

But power only picks up the forms of creativity useful to spectacular reprocessing.

For situationists, the whole life of modern societies is a piling up of spectacles. All that was directivity lived by man sails away in the ship of representation. Spectacle is felt as a concrete inversion of life, the autonomous movement of the non-being, which dominates the world with its sprawling infiltrations. The very exhibition of the bureaucratic power, which rules some industrial States, is precisely part of the general spectacle, appears as its pseudo-negation, and is thus its support. The role of ideological, artistic and cultural shows consists then in manufacturing the sheepdogs of knowledge and beauty out of wolves of spontaneity, as can attest museums and anthologies - filled with the revolutionary shouts we are no more able to understand. In the situationist mind, not only does consumption mellow the anger of the young rebels, it also shows artists the way for governmental harnessing: power will know how to reward them for having dressed with new and attractive colors the old conditioning into passiveness. As a result, only from a progressive awareness of a possible surpassing and from maladjustment to modern ways of life can arise a new poetry of factual experience, a re-invention of life. The connections between these theories and the punk movement are boundless. All the feelings radiated by punks were, along with a denouncement of the way people are conditioned to accept their near-slavery, a restless search for total freedom and a desire to systematically draw a red herring across the trail of self-expression. For the movement was reality-fed, it was not through language that it would be exposed, because it would then have played in the government hands and taken part in the whole masquerade of spectacular reprocessing. It was to be subversively visually expressed, stylized in order to resist the fatal robbery of its originality by power. Because through such ways of communication that are television and the press, only the acceptable, and thus the disfigured and the codified can be said - simplified and biased caricatures of real feelings, a limited image. Only through the multifaceted violence of self-invention, visual shock and style, could these theories avoid the traps of representation; only through an increasing build up of disconcerting symbols piling up with studied bad taste could punk cloud the issue.

The following passage will thus be devoted to the roots of punk visual expressions of

subversion, which owe a lot to Dadaism.

## C. The appearance of thought

In the history of 20th century movements of style and subversive contesting, only the Dada movement seems to carry the seeds for a punk movement that appears to spring out spontaneously from nothingness.

To establish a link between the Dada and the punk movement is no easy matter. But the search for nonsense and experiments in figurative expression are common drives behind both and, in spite of differences relative to the evolution of society through time, striking analogies can be worked out.

Punks and Dadaists had in common a destructive will, a conscious diving into chaos and contradictions, a sort of revengeful demonstration that nonsense could make sense, but not in the expected way. Situationists refer to the Dada movement to give instances of spontaneous thought processes - or at least a desire for this. Dadaism seems to be the first international link between those who want to protest against social shackles of all kinds and the first anti-everything movement. As well as punk seems to be the latest jolt of spontaneous and inventive contesting in the history of youth movements.

### C.1. Dadaism

Dadaism is a movement of refusal expressed through literature and pictorial arts, born in 1916 under the influence of Hugo Ball, and in New York with Alfred Stieglitz and Francis Picabia. Tristan Tzara took its direction in 1917.

The Dada movement was basically originated by a reaction against war, the army, and patriotism and advocated at first an absolute refusal of art.

*"Dada is a state of mind, the free artistic thought. As long as schoolchildren will be made to recite prayers in the guise of texts and museum visits, we'll call it despotism and seek to spoil the ceremony."*

*André Breton*

Dadaists exploited accidental and incongruous effects in their works and programmatically challenged established canons of art, thought, morality...

Nothing less literary, nothing less conformist had ever been systematically attempted before.

The members of the movement were practicing a sort of ascetic destruction, holding scandal as a means of action. The main characteristics of the Dadaist moods were a destructive cynicism coupled with irreverent attitudes towards art and society, as well as radically innovative ideas, a sort of subversion-worship.

The movement gave thus birth to many forms of artistic expression and strongly marked the trends orientation of modern art. Surrealism is directly inspired from Dadaism as it opened the way to the use of chance-effects, unexpected juxtapositions and introduced the hint of subjectivity and irrational imagery that was lacking in the established artistic science.

The whole meaning of these trends in art can thus be seen as the killing of a thought process that no longer fit - the artistic representation that art could bring no further solutions to mankind, for it was spoilt by an increasing snobbism that put culture on a pedestal, a mirage-like target less and less accessible to the average individual.

The ideal picture of a Dadaist attitude would be an artist complementing his canvas, sat on a chair in a desert museum.

Dadaism was a kind of arty thought process armed against itself to resist the forces of State-harnessing. The best means to achieve this was then to introduce humor in creations, diverting images from their reckoned signification, making unexpected juxtapositions between symbolic objects -in a word, to rehabilitate play, bringing back into favor the primitive instinct of play-activity that had been buried.

The idea was for art to drag down in its fall the huge edifice built by the seriously minded ones to worship the bourgeoisie.

Total play and day-to-day revolution were thus intended to work together.

*" I proclaim the opposition of all cosmic faculties to this blennorrhoea of a putrid sun out of the factories of philosophical thought; a fierce fight, with all the means of a dadaist disgust. Any produce of disgust likely to become a negation of the family is Dada, protests with its heart and fists in a destructive action: DADA; knowledge of all the means that have been rejected by the discreet sex of useful compromise and politeness: DADA: abolishment of logic, a dance for the powerless of creation: DADA: each object, all objects, feelings and obscurities; the apparitions and the precise choc of parallel lines are means for fighting: DADA: abolishment of memory: DADA: abolishment of archaeology: DADA: abolishment of prophets, DADA: abolishment of the future: DADA: absolute and indisputable belief in each god-immediate-produce out of spontaneity: DADA: respect all individualities in their madness of the moment: serious, timorous, shy, passionate, vigorous, resolute, enthusiastic: peel its church from all useless and heavy accessory; spit loving or unpleasant thoughts like a luminous torrent or cherish them - with the accurate satisfaction that it's the same. Freedom. DADA. DADA. DADA, wailing of tense colors, interwoven contraries and contradictions, grotesque and inconsistencies: LIFE."*

*Tritan Tzara*

## **c.2. From Dadaism to punk**

Punk is firstly eye-catching.

The description of the punk outfit and the finding of their possible signification will be detailed in the next chapter, but what is to be understood beforehand is the underlying feeling relative to the drive for self-invention.

Clothes represent roles, uniforms worn consciously or not in order to convey a meaning and state one's position on the social ladder.

Punks gather all the symbols they can find useful to the creation of an impressionistic melting - pot, mixing stupid and meaningless items with directly significant ones.

This is in complete harmony with the above description of Dadaist ways, as, even if bound to lead to a certain standardization brought about by time, punks were the first to use clothes to consciously make sense.

But the coexisting elements were so strange and humor so prevailing that the very signification of the clothing compositions cannot really be translated into words or summed up by definitions. They were creations of art.

A punk taken individually isn't representative of the wholeness of punks as for instance a soldier would be to exemplify the entire equipment of a given army in a given country.

This is not to say that punk style cannot be described, but the mood was that of self-creation and thus destroyed bounds other than those brought by the exhaustion of inspiration or commercial codification plans.

So the punks' aim was to make their appearance so ugly and so disconcerting that the mechanisms of clothe-market reprocessing would have no end of a job understanding the principle lying behind their dressing-ways (the hippy style-like clothes were now mass-produced and sold in supermarkets).

The punk movement was in a sense the visual exposition of the non-obvious, the coexistence of contradictions and anachronisms bringing stylized confusion rather than meanings, in an ever-present harmony between contraries.

Punk style was a parody of all uniforms, a collage - the first collages were invented by dadaists - and in the same time a parody of this same parody, brought about by stylized attitudes. It was not intended to make sense directly, nor after consideration: it was intended not to be understood at all - it was carrying its own critique as a style expressing the refusal of styles. Punk was thought dressing, and thought is complex.

Punks were walking down the streets disguised like commentaries upon the world.

There is for instance a deep connection between the "no future" slogan and the general atmosphere radiated.

The feeling was that, say, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or Orwell's *1984*, settle in a fictive future a thrill that a simple glance at present times would provoke. The future bears no interest compared to the experienced imprisonment in modern life.

There was in fact a desire to subvert appearances because they rule social life. What was felt was that human beings went this way through History: to be -to have - to show. And the best means to go back into being was then to spoil the show.

In order to achieve this, the chosen tactics came from the thought that if we are condemned to lie, only truth can act as a corrosive fluid. The game consists then in introducing some bits of truth among a tissue of nonsense. The final goal is to make truth spurt out from confusion and cynicism while it gives the impression of flying out contrary to them. This is in fact a search for poetry, a play on signs to denounce the falsification of communication, and a will to surpass language.

Nihilism thus emanates from this attitude, as this is a resentful awareness of the decaying state of the prominent spectacle, itself demonstrating the decaying swing of modern life into spectacle: the decay of the spectacle is thus to be expressed by the spectacle of decay-given by punks.

Punks were carrying their creations on their back, and this is through samples of these stylized juxtapositions that some significations can be worked out to give clues for an understanding of the general principle relative to this form of inventiveness in dressing -just as what the study of some given genuine antiques could do to delimit the furnishing style of a chosen time. The next chapter will thus deal with these descriptive investigations.

# How to make a Dadaist Poem (method of Tristan Tzara)

To make a Dadaist poem:

- Take a newspaper.
- Take a pair of scissors.
- Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
- Cut out the article.
- Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
- Shake it gently.
- Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
- Copy conscientiously.
- The poem will be like you.
- And here you are a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

-Tristan Tzara

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# *CHAPTER FOUR*



## 4. THE STRATEGY OF APPEARANCES

*" And our time, undoubtedly, (...) prefers the picture to the thing, the copy to the original, representation to reality, appearance to the being. What is sacred is only illusion but what is profane is truth."*

*Mircea Eliade*

### A. The punk outfit: a heap of signs to decipher

"Appearance" is a key word when dealing with the punk movement.

That punks chose to appear rather than to act efficiently and put their principles into practice is added evidence to their belonging to a tradition of pacifism. The movement would else have turned to be a terrorist organization, and this was not the goal sought. Violence was to be static, compact and contained, punk was to be the perfect symbiosis between what attacks and what is attacked.

The only means to achieve this was then to subvert appearances and create a real punk style, with its own rules and spirit. Clothes would mean shock, provocation, outrage, wonders, and disorder. They would, for the first time, be consciously significant, even in the path of nonsense.

To the question "What is punk?", there is a void for an answer, and a disorganized heap of pictures, moving and annoyingly elusive.

#### A.1. The origins of punk style

The origins of punk style are to be found both in the USA and in England. Clothes mutilation is a critical issue between the America's so-called New Wave bands and the Brit punk contingent, each claiming the exclusivity in inventiveness and avant-garde creation abilities.

This is in fact Richard Hell who originated the punk visuals, haircuts, torn and safety pinned T-shirts with scattered geometrical shapes and personal messages written on them, that is to say the proto-punk look.

As was mentioned in the first chapter, his sick-poet style looks impressed Malcolm McLaren who brought these ideas back to London, adding a stylized shade to the atmosphere around him. Real punk style was then created step by step.

#### A.2. Punk style: the underlying principle

##### A.2.1. The outbidding tactics

As the will standing behind punk dressing ways was originality and being unique and shocking, no wonder that the spreading of punk "fashion" was to bring to extremes. As soon as an idea - or some new element of style - was exploited by others, time had come to build up and extract new potentially significant entities

from the deepness of mass-symbolism.

The fall towards self-destruction was unavoidable as the search was directed down the path of» the worse " through the linked fields of the horrible, the frightening, the strange, the stupid. There was a search for new aesthetics, or for a means to wear nonsense. As a fashion, punk could only be very short-lived. But this was not due to any lack of inspiration as there was a wide range of variations on the mental image of what is punk. The reason for this was that punk could no more be punk if it had success.

Punk was a mass-creation scorning masses.

But those who understood punk style and were familiar to the "concept" of punk, those who didn't want to give up, those who had found in the punk movement a new sense to their lives and huge possibilities for creation ignored the logical side of punk destiny and instituted what soon became a fashion. Here are the main and basic components of punk style:

#### ***A.2.2. Zips and holes***

Zips are to be seen everywhere enough room is left. They suggest a sort of "scar" of the fabric, clothes being considered as a second skin, and not as any pieces of wardrobe.

Opposed to the hippy holes and dirty flared jeans, seen as a sign of decadence by punks, zips show a reaction against apathy and reinforce the aggressive side of their looks.

On the other hand, holes can be intentionally made by punks on their shirts. This is called clothes mutilation. This gives the impression that they wear self-made rags in search for a kind of aesthetics of trashcans. Everything lies in the way holes look like and zips are arranged. The main point in fact is to catch the "spirit" of zips and holes, to have the right authentic looks. An imitation of a punk is easy to recognize and rather inspires mockery, for a real punk. The whole mechanisms are to be understood first. Everything could be part of the punk outfit; what matters is that little thing that makes a difference and that belongs to snobbism, selection and connoisseurs.

One of the aims is both to create a new look with old and trite things and to make new ones appear old and authentic, polished by time.

#### ***A.2.3. Trousers***

Trousers are generally too large around the hips and very tight as well as too short toward the ankles.

This is in perfect opposition with the hippy trousers.

The inversion of perspective reflects the changes in ways of perceiving reality.

The hippy widening down suggested an opening of the mind, coupled with the "peace and love" mentality. The punk tightening, on the contrary, shows that time has come to stop these ramblings straight away.

Military trousers are also privileged, as well as rangers and any relics from world war two, adding a frightening touch to the outfit.

#### **A.2.4. Chest as a Christmas tree**

From the chest can hang the most heterogeneous items: badges, politic insignias, military decorations, safety pins, and photographs of the family, and even used sanitary towels (generally painted red) and children toys and dummies.

Chains and braces can also be worn in order to willingly fetter the movements of arms and legs.

The list of all possibilities would be without end.

### **A. 3. Subversion**

One may wonder about what is truly subversive in the punk looks. The above description of the main elements of the punk outfit are only underlined to give an idea of the punk figure as a whole. Subversion rather lies in attitudes, accessories and style.

#### **A.3.1. Head**

Hairdressing is one of the most important elements of punk style.

When deeply considered, hair is the only means to identify a naked punk. Hair is part of the body, the only part liable to be shaped.

After fifteen years of requests, punks gave satisfaction to their parents by cutting their hair short, happy to show that the "village idiot" style haircut is even uglier than the long hippy hairstyle.

The punk's fingers, once coated with grease, twist thin strands of hair to obtain a spiked hairstyle. The very goal of the operation is to suggest that the head, having exploded, no more directs the body. The hair can then be dyed in fluorescent green, pink, orange...

This was curiously the way by which the death character was pictured in the classical opera. The punk use it to symbolize the purest youth vitality and the highest potential. With time and inventiveness hairstyles diversified and became real creations of art. Colors, shapes and symbolism happily mixed made the bounds of normalcy move back.

There are also, to match haircuts, whole ranges of face expressions.

The eyes are those of puny children but can be wide open or rolled upwards. Sunglasses are sometimes worn at night. The complexion is to be pale green, decorated by a collection of spots from diverse origins such as excessive drinking or drugs.

Little scars can also be noticed. They are due to attempts - but only attempts - to

pierce one's cheek with safety pins.

The lips are generally thin and the teeth unbrushed: *"I never brush my teeth, they are green because I like this colour very much."* J.Rotten.

The punk generally tilts his head on one side to give an impression of mental illness.

### A.3.2. Accessories

A dog's collar or a security chain often surrounded the punk neck.

A thin black leather tie is one of the privileged elements, as it is felt as a real good means of subversion. It had been a long time since the youth hadn't worn any ties. The punks wish to annoy both hippies and parents--the former because this is a sign of bourgeois respectability and the latter because they would rather prefer the "decadent" hippy shirt to the punk tie, worn directly to the skin, with a torn T-shirt. Ties are moreover intended to suggest the picture of a hangman whose rope would just have been cut.

To sum up, any codified and socially recognized piece of wardrobe, any single and unnoticed element of day to day life can be put in a punk way, held up to ridicule and parodied.

## B. The punk spirit

### B.1. What is "very" punk<sup>2</sup>

Let it be reminded that in the punk field of aesthetics what prevails is how far one goes and how high one bids.

To look punk is to display the greater amount of punk signs and symbols. Only by this way the underlying goal will be reached: to obtain the ideological immunity against all the sources of boredom that are concealment, sense, and mannerism.

In this apology of nonsense, what is sought is more not to be part of an established trend or class than to create a new religion; more the form of refusal, thus considered as an end, than the refusal of forms-which ends in destruction.

As such punk can be seen as an attitude only, a sum of behaviours borrowed from the concept of punk.

A few examples could complete the caricature:

#### **Punk notions:**

- Spitting.
- Playing some punk music.
- Red with black, green with pink, vomiting, screaming; clumsiness, drunkenness and feverishness.

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<sup>2</sup> Mostly taken from *"Les mouvements de mode expliqués aux parents"*, Hector Olback, Alain Soral, Alexandre Pashe

- Being as rachitic as aggressive.
- To have no future and say so.
- To kick into walls.
- To be called Johnny Rotten, Rat Scabbies, Captain Sensible, Sid Vicious when one's real name is John Smith.
- To watch the ground.
- To speak loud.
- To speak very little.
- Never to wear watches.

In fact, everything is, consciously or not, intended to ward off the idea that punk could be a fashion.



Punks

### **B.2. Punk can also be seen as a solution**

Apart from all the ideological sides of the matter described in the first chapters and before taking seriously fashion into account, some psychological aspects can be considered in order to make understandable the process. by which one can become a punk and why, in the end, the punk game was spoilt. Let's take some instances:

Teenage crisis is in fact rather the lot of those who are in search of a personality, particularly when they are far from resembling the ideal they worship.

For a puny boy having no chance of being the influent and respected member of a hooligan urban gang, a little work is sufficient to turn the basic injustice into profit. He can cut short to his mates' mockeries by, for instance, sucking all day long a real baby dummy, one of his hands intentionally wrapped up in a crepe bandage. He is the shame of bad boys: he is happy; he is a punk.

Awkward and shy, this other one tries to change his image. Sitting at a pub's table, he drinks a lot of beer without talking and without behaving as if drunk. Being locked in a leather military jacket reassures him. His face is totally indifferent to the people around. But he is obsessed by a single question: has he convinced the crowd of his indifference?

If this third one is a punk today, it is because he was a hippy yesterday. This is the case of the one in the know. What can be deduced from these fictive cases is that punk "fashion" could also be a dialectic that permits teenagers to transform a weakness into prestige. The hypothetic boys described haven't changed at all, the first one still being as puny, and the second one as shy as before. But their appearance makes all the difference and this alteration is not necessarily a superficial one as for instance shyness is no more felt as a sort of paralyzed exuberance but as the control of the world.

### **B. 3. Values codified in no time**

The fact that some saw in the punk movement the solving of their personal problems coupled with the quick success and spreading of punk fashion signed its death warrant. In 1978 punk was no longer punk as it already possessed its rituals, its snobs, and its ex-drug addicts. The eternal manipulators invested the field and played with anguish. Saying "everything is black" soon became as stupid a creed as "peace and love". The image was blocked. The punks, holding their certainties, slowly slid towards sectarianism, with the proud arrogance that had characterized the Maoists in the after 1968. Punk was actually dead as soon as people were able to see a punk without wonders. What came afterwards is only the aesthetic extension and commercial exploitation of the original idea, developing into chain-produced and lavish copies of what had been a spontaneous production.

*Punk's not dead  
It just deserves to die  
When it becomes another stale cartoon  
A close-minded, self-centered social club  
Ideas don't matter, it's just who you know*

*If the music's gotten boring  
It's because of the people  
Who want everyone to sound the same  
Who drive bright people out Of our so-called scene 'till all that's left  
is just a meaningless fad  
Hardcore formulas are dogshit Change and caring are what's real Is this  
a state of mind  
Or just another label?*

*The joy and hope of an alternative Has become its own cliché A  
hairstyle is not a lifestyle  
Imagine Sid Vicious at 35 Who needs a scene  
Scared to love and to feel  
Judging everything  
By loud fast rules appeal  
Who played last night?  
" I don't know I forgot  
But diving off the stage  
Was a lot of fun."  
Peer pressure decrees*

*Make the same old mistakes  
Again and again*

*Chickenshit conformist just like your parents.  
What's ripped us apart even more than drugs  
Are the thieves and the goddam liars  
Ripping people off when they share their stuff  
When someone falls are there any friends?  
Harder core than thou for a year or two  
Then it's time to get a real job  
Others stay home it's no fun to go out  
When the gigs are wrecked by gangs and thugs  
When the thugs form bands, look who gets the record deals  
From New York Metal labels looking to scam  
Who sign the most racist queerbashing bands they can find  
To make a buck reviving kids up for war.  
Walk tall, act small  
Only as tough as gang approval  
Unity is bullshit  
When it's under someone's fat foot  
Where's the common cause  
Too many factions  
Safety sulk in their shells  
Agree with us on everything  
Or we won't help with anything  
That kind of attitude  
Just makes a split grow wider  
Guess who's laughing when the world explodes  
When we're all crybabes  
Who fights best among ourselves  
(...)  
Will the metalheads finally learn something  
Or will the punks throw away their education?  
No one's ever the best  
Once they believe their own press  
"Maturing" doesn't need rehearsing  
Mistakes of the Past  
The more things change  
The more they stay the same  
We can't grow  
When we won't criticize ourselves  
The 60S weren't all failure  
It's the 70S that stunk  
As the clock ticks we dig the same hole  
Music scenes ain't real life  
They won't get rid of the bomb  
Won't eliminate rape  
Or bring down the banks  
Any kind of real change  
Takes more time and work  
Than changing channels on a TV set.  
So why are we so?*

*Chickenshit conformitst, The Dead Kennedys.*

## **C . I s ideology an attribute of style?**

### **C . 1 . Ideology as an added accessory**

In their book, *Les mouvements de Mode Expliques aux Parents (1984)*, Hector

Olback, Alain Soral and Alexandre Pasche say that fashion has become so sophisticated and complex that it can consider ideology as an item as important as a pair of shoes or a hairstyle.

So the punk slogan " no future ", for instance, would be no end in itself nor any honest feeling but only a strong idea borrowed from nihilism to bump up the punk outfit.

Under this light, the punk movement wouldn't be taken too seriously.

As the style of negation, the movement soon became a fashion; but numerous were those who believed in punk and saw there the last refuge of honesty. Anarchy was going to change the face of society, and a whole generation of purpose was going to destroy the past.

Suicide, despair and such an intense musical production are obvious evidences that punk was not only a fashion and that punk roots were deeper than those of a flower.

### *C.2. Ideologies as a product of inner conflicts among the youth*

Since the 50S the status of youth has drastically changed. During the 40S, for instance, the idol of the youth was Humphrey Bogart, who was 45; during the 50S it was James Dean, who was 25.

Because of the after-war baby boom, the changes and liberation of family morals, the birth of a powerful student circle, the development of radio, the teenager of the 60S gradually happened to play the part of a whole individual. The social status of teenagers is then no longer considered as the one of an adult apprentice, as they represent a new and interesting clientele.

To understand why the punk movement cannot be considered as a mere fashion, a survey of the western history of youth movements and tendencies can act as an efficient light.

Since the end of the fifties London is the great theatre of western mentalities. On this stage were pictured all the main issues tearing and finally building our conscience. Strange shapes springing up from nowhere and disappearing without apparent reason, made of clothing outfits, behaviors and attitudes associated to aesthetics, morals and ideologies; whole sets, new cultures not to be understood by outsiders. These "fashions" were above all visions, ways of situating oneself in relation to the world.

When Mods were fighting against Rockers in southern England in 1964-65, it wasn't a matter of simple hooliganism but rather the confrontation between two conceptions of the world, as legitimate one another taking place in the heart of the working class and, more generally, of society.

Mods (moderns) wanted to be cool, detached and handsome. They liked French movies, Italian clothes, and black emancipated music. They were optimistic and positive, worked, and spent all their money at weekends on clothes and



nightclubs. They were in fact expressing a hedonist vision of life, willing to transcend their class origins, and to take part in the great liberation brought about by the consumption of goods. They no longer wanted to be spectators but actors; revolution would never be on their agenda.

In front of them, greasers, or rockers, wanted to assert them-selves as they were: children of the working class, everything in their dressing ways, music and behavior showed that they intended to be faithful to their social background. They were dirty, violent, rude, or, at least, did their best to appear as such.

Rockers were a traditionalist reaction operated by following near ethnic criterions of authenticity, in front of the mods renegades.

The conflict was first expressed through clothes and the outside looks. Ideas were worn; appearance was in deep connection with an essence and was bearing a message that could be deciphered. And this scheme is to be applied to all the movements of style that appeared in England during the 60S and 70S. Style was acting like an explicit socio-political position.

The debate between mods and rockers was to be re-enacted, under another shape and with more acuteness in the years 1968-69, between the psychedelics and the skinheads. Psychedelics and hippies, through their cult of art and individuality, their rejection of consumption values, their intellectualism and spirituality, were expressing a political will as much as an integration of some of the working-class values to those of the middle-class.

To this the skinheads reacted by a freezing on traditional working-class values, wearing stylized versions of the caricatural proletarian outfit: checked shirts, braces, mixed with elements borrowed from the Jamaican Rude Boys 'outfit. The skinheads were recognizing there the assertion of an ethnic identity, as well as values they shared: male chauvinism, cult of strength, and attachment to the community. They were fundamentalists of the working class, attempting to keep alive through appearances a world in decay.

Like artistic avant-gardes, these movements of style were formations of compromise, bridges between two orders of sensitivity, two mentalities. Their succession was thus relatively logical, even if only understandable afterwards. They were acting as woolly prophecies, only recognized as such when reality happened to prove them right.

The role of style was though to disappear as soon as reality had reached it. Its success signed its death warrant. Another style then came to replace it. In this way generations, and even societies, were built.

### **3. Punk**

With the punk movement, in 1976-77, a first crack appeared in the expressive function of style.

Punk was both a demand for speech and a jamming of this same speech, an assertion of sense and a refusal to give a definitive sense to things -a proliferation of symbols to destroy all possibility of clear communication.

Anti-decadent punk as well as the reflection of decadence; revolted punk but also indifferent, anti-star punk but the punk musicians want to be stars: heterogeneous flowers of confusion and contradiction in an explosive bunch of conflict.

Hybrid movement, collage of unconnected elements, kind of disordered recapitulation of a history, huge venture in recycling already dead signs: punk was an end in itself.

This is maybe the only definitive signification the movement can be given: the implicit acknowledgement that a history - that of youth as the engine of social transformations - was over.

Punk was grabbing style from signification, leaving empty signs, a pure surface.

The consequence of this punk step in style evolution will be considered in the last chapter. But there is beforehand a field that requires some analysis: the commercial side of the matter: how to convert a micro-revolution into an organized anti-fashion fashion and make money, by the way.

# *CHAPTER FIVE*

## 5. FASHION, TAKING OVER, AND REPROCESSING

### A. Fashion and anti-fashion

#### A.1. What is fashion

In the strict sense of the word, fashion is an unbroken string of sudden and slow diffusions, without justification, and ephemeral. Fashion is about the cyclic renewal of the forms of an use. Fashion is thus mainly focused on clothes.

Two types of fashion coexist: organized fashion and spontaneous fashion. Fashion is only the lot of modern societies directed towards change and progress, and cannot flourish in traditional, conservatory and stable societies.

The principle of fashion is to spread, and this leads to standardization. This is also a game by which a minority obliges a majority to imitate them, to start again endlessly.

From a social point of view, wardrobe is the means by which one slowly reveals himself to others, and thus becomes an articulate and shaded speech.

Marc Alain Descamps (1979), in *Psychosociologie de la Mode*, says that the social side of clothing is much more important than the psychological one.

Any given uniform must be replaced in its context, in connection to a group of people, if it is to be understood. The individual would be unable to express anything through clothes else than those already codified by society.

Fashion appears as a tangle of sense, an implacably logical psychosocial mechanism depriving the body from its original shape in order to dress it with cultural prints.

Fashion becomes the symbolic game by which societies play and play again in dizziness what represents the essence of their system.

#### A.2. The consequences of fashion

Our modern societies have instituted fashion as training for innovation. But this is a perverse tool as it turns back against them. Fashion doesn't take anything seriously, destroys all values in order to replace everything by novelty in an unlimited speeding up. Success is no more an evidence intended to underline value, but only a fleeting and absurd craze. And fashion is self-destructive; as a fashion dismisses another. As such it is the prey of commercial exploitation and machinations.

The constant increasing of fashion exploitation fields and of the belief that everything is a question of fashion unmask the loss of a social consensus about values.

Fashion diverts from seriousness -formerly religious, now revolutionary- critics, who in the past proceeded from the right wing conservatory thought now come from revolutionary thought of the left.

And when all values have been turned down, no sense can survive, only the insane laughter of the absurd. The precious tool of progressists becomes the fetish of nihilists.

### A.3. Anti-fashion, opposition and youth

Clothes were at first the reflection of a symbolic behavior whose signified was social prestige. But there is a shift in progress: some industrials, doctors, writers who now favor a neglected dressing style, for instance.

If clothes no longer belong to the field where class struggles are operated, they become the privileged one for the fight between age groups. The young are no longer dressed like adults; they have their own fashion. On the one side, there is official fashion, imposed by advertising campaigns and public bombarding, which is to be found ready and waiting in shops; on the other side there is anti-fashion. Trends in anti-fashion are inspired by a refusal in front of the artificial appearance organized by power, with its "do" and "don't". What is sought by a large part of the youth is to give a true picture of oneself, a means to show one's belonging to a group (small), as well as one's opposition to another (large), and also one's position towards the established order.

The youth has invented a fashion that is a real weapon. There is in fashion as a whole a desire to fly in the face of opinion. Eccentricities can be the first form of the contesting of legitimacy and of opposition to the group. A new fashion can thus become the rallying symbol of a party in opposition or a youth rebellion. (This was true of the Republican party, which gave birth to the diverse European revolutions from 1800 to 1850.)

The term 'fashion' is thus very ambiguous. There is no denying that anti-fashion is also a fashion because its products are sold in shops, and also because they are both ruled by the same principle that destroys durability and value.

But then, everything can be considered as a fashion.

One has to appear in some mask or another if one is to function socially at all. And even those who choose to reject such masks can only put on others, representing rejection. A given mask is a sign of the times and what rules such signs is fashion. In this sense, fashion can be considered as a general term without any meaning.

When dealing with a movement of style such as punk, asserting that it is a fashion would be annihilating all its intrinsic value. For, in the mind of the public, "fashion" would take a pejorative tone.

Fashion destroys durability, durability of values; it is the plague of the twentieth century but cannot be avoided: one can't escape fashion.

Even being old-fashioned could be a fashion.

The great danger menacing fashion is for it not to be understood, that is to say to lead to an oversimplification of phenomenon, holding them up to ridicule and thus suppressing their evolution and the possibility to draw lessons from them.

Punk was in fact a parody of anti-fashion fashions, attempting for the first time to bring the roles back to the playing ground, in a dramatic jolt of lucidity. To relegate the movement to a position of mere and trivial fashion is then to miss the

point, deeply.

## **B. Government harnessing and commercial taking over**

### **B.1. The fatal process**

The society of the spectacle, as an anonymous situationist article underlines, imposes its ideological categories for the understanding of the world and History through the mental image it keeps of itself and its foes.

Everything that happens in society is reduced to the natural order of things and thus real novelties are imprisoned into the illusory cell of organized ones.

According to trained mechanisms of inversion of reality, youth rebellions are classified into a pseudo-natural socio cultural category: the Idea of Youth (which would be revolted by essence). A youth rebellion is thus brought back to the eternal revolt of the youth, springing up cyclically along with each generation and finally calming down when the young man is taken by the seriousness of production, and directed towards concrete ends. Youth rebellion is thus the object of a real journalistic inflation, thrown to the lions of contemplation in order to avoid for it to be lived.

This revolt against society reassures society as it is intended to remain partial, in the "apartheid" of youth problems - as there would be a "black" problem, or a "woman" problem - and to only last for a short time.

In fact, if there is a "youth" problem in modern societies, couldn't it be because the deep crisis of society is more acutely felt and expressed by the young?

Youth is a powerful advertising myth, symbolizing the dynamism of economy in modern societies.

A whole sector of production is thus studied in order to en-snare the young in consumption: motorbikes, electric guitars, clothes, and records...

The civilizing influence of consumption over the rebels makes their revolt sink into the worse conformism.

### **B.2. Dissatisfaction as a merchandise**

This is mainly through fashion that the strength of our economic system reveals itself. Any data can enter in the huge western computer. Everything is submitted to commercial profit, even, and above all, revolts. Industrial fashion is ready for any anything in order to sell-as long as it sells well.

Even what had been built against it can be reprocessed and e-very anti-fashion products are copied and manufactured. Revolt has thus become a spectacularly organized fashion and dissatisfaction a merchandise; and this as soon as economic abundance had achieved its work upon mentalities and was able to deal with

such a raw material.

The industrial organization of fashion fights against the spontaneous productions of anti-fashion by the means of parody, repetition, wear and tear, and finally drowns them.

This phenomenon began in the seventies, when the hippy movement was getting tired. With some training, the lapse of time between the actual birth of a real movement of style and its industrial copy got shorter. By the late seventies, for instance, Commander Salamander, a store in New York, was offering "custom ripping, either on or off the body" free for the purchase of a 7.99 dollars shirt. Anarchy in the U.K. was bankable in the U.S. and the revolution was spent. Punks were famous all over the world and the sweetened industrially produced and schematized elements of their outfit were sold everywhere in western big cities.

Punks were reduced to a series of postcards, or waiting for the Japanese tourists' cameras in Carnabit Street or Kings Road, London.

*T-shirts only ten dollars  
Badges only 3.50  
I nicked the design, never asked the band I never listen to them  
either  
Buy buy buy from Circle A  
Like hula hoops, it's a disposable craze Another fast food fad to throw  
away Get your anarchy for sale(repeat) Sheep united  
Get your cuddly boots and studs Be sure to rebel in proper style Rebel  
along the paths we pick  
Out of fear or peer pressure we create Hey you!  
Get those flyers off my wall  
No commie peace shit in my boutique No one here cares what that all  
means  
Our anarchy is for sale (repeat) Our town sucks, our scene rules  
To belong you must buy into it  
So we sell you metal spike bracelets... C'mon let's see a good fight  
That's anarchy for sale.*

*Anarchy for sale, The Dead Kennedys*

### **B.3. The music business**

If fashion is an unbounded and uncontrollable field, this is not true of the music business.

The punk movement was a rock revolution.

On one side were those who put up with the traditional system and the conventions regulating the music production and broadcasting, on the other side stood those who wanted to put an end to this magnificent building.

The punks wanted to change everything, from the structures of industry to the mentality of the public.

The steps taken by Joy Division (i.e. Chapter 2.C), their refusal of any compromise, their long search for freedom in creation are a good instance of the

basic will of Punk musicians. When the first punks began to catch the interest of the media and music business, there was only one way to deal with a music career: to sign with a big record company.

The increasing popularity of the Sex Pistols, their lack of principles as regards the way to follow in order to make things move in a positive way, mustn't hide the doom side of the punk movement. The Sex Pistols were just the manipulated puppets put forward and soul-deprived by the media as a toy for public opinion. The real achievements of punks were else, and partly ignored by the public.

The punks created a situation of opening by producing themselves their records. About 6000 labels were counted about in G.B. these last years, and each year, Record Business Magazine can find approximately 800 new Indie Labels (independent).

They are all very different from each other and reveal an original approach. Some are based upon a certain aesthetic (Factory), others upon a political view (the anarchists of Crass Records)...What is important is to define an identity, a personality, a spirit, and to promote unknown bands.

Parallel to this, the great record companies have taken over the ruins of the punk movement.

The movement is, from a cultural point of view, the most important phenomenon of the twelve last years and partly goes on dictating the terms of a pop avant-garde.

The most decisive action of punks was to use all the styles invented by the youth since the 50s and, fed by ill-digested theories about art borrowed from the situationists, make a patchwork out of them, held by safety pins. When the movement broke in 1978 with the Sex Pistols, only remained a void. The only thing left to do was then to exploit the stylistic commodities of punk rock. The past had been used in a significant way, it would then have to be cut from its historic contents and recycled in fashion; taken as an end in itself.

Pop music had known its greatest moments when industry had no rights and no ready strategy over it, as in the middle of the 60s or during the punk explosion.

Record companies dislike punk rock, which they find aggressive and impossible to commercialize abroad. In front of the gap left by the cooling down of the punk fever and the definitely changed tastes of the public, bombarding advertising campaigns and marketing became essential.

Pop was a key word for the ideologists of the time, opposed to street credibility or political commitment.

It was then to be absolutely respectable for groups like Gang of Four or Spandau Ballet to parody and finally assume the traps of marketing and promotion. The whole edifice built with such a heedless care by punks gradually fell down in returning-back fashions as diverse as useless: Revival, Mod, Ska, Rockabilly and even Punk. This principle was, under a sophisticated shape, inspired by that of punks, but desperately empty and meaningless.



It suddenly wasn't enough to create a new record. A whole universe was to be expressed through record envelopes, video clips and interviews, showing that the artists had worked on the period concerned.

Everything was based on style and signification was ousted out, since this was only intended to last the time of a few appearances at Top of the Pops.

The past has become a gold mine for those who exploit it. There can be found strange toys that can be thrown away when they happen to become tiring. The hegemony of the present is such that the past no longer bears any teaching and is conveyed by the deafening media that deprives the individual from the mastering of his own life.

The new groups are the doubles of heroes who only exist in the imagination of the public; they are human adverts and the flag-holders of a culture where consumers come to power.

## C. Punk and moneymaking

### C.1. The reversing process

Industry, the media, and above all commerce, found themselves in front of a puzzling new material whose rules were to be established. Punk was acting like a quick drawn line across the 70S.

All that had been the ruling principle of the decade was to be converted, transfigured and renewed. Punk was appearing as non-evolving, an end, a full stop, barring the access to the eighties, destroying in order to clean.

The problem was for the media and the music business to find a means to use the negative energy of punk to their own benefit. New timetables were to be created as quickly as possible. All that had been the substance, the collective stereotypes of the 70S had lost credibility. They belonged to a past still too near to inspire respect. What was essential was to bring about new pictures.

Punk was a negative stereotype and could be used as such to enrich the great show of society. 'Be as obstructive as possible in order to fulfill the company's greatest dream: *"that they are obtaining the bargain of the century."* Malcolm McLaren says in *The Great Rock&roll Swindle*<sup>3</sup>.

What was indeed a good bargain for managers, promoters and tradesmen was that the epoch was actually one of wonders and stagnation. The assuming of one's personality through punk could tempt anybody, among the youth. The negative stereotype only needed to be turned into a model for illusory rebelling.

The media took the first step. Instead of trying to cool down the fuss and the fever brought about and carefully kept around the Sex Pistols by scandal sheets, they went on providing the public with the feeling that they were being

threatened by their own children.

"*Terrorise your own generation...Concentrate in creating generation gaps...and obtain credibility from nothing.*" also says McLaren in his movie, reversing the reversed process in his turn, laying odds both ways.

But for the average Englishman, there was just a new quadrant being provided to understand reality. There had been the hippies, now were the punks, and the legitimate young tribe of rebels was to be given a playground; and a pretended implicit status.

Once this status settled, the way was cleared for commercial and stylistic exploitation.

## C.2. The eighties

*"Sense, in the end, is nothing more than the signifier; the spectacle given by men to themselves of the power they have to render the insignificant significant."*

*Roland Barthes*

### C.2.1. The birth of a decade

Punk, in its essence, was resolutely anti-fashion; its stylistic aim was to create the irretrievable clothes par excellence. Punk style couldn't be softened, vulgarized.

As fashion must become subdued in order to spread, the mixing of punk and fashion was a very tricky project. One component was going up and off the beaten tracks, the other down social recognition and acceptance.

To make eccentricities central and establish them as a rule and principle of the eighties was the latest and ultimate step ever taken by societies.

The exploiting of style exploration as a restless race towards nothingness isn't punk, strictly speaking. But this would never have existed without the confusion that Punk gradually wedged among the rather consistent young tribes. The concept of youth needed a new definition; this was the end of prehistoric times.

The eighties are a strange decade.

Until 1985, London has been the great theatre of European trends and youth cultural innovations. London was - and still partly is - a real laboratory of styles where the most original experiences are attempted.

Style has become central and universal; a philosophy of life, the only way to assert one's being. Style is no longer the privilege of the fringe, to be socially and psychologically studied as an isolated phenomenon, but an overwhelming

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<sup>3</sup> A movie by Malcom McLaren

fact. One does not live or express oneself through style, but style is life.

### **C.2.2 . The Face**

The Face has been the English monthly bible of all the people in the know around the world.

Created in 1980, the magazine has been following all the shades of the decade, fitting its numerous crazes, and can thus be considered as the chronicle of a whole epoch.

The Face offered a refined version of rock&roll and soon played a strong part in the life of the over-dressed fashion-addict night-clubbing Londoners.

Rock&roll melted with fashion, became fashion, changing its looks every month, if not every week.

Each issue promoted a new trend, a new concept, a new personality. Pirates, dressed by Vivien Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, appeared there for being launched; neo-classical, Spanish, Russian styles, Chicanos: any trend created as quickly as left down are to be found in the magazine.

Images were becoming sacred, slogans were raised to the status of a writing-style and publicity became an aesthetic principle, and, why not, an ideology. Ephemeral was the new god. The Face was the engine of a media syndrome by which the simple announcing effect was enough to create a reality. The paper grabbed everything around without wondering about the possible contradictions. Always chic, frivolous, trivial, "in", and trendy, the magazine changed every month and melted with any kind of images, as long as they fitted the atmosphere.

The Face tried to be everywhere in the same time, before anyone. To study the eighties without taking The Face into serious account would be a mistake.

All epochs dream their own world, and build fantasies they finally take for reality. The eighties have led this principle to its climax. The eighties have maybe only lived in a double dimensioned generalized enactment, an eyewash of reality: easy to get money that fructifies like the miracles of the New Testament, images as events, pure events as reality and fashion as ideology; Andy Warhol's "Everyone will once be famous during fifteen minutes."



*The Face, November 1980*

### C.3. The punk movement and the eighties: the law of action and reaction

The influences of the punk movement over the eighties are strong.

Punk marked the definitive end of the hippy sale, and thus the possibility was back for the youth to wash away the shame they felt in front of consumption.

In the same time that punk was unclearly expressing an anger in front of the consumer society and cynically poking fun at the establishment, it gave birth to a civilization of the image and instituted appearances as a rule. The boomerang angrily thrown away by punks came back to chop their heads off. The message hadn't got through.

The punk movement had though deeply altered the visual style of metropolitan life. Long haired hippies were banned and the street belonged to mutants; the underground was brightened up by artful and colorful creations in hairstyles.

But was this punk? This was rather the softened conceptual notion of a punk without a soul, one would be tempted to answer.

But the breaking away of such a nightmarish dream as the punks' mustn't blur the issue. They maybe had brought about something valuable without even being aware of it.

## CONCLUSION

Punk. A puzzle never to be put together because revolt and spontaneity, youth and inventiveness never are to be suppressed if human beings are to remain human at all. Naivety and anxiety, awareness, an understanding of one's inadaptability to circumstances, a sense of injustice prevailing among the socially underprivileged and all those who care about the quality and the intensity of life are precious feelings if society is to get better at all.

The youth movements are evidences for the acknowledgement that the society concerned is a place where freedom is at least a praised and respected value.

All punks weren't caring people and many saw <sup>Jr</sup> the movement a means to have fun and be in the know.

But the movement can be considered as a mass creation out of which were to be born a new generation of "intellectuals" and artists, just as it had been the case some years ago with the hippy movement.

Punk, from mentalities to fashion, graphic creations and the underground pop avant-garde, undoubtedly marks what makes up the eighties.

The eighties began in 1976, launched by the <sup>P</sup>unk movement, from 1977 to 1981, just as the fifties began in 1946, after the war.

Decades punctuate centuries to shape evolution; and evolution comes from the inheritance received by the young. In the past, inheritance was mainly made of knowledge and education. Nowadays, it is rather an inheritance of social consciousness and popular culture that one has to deal with. The punk movement marks the end of prehistoric times for the settlement of a status for youth.

Everything has been said, from the hippies to the punks, to help consider youth as able to take power when they have their word to say and invent new ways of life.

The punk movement acted as a <sup>g</sup>igantic flush over the sixties and the seventies, clearing the way for the civilization of the image of the eighties.

Now, in this atmosphere of "fin de siècle", one should expect some synthesis between all the contradictory elements of the past three decades.

This would be necessary for society to make sense again - if it ever had.



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