



NO MACHOS OR POP STARS A

**WHEN THE LEEDS
ART EXPERIMENT
WENT PUNK**

GAVIN BUTT

NO MACHOS _{OR} POP STARS

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GAVIN BUTT

DUKE

**UNIVERSITY
PRESS**

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Cover art: Members of the Mekons and Delta 5 among fans and friends as pictured in *Melody Maker*, February 3, 1979.

Photograph © Jill Furmanovsky.

FOR KITTY, KELVIN, ANDY, JULZ, TONY, MARK—AND KATE

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PREFACE

CLASS ACTS

The Three Johns were one of my favorite bands in the mid-1980s. Hailing from Leeds, this late-period post-punk outfit held my teenage imagination because they made beatbox-driven, Captain Beefheart–esque music with lyrics that as a burgeoning young Marxist I really got lost in. “Oh, there’s a sun of mud,” sings vocalist John Hyatt on their 1984 album *Atom Drum Bop*, “Oh the Future is rising, yes it’s rising / not a stone’s throw from today.” Growing up as I did in the stultifying small-town culture of the English East Midlands, the idea of being on the cusp of a future that was all to play for was electrifying. But the quasi-Bataille image of a “sun of mud” was, at the same time, troubling. It was something I couldn’t quite work out. It seemed ominous. It left me with the creeping dread of a future whose brightness might be obscured (as the sun might be blotted out by a radioactive plume) or filled with a kind of weird gloomy brightness in which one might get bogged down or stuck. I was slowly waking up to what was happening under Thatcherism because it felt proximate to me. I remember being stopped by police during the 1984–85 miners’ strike when they mistook my friends and me for flying pickets driving to the Nottinghamshire coalfields. The image of a sun of mud seemed right for the times.

Listening to the Three Johns helped cast such realities in a broader imaginative landscape that, as an eighteen-year-old boy from a working-class family, I was quick to inhabit. My head was full of the fictions etched in Hyatt’s sometimes opaque and absurd, other times more directly political, lyrics. “Oh the mob expects malnutrition,” Hyatt continues to sing.

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FM.1 The Three Johns, *Atom Drum Bop* (Abstract Records, 1984). Cover art by Terry Atkinson.

“Robots are guarding that old ribcage fashion / Flamin’ torches, pick axe handles / Looking down the water-cannon of pop music.” Then, going on to the chorus: “Rock and roll, rock and roll, rock and roll / ideological product”—and genius, I thought—“Rock and roll is pop music / For the credit card hospital.” I really loved the irony of these lines. The Three Johns were holding up their sullied hands, signaling how the capitalist entertainment business could be treacherous and betray the intentions of even the most ardent lefty rockers. These lines also chimed with my own take on the mainstream 1980s pop industry which, by this time, I’d largely tired of as glossy capitalist distraction.

But I wasn’t drawn to the Three Johns solely because of their avowed political stance, nor even simply because I liked jumping around to their music, usually while drunk. They loomed large for me then because I also knew from reading the *New Musical Express* (NME) that two of the Three Johns went to art school. The art connection was unmistakably present on the band’s record covers, which featured paintings by Hyatt, drawings by Jon Langford, and work by the post-conceptual British artist Terry Atkinson. Atkinson was then teaching in the fine art studios at the University of Leeds, where Hyatt and Langford had been his students. Together, the Three Johns (and one Terry) represented to me the world-making possibilities of being at art school for someone like me who, at the time, was producing highly realistic oil paintings of scrapyards and still lifes of gardening implements for my art A level. Rather than more of the same, the Three

Johns represented what might be possible at art school: a future involving an “art” committed to progressive economic and social change and one reaching far beyond the confines of gallery walls. “ROCK N’ ROLL VERSUS THAATCHISM” proclaimed the slogan on the back cover of *Atom Drum Bop*, the Johns’ playful neologism nailing Thatcherism and Saatchi & Saatchi as symbiotic ills afflicting the times.

On becoming a member of the professoriat several years ago, I reflected upon the contrast between the education system that furnished me with the skills to become a critical intellectual and academic and the transformed, marketized conditions of English higher education inaugurated by the introduction of expensive undergraduate fees in 2012. Art-school education, along with university-level learning as a whole, was broadly state-funded in the UK from 1962 until 1986. The 1962 Education Act instructed Local Education Authorities in England and Wales to “grant scholarships, exhibitions, bursaries and other allowances . . . for the purpose of enabling pupils to take advantage without hardship to themselves or their parents of any educational facilities available to them.”¹ Though there was some means-testing involved in the issuing of maintenance grants, based on the amount of parental income, there was a guaranteed minimum level of award issued to all students during this period, and no fees to pay. The minimum grant was abolished in 1984 by the Thatcher government, along with students’ entitlement to unemployment benefits during vacation periods, and restrictions on student access to housing benefits were introduced. In the following years, successive governments further unpicked the social democratic character of the 1962 funding settlement, introducing student loans in 1990 and fees in 1998 and finally abolishing maintenance grants altogether in 2016.

This means that, looking back, the period from 1962 to the mid-1980s could be viewed as a halcyon, and historically brief, period of state funding for advanced art education—and more broadly for university-level study—in the UK. It was also a period in which students from working-class backgrounds enjoyed unprecedented access to it. These two factors—public funding and working-class access—were, unsurprisingly, linked: the former, to a large degree, determining the viability of the latter. As Mark Banks and Kate Oakley concluded on the basis of their research into art schools and UK educational policy, “The working class artist rode the wave of the post-war welfare settlement, as well as an emergent cultural sensibility that encouraged a radical break with tradition. To be an artist was to escape—and to become someone else. . . . Art students were symbolic of a more mobile class structure—but where they ‘belonged’ was not yet certain. These

new bohemians were in flight from proletarian tradition yet also contemptuous of middle-class mores and ‘straight’ society.”²

In the 1980s East Midlands, it was similarly unclear to me where I was to ultimately “belong,” but I knew, at least, that I wanted to go to art college, based on how that looked to me as a fan of the Three Johns. So I applied to study fine art at Leeds. When I didn’t get in, I was crestfallen. Tail between my legs, I went to art college in London instead. I arrived there just as the tectonic plates of the higher education funding settlement were beginning to shift. Nevertheless, I was still able—alongside others like me—to study without any hesitation about its affordability or anxieties about a lifetime of debt: there were no fees to pay, I received a full local authority maintenance grant, I claimed housing benefits to cover my rent, and I even claimed the dole during the summer holidays. This funding system, and the education sector that went with it, are now long gone in England and Wales, replaced by a new one devised to pay for a vastly expanded rate of participation since the 1970s and 1980s. But, as Valerie Walkerdine perceptively put it in her own take on these issues, “One of the paradoxes of the current situation in Britain is that while there have never been more places in higher education, it has become more and more exclusive.”³

Bearing witness to this, a number of reports have recently identified how barriers to educational opportunity for working-class people in the arts in England and Wales have persisted since the years of the so-called postwar consensus—notwithstanding progressive changes in society since then.⁴ Such inequalities particularly show themselves in the contemporary demographic makeup of people in the creative industries. Brook, O’Brien, and Taylor’s findings are sobering on this score: “The proportion of young cultural workers [in the arts] from upper-middle class backgrounds more than doubled between 1981 and 2011, from 15% to 33%. The proportion from working class origins dropped by about a third, from 22% to 13% over the same period. In 1981 there were more young people from working class origins entering creative jobs than from upper-middle class origins; this situation had reversed in 2011.”⁵

I therefore wanted to write a book about the time *before* 1981: to set out the conditions of cultural possibilities that existed in the not too distant past, little more than four decades ago, and which now seem in some ways very remote from the neoliberal conditions of contemporary education. The original point of what has become *No Machos or Pop Stars* was to write a book that would explore the social and cultural conditions of art school on the eve of neoliberalism’s emergence as the customary horizon of expectations

in the UK. It would be important, I had thought, for the book to focus on *who* went to art school in this period and to assess in particular the significance of the mingling of people from different social classes within the British art school system as a factor in bringing about the turn toward popular music-making *within* it, as well as other collective re-visionings of art's public purpose throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The book you are reading is, indeed, this book. But it is also something else—which came as a surprise to its author during the course of its evolution. As I talked with former Leeds art students and art college lecturers—either in person or on a video call—I was struck by the recurrence of narratives of disillusionment: expressions of feeling let down by art education, especially by the perceived shortcomings of pedagogy (or lack thereof); downbeat assessments of 1970s culture as in stasis or, worse, entropic decline; and accounts of acute instances of sexism and racism within studio culture. Hearing such things was particularly striking given how things looked for access arrangements in retrospect, perhaps through rose-tinted spectacles: all well-funded materials and workshops and no fees to pay, courtesy of the beating heart of state welfarism. Perhaps the past was not—after all—quite the different country I had imagined it to be. Not that all the voices I heard struck such a culturally “depressive” tone. Many fondly remembered their student years as times of heightened activity and concurred with me about the desirability of there being a book written about it all. But the things they recall doing were not always because of the experience of art college—some, I was told extremely pointedly, were in spite of it, critical as they were of the problems endemic to its culture.

The clashing of such “negative” and “positive” evaluations of art school experience ultimately moved me to tell a more dialectical tale of the 1970s and 1980s UK art school than the one I had envisioned: of how students turned to one another and to others beyond the institution to fashion alternatives to the moribund condition of the avant-garde and to pull themselves out of the collective torpor of a stagnating post-1960s late capitalist culture. In charting the multiple paths of the differing artist groups whose stories are told in these pages, the book shows how artists contested art school agendas and navigated seemingly impassable creative cul-de-sacs, which loomed metaphorically in the white-painted boards and cell-like structures of individual art students' studio spaces, as much as they took inspiration and direction from lecturers. In this way, *No Machos or Pop Stars* has also become—at least in part—an extended study of modern institutional disillusionment and of how people band together in attempts to surpass it.

I did finally get to Leeds, beginning my MA in the social history of art at the city's university in 1989, where I was lucky enough to be taught by Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock. By the time I got there, however, the scene explored in this book had long ended. What follows stands as a belated attempt to understand what I had missed: to illuminate the conditions of an art school education that was historically receding and yet unusually fraught with, even vitalized by, the contradictory forces of social division that threatened to consume it.



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Finally, a number of people who were, or were to be, involved in the preparation of this book sadly died during the years of its gestation. These included Kitty (also known as Marian) Lux, member of the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, and Kelvin Knight of Delta 5, who passed away before we were able to confirm arrangements for interview. Then, in the final stages of manuscript preparation, Gang of Four guitar legend Andy Gill died unexpectedly in February 2020. It is so very sad that Andy will never read these pages after his input to their preparation. I owe gratitude to his widow, Catherine Mayer, in honoring Andy's wish to allow materials from his estate to appear in this volume. Equally sadly, following this, Julz Sale, formerly of Delta 5, and Tony Baker of Household Name, also passed, adding to the roll call of losses among the people consulted for this volume.

Beyond the people more directly involved, my former Goldsmiths colleague Mark Fisher died in 2017, and, more recently still, my dear friend Kate Love—an indomitable force in my life and product of the very art school system explored in these pages—was taken from us early in 2020.

The book is dedicated in memoriam to Kitty, Kelvin, Andy, Julz, Tony, Mark—and Kate.



INTRO- DUCTION

THE ART SCHOOL DANCE GOES ON

Form is a plant that can grow anything it thinks about.

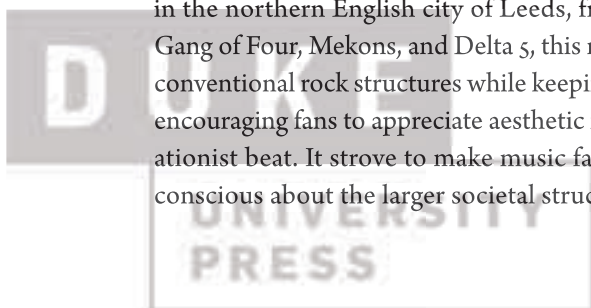
A human plant has flowers with trunks inside.

JEFF NUTTALL, LEEDS POLYTECHNIC FINE ART COURSE LEAFLET (1974)

So long as people remain fixated on themselves,
they never see anything but themselves.

FÉLIX GUATTARI, "TRANSVERSALITY" (1964)

Art student involvement in British pop music was so intense in the 1970s that Canadian rock critic Mary Harron, writing in *Melody Maker* on May 26, 1979, took it to be responsible for inaugurating a "second coming of British art-rock."¹ Distinguishing it from an earlier, failed phase of musical experiment in the 1960s, which only resulted in merging "bad rock music with phoney art," this second pass at mixing up avant-garde and pop was, Harron judged, thrillingly successful. Originating in the northern English city of Leeds, from a circle of bands made up of Gang of Four, Mekons, and Delta 5, this new phase of rock sought to reject conventional rock structures while keeping its finger on a "common pulse," encouraging fans to appreciate aesthetic invention while dancing to a Situationist beat. It strove to make music fans *think* in order to become self-conscious about the larger societal structures in which they were caught,





INTRO.1 Gang of Four photographed in the brutalist architectural surrounds of the Leeds University campus on the cover of *Melody Maker*, May 26, 1979. Photo: © Adrian Boot.

even when borne aloft by freeing movements on the dance floor. Hearing lyrics about the profit motives of the capitalist entertainment industry, the gendering of interpersonal relations, and the bathos of lost labor time, all while jumping around, had the effect of turning the dance floor into a new kind of place: as Harron would have it, one where “dialectics met disco,” where the tendency to reflect on, and criticize, the constraints of modern life became symbiotic with music culture’s libidinal drive.

It was in the creation of such a novel cultural mix, rather than in band members’ individual abilities to paint and draw, that the art school influence showed through. “What these groups have done is to introduce not the form or spirit of art, but *theories* of art into rock music,” Harron continues. “Who would ever have imagined that structuralism and Marxist aesthetics would become an inspiration to rock ‘n’ roll? But that, however indirectly, is where the present values . . . are coming from.” Drawing on the teachings of “theory” in the art education experienced by a majority of these bands’ members, the critique of ideology in music was able to be *heard* because of art school, which, perhaps somewhat against the odds, paved the way for it becoming a popular sound in British and international youth culture.

But taking such a “conceptual approach to music” in the wake of vituperative punk was, Harron quips, “like ringing a leper’s bell.” It was so out of step with the would-be expression of an under- or uneducated proletarianism supposedly found in punk music that wearing one’s art school training on one’s sleeve risked looking like a display of privilege or—worse—a statement of superiority (as one music critic snarkily commented, Gang of Four’s music “may sound fine to student leftists in Leeds Uni seminar rooms but to Joe Skin digging roads for Lambeth Council it’s just so much irrelevant gobbledegook”).² “The Gang of Four,” Harron goes on, are “an art-school band, but this, curiously enough, is not a correct thing to be. The music that is emerging in Britain has carried on some of punk’s attitudes, and the words ‘art’ and ‘avant-garde’ continue to be deadly insults—meaning effete, dilettantish, irrelevant to rock. The only problem with this is that the new music is firmly grounded in art and the avant-garde.”

This sense of a contradiction, of a lack of fit between “art” and “rock” in Gang of Four’s music extended to views of the band themselves as odd fish, if not interlopers in pop culture. Harron continues: “The Gang of Four don’t deny their art-school training, but they obviously realise that it could be used as grounds for attack. I don’t want to attack the Gang of Four—far from it—and the temptation is just to sweep the art school business under the carpet. But it should be talked about because the Gang of Four and other new groups are influenced by art in a way that we have never seen before.” Harron lists the Human League, Scritti Politti, Monochrome Set, and Red Crayola to illustrate the bands she has in mind here (though the last was hardly “new” in 1979), claiming that “nearly everyone on the experimental side of rock right now furiously rejects any connection with art because that implies an elite cultural activity with no connection with real life.”³ Gang of Four, she ventures, were unusually open in talking about their art college roots, leading her to follow suit in the pages of *Melody Maker*.

No Machos or Pop Stars ponders the questions that cluster around Harron’s perceptive understanding of a near-paradoxical ontology for 1970s art rock: Why did so many art students form groups in the wake of punk, when being an art school band seemed like a dubious thing to be? How did it come to pass that art and avant-gardism had become so discredited and yet, at the same time, so crucial to forging new forms in popular culture? And how could outward signs of an art education, viewed here prejudicially as “effete, dilettantish, irrelevant to rock,” be borne as a virtue rather than a failing in pop culture?

This book follows Gang of Four (and Scritti Politti and others) to Leeds to find answers to such questions, not to the go-to Western cities customarily thought of as emblematic of experimental culture at this time—New York, London, Manchester, Düsseldorf, Sheffield.⁴ This is because I want to delineate a different genealogy for understanding art and music based on an exploration of the limits and possibilities of an *art education*, itself in the midst of a period of turbulent change at this time.

The theoretical bent of the music of Gang of Four owed much, Harron notes, to the teachings of the fine art department at the University of Leeds, where two of the four band members had studied in the mid- to late 1970s. The department underwent a decisive shift in pedagogical direction when, in 1976, the young social historian of art and former Situationist International (SI) member T. J. Clark was appointed professor. Along with a team of staff including art historians Griselda Pollock, Fred Orton, and (later) John Tagg, alongside artist Terry Atkinson, the department began to draw in Marxist, feminist, and structuralist theory to the curriculum in order to challenge the ideologies of liberal humanist study that had persisted under more establishment administrations in previous years. This embrace of theory was building in progressive art institutions in Britain and the United States at the time and is what gave such bands an edge in being able to “attack,” as Harron put it, the “reactionary structures” of rock—just as Clark and company were attacking similar structures in the art world. Later music bands, including the Three Johns and more obscure acts like Sheeny and the Goys, the Shee Hees, the Cast Iron Fairies, Really, and the Com-mies from Mars, alongside feminist art groups such as Pavilion, also had members who studied at the university and were variously impacted by the teaching there, as this book seeks to show.

And yet the university was not the most famous art college in Leeds at the time, nor were the bands that came out of it the only ones to make an impact on the broader cultural landscape. World-famous bands and little-known groups—including electro-pop, post-punk, and experimental acts Soft Cell, Scritti Politti, Fad Gadget, the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, Household Name, Another Colour, Smart Cookies, Johnny Jumps the Bandwagon, and idid idid—were peopled by students, and former students, of the fine art department at the university’s neighboring institution, Leeds Polytechnic. Members of some of these bands put down paintbrushes and picked up guitars and synthesizers to sing deconstructed pop ditties about Jacques Derrida and make electro-dance music about “sex dwarfs,” taking forms of experiment and daring to the 1970s and 1980s music industry—



INTRO.2 Scritti Politti on *American Bandstand*, December 28, 1985. Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images.

even to *American Bandstand* and *Top of the Pops* (figure Intro.2). Others remained stubbornly “alternative” and remote from mainstream success. Members of all these groups passed through a late phase of avant-garde art education in Leeds that the Polytechnic, since its inception in 1970, had carried over from its precursor institution, Leeds College of Art, in the 1950s and 1960s. By the early 1970s the Polytechnic became renowned for its libertarian approach to fine art education and in particular student work in performance art.

For progressive-minded souls at this time the Polytechnic was “the most influential [art school] in Europe since the Bauhaus,” according to painter Patrick Heron, while, for an increasingly hostile and reactionary UK tabloid press, it was the whipping boy for everything wrong with permissive culture and the avant-garde.⁵ Singled out for supporting some of the wilder expressions of avant-garde sensibility (including, infamously, for a piece of performance art involving the shooting of live budgerigars and mice—more on that later), the Polytechnic came to achieve a degree of negative publicity unrivaled by almost any other UK art school during the course of the decade.⁶ Leeds art education thereby became an object on which a cultural outlook identified by Christopher Booker as definitive of the 1970s was projected: a decade in which “the first real death throes”

of the belief in human progress could be heard.⁷ “In politics, in the arts or in almost any other field one considers,” he wrote from the vantage point of 1980, “the prevailing mood was one of a somewhat weary, increasingly conservative, increasingly apprehensive disenchantment.”⁸ Optimism and belief in the possibilities of progressive cultural change, so much a part of the decade prior, had dissipated by the 1970s: the counterculture seemed to have run out of steam or suddenly looked misguided; the idea of progressive anything from rock to Modernist architecture seemed discredited; and the avant-garde looked increasingly moribund and elitist.

Thus struck up a broad chorus of voices questioning the value and viability of avant-garde art, not all of which were on the reactionary side of the cultural divide. Artists and art critics themselves, both in Leeds and elsewhere, came to wonder about whether or not the modern period of artistic experiment in the West had run out of steam. Looking back from its end point, art historian Edward Lucie-Smith concluded that the 1970s “may well be seen as the decade in which the very notion of an avant-garde, of a frontier of experiment which must always be pushed back, was finally seen as untenable.”⁹ Such a perception was borne out by received opinion among art professionals as the decade drew to a close: “avant-garde” and “art” were already dirty words as Harron began penning her article for *Melody Maker*.

The question of what to do, therefore, in the wake of the avant-garde having ended was one that rippled decisively through communities of UK artists in the 1970s and 1980s—or at least this is what this book contends. With a population of around 700,000 citizens in the 1970s (including outlying areas), Leeds was unusual in being a modest-sized city with the resource of three different types of institution offering courses in art practice: a university, a polytechnic, and a local art school, Jacob Kramer College, housed in the old buildings of the Leeds College of Art on Vernon Street, which offered lower-level courses of study in art and design. The city therefore offered to students studying there a range of perspectives and possibilities for imagining new, transformational paths beyond the cul-de-sacs of avant-gardism and a just response to the energizing challenge of punk. There was more to Leeds art education than a predilection for art theory.

There was also more to Leeds itself. The city was undergoing a large-scale urban modernization program during the years explored in this book, at a time much later than in comparable UK cities. This “top-down” initiative of city planners to transform it into the “Motorway City of the Seventies” coexisted uneasily with a very different, even opposing, “bottom-up” form of urban renewal based in radical collective forms of social provision

and activism. Such realities offered multiple, contesting ways of imagining “the new” in urban and political terms beyond the purview of the city’s formal programs of art education. What follows tells the story of how students were drawn together, sometimes within and across the city’s art institutions, other times outside of their art educational bases, in responding to the challenges of making art after the avant-garde. Drawing on the city’s various radical and alternative Left milieus, from the cooperative movement and Rock against Racism to the Workers’ Educational Association and feminism, the book shows how art students, armed with academic art theories and a little punk attitude, took artistic experiment to the city’s F Club and Leeds Warehouse and, at least sometimes, beyond.

In doing so, the book mines a central irony: of how—and why—for a limited time, institutions geared toward the shaping of exceptional, creative individuals (“artists”) and their elite productions came instead to be virtual factories for the *socialized* production of experimental forms of common culture.

ART INTO POP (REDUX)

According to Harron, this “second coming” of British art rock was superior to an earlier phase of musical output in the 1960s in which art and art education played a decisive role in shaping popular music culture. The predominant drive before, she asserts, was to “force” rock music into becoming something ontologically alien to it—namely, to try and make it over into “art” itself. “Rock music is not art,” she goes on, “but it can draw from art as long as this is done with respect for what rock music is.” But most 1960s art-inspired musicians tried instead “to ‘upgrade’ rock by treating it as classical music” and thus, according to Harron, ended up producing only “ghastly hybrids—rock operas, guitar virtuosos, albums based on mythology, [and] the gibberish that passed for poetic lyrics.” Though she doesn’t name names, output by bands like the Who and prog rock outfits Pink Floyd and Soft Machine, Van Der Graaf Generator, Yes, Rush, and even 1970s experimentalists like Henry Cow (though hardly an art school band) one might imagine within the crosshairs of Harron’s critical fire.

Some scholarly voices disagree with Harron’s acid judgment of this earlier phase of musical activity, but they nevertheless echo her in taking the 1960s as the first significant period in which the impact of British art education was felt within popular music culture. As Simon Frith and Howard Horne show

in their still-important study *Art into Pop*, British art school education of the decade prior was responsible for importing a noncommercial artistic bohemianism into popular, especially music, culture. Around 157 specialist art schools nationwide, including many regional art colleges and London institutions, produced graduates who brought Romantic ideas of the artist and of artistic creativity out of the art studios and into 1960s culture.¹⁰ Even though “not all significant British musicians were at art school,” those who were “brought into music-making attitudes that could never have been fostered under the pressures of professional entertainment.”¹¹ Thus it was that an art school band like Pink Floyd came to set their face against generic pop musical form and industry commercialism. By their own account, they “stopped doing twelve-bar three minute numbers . . . [and] started doing one chord going on and on.”¹² Alongside this they created considered, elaborate visuals at live performances that departed significantly from the flashing excitement of mass entertainment and owed more, as John Walker notes, to art school experiments with light and sound at Hornsey College of Art.¹³

Similarly, John Roberts identifies the art school as a key institution in unleashing radical experiments in popular song within the English counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁴ For him, the presence of students there from working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds was decisive in supporting the artistic expression of lower-class forms of indiscipline, temporarily freed from the yoke of employment (chapter 3 of this book includes more on the changing conditions of lower-class access to art education as we move into the 1970s). For Frith and Horne, the experience of studying fine art for at least four years—at the state’s expense and at a remove from the capitalist imperatives of the workplace—came to approach something like “the status of a lifestyle” for those going through it.¹⁵ The values of this lifestyle were then “translated into the terms of popular culture” by art school graduates, making “bohemian solutions” relevant “to the ways ‘the kids’ made sense of their everyday lives.”¹⁶ In comparison, for example, with the United States, where “success was a job in New York” (according to Andy Warhol) and where art colleges were generally more geared to technical training, the remoteness from, even outright hostility to, commerce within 1960s UK art schools made them “the natural setting for ideas of counter-culture.”¹⁷ Given this, it was “natural” for someone like Pete Townshend, for example, a student at Ealing Art College, to smash his guitar on stage—at least after hearing Gustav Metzger, the father of auto-destructive art, lecture about his work there in 1962.

These institutions were able to foster such expressions of artistic autonomy as a consequence of being granted independence from state control of their curricula following the first Coldstream Report into art education, published in 1960.¹⁸ An older regime of assessment, the national diploma in design, with fixed craft- and skills-based requirements, was phased out during the early 1960s and replaced by a diploma in art and design (Dip. AD), which gave institutions new freedoms to teach and assess according to locally determined priorities—as long as they held to some basic structural requirements pertaining to recruitment, teaching, and assessment. But this newly won independence was soon threatened by the British government's creation of the polytechnics in the late 1960s, which some saw as all-too-quickly threatening art education's gains through incorporation into larger multidisciplinary institutions.

Writing in the *Guardian* in 1971 under the banner of “Murder of the Art Schools,” Heron defended the independence of postwar British art colleges as the crucial ground of their success. It was art school autonomy, he proffered, which allowed them to operate as havens of experimentalism and which, in turn, gave rise to 1960s rock and pop bands, including the Beatles, and street styles that made Swinging London internationally admired and copied. Such wide cultural impact made justifying the resources spent on art schools an easier job, Heron ventured—at least for anyone disposed to do the sums: “If they added up the export earnings of the Beatles and the rest, not to mention those of the rag-trade whose famous designers cream-off scores of ideas all the time from the endlessly varying gear of the art students, they might just begin to see an economic justification for the ‘art school scene,’ not in spite of, but because of, its notorious freedoms and excesses.”¹⁹

Unfortunately for Heron, and arguably for the art schools themselves, this calculation was never arrived at. Indeed, only one year later, national discourse turned to *doubting* the value of such a 1960s-style art education, not least querying its value for money. Indeed one journalist—in a bizarre, extreme, even offensive, analogy—compared the goings-on inside one Leeds art college to those in Nazi death camps: “Art colleges are viewed by outsiders in much the same way as the German civilian population viewed concentration camps during the Third Reich: one knows they are there, and some strange things go on inside, but that is as far as it goes.”²⁰ However inappropriate a comparison or breathtaking the euphemistic description (“strange things go on inside”), the inference is clear here: art schools had been given license to commit would-be gross horrors by dint of the ignorance of the general public. This presages the necessity of right-wing and

populist “exposés” throughout the period covered by this book, supposedly carried out in order to bring to light, and to “rectify,” the alleged misspending of taxpayers’ money therein.

Even defenders of the art school sector were beginning to have their doubts about the direction in which UK art education was going by the middle of the 1970s. There was little ability to marshal a cogent *raison d’être* for it that everyone could get behind. The need for this seemed pressing by 1973 when art education looked increasingly like “an economic frill to be trimmed in hard times,” as Peter Lloyd Jones put it in the *Listener*.²¹ For Ken Rowat, painter and senior lecturer in fine art at Leeds Polytechnic, the problem was one of art schools’ advocates being “too emasculated and inept” to defend themselves from “the sinister forces of economics and philistine administration.”²²

Writing in the *Guardian* in February 1976, the year of punk, Rowat reflected on how “the very sector of further education which has been least hamstrung by medieval tradition is surrendering its relative freedom in return for a BA degree: the club badge of the materialist society.”²³ Thus he judged the great experiment of 1960s libertarian art education to have failed, finally being nullified through incorporation into the normative structures and expectations of academia. The “chance to establish and justify within the public education framework a climate which would cater for that sprinkling of oddballs without which any society will lose its collective soul” had, in his view, by then been squandered.²⁴ Taking a pop at the technocratic rationale of the polytechnics, Rowat concluded, “Whatever art might be, one thing is certain: it cannot be directed, planned, confined or measured.”²⁵ Presumed to be radically unlike learning within town-planning, business, engineering, or the design subjects, art-making was taken to be “inevitably subversive” and inimical to instrumentalized forms of learning required by a planned society.²⁶

Significantly, and as Rowat attests here, it appears it was easier to speak about fine art education in the negative—for example, as antithetical to the idea of workplace training—than to account for it in more affirmative terms. This inability to come up with an alternative *positive* vision for teaching visual art was echoed by a much wider malaise within progressivist thinking in the mid-1970s. The political and cultural lodestars that had guided forward-looking culture during the prior decade were dimming. The so-called governmental consensus across parliamentary parties in the UK, which had supported the maintenance of a strong public sector and welfare state since the years of postwar reconstruction, was crumbling. The

impact of the 1973 oil crisis had hit hard the nation's economic fortunes, already bringing in its wake reductions in public expenditure, despite the election of a Labour government in 1974. Cuts were made to local and national spending in the budget of 1975, and by 1976 the government negotiated a multimillion-pound loan from the IMF to ensure the country could pay its creditors and maintain Bank of England reserves.²⁷ Prime Minister Jim Callaghan was unmistakably forthright about the sea change in political thinking in his address to the Labour Party conference in 1976: "The cosy world which we were told would go on forever, where full employment would be guaranteed by a stroke of the chancellor's pen, cutting taxes, deficit spending: that cosy world is gone."²⁸

This culminated on May 3, 1979, three weeks earlier than the publication of Harron's article in *Melody Maker*, with the election victory of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party at the UK general election, adding to a sense, at the decade's end, that the 1970s had all along been about the nation struggling to forge a new place for itself in a changing world.

THE "LEEDS EXPERIMENT"

No Machos or Pop Stars follows a select band of art school students—and their compatriots—who dared, for a time, to imagine things could turn out differently to what became Thatcherism's neoliberal makeover for 1980s Britain. It tells the story of a dialectical entanglement of punk rock and art college radicalism through which both were sublated, in the manner of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, into artistic forms that variously attempted to plot alternative routes out of the crisis that had befallen postwar welfarism—alternative, that is, to avant-garde art or rock industry business-as-usual.

The story begins with the arrival in Leeds in the autumn of 1974 of the first art students for whom punk was to be significant and closes its historical window in 1981 when the last of such students graduate. For many members of this soon-to-be punk generation, the earlier phase of art-rock experiment so excoriated by Harron was already dead in the water. As Roberts puts it:

By 1975–76, after the political downturn, the counterculture—certainly what remained of it at the English summer festivals—had become a galumphing caravanserai of Edenists, tricksters, herbalists, Tofuism and recidivist Blues-band bores, that harboured a lower-middle class anarchist

line of least resistance, in which “rock” stood against the world in a dreary inflation of the Romantic mythos of the outsider; some of the bands continued (like Gong), but, there was no framing culture and set of expectations to renew what was being lost; and the music became awful in a softening of earlier glories. Even Henry Cow, the best of the best, could only stick it for a few years more, unable to survive financially, and eventually losing their way like everyone else.²⁹

Similarly Benjamin Piekut, in his magisterial study of Henry Cow, notes how, as the decade wore on, the “post-1968 collection of social, technical, and institutional arrangements that could host a Henry Cow no longer operated, or no longer operated in the same way.”³⁰

This meant that many mid-1970s teenage art students were already turned on to other things musically speaking: to pop, pub rock, and reggae rather than to avant-rock—to Bowie and Roxy, Dr Feelgood and Bob Marley. What follows is the story of how the continuing enjoyment of, and investment in, popular, even *pop*, music by 1970s art students—once ignited by the advent of punk rock—brought about a thoroughgoing reassessment of what, if anything, the avant-garde could bring to the cultural table and how art and music might yet still productively meet up with one another. Pop music and art school were most certainly related in many a young person’s imaginary at this time. As artist and former Leeds student Jamie Wagg put it to me in an interview, David Bowie, for example, acted in some ways as a gateway figure to art school for his younger self. The musician’s self-invention as Ziggy, the Burroughsian “cut-ups” of his song lyrics, his references to Andy Warhol, Lindsay Kemp, and others within his oeuvre, all gave “a whole generation of people permission to not go and get a trade, and not conform, and to not do the stuff that society asked you to do.” This made it feel like “there was another way out” to Bowie’s fans like Wagg—and that art school might be the place to go to actively pursue the path suggested by their pop idols.

By the mid-1970s Leeds was still hanging on to its reputation as the chief UK provider of an avant-garde art education. This was as a result of developments in the latter half of the 1950s, when the pioneering teacher and painter Harry Thubron, along with his associate Tom Hudson at Leeds College of Art, developed an approach known as Basic Research—and what Thubron himself referred to as the “Leeds experiment” in art education.³¹ This bore similarities to, and a degree of connection with, the teachings of Basic Design elsewhere in the UK, including at Newcastle, Ipswich,

Ealing, Leicester, Cardiff, and Central School of Arts and Crafts in London.³² It broadly perpetuated Bauhaus models of education that predated it by treating art-making as a heuristic process, through which students learned by creating forms and ideas out of relatively unrestricted experiment with materials, rather than being trained in the production of finished, and ultimately familiar, craft products and artistic styles.

Although it was difficult to get information about the Bauhaus in northern England in the 1950s, scholars have noted that particular elements of Bauhaus teaching—such as Paul Klee’s *Pedagogical Sketchbook*—were picked up by Thubron and his associates as models for art teaching in Leeds.³³ The attention that Klee gave to a quasi-scientific, though in reality quite playful and poetic, exploration of the abstract qualities of line and form influenced Thubron’s view of the modern artist as a formal and technical innovator analogous to the engineer and scientist. For him, the visual artist’s role was to embrace an open-ended exploration of the expressive possibilities of visual form across an array of media, including traditional painting and sculptural materials such as paint, clay, wood, and metal, but also newer materials and tools including plastics, photography, and modern printing methods. The broad orientation was progressive and experimental, as Thubron told the *Guardian*: “Students are not trying to give you what they think you are wanting, art as she is known. . . . The aim is to stop people doing ‘art’ and to make it difficult for them to give you what has already been done in art.”³⁴

Key to all of this was Thubron’s broadly antiauthoritarian approach to art teaching. Gone was the idea that students need slavishly reproduce the art of “great” forebears (for example, by drawing mimetically from antique busts) or even that the master knew best. The “god” of Basic Research, instead, was the creative process itself. Only by making intuitive decisions in the flow of art-making activity, responsive to the contingency of what was required by its peculiar and unrepeatable circumstances, could the artist fulfill their exploratory brief. All of this entailed, as Norbert Lynton recalls of Thubron’s time at Leeds, that “barriers between departments were ignored. Even the barrier between faculty and students crumbled as intenser activity made for mutual regard. Teachers’ and students’ work alike became an urgent, priority business.”³⁵ Hierarchies common to the master’s workshop were rejected, as was the customary top-down, unidirectional flow of knowledge and expertise from teacher to student. In 1959 Thubron wrote: “Basic training . . . is a balanced course involving disciplines and freedoms that are relative to the individual. . . . There are no answers other than those offered

by the student.”³⁶ Indeed, as Thubron often put it, the point of teaching, as far as he saw it, was to help artists to “learn how to learn” for themselves.³⁷

By 1970, the city’s College of Art had been incorporated into the newly founded and multidisciplinary technical institution, Leeds Polytechnic. But, despite the fears of some, the broad experimental ethos of the Thubron years survived in Leeds pedagogy well into the following decade and was to be continuously influential for a generation of students fired up by punk rock. This was chiefly a result of the appointment of Jeff Nuttall to the Polytechnic staff, who, different in many ways from Thubron, brought a newly libertarian and provocative cast to it. James Charnley, in his compelling study of art education in Leeds, remembers that Nuttall’s presence “more than any other thing defined the ethos of the Fine Art Department in the early 1970s.”³⁸ As a poet, jazz trumpeter, painter, performance artist, and author of *Bomb Culture*, Nuttall embodied an ongoing polymathic reach of Leeds fine art. A writer and performer in the performance group People Show, he was also as indebted to twentieth-century avant-gardism—to Cabaret Voltaire and the poetics of Comte de Lautréamont and Antonin Artaud—as he was to 1960s-style events. Early People Show performances took the form of happenings that presented confounding “aesthetic juxtapositions” of imagery and action, designed to arrest traditional theatrical priorities of character development, plot, and the communication of a message.³⁹

Nuttall had faith in the transformative power of aesthetics at a time when progressive politics, as far as he saw it, had become impotent—principally because the 1960s had failed to overthrow capitalism or stop the Vietnam War. He maintained a *soixante-huitard* opposition to the war into the 1970s, but by this time he believed only art, not politics, to be the antidote to it. For him, art’s radicalism resided in its ready ability to besmirch the logics of capitalist rationality and moral judgment. When a journalist for *Look North* on BBC TV in 1970 charged that the art of Leeds students was devoid of “sanity,” Nuttall, appearing before the steps of the Polytechnic H Block, shot back: “It has been claimed that the Vietnam war, which was much more expensive than the fine art department at Leeds, is a sane project. I think that is truly insane. Whereas I think the things we are doing here are sane.”⁴⁰ In rejecting war, however, Nuttall was not rejecting violence. Like some latter-day Marinetti, he saw the job of the avant-garde artist as making new aesthetic forms by means of an aggressive destruction of the old, in the process producing a “violently intensified effect” to energize art’s audiences.

“The policy” securing Leeds’s continuing reputation as home to the avant-garde, writes Nuttall, was not, though, the solicitation of violent ef-

fect in art but “wide open liberty with all facilities of space, materials and machinery available to all students whose imagination was permitted to extend its range to film, performance, writing and tape composition, beyond the usual painting and sculpture. All you needed to be, at Leeds in the Seventies, was diverse. All that was forbidden was dull. The course was a kind of concert platform where sooner or later you had to do your turn.”⁴¹ In more official language, as evidenced in the quinquennial review document for BA (Hons) Fine Art in 1976, prepared for inspection by the Council for National Academic Awards, the preferred term for such a pedagogic approach, borrowed from the Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, was “intermedia”: “Our belief that the development of a creative personality in each student can best be achieved by not necessarily linking his [*sic*] progress to specific media at any point in the course, has been strengthened. . . . The intermedia approach has developed empirically and has grown increasingly relevant to student needs since the establishment of the Dip AD.”⁴² In the spirit of such an ethos of artistic creation, a purpose-built though fairly low-tech performance space was constructed in the early 1970s and John Darling (of performance group John Bull Puncture Repair Kit) was appointed to the Polytechnic in 1971 with the brief of setting up a small sound studio comprising tape recorders, amplifiers, speakers, mixers, microphones, Tandberg reel-to-reel tape decks, a reverberation unit, a turntable, and “a whole bunch of sound effects records.”⁴³ Its purpose was to facilitate the making of soundscapes for use in performance art, but, in the wake of punk rock, it was destined to be used instead as a resource for the creation of (sometimes) popular music—as we shall see—by members of bands including Soft Cell, Household Name, and Fad Gadget.

Members of Gang of Four, Delta 5, and the Mekons, on the other hand, were atypical among UK art students in the 1970s in studying their subject in a university department rather than in a polytechnic or independent art school. At this point in time, Leeds was one of few universities in the country offering degree-level courses in fine art, along with Reading, Newcastle, and the Slade School of Art in London. One of Thubron’s friends and associates, Maurice de Sausmarez, author of *Basic Design: The Dynamics of Visual Form* (1964), had been head of the department of fine art at the University of Leeds throughout the 1950s and translated some of Thubron’s precepts into the teaching there, making the city home to *two* institutions predisposed to experimental art education. However, de Sausmarez’s replacements through the 1960s and early 1970s—Bloomsbury artist Quentin Bell and painter and art historian Lawrence Gowing—did not maintain

the Basic Design ethos in the university studios. This resulted in a relatively conservative form of art education in comparison with the Polytechnic's ongoing radicalism—at least until the significant changes to the university's provision wrought in the wake of T. J. Clark's appointment in 1976.

ART AND PUNK: A SOCIAL HISTORY

No Machos or Pop Stars is split into two parts. The first and shorter, "Avant-Garde and Punk," focuses on punk and pre-punk collective experiment with nontraditional aesthetic forms at art school, particularly performance art, and the beginnings of art student disenchantment with avant-gardism. The second and main part of the book, "Forming a Band," chronicles the multiple groups that emerged from art school in the wake of the Anarchy in the UK tour arriving in Leeds in December 1976 and the possibilities that punk suggested for popular forms of artistic experiment during a crisis of legitimacy in UK art education. It takes in the resources gained from state-funded art education, as well as the challenges to it, by bands variously espousing the virtues of pop and punk production, collectivism, Marxism, feminism, critical theory, performance art, antiracism, and club culture during a heightened period of politicization in the city.

Academics have already seen in punk a subcultural response to the collapse of the postwar consensus and social crisis, but rarely has punk's relationship to the art school and, more narrowly, the crisis of *its* value been given extended treatment.⁴⁴ The best literature on punk and post-punk does address the relations between avant-garde art and popular music but is less forthcoming about art school as enabler of, or context for, this influence—perhaps as a result of music writers' lack of knowledge in this area.⁴⁵ Where art college has been acknowledged, as in the work of Frith and Horne, it is usually as breeding ground for the Svengalis and image makers that variously packaged bands to achieve Situationist-like effects within spectacular capitalist culture.⁴⁶ From Malcolm McLaren's establishment-baiting presentation of the Sex Pistols to Vivienne Westwood's and Bernard Rhodes's creation of punk style, from Bob Last and Hilary Morrison's corporate pastiche in Fast Product to Tony Wilson's appearances on TV's *So It Goes*, the art school element of UK punk has been seen to express itself principally through postmodern forms of image management. Here it is the *managen* who becomes the quasi-Warholian "artist" par excellence in shaping forms of appearance within media culture, regardless of whether such

managers actually passed through art college as students.⁴⁷ In the UK these managers operated out of London, Edinburgh, Manchester, and Liverpool (Bill Drummond). Leeds did not produce a like figure at the time. John Keenan was the closest thing to such an impresario figure there (see chapter 3), but, though an important scene-maker as founder and manager of the F Club and Futurama festivals, he was more committed to gig and venue promotion than band management.⁴⁸

No Machos or Pop Stars therefore tells a different story: of the *self*-organizing bands that predominated in West Yorkshire. It seeks to show how the formal inventiveness, debates, and sometime utopianism of an aesthetic education impacted new modes of creative association and collective working for art students as they turned their attention to making popular music. I consider how Leeds art students were encouraged to work in untrammelled ways across artistic media and disciplines, and how this also sometimes seeded hopes for challenging or transcending forms of social division. In the pages that follow I therefore foreground “the band” itself as a form (a social structure) that art students variously sought to reshape in their attempts to democratize the conditions of art’s production and consumption—and even to consider it as prefigurative of alternative ways of organizing society.

But just as materials can offer resistance to the realization of an artist’s vision (the sculptor’s stone too coarse, the painter’s colors too murky), I also attend to the obdurate materiality of social hierarchies that sometimes hindered the realization of art students’ dreams for “the group.” I do so in order to capture in granular detail how late 1970s and early 1980s art students grappled anew with the aesthetic and social experiments left unfinished by the 1960s counterculture that preceded them. As Simon Reynolds has reflected: “There is something about the band as quasi-family (upfront in names like Sly and the Family Stone and UK psychedelic underground band Family) that has a utopian, all-for-one, one-for-all quality, and also sets in motion all kinds of emotional and interpersonal dynamics and frictions that are productive, as long as the unit can keep it together. The Band, as in Dylan’s backing band that then become their own brotherhood, is another example—banding together, the gang as micro-utopia.”⁴⁹ *No Machos or Pop Stars* worries away at the legacies of such groups and the tendency to see the art-influenced music band as “equivalent in certain respects to the experimental ‘artists group.’”⁵⁰ It considers how the band as a kind of micro-utopia, as a space of “learning and self-transformation,” came to be both problematized and reformulated in art school post-punk—and how

art education played a decisive role in providing the aesthetic, social, intellectual, technical, and economic resources, even the time, to achieve this.⁵¹

Even though the overall number of people going to art school, and to university, as a proportion of the population was small in the 1970s compared with contemporary UK levels, the significance of the cross-class and cross-disciplinary activities made possible there was magnified at a cultural level—as this book seeks to show.⁵² The period I consider was also significant for institutional reckonings with the politics of gender, race, and sexuality consequent upon the impact of feminism and gay liberation, anti-racism, and the slowly increasing presence of children of the Windrush generation within student bodies in higher education. It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that globalization began to more extensively diversify international student recruitment to UK institutions, while successive changes to university funding conspired to make a higher education in the arts progressively less accessible to working-class British students of all races, sexualities, and genders.⁵³ Student consciousness of the elitist, class-bound character of the art world—and of sexism, racism, and homophobia—drew critical attention to the limitations of a 1960s-style art education, focused as it had been around the liberal cultivation of creative individuals. Students sought to organize to change such things *together*—and this invariably involved acting in concert with those outside the walls of academia.

In tune with this collective, even collectivist, mindset, sociologist Howard S. Becker wrote in his 1982 study *Art Worlds*, “Changes in art occur through changes in worlds. Innovations last when participants make them the basis of a new mode of cooperation, or incorporate a change into their ongoing cooperative activities.”⁵⁴ This could almost have been a guiding script for diverse artist groups who followed trajectories that cut what Deleuze and Guattari would call “transversal” lines across customary vectors of discipline, expertise, audience, and industry in order to envisage and realize new “worlds” of artistic mutuality, production, and engagement.⁵⁵ In this way, *No Machos or Pop Stars* offers an in-depth case study of the transformed world-making powers of art school groups as they persisted into the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The critical awareness of college politics by art students was additionally fed by a general skepticism toward institutionalized forms of education per se in 1970s technocratic society. From the publication in English of Brazilian activist-educator Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970 through Ivan Illich’s *Deschooling Society* (1971) and the increasing knowl-

edge of the 1960s antipsychiatry movement within the UK and Europe, some 1970s radicals came to adopt a pointed, other times more fuzzy or inchoate, distrust of institutionally and nationally approved forms of education, including state-funded art school.⁵⁶ The book is therefore unlike most histories of art education, which tend to foreground the determining power of, for example, a celebrated teacher or a particularly innovative institution. Though what follows pays necessary attention to the importance of key pedagogues in Leeds art education and to the changing nature of educational provision in the schools featured, rather more attention is given to student attempts to slip the constraints of a state-funded education in the struggle to forge vital experiments in popular culture.

The book presents an extensive social history of an art school milieu in order to show how student independence was born through critical, sometimes contesting, engagement with pedagogical authority. Oral histories of former students that have been conducted are the primary basis on which the book builds its account, capturing the logics of being in a band as a move within an art school or art world game—even when the desired move is one of *exiting* that game. As a generally overlooked college scene, it is the subject of relatively little existing literature but, where material is available, I have sought not to repeat its insights.⁵⁷ Instead I concentrate on hitherto poorly covered or totally overlooked matters. I therefore do not attempt comprehensiveness in the pages that follow. For those who desire a fuller picture of the policy changes affecting art education in the period under consideration, readers are advised to consult Robert Strand's exhaustive *A Good Deal of Freedom* (1987) and Dave Seeger's "Changes Imposed on Fine Art Courses in Higher Education between 1960 and 1987" (1987). For an extensive top-down account of the operations of Leeds Polytechnic, Patrick Nuttgens's *The Art of Learning* (2000) is indispensable. What follows, in contrast, are bottom-up accounts—of the struggles to conceive a rationale for art and music at the impasse reached by the avant-garde.

A note on terminology: At various points in the book I use the term "post-punk." How we understand this term, and how it overlaps with and differs from "punk," is a common subject of debate about music ever since it was first used in print by music journalists in 1978.⁵⁸ But the debate has intensified more recently in the wake of Reynolds's subject-defining study, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978–1984* (2005), culminating in studies by David Wilkinson and Mimi Haddon, and variously involves the making of genre, cultural, and political claims for post-punk music *as a category*.⁵⁹ *No Machos or Pop Stars* largely sidesteps such debates in the belief

that the term was not significant for makers of what might otherwise be termed “post-punk” music in the locale and period under review and, as Haddon suggests, that it was anyway a term used rather more by music’s critics and consumers.⁶⁰ Since the focus in what follows is on art students’ self-understandings as popular music makers, I follow wherever possible the terminologies and references used by them, whether in contemporaneous interviews or supplied subsequently within my oral histories.⁶¹ When I use “post-punk,” therefore, I usually use it in a more straightforwardly periodizing way—to indicate that which came after punk—rather than as any developed category of musical style or cultural outlook.



NOTES

PREFACE

- 1 Wilson, *Student Grants*, 7.
- 2 Banks and Oakley, “The Dance Goes On Forever?,” 46.
- 3 Walkerdine, “Coming to Know.”
- 4 Hillman and Robinson, *Boys to Men*; and Brook, O’Brien, and Taylor, *Panic!*
- 5 Brook, O’Brien, and Taylor, *Panic!*, 17. The authors present a complex picture and acknowledge that the changed structure of the British economy since the 1980s accounts for much of the recent variation in absolute numbers of people from different class backgrounds working in the arts. Even so, they also present the grim finding that the proportion of people from different social classes in arts employment in 2011 had not improved *at all* since 1981, with upper echelons of society continuing to be disproportionately overrepresented and lower ones significantly underrepresented therein.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Mary Harron, “Dialectics Meet Disco,” *Melody Maker*, May 26, 1979, 17. All subsequent citations of Harron are from the same source and page unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 Garry Bushell, “Notes from Up a Bourgeois Cul-de-sac,” *Sounds*, October 6, 1979, 43. Reynolds notes that some punk “diehards”—which could include the likes of Bushell—accused art school experimentalists “of merely lapsing back into what punk had originally aimed to destroy: art-rock elitism.” *Rip It Up and Start Again*, xvii.
- 3 Her boldest example of denial is Fast Product’s Bob Last, who, she writes, “began to foam at the mouth” when accused of taking his operational strategies from Dada and Andy Warhol. Harron, “Dialectics Meet Disco,” 17.

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- 4 See Taylor, *Downtown Book*; Savage, *England's Dreaming*; Wilson, *24 Hour Party People*; Esch, *Electri_City*; and Fish, *Industrial Evolution*.
- 5 Patrick Heron, "Murder of the Art Schools," *Guardian*, October 12, 1971, 8.
- 6 See "Living Picture Ends Up in Court," *Daily Mail*, November 24, 1970; Byron Rogers, "Progressive Art or Subsidised Freak Out?," *Daily Telegraph Magazine*, April 14, 1972, 9–12; Anthony Delano, "Roll Up and See the Concrete Music Man and the Baking Ford," *Daily Mirror*, May 5, 1972; "We're Daft to Pay Up £400 for this Caper!," *Sunday People*, March 7, 1976; and "The Fine Art of Killing Budgies," *Daily Express*, May 27, 1977.
- 7 Booker, *Seventies*, 5.
- 8 Booker, *Seventies*, 5.
- 9 Lucie-Smith, *Art in the Seventies*, 121.
- 10 The figure of 157 art schools is drawn from the research and expertise of John Beck and Matthew Cornford. In correspondence with the author, Beck notes A. J. Peters's 1967 assessment of the number of art education institutes: "The number of maintained art establishments has decreased from 207 in 1946–7 to 157 in 1964–5. About 70 were believed to be attached to technical colleges." Peters, *British Further Education*, 70. I am also indebted to Beck and Cornford, *Art School and the Culture Shed*.
- 11 Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 86. See also Walker, *Cross-Overs*.
- 12 Cited in Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 96.
- 13 Cited in Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 96.
- 14 See Roberts, *Red Days*.
- 15 Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 28.
- 16 Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 60–61.
- 17 Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 48. There are notable exceptions to my generalizing comments about art education in the United States here, most significantly the experimental Black Mountain College, which ran for twenty-three years until 1956.
- 18 Ministry of Education, *First Report*.
- 19 Heron, "Murder of the Art Schools," 8.
- 20 Rogers, "Progressive Art or Subsidised Freak Out?," 10.
- 21 Jones, "Art Students and Their Troubles," 65.
- 22 Ken Rowat, untitled article, *Guardian*, February 10, 1976, 15.
- 23 Rowat, untitled article, 15.
- 24 Rowat, untitled article, 15.
- 25 Rowat, untitled article, 15.
- 26 Rowat refers to art in this way in *Omnibus: Art—to a Degree?*, BBC broadcast, November 11, 1976.
- 27 See Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, 171–77, 331–35, 339–45, and 353–57, for further details. As Beckett notes, the IMF deal subsequently required huge cuts to public expenditure between 1977 and 1979. These turned out to be unnecessary because, Beckett argues, the government was misled by incorrect

- assumptions in 1976 about the UK's borrowing requirements and really didn't need the sizable loan it ended up having to pay back.
- 28 Callaghan, "Leader's Speech." This speech paved the way for the monetarist policies of the Thatcher government after 1979.
- 29 Roberts, *Red Days*, 23.
- 30 Piekut, *Henry Cow*, 383.
- 31 See Manson, *Willy Tirr*, 34.
- 32 See Thistlewood, *Continuing Process*; Bracewell, *Re-make/Re-model*; Westley and Williamson, "William Johnstone"; and Crippa and Williamson, *Basic Design*.
- 33 Forrest, "Harry Thubron," 190–94.
- 34 Michael Parkin, "Techno-Artist," *Guardian*, February 13, 1964, 8.
- 35 Lynton, "Harry Thubron," 170.
- 36 Leeds College of Art, *Basic Research*, 4.
- 37 Askham and Thubron, "Case for Polytechnics."
- 38 Charnley, *Creative License*, 146.
- 39 Nuttall, *Performance Art: Memoirs*, 17.
- 40 *Look North*, BBC TV, November 22, 1970.
- 41 Nuttall, *Art and the Degradation of Awareness*, 64–65.
- 42 Leeds Polytechnic, "B.A. (Honours) Fine Art Quinquennial Review," 2.
- 43 Dave Ball, personal communication with author, July 16, 2015.
- 44 See Worley, "Shot by Both Sides"; and Crossley, *Networks of Sound, Style and Subversion*, 58–60.
- 45 See Haddon, *What Is Post-Punk?*; Hebdige, *Subculture*; Laing, *One Chord Wonders*; Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*; and exhibitions including *Panic Attack: Art in the Punk Years* at Barbican Art Gallery, London in 2007. Reynolds is the outlier among these sources in accounting for the specifics of art school influence at various points within his *Rip It Up and Start Again*.
- 46 See Frith and Horne, *Art into Pop*, 129–61. For an account of McLaren's formative art school years, see Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 23–57.
- 47 Though McLaren went to numerous art colleges (Croydon, Goldsmiths, and Saint Martins) and Bob Last studied architecture, Vivienne Westwood reportedly only lasted a term at Harrow School of Art and neither Rhodes nor Wilson studied art. Wilson presided over the Factory in Manchester while denying Warhol as progenitor for his own initiatives. As Savage details, the Situationist International was more pressing and influential for Manchester post-punk than American pop art. Savage, "Fac 1–50."
- 48 To be clear: I am suggesting not that Leeds bands were without managers or promoters but rather that those who did have them were managed from outside Leeds itself. Bob Last, in Edinburgh, worked with Gang of Four in Leeds and Scritti Politti once relocated to London, and Stevo and Daniel Miller in London worked with Soft Cell and Fad Gadget, respectively. Mick Wixey, the Mekons' manager, was the exception in residing in Leeds—though hardly a

- McLaren-esque figure. For more on Stevo's promotion of Soft Cell for Some Bizzare Records, see Clowes, "Depeche Mode and Soft Cell."
- 49 Simon Reynolds, correspondence with author, January 18, 2020.
- 50 Roberts, *Red Days*, 12.
- 51 Roberts, *Red Days*, 13.
- 52 Though I do not have exact comparative figures for students studying art and design, Mark Banks and Kate Oakley note that, following the expansion and globalization of British higher education in the 1990s, "The UK has seen a growth in undergraduates wanting to study subjects related to the arts and cultural industries, with a 30% growth in 'creative arts and design,' between 2003/4 and 2011/12." Banks and Oakley, "The Dance Goes on Forever?," 49.
- 53 See Brook, O'Brien, and Taylor, *Panic!* See also Tess Reidy, "Is Studying the Arts the Preserve of the Middle Classes?," *Guardian*, August 31, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/aug/31/how-working-class-arts-students-get-locked-out>.
- 54 Becker, *Art Worlds*, 309.
- 55 My thinking in this book is indebted to Félix Guattari's radical approach to group-working in clinical psychiatric institutions and to his magisterial study of democratic energies in mid-1980s Brazil, the latter conducted with the collaboration of Suely Rolnik. See Guattari, "Transversality"; and Guattari and Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*.
- 56 Illich, *Deschooling Society*; Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
- 57 Charnley's *Creative License* and Rooney's *Thin Air* offer useful accounts of the history of fine art education at the Polytechnic. Belinfante and Pollock's exhibition *Lessons in the Studio* gave a useful overview of fine art at the university over a seventy-year period. Further print sources within popular music studies, rock journalism, and pop-star autobiographies variously touch on Leeds art school bands: Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again*, 111–13, 117, 199; Wilkinson, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure*, 78–79, 83, 95; O'Brien, "Can I Have a Taste of Your Ice Cream?," 29–31; and Whitney, *Hit Factories*, 99–100, 102–3, 108–9, 117. Books on Gang of Four by Dooley, *Red Set*, 57–73; and Lester, *Gang of Four*, 17–18, have useful information. Almond, *Tainted Life*, 55–79, 84–87; Ball, *Electronic Boy*, 67–96; and Parsons (Tony Baker), *From Now Until Yesterday*, 15–46, all provide compelling accounts of art student life at Leeds Polytechnic.
- 58 For an account of early uses of the term *post-punk*, see Haddon, *What Is Post-Punk?*, 25–42.
- 59 Wilkinson, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure*; and Haddon, *What Is Post-Punk?*
- 60 Haddon, *What Is Post-Punk?*, 14–17.
- 61 This volume is written in American English except regarding band names, which are referred to throughout as plural collective nouns. The latter is customary of the British English used by the book's interviewees and within the material cited from these and other British sources.