Australian Anarcha-punk Zines: Poststructuralism in contemporary anarchist and gender politics.

Lucy Katherine Nicholas BA (Hons) Politics and Society with Combined Studies, University of Gloucestershire

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, Griffith University.

Date of Submission: September 2005
Abstract

This thesis describes and analyses the politics of the Australian DIY anarcha-punk scene and the ethos of the culture’s participants. Eschewing the orthodox sub-cultural approach which situates “punk” within a structuralist hegemony / resistance paradigm, the thesis uses participant observation and textual analysis techniques to understand the role played by zines (hand made publications) in fostering the intellectual and ethical capacities needed to participate in the Australian DIY anarcha-punk scene.

The zines, in their deviation from classical anarchism, often invoke concepts of power and “the political” analogous with those of poststructuralist theory, yet DIY anarchist politics also diverge from poststructuralism. I therefore address DIY anarchist politics by questioning the significance of these inconsistencies with Theory. In doing so I am led to suggest that the zines may be more usefully approached as elements in the ethico-political practice of DIY anarchism, which nonetheless draws on the “conceptual vocabulary” of much poststructuralism, as well as other theoretical approaches.

Thus I re-describe DIY anarchism as an ethos which seeks to argue for its agendas and values on non-foundational terms. Further, I demonstrate that by pursuing an ethos of “autonomy”, the culture’s participants seek to develop their intellectual and ethical capacities through a self-consciously “developmental” engagement of power relationships, in the form of DIY “prefiguration” or exemplification.
Following the preoccupation with gender politics in the zines and the wider scenes, I describe the approach to gender politics in similarly ethico-political terms, drawing likewise on various elements of poststructuralist and other theories. I show this feminist ethical practice to be based on assumptions about gender which embody a certain poststructuralist approach to “gender”, one that is predicated on the material effects of a discursively congealed gender structure, but forms part of an ethos aiming to deconstruct this structure.

By re-describing the political approaches of these zines in reference to various theoretical perspectives and ethico-political practices, I am able to offer perspectives to the culture in question, as well as to the interdisciplinary academic context within which I am writing.
Statement of Authorship:

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Lucy Nicholas
Acknowledgments

My academic acknowledgments go first and foremost to my supervisors for this project. To Dr. Felicity Grace not only for her supervision but her tireless engagement with the bureaucracy. To Dr. David Adair for his amazing enthusiasm, dedication, inspiration, faith and intellect - I am proud to be his first postgraduate research student and without his tireless supervision in the late stages I could surely not have achieved this. Both his academic and organisational skills have proved inspirational and indispensable.

To the zine makers, punks and revos of the Australian DIY anarchist scenes I am forever indebted. Particularly I thank the zine makers whose work inspired this thesis and the various kids who took me in and helped me (and the thesis) grow.

My colleagues and friends have been invaluable support. Dr. Jason Wilson and Rea Turner for their postgraduate comradery, and their personal support and good times. CJ for her personal / political inspiration, support, love, sisterhood and strength. Tom O for his academic genius and enthusiasm and for his advice in the late stages. Penky for inspiration. Especially I am indebted to KJ, my soulmate and mentor, my idol and teacher, my partner in crime.

And finally to my family, without whose (ridiculously infinite) unconditional support and love this would not have even been an option, and completion impossible. You are proud of me and love and respect me for everything I do, and the feeling is mutual.
# Table of Contents

**Thesis Introduction**  
1  
Literature Review 3  
Methodology 13  
Methods 18  
My language and use of terms 22  
Outline 27

**Chapter 1: DIY and Poststructuralist Anarchism**  
29  
Introduction 29  
1) From classical anarchism to DIY prefiguration. 31  
Classical anarchism 31  
Zines, DIY Anarchism and the expansion of the “political” 36  
2) Issues of poststructuralism 44  
Structures as “spurious unities” 45  
“Power” and governmentality 48  
Subjects and discourses, actors and disciplines 55  
3) The limited agency of subversion (doubled vision) 59  
Resistance 63  
Revolution / reform / neither / both : “Tactics” 68  
Engagements with the “macro” 75  
An afterword: Anarchist continuities 77  
Conclusion 80

**Chapter 2: The Ethos of DIY Anarchism**  
83  
Introduction 83  
Ethics 84  
Normative bases - self-governance 87
My aim in this thesis is to account for the impacts of poststructuralism on the theory and practice of DIY anarcha-punk in Australia. To do this I analyse a collection of self-professed DIY anarchist zines from Australia and, acting as a participant observer in the “scenes” in which these zines circulate, demonstrate how they accord with, and depart from, poststructuralist theories and ethical norms.

The “DIY anarcha-punk” scene in Australia is a flourishing culture, attested to by the volume of “kids”\(^1\), zines, bands, festivals, squats, “food not bombs”\(^2\), shows (concerts), distros\(^3\), tours, and various other DIY creations which make up this culture. It is a culture which valorises the direct self-creation of anarcha-punk culture, and demonstrates the attempt to foster particular values. Not only this but it is a self-consciously political culture, and it is by addressing the culture with poststructuralist theory that I wish to see how the members of the scene figure this culture to be political in nature, how this political approach is assumed to function, and on what values the culture is predicated.

By addressing how useful poststructuralist theories are for understanding the DIY politics demonstrated by the zines in Chapter One, and positing the limits to a theoretically predicated approach, I am able to problematise this attempt at a purely theoretical account of these political texts and address them instead as part of an ethico-political approach of

---

\(^1\) See “My language and use of terms” on p.24.
\(^2\) “Food not bombs” is an anarchist practice of using discarded food to create vegan meals to serve for free on the streets, see footnotes on p.108 in Chapter Two.
\(^3\) See “My language and use of terms” on p.24.
self-creation in Chapter Two. In a more specific focus in Chapter Three I then draw attention to the gender politics of contemporary DIY anarcha-punk as emblematic of some of the key theoretical, political and ethical issues. Gender politics are a passionately prioritised topic in the scene and are thus useful for demonstrating the types of political approaches entailed in the DIY anarchist ethos.

In analyzing contemporary Australian DIY anarcha-punk, my intention is not to plunder this culture for my own (academic) ends, but rather to offer “new descriptions of the world” (Barker 2000, p29) to both the culture which is the object of my study⁴, and the academic readership of this thesis. In this way my thesis intends to be a poetic exposition and narration which brings new voices in to what Rorty calls the ‘cosmopolitan conversation of humankind.’…[and a] route by which our own culture is made strange to us, allowing new descriptions of the world to be generated. (Barker 2000, p.29)

In his book Notes from the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture, Duncombe (1997) defines zines as “noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish and distribute by themselves” (1997, p.6). The zine directory Factsheet 5 defines a zine as a “small handmade amateur publication done purely out of passion, rarely making a profit or even breaking even. Sounds like ‘zeen’.” (Dunne 1995, p.55). Zines are an integral element of contemporary punk culture (O’Hara 1999, Personality Liberation Front Zine #3, Fenster 1993), emblematising the DIY approach to politics and serving as a location for self-reflexivity

---

⁴ I am attempting to achieve this aim through the ongoing creation of my own zine which uses the academic ideas herein, in the anarcha-punk vernacular, in a reversal of this thesis’ function.
for participants in the scene. Thus *The Philosophy of Punk* (O’ Hara 1999) asserts that punk fanzines “provide an overall view, a synthesis of the various elements – music, philosophy, aesthetics, and attitude – that make up the phenomenon of punk” (p.47).

Anarchism has been variously defined as a theory, a practice and a tendency, different definitions which are themselves significant for how DIY anarchism approaches “anarchism”. The principle commonality of anarchism is an opposition to / rejection of government, although what constitutes “government” is itself a problematic issue which greatly impacts on different definitions of anarchism. Anarchism, in varying forms, has consistently been an element of punk, from the allusions to “anarchy” as chaos by the *Sex Pistols* in the 1970s - what Clark posits as “simulated ‘anarchy’… performances of anarchy” (Clark 2003, p.233) - to the thriving international network of the self-consciously political anarchism of contemporary anarcho-punks.

**Literature Review**

I have chosen to restrict my literature review here to zine literature, and to a lesser extent, punk literature, as the literature on anarchism and poststructuralist theory will become apparent as I use it for my analysis of these zines and the broader DIY anarchist culture. However, a brief description of literature on zines is necessary to contextualise my study of these particular zines in relation to the approaches used by other researchers.
There has been little theoretical writing on the subject of zines, and most of this appears in media studies, cultural studies and women’s studies. This literature has tended to be either focused on subcultures or undertaken from a literary perspective. Writing in publishing studies, Stoneman (2001) has noted that in addition to the small amount of academic literature on zines, there is a “larger amount of analytical literature both within fanzines themselves and on the internet” (p.9). I have chosen to leave this DIY literature also to the main body of the thesis, as this self-reflexivity is one of the primary objects of interest in my study.

**Spectacular Model:**

The dominant model for theorising punk culture has been Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) subculture theory. This literature occasionally touches on zines as an element of the culture. Yet the homogenising and authoritative definitions of “punk” used in such studies\(^5\) preclude serious consideration of the contemporary manifestations of the culture – an academic orthodoxy attested to by the authoritative cries of “punk rock’s dead!” in my University department - and thus overlook the possibilities of changes and development. This authoritative definition also serves to homogenise, in the sense that by taking “punk” as a transcendental signifier, it elides the different adoptions and effects of “punk” in different contexts at different times.

This dominant definition, which has usually focused on “the spectacular” aspect of punk, serves to privilege a structuralist semiological framework for analysis. *Lipstick Traces*

---

(Marcus 1989) is a text which serves to perpetuate dominant and unified understandings of “punk”, focusing as it does on the ‘78 “spectacular” aspects of punk and proclaiming “it” dead. By contrast, in Wood’s (1999 & 2003) studies of actors’ interpretations of their straightedge\(^6\) punk identification, he encourages future researchers to emphasise the different invocations of punk and not to assign a universal (structuralist) model to the meanings of punk-identification. His conclusion is that “sub-cultural identity…is a highly fluid, contingent, and contradictory phenomenon that is constructed and experienced idiosyncratically by the very same members.” (Wood 2003, p.33). Likewise, Kearney asserts, this time in a discussion of the riot-grrrl\(^7\) aspect of punk, that “thin descriptions”, within which I would place the “spectacular” model of punk subculture theory, serve to homogenise terms of plural invocations and interpretations:

scholars of youth cultures often appear satisfied with what Clifford Geertz calls ‘thin descriptions’ of culture: that is, representations of a culture’s surface details which fail to explore the more complex (and often contradictory) processes involved in cultural signification. (1998, p.163)

This tendency of “thin description” is perhaps a result of researchers’ eagerness to analyse the cultures that are the objects of study within their own analytical preconceptions, rather than addressing the participants in the cultures as agents in “cultural signification”.

\(^{6}\) See definition of “straightedge” in “My language and use of terms” on p.25.

\(^{7}\) See definition of “riot grrrl” in “My language and use of terms” on p.26.
Resistance / hegemony model:

Another limit of the CCCS model is the hegemony/resistance structure within which subcultural activity is generally approached, a model predicated on an assumed truth which is often "at a level beneath the consciousness of the individual members of a spectacular subculture." (Hebdige cited in Marchart 2003, p.89). Such an approach assumes a capacity of the academic to develop a consciousness which transcends the subjectification of this hegemony, to access and articulate this “truth”, and to assign a transcendental meaning to all punk activities. The main assumptions are that the academic researcher has attained an objective subjectivity through academic training in the “subjectless science” of Critical Theory, and that the object of study, the member of the subculture, is an unconscious relay for external influences.

Such a critical and “objective” distance is assumed by the academic researcher Lauraine Leblanc (1999), who focuses on punk in a style and resistance paradigm in *Pretty in Punk*. Here, despite qualitative interviews which allowed punk wimmin\(^8\) to speak for themselves, Leblanc assumes the position of trained semiologist, able to decode the unconscious intentions of these punk wimmin, and the meanings of their identification with punk, in a system of unified discourse. Leblanc’s approach is typical of those analyses which seek to inscribe the intentions of the objects of study with meaning, according to the discourse which the researchers themselves take as their point of departure. Indeed, Stuart Hall, former director of CCCS, himself admitted such limits when he stated that “we are aware of the many turning points where we have fallen into

---

\(^8\) For explanations of my use of this term see “My language and use of terms” on p.22.
an imitative dependency, or where we have allowed theoretical debates to obscure the absolutely necessary test of concrete work and exemplification” (in Schulman 1993).

There are many examples from the academic literature of an agenda to insert zines into a narrative of resistance. Dunne’s (1995) analysis of queer zines goes on to defy the specificity promised by his topic of analysis (queer zines) and instead attempts a meta-narrative analysis for all zines in the form of this resistance model. He states that “the defining criterion of zines is a muscular confrontation with the dominant tropes of mainstream culture presented in a ‘non-professional’ cut-and-paste design aesthetic” (p.59). In an analysis of riot grrrl zines, Anita Harris (2001) retains some specificity and avoids an analysis which places transcendental political significance on the medium of zines itself. Instead, she focuses on this one particular type of engagement with the medium - riot grrrl zines - but also places them in a hegemony/resistance binary, stating that she is presenting “counter-hegemonic work in these sites in relation to the dominant ways in which youth and their political insights and engagements are represented” (Harris, 2001). This represents the assumption of the “truth” of a unified, repressive and strategic field of “mass culture” which it is possible to decode and resist.

Further problems with this metanarrative of resistance are exemplified by a recent piece in uber-hip hair salon Toni & Guy UK’s magazine about “the cult of the fanzine” (McKenzie 2004, p.26), in which a naked “alternative” girl is depicted lying in a sea of zines. The article claims that zinesters are “creating a counter-culture to challenge the status quo” (McKenzie 2004, p.26). In addition to the adoption of this easily applied
dominance / resistance formula, what this article is actually discussing is “fanmags”, “fanzines with the gloss of magazines” (McKenzie 2004, p.26). A primary difference between these publications and DIY punk zines, is the presumed readership, exemplified by the large volume of commercial advertising in fanmags such as *Vice* or *Sleaze*.

**Deviance model:**

Wood (1999) highlights a tendency in academic studies to apply concepts such as subcultural deviance “without first acquiring sufficient and substantive knowledge of the phenomenon in question”; a tendency which “often results in a premature or erroneous ascription of a deviant status to cases of collective youth phenomena” (Wood 1999, p.134). Such ascriptions of deviance are necessarily the result of a normative point of departure, wherein the phenomenon in question is approached as a “*sub*-culture”, that is something defined by its difference from a presumed dominant mass-culture. This then is my reasoning for rejecting the term “subculture”, with its associations of a unified culture and elisions of the constructedness of such discourses, and its subsequent difficulties in appreciating the plurality and hybridity of cultures. In Byrne’s 1999 Masters thesis on the Brisbane punk scene she similarly rejects the spectacular and homogenising aspects of traditional subcultural studies:

> I have employed the term ‘subculture’ within this paper. However, I do not endorse the popular methods of sub-cultural theorists. I have used the term to mean a smaller sub-section of a larger culture with some identifiable ‘norms’. (Byrne 1999, p.15)

My study intends instead to approach the culture of punk not from a point of departure of...
its negative status, deviating from an assumed norm, but as part of the diffuse and productive process of the creation and uses of discourses.

**Participant research:**

More recently, there has been some literature produced by academics who were also participants in the contemporary punk culture before undertaking the studies and who seek to theorise the culture as a more self-conscious producer of particular subjectivities. Yet this literature invariably takes the form of short articles or chapters in academic anthologies or journals, as opposed to the more substantial publications produced by now-dominant CCCS subcultural studies. Alternatively, these studies take the form of more underground and DIY self-published zine style studies or books published through anarchist / punk publishers. An example is O’Hara’s (1999) *The Philosophy of Punk*, a revised Masters thesis published by anarchist publishers *AK Press*.

Notable features of both Wood (1999 & 2003) to whom I have referred above, and O’Connor (2002), who wrote a participant comparative ethnography of the Toronto punk scene (within which he participates) and the Mexico punk scene, is their eschewal of generalisation, and their concentration on the specificities of the scenes which were the objects of their study. Indeed, one of the conclusions I gleaned from O’Connor’s study was that, while there are some “thin” musical and political commonalities among all “ punks”, it is unwise to universalise any further.

What sets these subcultural studies apart from their traditional counterparts is that their
point of departure is the cultures, as opposed to the theory. The intention is to approach these cultures without the existing conceptual frameworks set by the CCSS / Critical Theory approach, and thereby allow them to speak very much for themselves and on their own terms, either due to the status of the author as a participant in the culture, or through a combination of qualitative methods such as interviews and “thick” analyses of primary sources such as zines and music. Wood’s research is notable for his insistence on using many primary examples from straightedge punk bands’ lyrics as “transmitters of subcultural attitudes and beliefs” (Wood 1999, p.135) and his position as a participant in the subculture about which he is writing.

A notable feature of O’Connor’s (2002) study is a reluctance to depart from a theoretical starting point, a flaw which he attempted to avoid with emphasis on contextualisation. His conclusions about the Mexico City punk scene, to which he was a visitor from the Toronto punk scene, were drawn only with contextualisation, gained in consultation with members of the scene: a tactic he used in order to avoid applying Canadian-centric assumptions. A good example is his description of the compulsory mosh-pit ritual of the men in the Mexico City scene, which he avoided placing in the discourse of Canadian gender politics, and instead reported only the explanations of the scene participants in reference to the ritual (2002, pp.146-147).

My position:
While nothing would please me more than a romantic vision of zines as inherently and universally transgressive in opposition to a homogenised repressive power, I think it is
important to take seriously some of the poststructuralist critiques of such structuralist points of departure. First, I seek to question such romanticism in the light of poststructuralist rearticulations of the mechanisms of power, which posit that the technology of power is not so strategic; and, with a close reading of the zines of my study, I attempt to find a way forward for an anarchist politics outside of the hegemony/resistance model. Second, I wish to take seriously the critiques of the academic narratives of “subcultural” activity, which reveal them to be predicated on elitist presuppositions and particular agendas. What my study does, then, is to demonstrate the commonalities between these zines and their associated DIY anarcha-hardcore scenes’ politics and poststructuralist problematics of “power” and domination, without recourse to the imposition of hegemony/resistance models. I am also introducing a notion of the “ethico-political” in order to redescribe how zines are implicated in the practices of participants in the DIY anarchist culture, as resources used by the culture’s participants to form themselves as the subjects of a politics. In this way I am able to redescribe the zines without abandoning theoretical analyses, but also without fetishizing and imposing “Theory” on possibly disparate phenomena.

I began this study with little knowledge of poststructuralist theory, and certainly no agenda to locate the zines of my study within it. Conversely, it was departing from the zines’ allusions to theory which led me to poststructuralist ideas. My title may be misleading here, as it is not my intention to fit an analysis of the zines into “a poststructuralist model” of politics. Primarily, this is because no such model exists, the principal commonality of poststructuralism being a departure from structuralism. But
this is also not my intention, as I believe it erroneous to attempt a forced purist account, and not acknowledge the ways in which the zines diverge from poststructuralist ideas as well as converge with them. When I ask, in my thesis question, “how far can poststructuralist theory be used to analyse these Australian anarcha-hardcore-punk zines?”, I am seeking to discover useful aspects of theory for understanding Australian DIY anarchism. It is not my intention to prove the compatibility, or not, of these zines with a unified field of poststructuralist Politics, then, but rather to redescribe the zines as components of particular types of politics.

This thesis therefore restricts its generalizations to the Australian DIY anarcha-hardcore scene, and any allusions to “DIY anarchism” or “the scene” should be read from here on in as referring only to this scene. The contextuality of the politics and conceptualisations of power particular to this scene is made particularly pertinent by comparison with other scenes, as O’Connor’s (2002) study demonstrated. In my personal experience, my ability to compare the Australian anarcha-hardcorepunk scene with that of Bucharest, Romania, demonstrates the need for careful contextualisation. For example, the common practice in the Australian scenes of dumpster diving - taking still-edible discarded food from supermarket bins - is contingent on the high standards of Australian supermarkets and a lack of competition for the wasted food. This is an impossibility in Bucharest due to the levels of poverty, the differing standards of the supermarkets and the higher security. Another example is the practice of gardening, common in the Australian context, and contingent on the access to a garden, something rare in the concrete apartments of Bucharest. Thus my theoretical assertions regarding concepts such as “power” and
“governmentality” I also wish to apply only to the context from, and about, which I am writing – that is, Australia.

I attempt also, like O’Connor (2002) and Wood (1999 & 2003), to retain a specificity and eschewal of universality, a tactic which could be said to be characteristic of poststructuralist points of departure, along with the rejection of a universalising hegemony/resistance model. In these respects my approach is similar to that of Chartier, when he writes: “Cultural history has lost its ambition to be all-embracing, to be sure, but it has perhaps gained an unprecedented attention to the texts, henceforth freed from the reduction to ideology that had destroyed them as discursive practices.” (Chartier 1988, p.11).

Methodology

This thesis is ethnographic in the postmodern sense that it is a narrative of a small selection of zines and the DIY cultures in which they are situated: a “poetic exposition” that addresses ethical and political questions (Rorty 1989, p.7). In this sense my reading is a truth, if we approach the concept of “truth” as “descriptions of the world created by us”, as Rorty conceptualises it when he invokes the "Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found." (Rorty 1989, p.7).

My zine sample is undeniably not an objective cross section of zines. It is “purposive” or
“judgemental nonprobability sampling” (Newman 1997, p.206), a selection method used in field research with a specific purpose. In this way my aims are similar to that of Wood (2003) in his study of the straightheadge punk youth subculture, in that “a strategic, criterion-based targeting of self-professed group members ensures that the variable of interest…is present in the selected individual” (Wood 2003). Thus my selection of primary sources reflects my aim in this study, which is to present the extent to which the politics (and specifically the gender politics) of Australian DIY anarcha-hardcorepunk can be analysed by various poststructuralist theories, specifically through zines, not to theorise about “zines” in general or a particular “genre” of zines, or punk in general.

The commonality of the zines I selected for this research, therefore, is their association with the scene I am analyzing, and their engagement with the DIY anarchist and gender politics of this scene; that is, their ability to help provide an answer to my thesis question. The main issues of anarchism and gender are approached, even in my selection of zines, in diverse ways and from different potential “genres” of zine. I do not wish to attempt to place the zines I have chosen within a “genre”, an act that I feel would merely serve to perpetuate an homogenizing of zines’ specific and fragmented characters. I feel that it is more beneficial to concentrate on where and by whom they were created and how I obtained them in order to better understand their roles in specific social networks. I will therefore now outline, in alphabetical order, how I obtained each of the main zines used in my study and how they are socially situated. All of my choices are paper zines (as opposed to online “e-zines”) and are hand made and photocopied in format, with many (but not all) using computer word processors for some or all text. None seem to have
used computers for layout but rather have used the “cut-n-paste” method. All of the zines I have chosen are from Brisbane, Sydney and Wollongong, as this is where I have mostly had contact with zine makers in the course of my research.

First, I obtained *Belladonna DIY zine 2003* at the December 2003 *Belladonna DIY Fest*, Wollongong. This is a free annual DIY fest at a youth centre organized by a collective of anarchy-punks. It is mainly aimed at the anarchy-punk community but also any aspects of DIY culture. I attended this festival because a large zine / DIY fair had been advertised on the flyer which I had picked up from a Brisbane DIY Punk (mainly music) distro, *Endless Blockades*. This zine was free for all attendees. It includes, among other articles, the program for the festival, with write-ups for each event and band, giving a good outline of a segment of the Australian anarchy-hardcore punk community and the politics (and specifically the gender politics) of this scene.

I obtained *Coughing up Legomen* through a swap for my first per-zine\(^9\) (*Villagebike #1*) with its creator Chris (from Sydney) at *Queer Collaborations* conference, Melbourne, 2003. This event is the national student queer conference organized by students for students. I obtained the zine from Chris after he had presented a workshop on *Reclaim the Streets* (an anarchist form of protest) for a queer student audience. I chose this zine for my analysis as its content represents a cross section between the radical anarchy-queer community of Australia, the anarchy-hardcore community, and the general anarchist activist community.

---

\(^9\) Perzine: "Personal zine: A zine written by one person with essays and comments typically dealing with the publisher's daily life." (*Factsheet 5 1994*)
I obtained *Lezzarine* through a swap with its creator Melamoo, who I had come into contact with through both the Brisbane Queer Activist community through my queer area at university, and through the virtual Riot_Grrl community on www.livejournal.com. This zine is not associated with the hardcore community, but engages with punk-rock music and culture more generally, mostly through an interest in riot grrrl. Primarily however, it is a zine dealing with radical anarchy-queer and feminist politics.

*No More Waiting* is a zine which I swapped mine for at an anarchist leaning zine distro in Sydney at the zine fair at *This is Not Art* Festival 2003 in Newcastle, the biggest national zine fair in Australia. I chose this zine for its affiliation with the anarchist activist community and the content, which deals with radical gender politics. I only recently became aware that its creator, Amy, is affiliated with the anarchy-hardcore punk community also, as this is not touched on in the content.

*On Fire #3* is a zine I obtained from *Endless Blockades* distro in Brisbane, although its creator Dan is from Wollongong. I purchased it as I knew the creator from the *Australian National Anarchist conference* and his previous zines (*No Longer Blind and Hitchers Do it With Their Thumbs*), and have included it as its content, whilst primarily music based, deals a great deal with anarchist politics, including a great deal of attention to gender politics, particularly within hardcore. It proclaims itself to be the “Journal of the Australian Hardcore Punk scene” and certainly has a large distribution, nationally as well as internationally, through punk distros. Thus I am interested in using this zine to look at
the politics, and particularly gender politics, that its creator perceives in hardcore.

*Personality Liberation Front #3* is also primarily a hardcore-punk zine, which I obtained through its creator, Kylie who was running a zine distro at an *Indymedia* benefit show in Brisbane, and with whom I inquired about an interview for this project. The zine certainly does not call itself only a music zine but *does* place itself within the hardcore-punk community / genre. I selected it for its intersection of punk culture, anarchist politics and radical gender and queer politics.

I obtained *Queen Psychotic Rage #2* from its creator, Davey from Sydney, through a swap at the *Australian National Anarchist conference*, Brisbane, 2003. I chose it because of its intersection between radical queer and gender politics and anarchism. Davey is active in both queer and anarchist activism.

*Secret Archives of the Recent Past* is a zine I swapped for from the same anarchist-leaning distro as *No More Waiting*, but this time at *Belladonna DIY Fest 2003* zine fair. This zine also appears unaffiliated with the hardcore/punk scene in content, although the creator is sometimes involved and I obtained the zine at a DIY hardcore festival. The content of this zine is concerned with DIY culture, personal politics, radical gender politics and anarcha-activism.

I obtained *Ugly Duckling* at a distro table run by its creator Carmen at *Venus Rising*, a wimmin only event hosted by the University of Queensland’s wimmins space, 2003,
where I approached Carmen to inquire about an interview for this project. The zine places itself primarily as feminist, and I chose it as its content includes radical gender/queer politics, radical activist politics and DIY culture.

**Methods**

My principal methods of research are content analysis of these zines, and participant observation of the scenes from which they arise. I have chosen nine main zines to analyse in depth (as outlined above), but have used other Australian zines from the same scene, lyrics from anarcha-hardcore bands popular in the scene, and other cultural forms such as fliers, lyric sheets, patches, leaflets/posters, and on-line information as support material. I have also referred to material produced by anarcha-punk identified sources internationally but only if I accessed them through my participant observation in Australia, and always with reference to their relationship to this specific scene: the extent of their popularity in, or influence on, this scene.

My methods are standard qualitative ethnographic and deconstructive cultural studies textual approaches, with the primary innovation being my involvement in the culture both before and during (and presumably after) the research. The primary task of such research is therefore that of narrating “meanings generated by actors gathered through participant observation, interviews, focus groups and textual analysis.” (Barker 2000, p.27).
For the zines, my primary methods are *content analysis* and *textual analysis* of these primary sources, including some quantitative methods, but I also include supplementary data gathered from *participant observation*, the influence of which should not be understated. What I mean by this is that my understanding of the context of the politics of the zines was obviously affected and enhanced greatly by my participation in these scenes during my research and my ability to contextualise how the zines figured as part of DIY anarchist practice, and how they are “read”. My starting point of involvement in the scenes is an attempt to eschew the application of pre-conceived concepts as a researcher which, as I quoted Wood as suggesting earlier, is characteristic of academic studies which do not possess “sufficient and substantive knowledge of the phenomenon in question” (Wood 1999, p.134).

My approach to the zines themselves could also be called *ethnographic content analysis* as this “is also oriented to documenting and understanding the communication of meaning, as well as verifying theoretical relationships” (Altheide 1996, p.16). This is what I would suggest I have in common with McLaughlin in his study of zines, when he writes that his tactic is to “examine the explicit and implicit theoretical work done in the zines” (McLaughlin 1997, p.62, emphasis added). In the same way, I have focused on form, content and distribution of the zines as a way to analyse explicit and implicit “theory”, because in the words of Duncombe (1997), zines’ “politics reside less in what they say and more in what they are” (p.166). As I suggested in reference to Chartier (1988) earlier, my rejection of an ideological context allows me to see these zines as discursive practices. Chartier explains that viewing discourses as practices entails
not reading them only in order to ascertain the overall ideology that they contain but taking into account their mechanisms, their rhetorical apparatuses and their demonstrative strategies....[T]he arrangement of discourse - classification systems, criteria for distinctions, modes of representation, for example - can by no means be reduced to the theories that produce them and that they are supposed to verify. (Chartier 1988, p.10)

Atton (2004) takes a similar approach to alternative media culture:

I propose a theoretical and a methodological framework that incorporates content as one element in an alternative media culture that is equally interested in the processes and relations that form around alternative media production. That is, I define alternative media as much by their capacity to generate non-standard, often infractory, methods of creation, production and distribution as I do by their content. (2002, pp.3-4).

Thus, in *Alternative Media*, Atton advocates a textual reading and an ethnographic approach:

In a subject that is still developing and for which in some circles a case still needs to be made, I think it important to provide case studies that at times approach ethnography and at others offer close textual and organizational readings (Atton 2002, p.3)

My poststructuralist position grew from a non-foundationalist feminist methodological approach, wherein I was first encouraged to consider the completely subjective nature of research and reject any claims of scientific objectivity, emanating from deconstructions of truth claims which masked gender hierarchies behind claims of “objective universality”. Thus it is that many feminists have emphasised the debt owed by poststructuralist theorists in the contestation of transcendental truth claims, in that
feminists were first to propose that "science itself is a social product ... scientists are socially situated human beings with partial vision, and ... no scientific method ensures access to some incontrovertible 'truth'." (Ramazanoglu in Stanley 1990 p.45).

Suggestions have been made by feminists and postmodernists for ways to avoid the “power relations and personal cross-purposes” (Barker 2000, p.28) of scientific truth claims of “objectivity”. Among these are the elaboration of my assumptions, views and positions as a researcher, as well as consultation with the subjects (Cook & Fonow in Stanley 1990, p.38). This is why I emphasise the participant observation aspect of my research, and attempt to make transparent the ways in which my theorisations on these zines were supported or confirmed, or affected in any way, by my wider observations. In other words, I am “refusing to see experience as ‘un-scientific’” (Cook & Fonow 1990, p.38). My rejection of objectivity and challenge to traditional epistemological notions point towards my methodological approach as also being a feminist postmodernist epistemology which

has its origins in, first, a feminist scepticism of all universalising claims, derived from semiotics, deconstructionism and psychoanalysis and their rejection of any notion of a ‘more authentic self’; and, second, in the rejection by black feminists in particular that all women do ‘share experiences’. (Stanley 1990, p.27)

Having explained my understanding of the multiplicity of “poststructuralist” theories, and thus my approach of addressing them as plural, rather than as “Theory”, I wish also to justify my use of different and specific theories without undue adherence to their relation to their creator's entire body of work and its relation to other theorists’ entire bodies of
work, elements of whose work I may have used concurrently.

My language and use of terms

Gendered language:

My choice to replace much gendered language in the thesis with alternatives is a deconstructionist political tactic, the aim of which is to make apparent the gender bias in claims of default “neutrality” in language. In this thesis, therefore, I have replaced the word “seminal” with “germinal”, following the example of Heckert (2005), and also, following feminist practice and the zine makers of my study, replaced “human” with “humyn”, “women” with “wimmin” and “woman” with “wumun”. In addition, there are various occasions where I have chosen to use a word in its originary form but put a line through it (for example: woman), so that it is placed “under erasure” (Derrida 1976, p.xiv) in order to demonstrate the necessity of its use, with my simultaneous desire to foster deconstructive readings of it. There are occasions, especially in Chapter Three, where it is necessary for me to use the traditional spellings of “woman” and “women” for particular reasons, such as to demonstrate the exact language used in the zines. This will always be made clear, however, and I have attempted to make my default uses the politically tactical ones outlined above. I have also replaced the traditional “anarchohardcore” / “anarcho-punk” with “anarcha-hardcore / punk”, following the lead of anarcha-feminists to demonstrate the gender default of this term.
The scene:

In *The Philosophy of Punk*, O’Hara describes the use of the word “scenes” in punk in this way: “The ‘scene’ is the punk community and the word they use to describe it. There are local scenes, national scenes, and worldwide scenes. The subsections of the punk movement also use the term to describe themselves, e.g. the Straight Edge scene” (1995, p.3). In this thesis the default scene I am referring to is the Australian DIY anarcha-hardcore punk scene. By doing so, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only, or even the major, scene in Australia, merely the one which fulfilled the purposive aims of my thesis. This also does not necessarily extend my assertions to any scenes which overlap with these scenes internationally or nationally, although it is possible there may be continuities.

The following explanation, taken from major international hardcore punk zine *MaximumRockandRoll*, refers to the American hardcore scene, but also explains some of the roots of the international scenes and their relation to what is traditionally considered “punk” – the ’78 style of punk which preceded hardcore. Yohannan writes that

[the American punk scene] blossomed in ’77 or ’78. Then by around ’80 or so it started losing its vitality – it became more commercialized and a lot of the original ethic of it was lost. Then around ’80, ’81 or so hardcore started as a reaction against what punk had become, against the wimping out of punk and its values. And those people who said they were into “hardcore” punk were referring to the harder-edged [style] of both the music and ideals. So it was sort of a rejuvenation that a younger crop of kids were spear-heading, and the music was even shorter and louder than before. (Fenster 1993, p.76)

The kids:
The quote from Yohannan above exemplifies the use of “kids” in punk and hardcore, to mean the participants in the culture. It is a part of the punk culture’s vernacular, exemplified by Sham 69’s (1978) song “if the kids are united.” This could be an indication of the age range of punks, which Fenster posits as “teenagers and post-adolescents,” (1993, p.74) although my participant observation indicates that the anarcha-hardcore scene in Australia has growing numbers of participants whose ages exceed the category “post-adolescent”, indicated by many respected participants of the scene whose ages exceed thirty, and a smaller number who exceed forty.

**Zine / band surnames:**

In my thesis I have followed another aspect of zine and punk/hardcore vernacular, that of replacing someone’s surname with their zine name or band name. A well-known example of this is Aaron Cometbus, who produces the internationally distributed zine *Cometbus*. In this thesis I have used this naming convention for some of the zine makers and band members who were known in this way in the scene.

**Distro:**

A distro is a DIY distributor of various cultural products such as records, CDs, tapes, zines, patches, band shirts and other clothes. They are a feature of most punk scenes, the zine underground, other music scenes, and various other political and cultural movements. Their defining feature is their independence. They operate in various ways, such as through mail order, at shows (concerts), at zine fairs and festivals, or from the
internet. They are rarely operated for profit, and rarely make a profit, much like the production of zines and most other DIY products.

**CrimethInc.:**

CrimethInc. is a publisher and distributor of DIY and punk material, as well as a moniker open for anyone. In this way it functions like many anarchist pseudo-organisations such as the E.L.F. (Earth Liberation Front), Black Bloc and Food not Bombs, which are not centralised “organisations” but rather diffuse tendencies. Its function as a moniker explains why I have so many references credited to “CrimethInc.” in the thesis, in that it is a convenient label for any publishers, writers or activists associated with anarcha-hardcore, DIY or both to retain anonymity for their work for any number of reasons, most commonly to avoid “vanguardism”. This moniker function also explains why it may be that materials produced under this name can be contradictory and varied.

**Straightedge:**

“Straightedge” is a prevalent lifestyle practice in punk and hardcore, the basic tenets of which are the abstinence from drugs, tobacco and alcohol. Some who identify with the practice also abstain from casual sex. *Wikipedia* identifies it as a “mostly youth-oriented lifestyle and (counter cultural) subculture.” The encyclopedia also goes on to say that although straight-edges do not necessarily identify with a particular worldview on social or political issues, many do subscribe to precepts associated with anarchism, vegetarianism, socialism, veganism, environmentalism and the ecology movement. (‘Straightedge’, *Wikipedia*)
Cultural aspects of the practice include 3 x’s as a symbol of straightedge: “xxx”. Further, to use the letter x at either side of one’s name shows that one is straightedge, eg. xLucyx. Those who identify with it also tend to draw black x’s on the top of their hands with marker pen, a practice said to derive from the tendency of bar owners to put black crosses on underage show-attendees’ hands in order that they may attend shows with assurance that the bar tender would not serve them alcohol. Many hardcore bands have straightedge oriented lyrics, and the term is often attributed Ian MacKaye’s band *Minor Threat* in the 1980s, although he himself does not associate with it as a movement.

**Riot grrrl:**

Riot grrrl is a genre of hardcore/punk music played by wimmin, united more by a feminist ethos than a style. It developed from the punk scene in the USA in the early 1990s as a reaction to the perceived male-dominance and machismo of the punk scene, as a way to address the lack of wimmin in punk and to counter the sexism. It soon grew into a distinct movement or scene and many zines, bands, websites, groups / chapters and various DIY products were / are produced under the moniker, with heavy influence from previous feminisms. In some ways it functions like the anarchist monikers which I outlined above, as the term is available for anyone to do/produce what they see fit under its name, either autonomously or as an autonomous “chapter”. *Queercore* is a similar aspect of punk culture as riot grrrl; it refers not so much to a style of punk, as to a queer ethos, defined by the bands, zines, shows, festivals and the individuals affiliated with it.
Outline

My first chapter proceeds with redescriptions of two, often diverging, approaches to anti-authoritarian politics: classical anarchist theory and, by contrast, contemporary Australian DIY anarchist culture as described in the zines. Through this I am able to identify key divergences between the two traditions’ politics: differing conceptions of the operation of power, gauged by their conceptions of what constitutes “the political”; and subsequently divergent conceptions of “revolution” and approaches to resisting domination. With the invocation of poststructuralist theory, I investigate how far such divergences between the two approaches to anarchism can be described as a matter of theory. In this way I draw parallels (and identify important limits) between poststructuralist reconceptualisations of power and its subsequent expansions of “the political”, and DIY anarchism’s expanded political foci. I am able to use a poststructuralist theoretical approach to discuss the DIY anarchist turn to culture as part of a political project, but I also demonstrate some important theoretical inconsistencies in the zines.

By approaching anarchism from a genealogy of practice, as a tendency and an ethos rather than Theory, I am able to eschew somewhat the theoretical paradigm and look to the uses of diverging theories by DIY anarchism as an ethico-political project. I end Chapter One by addressing the “tactical” political approach of DIY anarchism which reflects not only a poststructuralist premise of power’s mechanisms, but also its nature as a politics predicated on an ethical aim, not theoretical consistency. This motivates me, in
Chapter Two, to interrogate the values upon which such an ethico-political approach is founded.

Chapter Two takes as its premise these ethical limits alluded to in Chapter One, and addresses how primarily critical or transgressive approaches to politics, predicated as they are on the “necessary error” (Butler 1993, p.230, borrowing from Spivak) of what they transgress, do, nonetheless, offer normative foundations and ethical bases. With reference to certain aspects of Queer Theory, I am able to demonstrate that DIY anarchism is predicated in a positive valorisation of self-creation. An understanding of ethics as “self-governance” problematises definitions of anarchism as a purely “anti-governance” approach, and I thus address how it is that the practice can mediate between desirable and undesirable governance with reference to Foucauldian distinctions between types of power, and the value-based distinctions therein. I introduce problematisations to this ethos of self-governance by questioning the origins of the capacities to develop such an ethos, and in the process open this topic for further development in Chapter Three where the same problematisation is present, this time with regards to a specifically feminist ethos.

The orientation to the self in DIY anarchist gender politics I address, as with Chapter Two, as an ethico-political practice which draws upon some of the “conceptual vocabulary” (Newman 2003) of governmentality. I analogue the ethico-political orientation of DIY anarchism to gender with specific poststructuralist feminist practices which are premised on similar contentions that gender has congealed through the
dispersed and productive mechanisms of power, so that it is a seemingly fixed discursive system of normativity. Continuing the problematisation opened in Chapter Two, I address the contingency of the development of the ethos and its relations with wider social contexts.

Chapter One: DIY and Poststructuralist Anarchism

Introduction

This chapter seeks to understand the usefulness of poststructuralist theory for analysing the approach to politics in contemporary Australian DIY anarchism. Further, it sets out to demonstrate limits to a theoretical approach and lays the groundwork for ethico-political analyses in the subsequent chapters. Starting from classical anarchist approaches to politics, I demonstrate how the zines in my analysis posit an approach for DIY anarchism which diverges from that of classical anarchism. Different poststructuralist approaches are then applied in order to gauge their powers to account for this anarchist politics.

The chapter begins with an outline of classical anarchist theorists’ presuppositions in order that I may then interrogate these in the context of the contemporary DIY
manifestation of anarchism. I propose that classical anarchism took as its key principle an opposition to government, which it assumed to be repressive in nature and vested primarily in the state. I further argue that the project of classical anarchism to eradicate the state by means of revolution was predicated on a humanistic assumption that there is an “outside” to power, in the form of a natural capacity for harmony.

The DIY anarchist approach, as demonstrated by the zines in my analysis, expresses disillusionment with the state as the target for change. In addition, DIY anarchists often allude to the presence and operations of “governance” on other terrains, such as in everyday interactions and in discourses. This leads them to an “everyday revolution” approach to resistance, which posits that self-transformation, culture-creation and subversion are all political acts.

Poststructuralist theory is then described as sharing with the DIY anarchist approach a refutation of centralised notions of dominance / “governance”. I address the perception by some poststructuralists that “spurious unities” (Hindess 1986) assumed to be the source of dominance are mere symbols and do not reflect the mechanisms of dominance. Poststructuralism, then, offers alternative accounts of “power” and “governance” to the centralised and repressive presuppositions in classical anarchism. To an extent the theoretical redescriptions of power obtained from these accounts of governmentality can help us to understand how DIY anarchism continues the anarchist project of rejecting governance, but in the context of a poststructuralist “conceptual vocabulary” (Newman 2003).
I analyse the approaches to resistance in the zines in terms of poststructuralist arguments that power, and thus governance, operate productively by enabling actors within the limits of available discursive positions. From here it is possible to read the DIY anarchist focus on the interrogation and subversion of various discourses or “ways of being” as modes of resistance: deconstructions preceding and constituting the prefiguration of other “ways of being” which are aware of these limits.

Finally, I problematise a purely theoretical approach by demonstrating inconsistencies between DIY anarchism and poststructuralist anarchist theory. If anarchist practice is approached as an aim-based politics, rather than as a coherent theory, it is only in some ways understandable within the deconstructive project of poststructuralism. Where it diverges with such deconstructive projects is in its value-based ethico-political aspects. While this basis can explain why DIY anarchism would appear to be riddled with theoretical inconsistency, it also allows for consideration of theories in tactical and ethico-political terms. I shall then follow up this broaching of the topic of the ethico-political in more detail in Chapter Two.

1) From classical anarchism to DIY prefiguration.

Classical anarchism
Definitions of anarchism suggest a broad project of an opposition to authority. Woodcock (1980) states that “anarchism is the doctrine which contends that government is the source of most of our social troubles” (1980, p.11). Likewise Ward’s (1973) definition of anarchism is “the absence of government, the absence of authority” (p.11). Conceptions of the source and mechanisms of anarchism’s enemy of “authority” or “governance” can be deduced by the foci of different approaches to the project of anarchism. Woodcock attests to a common conflation, in classical anarchism, of governance with the State when he remarks that it is “authoritarian institutions that warp and atrophy [man’s –sic] …cooperative inclinations.” (1980, p.18, emphasis added).

Classical anarchism can be read in a poststructuralist context then as operating in or departing from a top-down / macro-political, centralised and repressive perspective on the mechanisms of power, demonstrated through its conflation of governing with the State.

Anarchism arose partly from critique of the economic reductionism of Marxism, which posited that Capitalist economic arrangements were the root of domination, and that the institution of the State was not inherently dominating. In its critique of Marxist reductionism, anarchism seemed to begin the project of opening autonomous forms of domination to criticism, and a wider notion of “government” or “governance”. As I have demonstrated above, however, much of the literature of classical anarchism went on to privilege the State as the principal Political terrain of domination. This widening of the political to other autonomous sites of power away from the economic base is one of
anarchism’s most innovative theoretical offerings, and is something which poststructuralist approaches to anarchism can build upon. Newman (2003), for example, states that what he sees as “innovative and seminal in anarchism is the theorization of the autonomy and specificity of the political domain, and the deconstructive critique of political authority” (Newman 2003). The shortcoming of the classical anarchist approach to non-economic conceptions of power though is that whilst the State “constituted an autonomous site or place of power, [it is the] one that must be destroyed as the first act of revolution.” (Newman 2003, emphasis added). Thus it is that, to an extent, classical anarchism suffered this same reductionism as the Marxism from which it split.

This privileging of the State as the source of governance would make the primary project of anarchism a rejection of the state. This project of “smashing the state” requires little consideration of what would replace it, owing to a priori assumptions that the act of eradicating the State would reveal a harmony natural or innate to humyns, currently repressed by the State. The priority of traditional anarchism, then, was a revolution which would “smash the state”, but it is a project necessarily predicated on a foundationalist humanism to justify what would replace the State’s perverting force.

The concentration by classical anarchism on the State as the exclusive site of Political power and dominance is reliant on and symptomatic of a centralised, “repressive” and, more importantly for this discussion, external conception of “power”, wherein power is conflated with domination and is conceived of as something to be eradicated by revolution. The classical anarchist precondition for such an aim is the assumption of an
uncontaminated outside to “power” in subjects, power being the repressive force which perverts and prevents the harmony of the *natural* laws of humyn “nature”. As Newman (2001, p. 34) puts this: classical anarchism “demands a pure place of revolution, and it finds it in natural essence, in an essential human subjectivity”. This, then, is classical anarchism’s ontological “uncontaminated point of departure” (Newman 2001).

Kropotkin’s point of departure, for example, was the assumption of an innate human *sociability*, apparent in his statement that any institution which “depends on coercion for its existence…is a perversion of *natural order*” (emphasis added, Woodcock 1980, p.19). Likewise, Proudhon relied on a foundationalist point of departure in the guise of a natural “sense of justice” present in everyone, to further theorise anarchist freedom (Woodcock 1980, p.20). Thus it is that most classical anarchist discourses relied on the concepts of humyn nature, a natural order and a natural law to allay the charges that anarchism would result in chaos (Woodcock 1980, p.16). This conception of humyn nature taken as a point of departure by anarchism is diametrically opposed to the Hobbesian “fear and self-interest” conception of humyn nature, which is the point of departure for liberal theories of the social contract. This contrary conception of human nature asserts that life in a state of “anarchy” would be “nasty, brutish and short”, yet both share the Enlightenment assumption of a foundationalist humyn nature as a premise for their political assertions.

Since the humanism of much classical anarchism assumed that underneath the perversions of State domination the humyn subject was a rational and autonomous being, anarchists did not see a need to expand notions of “the political”, as power could be
assumed to be working externally and repressively upon a coherent subject, which was free from power. It is in this way that classical anarchism assumed that power was avoidable, necessarily negative, and certainly external to humyn subjects. This makes classical anarchism’s ultimate aim a “Freedom from” (Holloway 2002, p.213, emphasis added) the forces of repressive power and governance, which classical anarchist analyses grounded in centralism and the State. Anarchism needed this humanism, then, to justify its approach to revolution as a centralised “once-and-for-all cataclysmic struggle” (Ward 1973, p.136) which would allow for a natural order uncontaminated by “power”.

A simple definition of anarchism as the rejection of all governance is problematised by taking humyn nature as its point of ethical departure. I have demonstrated that classical anarchists often alluded that “when government is abolished new sources of order will naturally be tapped” (Krimerman & Perry 1966, p.3) so that this “natural law” would replace the un-natural law of the state, and would prevent the much-feared chaos of anarchy. The value judgement that governance by the State is an undesirable governance, but the governance of “natural law” is a desirable governance, thus constitutes a limit to the simple “opposition to governance” according to which anarchism is often defined. The justification for such a value judgement lay in dubious appeals to nature.

Emma Goldman is a classical anarchist who held a similarly foundationalist point of departure for anarchism’s aims, but assumed not so directly that the desired harmony would result necessarily and directly only from an overthrowing of the State. She asserts
that, “As to individualism, at no time in human history did it have less chance of expression, less opportunity to assert itself in a normal, healthy manner” (Goldman, 1969, p.77). This statement is still predicated on a foundation, that of a humyn capacity to achieve such an “individualism” (in the anarchist sense of autonomy), and a value judgement, that such autonomy is more desirable than the external governance of the state. But Goldman’s articulations of anarchism as an aim-based politics towards autonomy also seemed to assume that the capacities for autonomy, while to some extent “natural” in that they are possible and desirable, also required fostering. Thus it is that, when addressing anarcha-feminism, she was one of the first anarchists to encourage anarchism to focus not only on the external aspects of power, the State, but also the “the internal tyrants, far more harmful to life and growth…[of] ethical and social conventions” (Goldman 1969, p.227). Her faith, then, is in an innate capacity of humyns to achieve, with fostering, complete agency and autonomy.

**Zines, DIY anarchism and the expansion of “the political”**

A principal divergence of the anarchist zines in my study from their (at least male\(^{10}\)) classical anarchist lineage is their overt rejection, and feeling of disempowerment and futility, with anarchism’s traditional enemy, source of power and thus target for protest, embodied in the State. Concomitantly they express disillusionment with the classical anarchist notion of central and one-off “revolution” which would overthrow the State. This represents an important break with classical anarchism, the primary objective of

---

\(^{10}\) As I have demonstrated Emma Goldman’s analysis of power was less state-focused.
which was a revolution which would “smash the state”.

The criticisms of parliamentary reform inherent in Dan On Fire's statement that "I am afraid to hear the results of another election I will not vote in” (Dan, On Fire p. 5) can be read as a classical anarchist rejection of the centralised representative power that is classical anarchism's enemy. He suggests that any political party is equally problematic, when he says that “for all the changes, Labour, Liberal, Laboural, Libour, One Nation, everything stays the same” (Dan, On Fire p. 5; p. 14). This is an articulation of classical anarchism’s rejection of the governance embodied in the state and is not a radical departure from classical anarchist anti-stateism. Disillusionment felt in the context of the beginning of the 2003 invasions of Iraq for the “war on terror” extends this typical anarchist anti-stateism to symbols of control such as “the war machine”, suggesting that appeals for change targeted at State symbols is impotent, statements which point towards a conception of the State as not quite such a coherent and unified, all-powerful entity which classical anarchism assumed its enemy to be.

In retrospect I feel we did so little…but what was the reality that anything would change? I remember someone saying…we thought if we stood up we could make a difference…but did we really? Did any of us really believe we could make a difference, or did we just do it symbolically, to have our voices heard? It all felt so overwhelming, I never really thought we could stop the war machine. If we believed enough could we have acted in ways which would bring about change? (Amy, No More Waiting)

This quote simultaneously invokes a totalising symbol of power in “the war machine” and also the idea that appeals to such a symbol of seemingly coherent repressive power are merely symbolic.
What assumptions about the operations of power, then, do appear in the zines? Analysis of what is deemed to be effectively resistive, and how the zines differently theorise “revolutionary” activity, can offer an insight into what the zines consider to be “political” and thus how they conceive of power or domination.

In the same context of the war, Anwyn in *Secret Archives of the Recent Past* also rejects the “absurdity” of the traditional format of protest, and suggests potentially more abstract methods of resistance which eschew engagement with the centralised issue targeted in protests reacting to what is occurring on the macro-political terrain.

In the weeks before the war began I went to the biggest protest there’s ever been in this city and I was bored. There were 250,000 people, we could have shut down the place, stopped working and paying and started talking to each other. But instead we walked slowly in a circle. There were a bunch of us dressed as pirates, we had a theme going for a while, MUTINY flags painted with glitter glue onto floral bedsheets. We shouted cheesy slogans: ‘make the bastards walk the plank! The boats of the rich should all be sank!’ I’m glad we were stupidly funny and dressed up. It suited the absurdity of the whole situation. (Anwyn, *Secret Archives of the Recent Past*)

While Anwyn chooses still to engage in such protest, her desired alternatives are to “shut down the place, stop … working and paying and start … talking to each other”. She seems to reject the appeals to the perceived sources of power, and instead advocates a “parallel power”. In *Lezzarine*, Melamoo also expresses her boredom with traditional “reformist” activism, writing that the creative DIY cultural politics of riot grrrl punk appealed to her as it was “a change from the rally/march boredom” (*Lezzarine*) of Political activism. A number of the zines (*Lezzarine, Personality Liberation Front, Ugly*...
Duckling) make reference to their involvement with the “bedroom politics” (Harris 2001) / “Revolutions from Within” (Rosenberg & Garofalo 1998) of riot grrrl, a movement which, like its feminist influences, focuses a great deal on the transformation in consciousness of those who participate in it (both grrrls and boiz). The primary methods by which it seeks to do this are through the cultural media of music and zines.

Allusions to “everyday revolution” are commonplace not only in riot grrrl but also in the DIY anarchy-hardcore scene, as exemplified by the statement in On Fire zine that “revolution is building. It is in these words. It is in your hearts.” (Daniel, On Fire). Likewise, Kylie writes that the “concept of ‘revolution’ I feel a connection with is not one of a far-in-the-future armed insurrection straight from the pages of a dusty old textbook, but one that starts with our every day lives” (Kylie, Ladies Liberation Handbook #3, 2004). These allusions to everyday revolution appeal to selves (“hearts”), and to culture (“words”) as places where “revolution” can “build”. This is a rejection of, and allusion to the futility of, the centralised “once-and-for-all cataclysmic” (Ward 1973, p.136) revolution of classical anarchism, and represents a more transient and ongoing notion of what constitutes “revolutionary” action. Kylie further supports this with the statement in Ladies Liberation Handbook #3 that her definition of revolutionary activity is “stealing back moments of liberation”.

Dan, Melamoo, Kylie and Anwyn gesture towards culture and everyday arrangements as political. As Dan puts this, the DIY punk community is resistive / revolutionary through its self-creation of culture:
They may not believe us, but our punk community is a community of resistance... We struggle to make our own culture, we subvert their images, we make our own images and we dress ourselves (even if it is just sewing on patches to transform a boring pair of jeans into a flag of defiance). We are the bubbles of the wave of revolution that is yet to come (Dan, *On Fire*).

Much of what is regarded as resistive or “revolutionary” activity in the DIY anarcha-punk scene could be described in terms of “prefiguration”, described as “the demonstration or rehearsal or sample of how life could be in a better world [which] is usually but not always transgressive.” (Greenway in Bowen & Purkis 1997, p.175). Prefigurative DIY is perhaps one narration of creative “parallel power”: the things “apart from protest [which] could happen” dreamed of by Anwyn in *Secret Archives of the Recent Past*. The DIY anarcha-punk community’s principal activities are indeed the creation of culture, a major element of which is the creation of zines. Yet the principal element – the only thing that is a necessary element and thus the guarantee of the commonality of *all* punk culture – is music.

The following quote is from the lyrics of 1905, a Canadian anarcha-hardcore – “folk”, in their own words - band whose DIY produced and distributed releases (on CD and LP) have found their way to DIY punk distributors in Australia, and have thus gained popularity in the anarcha-DIY punk scene in Australia. The following example of prefiguration is from a song entitled “Can't change everything”:

11 To gain a sense of their relation to the scene, 1905's releases are distributed from Sydney in *Paint it Black* punk and hardcore record and zine store (which also stocks *Coughing up Legomen, SARP, NMW, On Fire* and *PLF* zines) and in Brisbane and Wollongong through *Beating Hearts Press* anarcha-punk zine and record distro, who also distribute much *CrimethInc.* material and *On Fire* and *PLF* zines. To gain an idea of accessibility, both distributors have paper-based mail order catalogues (a common punk distro feature) and often take their distros to shows both in their home cities and on national tours with bands.
Just because I can't change everything
Doesn't mean I can't change anything...
To envision a world without chains but recognise that we, as individuals, can only
chip away at the links one at a time, day by day. To have the ability to wage quiet
wars in our everyday lives and recognize the subtle victories when they happen…
One brick today
Is one less for tomorrow.

(1905, Voice, 2002)

While, as I have stated, music is the principal commonality of “punk”, there are
significant divergences in sub-genres and in form and content. Yet this does not devalue
the fact that it is the principal cultural creation of punk and as such, highly reflective of
its differing values. Punk and hardcore music are routinely described as “more than
Noise” (Kylie, Personality Liberation Front #3, 2002), “more than self-expression”
(Aphra Behn lyrics, 2003) or “more than … consumptive fun” (Dan On Fire).

Belladonna DIY Fest, a free three day DIY anarchy-punk festival of shows and
workshops for which the Belladonna DIY zine was made, is exemplary of the privileging
of message and “ethos” over form in DIY punk. The performers were chosen for their
DIY ethos rather than their adherence to a particular style of punk / hardcore. Thus, the
Belladonna festival included a range of styles including hardcore, acoustic, folk-punk,
screamo, emo, thrash, metalcore, post-hardcore and post-punk.

The practice of including lyric sheets is a notable feature of hardcore, as integral an
element of the genre as the screaming singing style which makes the lyrics

---

12 It would take another thesis to describe the sub-genres of punk. For a good overview of genres see the
list of punk genres on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_punk_genres), and the list of
hardcore genres (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hardcore_punk_genres)
indecipherable. Solo artist Both Hands stated in Belladonna zine that “the words I write to accompany the music come much harder, and in many ways are more important to me, than the music itself” (Both Hands, Belladonna DIY zine). Lyric sheets are photocopied and come with records or CDs or are distributed for free at shows. The lyric sheet is often in the form of a zine and often has further paragraph explanations to the lyrics.  

Graffiti and stencil art are also common practices in both DIY anarchy-hardcore (attested to by the stencil-making workshop at Belladonna DIY fest) and in other DIY communities where zines are also an integral element. Such cultural practices appear regularly in images throughout the zines (but mainly in No More Waiting, Secret Archives of the Recent Past, and Coughing up Legomen.). In Secret Archives of the Recent Past, Anwyn describes an occasion where she was engaged with the “creation of narratives” through graffiti, as a method of political intervention:

During the weeks of the war I spent several nights down alleyways with spraycans in my hand. We were creating fractured narratives on various walls, trying to drag the stories back towards some kind of truth. I spent hours cutting out stencils of john howard, photocopying huge pictures of riot police, filling egg shells with red paint. making visible the connections between army and police, military/paramilitary. protestors/terrorists. war/criminalisation. we were trying to find some space in the city beyond law, surveillance, trying to spark thoughts, conversations. (Anwyn, Secret Archives of the Recent Past)

Addressing the reasons for prefigurative approaches to politics, Anwyn asserts that “we need our own histories, because we’re never gonna hear them spoken back to us on screen” (Secret Archives of the Recent Past). She concludes, in a valorisation of

---

13 For example The Night Crash [Brisbane], Existence is Dead [Brisbane], The Plague [Wollongong], the Execution [Melbourne], Pure Evil [Sydney]
prefiguration, that “The only hope you have, the only hope any of us has, is the remade life.” (Anwyn, *Secret Archives of the Recent Past*).

The self-reflexivity of DIY makes explicit how its participants view their engagements with DIY culture. This may help us to address the question of what values DIY politics are based on. The *Belladonna DIY Zine* presented various punks’ views on DIY. One interviewee summarised DIY as:

> The conscious attempt by people to create a culture independent of the coercion and institutionalised violence that characterises the forces of Capitalism and mass (produced) culture. It’s also about taking it upon yourself to learn new, practical skills. I feel the foundation of this idea is empowerment. (*Belladonna DIY zine*)

Relating this directly to the cultural level, another interviewee answered that “what DIY meant to them” was being “able to control the production of my own meaning.” Another responded that “in DIY culture, the emphasis is on personal and mutual fulfilment – sharing ideas, resources, and creations, rather than seeking to make individual profits.”

In *Hunter/Gatherer*, a zine dedicated to the political implications of DIY cultures which alludes often to its role as creating “folklore” for the DIY punk community, the values of DIY are summarised as follows:

> So here it is in one sentence: When we speak of liberty, we mean the creation of our own cultural context for life, which is necessarily collective; when we speak of autonomy, we mean the opportunity to do that creating without interference. (CrimethInc., *Hunter/Gatherer*)
What is interesting about these above definitions is their firm dedication to individual *as well as* collective “fulfilment”. This is a major divergence from much of the academic literature on DIY politics which tends to homogenise the term and conflate its use with neo-liberal individualism (cf. Bail 1996, Harris 1999).

In the following chapter I address the ethical aspects of zines and DIY in more detail; and in particular, their articulation of the ethos of DIY anarchism as self-creation. At this point, however, I wish to address the question of how far poststructuralist theory can be used to understand the approaches of DIY and zines to politics. This necessitates a temporary shift in my discussions away from the zines and towards more theoretical concerns.

2) **Issues of poststructuralism**

If DIY anarchism rejects “symbols” of domination such as “the State” and “the war machine” for prefigurative alternative conceptions of politics, there are also poststructuralist theories that question the apparent unity of such symbols of domination and their potential to act as “social actors”. With certain poststructuralist theories, these symbols can be redescribed in contingent, non-structural terms. Discussing these redescriptions of how power operates can provide us with a theoretical framework for understanding why it is that subjects and culture are key elements of the zines’ revolutionary projects. In addition, however, these redescriptions can also problematise
the some understandings of the prefigurative project itself, in that they also de-centre unified understandings of how “culture” and discourses constitute subjects in return for a contingent and practical understanding of their role.

Outlining Foucauldian poststructuralist reconceptualisations of the mechanisms of power, with the help of “governmentality” theory, I will demonstrate how such approaches differentiate between the notions of domination and power, and posit how it is that power, seen as the interaction of social forces, operates. It is then possible to link this back to the kind of subjects this approach to power presupposes, in comparison to many classical anarchist theorists’ humanistic a priori. Relating this to how the contemporary anarchism expressed in the zines, armed with the ethos of anarchism, addresses their telos within these reconceptualisations of power and domination, I will describe a turn towards the micro-political which can be analysed with reference to “poststructuralist anarchism”.

Structures as “spurious unities”

How can we understand the eschewal of protest, of traditional anarchist activism aimed at the State, by the self-proclaimed anarchist-oriented creators of these zines?

Barry Hindess (1986) has criticised the way in which those working in the paradigms of humanism - as is the case of classical anarchism - and Marxism have often conflated

---

14 Telos: “the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way” (Foucault 1991, p.355).
societies or classes as “actors”, that is, in Hindess’ words, as “things that formulate decisions and act on them” (1986, p.116). Traditional anarchists assumed that the state was such an actor, and consequently developed their politics of resistance in reference to this “enemy”. This problem of conflation is repeated by some participants in the contemporary anarchist scene, as attested to by the invocation of DIY as a method to resist “mass-produced culture” and “Capitalism” (*Belladonna DIY Zine*).

Other participants in the scene reject such a “strategic” or totalising approach to power’s mechanisms. For example, some literature by DIY anarcha-punk collective *CrimethInc.* seeks to decentralise understandings of domination and asserts that “there is no mythical 'they'” (2001, p.81) who are the enemy; "our social and economic relations are snarled and harmful in such complex ways that no secret society of geniuses could ever have arranged this fate for us." (2001, p.81). *CrimethInc.* thus offers a de-personalised perspective on issues of power and domination:

> Our true 'enemy' is the social forces and patterns at work between us, and it is these forces which we must come to understand and to struggle against. This is not to say that there are not individuals whose behaviour is particularly damaging to their fellow human beings, insofar as it perpetuates and intensifies our current state of emergency. But even if those individuals who do have negative intentions towards others, it is still unlikely that they possess a clear understanding of the extremely complicated conditions to which they are contributing. (2001, p.81).

Mitchell Dean (1999, p.26) likewise questions the humanist assumption that the State is “a fact of brute domination repressing our genuine humanity”. He argues that we should instead consider that “the state possesses neither this unity nor this functionality, and we should recognize that the state is but a ‘composite reality’ and a ‘mythicized abstraction’”
(1999, p.26). Hindess similarly argues that erroneously attributing the status of “actors” to abstract entities can be an obstacle to serious and informed political discussion. This occurs when the concept of actor is extended to aggregates that have no identifiable means of formulating decisions, let alone acting on them – societies, communities, classes, racial or gender categories, bureaucracy, or whatever. (1986, p.124)

For Hindess, such “spurious unities” are effects of specific social relations, rather than overarching structures which determine conduct.

Hindess’ and Dean’s anti-reductionist arguments have repercussions for how we conceive political interventions into “decision and action”. Hindess (1986, pp.116-117), for example, writes that to “blame ‘society’ for some state of affairs may be a way of suggesting that changes are desirable, but [it] tells us nothing about how they may be brought about”. In order to address how such changes may be brought about, an analysis of the mechanisms of power and governance is necessary. This kind of analysis is useful for any politics seeking social change, since it helps assign responsibility: a task that is vital for analysing social relations and deciding on what is needed to change them (Hindess 1986, p.116). In the following section I therefore outline poststructuralist conceptions of power and its mechanisms, and propose that many DIY anarchist approaches to politics seek to address “power” and oppose the domination that power relations can result in, at the level of its perceived mechanism, as opposed to its results. In this way, the understandings of power in much DIY anarchist politics can be paralleled with the analytics of governmentality.
“Power” and governmentality

Hindess’ and Dean’s arguments exemplify a usage of the term “power” that differs from the notion of a force that we and certain social composites such as classes or states possess and strategically wield. Hindess uses “social relations”, in the same way that Foucault nominally uses “power”. Foucault lends this name in an act of “nominalism” (“One needs to be a nominalist, no doubt” (Foucault in Spivak 1996, p.143)) so that “power is not an institution, and it’s not a structure; it is not a certain strength [puissance] that some are endowed with; it is the name that one lends [prêter] to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (op. cit). For Spivak, this nominalism is a methodological necessity. One needs a name for this thing whose ‘mechanism [can be used] as a grid of intelligibility of the social order.’ It is called ‘power’ because that is the closest one can get to it. This sort of proximate naming can be called catachrestic. (Spivak 1996, p.143)

The Foucauldian use of the term “power”, then, is incompatible with the primary definition of “politics” from dictionary.com which defines it as the workings of Government (in terms of the State), but is rather more akin to the sixth offering in dictionary.com's results for “politics”. This second definition opens potentially more autonomous sites of power and the Political when it defines “politics” as the “often internally conflicting interrelationships among people in a society” and even lower down, “social relations involving authority or power”. These allusions to complex situations,
grids of intelligibility for social orders and social forces, then, point towards a catachrestic usage of “power” which is not simply interchangeable with “domination”. Patton deduces that Foucault’s primary use of power is “the capacity to do or become certain things” (1994, p.61) which allows for a neutral or value-free understanding of what “power” is.

Thus it is that I have alluded already, in my discussion of classical anarchist approaches to power and poststructuralist critiques of them, to the idea that poststructuralist analyses of power reject the notion of power as only ever a repressive force of domination. These critiques derive from Foucault’s “genealogical” approach to history, in particular his genealogy of the concept of “sexuality” in *The History of Sexuality Volume One*. In that book he was led to ask the question: “Do the workings of power, and in particular those mechanisms that are brought into play in societies such as ours, really belong primarily to the category of repression?” (Foucault 1978, p.10).

Seen from this poststructuralist understanding of power and politics, then, the state-centricity of classical anarchism is as reductionist as the economistic Marxism that they themselves had critiqued. Both approaches share a totalising notion of dominating power, wherein power functions upon the subject from the macro to the micro, that is from the top-down. By contrast, Foucault undertook the project of opening up autonomous sites of power for description and analysis: a project which, as I have noted, Newman (2003) proposed that anarchism was a forerunner of, albeit one which stopped short with the state. For Foucault, however,
it is as if the State has been decentralized, and the various techniques of power - 'the disciplines' - are seen as having an autonomy of their own. They develop their own rationalities and logics, their own internal dynamics, which help to preserve their interests and expand their spheres of operation. (Pratt, Power and Resistance)

Like Hindess, Dean has posited that identifying “government” as an issue only of the State is symptomatic of a “search for an origin or a source of the power held to reside in the state, the attempt to identify which agents hold or possess that power” (1999, p.9).

If, according to these accounts, power does not reside in the State and governance does not emanate strategically from a single source, then how does it operate, what are its mechanisms so alluded to, and how does this affect anarchism’s methods for resisting it?

One of the important yields of Foucault's early genealogies which refuted the commonly held assumption that power and thus governance operate repressively, was the notion that governance does not now operate by restriction on a basically free subject through repressive punishment, but is a productive discipline which constitutes subjects.

Foucault's oft-referenced exemplification of this disciplinary and constitutive power is the idea of the Panoptic, which has been summarised as follows:

The **PANOPTICON** was proposed as a model prison by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), a Utilitarian philosopher and theorist of British legal reform. The Panopticon ("all-seeing") functioned as a round-the-clock surveillance machine. Its design ensured that no prisoner could ever see the 'inspector' who conducted surveillance from the privileged central location within the radial configuration. The prisoner could never know when he was being surveilled – mental uncertainty that in itself would prove to be a crucial instrument of discipline.

(Cartome.org 2003)
For Foucault, the ideal of panopticism emblematised a new rationality which assumed that such discipline was desirable and necessary, and which represented a constitutive technology of governance. The consciousness of a permanent visibility served the disciplinary function of inducing “in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action” (Foucault 1995, p.201). Thus it is that the panopticon has been so often cited as a metaphor for “a power situation of which [people] are themselves the bearers.” (Foucault 1995, p.201).

Patton posits that the panopticon embodies a state of domination because it is a “fixed asymmetry” of power, in that it negates the capacities for power of the subjects who are dominated by the situation (their “power to-“ (Holloway 2002, p.213)) so that they no longer have the power to “do or become certain things” (1994, p.62). Elsewhere, Hunter has outlined other disciplinary practices of government which may or may not serve the interests of states and rulers. For example he states that “the comportment of the citizen from that of the person of conscience was the achievement of a rationality & apparatus of government that replaced a spiritual politics with an administrative one” (Hunter 1993-94, p.92). More specifically, Hunter describes “the ‘moral machinery’ of popular education aimed, as Foucault puts it, at the ‘normalisation of the population’” (1988, p.75).

In Hindess’ view, social power relations operate through a “variety of diverse sites, practices and conditions” (1986, p.124) and include, but are not restricted to, relations of domination. Some poststructuralist anarchists make similarly anti-totalising arguments
when they posit that “it may be that structures like those of capitalist economic relationships are the products as much as (or more than) they are the cause of local power relationships” (May 1994, p.52). For these anarchist theorists, then, seemingly overarching “structures” like “capitalism”, with their inability to act as a cohesive whole, are effects, not causes of power.

When poststructuralist anarchists question the power of the “spurious aggregate” of capitalism to act in a unitary way, they are pursuing an alternative to the repressive hypothesis of power: a productive notion of power that sees it operating from the “micro” to the “macro”, and not from a centralised strategy. In this respect, these anarchists are indebted to Foucault, who distinguishes between a conception of power as one great “strategic” central mechanism and the tactical operations proposed by the productive hypothesis:

All these negative elements - defenses, censorships, denials - which the repressive hypothesis groups together in one great central mechanism destined to say no, are doubtless only component parts that have a local and tactical role to play in a transformation into discourse, a technology of power, and a will to knowledge that are far from being reducible to the former. (Foucault 1978, p.12)

Thus it is that Foucault opened up the study of “governmentality” - the study of technologies of governance - which is predicated on notions of the varied operations of decentralised power relations. In Dean’s account of “governmentality”, government is defined as “the conduct of conduct” (Dean 1999, p.10). This not only eschews the conflation of power with domination, but also opens our analysis to the plurality of autonomous mechanisms of governmentality.
“Governmentality” is the “connection of government and thought that is emphasized in the hybrid term” (Dean 1999, p.31). This is how Foucault explains the role of discourses in governance:

in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (Foucault 1980, p.93)

In Dean’s (1999, p.16) terms, “the way we think about exercising authority draws upon the theories, ideas, philosophies and forms of knowledge that are a part of our social and cultural products”. We “govern others and ourselves according to various truths about our existence and nature as human beings.” (Dean 1999, p.18) Thus govern-mentality is an articulation of Foucault’s previously quoted reference to “economies of discourses of truth” (Foucault 1980, p.93).

This focus on discourses has been criticised on the basis that it does not address the material; a charge that does not survive scrutiny if we are to accept Foucault’s assertions of the practical and technical – eminently “material” - relationships of dependency between modes of governance and the “economy of discourses of truth”. Similarly, de Lauretis (1986) has defended the concern with discourses as sites constitutive of power relations, positing that far from negating the material, “for those of us who work with
words, ideas, and other tools of formal knowledge, who know both the high price and the negotiability of discourses...for us, then, it is imperative that we confront these issues.” (p.6).

The opening up of autonomous sites of power which Newman appealed to as one of classical anarchism’s unfulfilled potentials, limited by its reinstitution of the “tyranny of globalizing discourses” (Foucault 1980, p.83) through state-centricity, is thus one of the projects of “poststructuralist anarchism”. There is limited literature on the synthesis of anarchism and poststructuralism, but the principal texts in this vein are Saul Newman’s 2001 book, From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, and Todd May’s 1994 The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism. Both authors have also written numerous articles on the subject and there are a small number of other short articles, both academic and more activist-based, which seek to consolidate the two ways of thinking. Newman’s project is the extension of the anarchist project, which he sees as a rejection of authority, to those sites of authority opened up by Foucauldian-derived accounts of governmentality. This is evident when he writes that

I employ a deliberately broad definition of authority: it refers not only to institutions like the state and the prison etc.; it also refers to authoritarian discursive structures like rational truth, essence, and the subjectifying norms they produce. (Newman 2001, pp.12-13)

Newman’s is a straightforward application of Foucault’s theories of governance to an anarchist context. But if governance operates, in part, through discourses which constitute
us, where does this leave agency? On what assumptions of agency is this analysis of governance predicated?

Subjects and discourses, actors and disciplines

Poststructuralist theories of discursively constituted subjects, like Judith Butler’s, rely on the interplay, contingency and specificity of particular actors’ combined and shifting positions within discourses. As Davies and Harre (2003) put this, in such accounts “the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time is [sic] a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions” (Davies & Harre 2003). It is here that the potential for resistance or agency is opened, in that these positions are constantly in process, rather than fixed as in the structural model, so that subjects are “constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate.” (Davies & Harre 2003). There is, however, an element of determinism retained in such accounts of discursive positions, wherein the discourses themselves are assumed to retain a transcendental and pre-existing meaning (which, to its credit, is often historicised) within which actors must position themselves.

The point of departure for a governmental analytics of the mechanisms of governance is a notion of actors participating in disciplinary regimes.
Government as the ‘conduct of conduct’ entails the idea that the one governed is, at least in some rudimentary sense, an actor and therefore a locus of freedom…Government presupposes the existence of subjects who are free in the primary sense of living and thinking beings endowed with bodily and mental capacities. (Dean 1999, p.13)

This agency is limited by actors’ requirements for discourses with which to position ourselves in order to make sense of the world; in order to “be”, we are “dependent on the prior existence of discursive positions…from which to comprehend the world” (Barker 2000, p.21). For Butler, we are free in so far as we can acknowledge that our constitution as subjects is contingent on what she calls a “social world I never chose” (2004, p.3) and because we have the potential to take up multiple subject positions. In Dean’s (1999) analytics of government, this dual constitution - “subjects” as subjected and as well as possessing a “subject-hood” - is explicitly associated with autonomous disciplines as elements of governance:

Regimes of government do not determine forms of subjectivity. They elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statuses to particular agents. They are successful to the extent that these agents come to experience themselves through such capacities (Dean 1999, p.32)

Hunter (1991) likewise emphasises the technical and uncertain nature of governance; he writes that “the various phenomena tagged ‘subjectivity’ are not the product of the use of essential notations and are instead variously formed in a patchwork of techniques of living where notations play a purely practical and contingent role.” (1991, p.42). This is part of looking at discourses not as transcendental ideology carriers but rather “first by taking discourses as practices - that is, not reading them only in order to ascertain the overall ideology that they contain but taking into account their mechanisms, their
rhetorical apparatuses & their demonstrative strategies” (Chartier 1988, p.10). In this way poststructuralist theorists have been able to free discourses from the hegemony / resistance Ideology model. Thus it is that Foucault stated his interest to be in the economies of discourses (1980, p.93) and de Lauretis likewise the negotiability of discourses (1986, p.6).

Deconstructions of various discourses or “economies of discourses of truth” found in the zines can be seen as examples of the poststructuralist anarchist assumption that “authority” can also apply to “discursive structures like rational truth [and] essence” (Newman 2001, pp.12-13). Further, these deconstructive conducts can be seen as examples of the limited agency of actors, in that they are “making explicit the forms of rationality and thought that inhere in regimes of practices, by demonstrating the fragility of the ways in which we know ourselves and how we govern and are governed” (Dean 1999, p.36). The reconstructions apparent in DIY prefiguration and exemplified in the zines can thus be understood as attempts to foster new ways of seeing and conducting oneself as a subject of politics.

When Anwyn describes the graffiti she created in the context of the “war on terror” as a political act, “trying to spark thoughts” (Secret Archives of the Recent Past), she is engaging with and deconstructing the forms of rationality and thought which allowed people to view the war within a certain discourse or story. Indeed she refers to the discourses of the war as narratives, suggesting that her narratives offered alternative stories for actors to place “the war” within. In Ugly Duckling, Carmen analyses the
forms of knowledge and truth offered by Anne Summers’ book *The End of Equality* and is able to bring discourses to bear on the book’s critical reception that call into question its particular way of looking at “equality”. Elsewhere, discussions of veganism\(^\text{15}\) seek to uncover discourses of truth on which meat-eating is predicated, and the practice of veganism is often articulated as a form of exemplification (this being a topic I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two). But in short, these critiques of discourses serve to “remove the taken-for-granted character of these practices...[and] open the space in which to think about how it is possible to do things in a different fashion” (Dean 1999, p.36).

These deconstructive practices then (which I posit as a part, but not the sum of contemporary DIY anarchism) have the potential to be prefigurative. Heckert (2005) stated that "breaking rules for the sake of breaking rules is merely transgressive. Breaking rules to produce new realities is prefigurative" (p.42).

This is akin to Foucault’s explicit statements of intent with his genealogies; that “it is by virtue of his continuing insistence on showing how things could now be (and could have been) otherwise” (McHoul & Grace 1993, p.119) that he turned to the examples of ancient societies. The same intent can be read from Foucault’s valorisation of the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (1980, p.81). That is, if we do not assume this to be alluding to the insurrection of some repressed essential discourses which are the link to “true” subjectivity repressed by hegemonic culture; rather if we take seriously Foucault’s critique of the repressive hypothesis and assume this to refer instead to

\(^{15}\) The abstinence from consuming all animal products.
alternative discourses, different truths in the economy of discourses, which could
demonstrate alternative rationales of governance. As discourses, zines can be approached
as providing new knowledges, new discourses or, to continue the actors metaphor, new
“scripts” in which actors may be able to exercise their real but necessarily limited agency
and improvise new possibilities.

3) The limited agency of subversion (doubled vision)

What the reconceptualisations of power from poststructuralism mean for anarchism, then,
is that while classical anarchism has been posited as simply the most radical political
eexpression of the Enlightenment humanist principle of Man usurping God to take his
natural position as the centre of the universe (Newman 2001), with its humanistic a priori
of self-knowing agents, some of the approaches to anarchism apparent in DIY
acknowledge limits to agency, which can be theorised within the poststructuralist notions
of “actors” and “subject positions”.

What potentials are there then for agency in the notion of “actors”? Davies and Harre
(2003) conceive agency as a kind of “doubled vision” (de Lauretis 1987, p. 10) of a
knowledge of the “discursive practices through which one positions oneself and is
positioned”:

The (personal) political implications of attending to the discursive practices
through which one positions oneself and is positioned, are that one's speech-as-
usual with its embedded metaphors, images forms, etc, can be recognised as
inappropriate to personal/political beliefs both of one's own and of others with whom one interacts. (Davies & Harre 2003)

An example of how one might use this “doubled vision” of being knowingly constituted in what I previously quoted Butler as calling a “social world I never chose” is subversion, the act of using the discourses available to you, and which you are constituted by, to reveal their constructed-ness: a form of “double intention” (Derrida 1976, pp.xviii-xix).

I have quoted Dan On Fire as asserting DIY resistance not just through the creation of culture, but through the limited agency of subversion, when he said that in the punk “community of resistance … we subvert their images.” Dan admitted the limitations of this practice when he acknowledged that it is resistive “even if it is just” subversion (Dan, On Fire). Of course, Dan is invoking an abstract and ephemeral “they” who create the discourses through which we are constituted, an assumption of a strategic technology of power through culture. In Queen Psychotic Rage we see a manifesto for “revolutionary action” which argues for such an activity in subversive techniques, but similarly invokes a unified “system” which is the origin of the discourses to be subverted:

revolutionary action is found not within the confrontation [of domination] , but within its displacement, its deferral. Attacks against the system can only operate under the system’s terms of engagement. Revolutionary action thus seeks to turn the system on itself via subversion. Energy flows must not circulate back to the system, but flow away to the counter-economy culture. It is then an equation of critical mass. Where the system without devours the system within. (Davey, Queen Psychotic Rage)

The use of “counter-culture” is predicated on the notion of culture as an hegemonic structure, working strategically to shape subjects through its discourse. As with all
seeming “structures” in the poststructuralist context, such seeming conglomerations as “Culture” should be treated as the effects of the “patchwork” of micro arrangements, as opposed to the cause, lest the “tyrannical globalising discourse” of reductionist ideology, hegemony and resistance be reinstated. There is the danger, in theorising “counter-culture” as the resistance to “mass-culture”, of replacing “capitalism” or “the state” with another spurious unity with no more ability to act centrally and strategically. The person positing the totality is assuming that they have access to “the real”: an assumption Hunter identifies with the moment “when the specific forms in which the administration of cultural attributes first became thinkable are subordinated to a totalising ‘cultural process’” (1988, p.72). Other versions are found in Marxian cultural theories that posit culture as an ideological apparatus of the economic base, and professes to be able to see the occluded truth. Thus Raymond Williams posited his Marxian art history as the “real history” which has “a materialist grasp of the socially effective practices constituting authentic knowledges, while others possess an abstract, idealist understanding that obscures this reality” (Adair 2002, p.104).

However, this manifesto from *Queen Psychotic Rage* does also identify a “counter-culture” as exemplary of the doubled-vision necessary for the “everyday revolution” sanctioned by DIY politics which is, of course, predicated on the faith in the alternative being created, even if this faith is expressed contingently and non-foundationally, as opposed to the Marxian terms of “the real”.

Duncombe (1997) says that despite being labelled "losers by mainstream society,
zinesters write to one another, glorifying their loserdom, and in the process making this negative label a positive one" (p.20). While he, like the zine extracts above, adheres to a totalising discourse of “mainstream society”, he suggests that zinesters can resist becoming normative subjects by subversion from within these “mainstream” discourses. This can be analogised to the potential for resistance which Butler (1993, p.224) articulates for “actors” in *Bodies That Matter* in reference to the attempted “resignification” or “detoxification” of the term “queer”. In place of Duncombe's totalised mainstream society, Butler works with a diachronic idea of the “convergent force” of a discourse's meaning as an historical “citationality”, a more imminentest view of the discourses available to us. She states that we cannot “be” without the citationally congealed identities attributed to us and so “we no more create from nothing the political terms that come to represent our ‘freedom’ than we are responsible for the terms that carry the pain of social injury.” (Butler 1993, p.229).

Thus, the potential for reading the zines in poststructuralist theory is limited, in that the limits to agency are often not assumed to emanate from a contingent lack of access to discourses (cf. Hindess 1986), but by a totalised notion of a more strategic “system” or “mainstream”. As a result, zines are often self-consciously theorised as “counter-cultural” in response to a totalised “mass culture”. In Chapter Two I offer alternative and less humanistic accounts wherein zines are viewed as the means for fostering capacities for autonomy. At this point, however, I address the issue of how poststructuralist reconceptualisations of power and the political affect DIY anarchist notions of “resistance”.
Resistance

How far can the zines’ approaches to resistance and revolution be analysed by the transformations derived from poststructuralism?

I have demonstrated that the Foucauldian theory of governmentality assumes that discourses and the practices they foster are mechanisms of governance, and that poststructuralist anarchists opposed to governance view these as valid sites for intervention. I have also suggested that the notion of “actors” allows for a limited agency through acknowledging the capacity of individuals to foster a “doubled vision”. Combined with the reconceptualisations of power which predicate such ideas of limited agency, approaches to resistance and revolution are necessarily transformed. How could poststructuralist theories of actors and discourses offer an explanation as to why zines and DIY culture generally are resistive to contemporary forms of governance or domination?

The resistance of DIY, as I have discussed in reference to zines and graffiti as discourses, can be approached as attempts to intervene in the mechanisms of governance where they operate. In this way they can be seen to represent a “postanarchist” approach which, using the new understandings of power from poststructuralism, “implies a broad strategy of interrogating and contesting relations of power and hierarchy, of uncovering
previously unseen sites of domination and antagonism.” (Newman, 2003). Roger
Chartier (1988) likewise identifies “struggle over representations” to be an integral part
of power struggles: "Rival representations are just as important as economic struggles for
understanding the mechanisms by means of which a group imposes (or attempts to
impose) its conception of the social world, its values & its dominion.” (p.5)

Hunter/Gatherer, a journal/zine which I obtained from Brisbane / Wollongong Beating
Hearts distro, purports to be creating myths and folklore for and from the “decentralized,
radically participatory, do-it-yourself underground”. It seeks to account for DIY in
poststructuralist terms, using the terms “languages” where poststructuralism might use
discourses, but confirming a similar meaning to the poststructuralist uses of “discourses”
through the assertion that its use of “languages” is interchangeable with “stories”. This
publication suggests that, whilst these “languages” “set our options,” we are free to the
extent that we can make selections among these options, and asserts that we are
implicated in this process to the extent that we make the languages “as much as they
make us” (to paraphrase). Like poststructuralist theorists the writers suggest the same
constraining inescapability of discourses – an assumption evident when they assert that
“Liberty is not a condition of being undetermined - that's impossible”. But they use the
fact that “those constraints are us” to find a potential for resistance according to their
anarchist values and telos of autonomy, by concluding that “if we’re looking for liberty,
we do best to take our stand with the ones challenging the languages that exist today and
with the parts of our lives in which we currently join in interactive culture.” (CrimethInc.
Hunter/Gatherer, p.3). This is one narration of DIY culture which places the resistive
creation of culture not in opposition to a totality emanating strategically from above, but rather places this “interactive” creation of culture as a resistance to a more diffuse source of the creation of the discourses which it seeks to challenge, the continuation of which we are all implicated in, because they are what constitute us.

Actors, then, are free and have “agency” in so far as they are able only to act within the discourses they are able to cite, to “be” within. Butler is keen to emphasise these serious limits to an actor’s agency, reminding us that the “freedom” we have as actors, “does not mean that I can remake the world so that I become its maker. That fantasy of godlike power only refuses the ways we are constituted, invariably and from the start, by what is before us and outside of us” (2004, p.3). Thus it is that the presumption of DIY prefiguration as “making” entirely new discourses, as exemplified in the Hunter/Gatherer article cited above, is perhaps overstated, in that it is too close to the simplified hope in the idea that because power constitutes us, it is a simple matter of acknowledging and reclaiming that constitution via discourses to achieve the “godlike power” to become the world’s maker which Butler refuted above.

DIY prefigurations can, however, be more modestly reframed and seen as “world[s] within this one”, which is also often invoked as an explanation of DIY by various CrimethInc.-ers. Indeed, elsewhere in Hunter / Gatherer\textsuperscript{16} there are suggestions that the limits to our agency mean that we can only work from where we are to “alter” or

\textsuperscript{16} It is worth noting that, while made under the moniker “CrimethInc.” no publication created under this moniker can be seen as representative of unified a “CrimethInc.” perspective, as the name is open to anyone to use. Often even within one publication produced under this name ideas can contradict and overlap, perhaps because they are created by collectives.
“subvert” concepts from the discourses which we are constituted by, rather than attempting to create entirely new ones (CrimethInc., Hunter/Gatherer). This less “purist” but more realistic approach acknowledges the level to which DIY is implicated in what it seeks to reject and be an alternative to, and works with the notion that for actors there is no outside to power or discourses.

The necessary limits that are sometimes acknowledged in DIY anarchism are questioned in many critiques by other anarchists and punks, who suggest that, far from being a viable alternative to current ways of “being”, the subversive prefigurative DIY approach to “being” which acknowledges limits is merely “in love with capitalism” (Dan, On Fire). I would suggest though that such critiques are themselves predicated on purist notions of a potential prediscursive outside to power and a strategic operation of domination, a similar notion to that on which the binary of revolution or reform is predicated. As Hindess reminds us, attempts at changing discourses and practices cannot be achieved in such a pure way.

Actors make decisions and act accordingly, but they do so on the basis of the discursive means and means of action available to them. To a large extent those means are not a matter of choice. Actors can and sometimes do work to change how they (and others) think, but they cannot adopt entirely new discursive forms quickly or at will. (Hindess 1986, p.123).

Indeed it is the case that many of the subversive and transformatory practices which DIY anarchists engage in are contingent on those arrangements - what the critique cited by Dan On Fire called “capitalism” - which they claim to reject. Among these are the
scamming aspects\textsuperscript{17}, such as photocopy scams, which are prerequisites to the production of many zines which make up DIY culture. These scamming tactics, though, do not overshadow the simultaneous (and more long-term) preoccupation with self-sustainability. This preoccupation is attested to by the workshop topics at Belladonna, such as gardening, plumbing, cooking, building, bike building and sewing (\textit{Belladonna DIY zine}). They are inherent in the very name do-it-yourself, which is the aim of demonstrating an alternative “world within this one”.

Squatting is an interesting example (referred to in \textit{Coughing up Legomen, On Fire} and \textit{Personality Liberation Front}) which is both an act of scamming - by taking something from the gaps in the “world” being rejected - and using this to create a working example, a prefiguration, of an alternative. This is the hinge point of DIY politics, a contextuality which works towards what it envisions, within what it has access to. An article in \textit{Ugly Duckling} zine envisions its ideal world as being one based on voluntary co-operation and self-sustainability and ends with the statement that “the majority of my actions…are aimed at creating little sample pockets of world [sic] where everything is as above.”

And so it is that DIY anarchism is a form of politics which works towards these long-term aims with the “double visioned” and contradictory self-knowing ironic acknowledgment that many of the discourses and practices being used are reliant on that which is being rejected. Thus it is that an understanding of this inescapability of power

\textsuperscript{17} This scamming / “scrapping” aspect of DIY anarchism is something which I discuss in greater length in chapter Two but is prevalent in DIY anarchism. Examples mentioned in the zines include free photocopy scams, dumpster diving (finding still-edible food in supermarket bins and general useful things from bins), shoplifting and squatting.
and the discourses which constitute us necessitate a tactical approach to political resistance / intervention.

**Revolution / reform / neither / both : “Tactics”**

Noam Chomsky offered an alternative definition for anarchism when he refuted definitions positing anarchism as a doctrine or Theory based on the absence of government, and defined it instead as “a tendency of thought and action” (Chomsky in *Blackened.net*). According to this definition, anarchism has always contained an element of non-doctrinairality and the affirmation - in major divergence from the view of anarchism by Marxism - that anarchism is and always was an approach as opposed to an Ideology. In contrast to Marxism, anarchism has always identified as a “movement rather than a party” (Woodcock 1980, p.13). Despite using the word “doctrine” in his definition of classical anarchism, Woodcock goes on to discuss the anti-doctrinarian nature of anarchism, stating that Proudhon, a nineteenth century anarchist, “refused to establish a dogmatic doctrine such as Marx bequeathed to his followers” (Woodcock 1980, p.13). Further emphasising the contextual approach of early anarchism, Woodcock wrote of Proudhon that “for him, [doctrines] were never complete; their meanings emerged and their forms changed according to the situation” (1980, p.14).

Emma Goldman (1969) - who I have already emphasised as a classical anarchist who held a more broad understanding of governance - similarly emphasised that anarchism is
an aim-based politics working towards autonomy. She described the contextual approach this aim necessitates: “I believe that anarchism can not consistently impose an iron-clad program or method on the future” (1969, p.49). Woodcock however does find it possible to positively identify anarchism as “a doctrine with many variations, which nevertheless moves between the banks of certain unifying principles” (1980, p.16). More recent articulations of anarchism have been even more oriented towards the idea of this non-doctrinaire approach. For example, in the 1970s Ward (1973) defined anarchism as “not a programme for political change but an act of social self-determination” (1973, p.143).

It is in this non-doctrinaire understanding of anarchism that some anarchists have seen the most potential for combining anarchism with poststructuralism, to produce a new approach to politics:

If anarchism can after all be thought of as an approach, a critique, a set of questions to be asked about power relations, rather than a theory or set of answers, then perhaps it can escape the fate of yesterday's discarded ideologies. (Greenway in Bowen & Purkis 1997, p.177).

This is another aspect in which there is potential for anarchism to be compatible with poststructuralist approaches to politics, based as they are on a not only diachronic understanding of politics, but also a contextual and tactical approach to their aims, which similarly critique Marxist non-contextual strategies:

It can certainly be advanced that one of the many scripts spelling out the vicissitudes of the diversified field of the first wave of global Marxism is the consequence of the realist compromises of reading a speculative morphology as an adequate blueprint for social justice: to treat a critical philosophy as a
An awareness of the mechanisms of power derived from governmentality and the “awareness of limits of knowing” (Spivak 1996, p.142) - the necessity of the discourses which constitute us as subjects - problematises the revolution / reform binary, on the basis that this way of conceiving radical politics is predicated on an “outside” to power which poststructuralists assert does not exist. If we recall that Dean (1999) and Hindess (1986), deriving from Foucault, reject strategic notions of power which conflate “spurious unities” such as classes and the State with social actors, responsible for the mechanisms of power, it becomes less viable to talk of a strategic approach to resistance, on which the notion of a “once-and-for-all cataclysmic” (Ward 1973, p.136) revolution, in a binary opposition with reform, is predicated.

Thus it is that traditional, centralised concepts of revolution can be seen as intervening at the result / effect of power arrangements, not at the causes. This transforms resistance in that according to “Foucault, resistance is much more effective when it is directed at a ‘technique’ of power, rather than at ‘power’ in general” (McHoul & Grace 1993, p.86). Deriving from an approach to power which focuses on the mechanisms rather than effects, the approach of governmentality asserts that the familiar distinction on the left between reform and revolution cannot be sustained. If there is no fundamental structure providing necessary effects, then changes in some social conditions cannot be dismissed as mere reforms, that is, as cosmetic changes leaving that fundamental structure untouched. (Hindess 1986, p.125)
Spivak is a theorist keen to demonstrate deconstruction’s material / “empirical” uses, which would reject charges of “reformism” levelled to deconstruction. She suggests instead that the non-foundationalist politics of poststructuralism is still grounded in a kind of materialism, or what she calls an awareness of “empirical power” (Spivak 1996, pp.144-145). Thus it is that deconstructive approaches to politics, as “critical” approaches in Spivak’s sense, retain a self-consciousness to evade the dogmatism present in strategic - as opposed to tactical - philosophy: “By ‘critical’ I mean a philosophy that is aware of the limits of knowing. By ‘dogmatic’ I mean a philosophy that advances coherent general principles without sufficient interest in empirical details.” (Spivak 1996, p.142).

This is one theoretical explanation for the tactical approaches to resistance sometimes articulated in the zines, and which I referred to earlier in this chapter. An example is the following extract from Ugly Duckling zine:

I do not believe the world is perfect and I am not interested in leaving it the way it is. I want to question how the world works and produce and publish writing that reflects this… I would love to contribute to its downfall, but if I cant do that, then questioning it and maybe changing it a little will be enough (for the moment). (Carmen)

This demonstrates an ethical desire to change the world, within an acknowledgment of the limits of agency, the “limits of knowing”. This quote still retains an inherent allusion to the potential for a “downfall” of some totality, present in the allusion to the “world the way it is”. Having said this, such hopes are acknowledged as impossible and, with the acceptance of this, Carmen seeks instead to question how the world does work and to see
how she can change elements of it: a project which can be paralleled with a governmental critique’s aims to uncover the mechanisms of power.

This is how it is that the “double-visioned,” self-conscious practice of subversion and, in fact, all of the “impure” and contextual political approaches of DIY anarchism, including prefiguration, exemplify Spivak’s critical (as opposed to dogmatic) approach to politics. In other words, they are “aware of the limits of knowing” and are predicated on the context of power which I discussed above: the necessity of the discourses that constitute subjects. Charges of “reformism” levelled against DIY tactics – that they are implicated in what they seek to reject - demonstrate a strategic understanding of power which fails to acknowledge that one can only “operate according to the vocabulary of the very thing that one delimits” (Derrida 1976, p.xviii).

From a similar understanding of the mechanisms of power as tactical and contingent, various articulations of temporality have arisen from poststructuralists concerned with resisting domination. These theories of resistance reject dogmatic strategy, and instead embrace a contingent and transient tactical approach. For example, the rhizomically structured website Nomadology.com, posits that context is paramount for choosing strategies of resistance, asserting that “Nomads adapt their strategies to the immediate situation” (‘micro’, Nomadology.com), and that “Nomadism is a strategy of the present. There is not one nomadic strategy but a multiplicity of micro-strategies.” (‘strategy’, Nomadology.com).
Poststructuralist acknowledgements of the limits to agency and challenges to repressive and strategic understandings of power then can be used to explain the non-traditional uses of “revolution” and “freedom” in the zines and DIY. I have already suggested that the tactic of subversion, recommended by Butler as emblematic of “double visioned” agency or a self-conscious “double intention” (Derrida 1976, pp.xviii-xix), can be considered part of “revolutionary” activity in the DIY context. This brings me back, then, to the definitions of “revolution” as less long-term, which Kylie alluded to in *Ladies Liberation Handbook*. Here, she suggested rather that revolution is any moment where the mechanisms of power are intervened in. Thus it is that DIY practices are considered to be “everyday revolutions” recognising that the mechanisms of power mean that “individuals, can only chip away at the links one at a time, day by day… wage quiet wars in our everyday lives and recognize the subtle victories when they happen” (1905, ‘Can’t Change Everything’, *Voice*, 2002). This is a similar acknowledgment to that of Hindess, cited earlier, that individual actors, while working towards changing “how they (and others) think” are restricted to the fact that they “cannot adopt entirely new discursive forms quickly or at will.” (1986, p.123).

Similarly, the reconceptualisations of power that developed from Foucault’s concept “governmentality” have affected the way that poststructuralist anarchists approach resistance, by rejecting an all-or-nothing definition of revolution. As Bey asks,

Must we wait until the entire world is freed of political control before even one of us can claim to know freedom? Logic and emotion unite to condemn such a supposition…To say that “I will not be free till all humans (or all sentient creatures) are free” is simply to cave in to a kind of nirvana-stupor, to abdicate our
humanity, to define ourselves as losers. (1991, p.53)

Thus it is that in the poststructuralist anarchist context, different terms have been suggested to avoid the “once-and-for-all cataclysmic” (Ward 1973, p.136) citational associations carried by the term “revolution”. Newman, after Foucault, chooses to describe instances of this tactical, poststructuralist anarchist approach to politics as “insurrection” rather than “revolution”.

Similarly, Hakim Bey, rejects the cataclysmic notion of revolution and instead advocates the concepts of “uprising” or “insurrection”. He argues that the use of such a term is an inherent challenge to strategic conceptions of power:

‘Uprising’, or the latin form ‘insurrection’, are words used by historians to label ‘failed’ revolutions — movements which do not match the expected curve, the consensus-approved trajectory: revolution, reaction, betrayal, the founding of a stronger and even more oppressive state — the turning of the wheel, the return of history again and again to its highest form: jackboot on the face of humanity forever…By failing to follow this curve, the ‘up-rising’ suggests the possibility of a movement outside and beyond the Hegelian spiral of that ‘progress’ which is secretly nothing more than a vicious circle. (Bey 1991, p.53)

What is interesting, though, is that the zines retain the term “revolution”, while attempting to resignify it along the lines of “subversion”, in a move that is predicated on the notion that one can only “operate according to the vocabulary of the very thing that one delimits.” (Derrida, 1976, p.xviii).
Engagements with the ‘macro’

How are we to understand the allusions in the zines to such things as Mayday Protests and “multinational corporations” in Ugly Duckling, and CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting), WTO (World Trade Organisation) and WEF (World economic forum) in Coughing Up Legomen? These allusions emblematise a wider tendency for DIY anarchists to (critically) engage also in “traditional” protest (as well as cultural activism), often as part of anarchist blocs or black bloc\(^\text{18}\), as exemplified by the many allusions to anti-war protest in the zines.

Engagement with, and protest against such influential organisations as WTO, IMF and G8, can be seen as valid attacks against social actors, as these organisations are all social actors with the ability to “make decisions and act upon them” (Hindess 1986): decisions which are implicated in the “conduct of conduct” (Dean 1999). But how is this protest intended to function to make a change, bearing in mind the lessons of Foucault’s critique of governmentality regarding the dispersed nature of the mechanisms of power? Is this not an attempt to take resistance straight to the top, that is, a strategic resistance? Owing to the above understandings of the mechanisms of power and their reliance on governmentality, such protest could be perceived as aiming rather at the level of mentality. That is they aim to intervene in the knowledges and truths which uphold such social actors who govern the conduct of others, attempting to foster different ways of seeing (through the destruction / subversion of the old) which challenge the ways of seeing, the mentalities, which allow such actors to function. It could be proposed then that the

\(^{18}\) See p. 108 in Chpater Two for further discussion of “black bloc”.
alternative ways of seeing demonstrated or prefigured by such protests are intended to foster the capacity of different ways of seeing which undermine the governmental (citational / historical) authority of such actors. The prefiguration is intended to demonstrate to the governed the extent of the means by which their autonomy is constrained by the mechanism of governance. It also points positively to other ways of thinking, other rationales, and offers another way on the basis of its moral value, as I theorised DIY prefiguration above.

This narrative of such protests as prefigurative is supported by the level of prefigurative activities which have become a feature of these demonstrations (which many people refer to as “anti-capitalist” protest); embodied by the approaches to the protesters’ sites of convergence\(^\text{19}\), which often attempt to embody “radically participatory” enactments of the ethical principles of anarchism. This entails non-hierarchical and completely participatory consensus decision making, voluntary co-operation and the participation of all protesters in the tasks involved in such convergences, such as cooking, cleaning, building, and organising actions. This then is a tactical enactment of the alternatives envisioned by the protesters, in the limited circumstances available. It is prefiguration which is necessarily reliant on much of what it rejects - as I discussed above - but is a tactic developed in the knowledge of the lack of an outside to power or the possibility of a “once-and-for-all cataclysmic” (Ward 1973, p.136) revolution. With such an understanding of power and governance in mind, it can be theorised as a tactical

\(^{19}\) The “convergence” usually entails a communal convergence site for the protesters from which to organise and at which to stay. It usually takes the physical form of campsites, “reclaimed” (squatted) buildings or community spaces.
approach developing from this knowledge of the impossibility of purity. Simultaneously it is a vocal objection to the govern-mentalities that such prefiguration is an alternative to.

Thus it can be said that subversion, prefiguration and symbolic protest are compatible with contextual and tactical approaches to politics which have been derived from poststructuralist understandings of power and governmentality.

**An afterword: Anarchist continuities**

The anarchist tradition has always included social approaches to politics and revolution of the kind I have outlined above, as well as less-doctrinaire approaches. This mixed heritage problematises a simple classical / poststructuralist anarchism binary. The principle of “means as ends”, which has been an ever-present feature of anarchism, has necessitated a level of prefiguration in anarchist practice, concurrent with the more traditionally Political State-centric focus of the Theory. This notion of “means as ends” was indeed one of the principle divergences of anarchism from Marxism, and was articulated by Bakunin's supporters, who split from Marx's supporters in the First Internationale:

the embryo of future human society must be from this moment the faithful image of our principles…for anarchists, the goal must be reflected in the process; otherwise, the permanent possibility of distorting the revolutionary process will be imminent. (May 1994, p.47).
This quote suggests that classical anarchism could and did expand the scope of its conceptions of the mechanisms of domination and governance to include the more insidious mechanisms of discipline which “conduct conduct”: an expansion of the political which calls into question a reductionist picture of classical anarchism as entirely state-oriented. In *Twenty First Century Anarchism*, Goaman and Dodson seek to uncover and elaborate on this more micro-political element of anarchism when they refer to ongoing practices which include “starting communes[,]…Situationist-inspired activity and *self-published texts*” (Goaman & Dodson 1997, p.84, emphasis added). This resonates with the contemporary culture of communal squats, zines and cultural interventions such as graffiti. Goaman and Dodson suggest that this approach is a result of anarchism’s rejection of “both the traditional parliamentary process of opposition AND the Marxist idea of vanguardist movements to seize power” (*ibid*).

DIY and the zines can be understood not only from a genealogy of the theoretical marriage of poststructuralist and anarchist theory, then, but also as continuing the ever-present threads of tactical approaches to politics and enactments of prefiguration in anarchist practice; in other words, as attempts to work towards the anarchist goal / telos of personal and group autonomy. For example, poststructuralist anarchist Newman (2003), while emphasising that this limited element of anarchism did not go far enough in opening autonomous sites of domination, views this as a good starting point or building block for a poststructuralist approach to anarchism.

Anarcha-feminists have necessarily always held a more broad view of power and the
political, due to what they perceived as an autonomous political field of power relations in the form of gender relations. Thus anarcha-feminists have suggested that while the state is a major site of patriarchy, it is not the only one. As Humm (2003) put this, to “destroy the state is to destroy the major agent of institutionalised patriarchy; to abolish patriarchy is to abolish the state” (2003, p.9). To put this another way, whilst patriarchy is present in the state, it also constitutes an autonomous site of power. Early anarcha-feminist Emma Goldman suggested a multi-terrained decentralised outlook on power when she commented on the failures which would surely ensue from a conception of freedom based within public/private divides: “They [supposedly emancipated wimmin] thought that all that was needed was independence from external tyrannies; the internal tyrants, far more harmful to life and growth – ethical and social conventions – were left to take care of themselves” (Goldman 1969, p.227). Anarcha-feminist ethos will be addressed in Chapter Three when I demonstrate the gender politics of contemporary DIY anarchism in Australia.

Heckert (2005) is wary of how much of the poststructuralist anarchist literature sets up a simplistic opposition between this new and more sophisticated poststructuralist anarchism and “an out-of-date and philosophically naive ‘classical anarchism’” (p.46). Like me, he emphasizes those anarchist theorists, like Emma Goldman, whose work does not fit into the neat definition of “classical anarchism” appearing in much of the poststructuralist anarchist literature. Heckert sees much of this literature as serving to normalise the often multiplicitous and varying broad field of “classical anarchism”.
It may thus be more beneficial to approach the problem more contextually, bearing in mind that “the conceptual vocabulary to analyse these new forms of power and subjectivity would not have been available to classical anarchism” (Newman 2003). In this way, then, poststructuralist anarchist or postanarchist critiques of anarchism should, like any post-theory, seek not merely to reject the original theory and react against it, but rather to build upon it with the context and conceptual vocabulary of new theory. Online encyclopaedia of anarchism, Anarchopedia, seems to hold such a definition, asserting that “postanarchism” is merely the reconceptualisation of the principle of anarchism in the contemporary theoretical context, in that “Whilst it is post-anarchist it is also post-anarchist - in other words it is not a complete rejection of classical anarchism but rather a step beyond the limits defined for it by Enlightenment thought” (Anarchopedia 2004). Moreover, framed as an approach and not a theory, DIY anarchism is not required to demonstrate theoretical consistency, making use as it does of the “conceptual vocabulary” relevant to its ethos.

Conclusion

Poststructuralist anarchism, and specifically DIY anarchism, can be paralleled to an extent with certain aspects of the poststructuralist project of Queer Theory, in that both are engaged in a project of uncovering the mechanisms of normativity, and both look toward the terrains opened up by governmentality – those uses of knowledge and formations of identity which I outlined. Some uses of Queer Theory resist the
normalisation which it seeks to critique by positing “queer” as a verb, not a noun, so that it does not mimic what it seeks to critique by becoming a normative identity. In this way “to queer” is defined by its critical and transgressive function.

It is here that a DIY anarchism diverges with the exemplarily poststructuralist project of this type of “transgressive” Queer Theory as a result of its dedication to the practice of an anarchist ethos. This divergence is based in the fact that, despite claims that anarchism is definable by its opposition to, and aim of uncovering, all forms of governance, poststructuralist anarchism and especially DIY anarchism, do contain a normative stance which retains a valorisation of “self-creation”. The notion of ethics as “self-governance” is a problematisation of a simple definition of poststructuralist anarchism as opposition to all governance. DIY anarchism, then, cannot be seen merely within the project of placing this traditional definition of anarchism as “without governance” in the theoretical reconceptualisations of power and expanding of the political from the poststructuralist context.

Contemporary anarchist Hakim Bey, in the following extract, summarises how he understands that, despite beginning to challenge instances of tyrannical “order”, classical anarchism leaves intact an ontological conception of “natural order”. This is a point I made using the language of governmentality when I highlighted the inherent value judgments of classical anarchism. I posited that many classical anarchists had limits to their opposition to governance which lay in their privileging of the governance of a natural order over the governance of a state:
Even anarchism seems to want a natural law, an inner and innate morality in matter, an entelechy or purpose-of-being. (No better than Christians in this respect, or so Nietzsche believed - radical only in the depth of their resentment). Anarchism says that ‘the state should be abolished’ only to institute a new more radical form of order in its place. Ontological Anarchy however replies that no ‘state’ can ‘exist’ in chaos, that all ontological claims are spurious except the claim of chaos (which however is undetermined), and therefore that governance of any sort is impossible. (Bey, *Immediatism*)

By contrast, his less foundationalist approach seeks to deconstruct all “orders” as tyrannical. His poststructuralist critique of anarchism thus allows for new forms of “Anarchy” to theorise new terrains of dominance limitlessly, which it suggests anarchism neglected to deconstruct because it contains ethical limits. In my reading of this, Bey is suggesting that poststructuralism is *more anarchic than anarchism* in that it deconstructs forms of order, and thus dominance, which classical anarchism left uninterrogated.

So while poststructuralism is useful for considering the anarchism of the zines to an extent and for providing ways to talk about power, this limitlessness which Bey alludes to seems to be one of the main divergences of DIY from a potentially tireless and ethically vapid politics of deconstruction. These limits are what save the DIY anarchism in these zines from falling prey to the problems identified by general critiques of poststructuralism as a basis for ethical politics (cf. Nussbaum 2000, Dynes 1995).

In the following chapter I elaborate on the limits which I have already suggested this DIY anarchism is predicated on: an anarchist moral value which privileges self-governance over external governance. In that chapter I focus on ethics as self-governance and ask on
what basis anarchism can make such a claim in a foundationless context in order to avoid the humanistic appeals of its classical forerunner, as well as how such a telos of self-creation is assumed to function.

Chapter 2: The Ethos of DIY Anarchism

Introduction

Through reading DIY anarchism as a primarily ethico-political practice continuing in the long tradition of anarchist practice, and by eschewing purely theoretical approaches, I am able in this chapter to investigate the specifics of its ethos, making use of some of the “conceptual vocabulary” (Newman 2003) of poststructuralism.

This chapter seeks to interrogate the value based points of departure for the autonomist ethico-political practice of DIY anarchism to which I have alluded regularly in Chapter One. I intend to demonstrate that the ethic of “self-creation” entails an element of “self-governance”; this problematises a value-free poststructuralist anarchist approach which defines itself simply as a project of uncovering governance with poststructuralist reconceptualisations of power. In my discussion of this anarchist ethico-political aim of self-creation I will refer to Foucault’s work on ethics and, heeding the lessons of
poststructuralist reconceptualisations of power, place the approaches of DIY not in opposition to power, but in a “developmental” model of power.

A related question I address is on what bases it is possible for an anarchist ethos to be posited, in a non-foundational context. Further, I will address the contingency of those capacities variously assumed and fostered in DIY anarchism, and which predicate the ethic of autonomy. Finally, I invoke a model of collectivity to demonstrate how this ethos can be integrated into a collective approach to politics.

**Ethics**

Many theorists cannot conceive of alternative models of politics premised on something other than foundations, and thus associate poststructuralism with an elitist form of critique or nihilistic deconstruction, and call for poststructuralist theorists to propose alternatives for political points of departure. In the context of Queer Studies, this debate takes the form of disputes between gay and lesbian identity-politics (which had as a point of departure foundational and fixed identity) and queer post-identity politics. Dynes is sceptical of the ability of queer poststructuralist theory to replace more identity-based foundationalism as a political approach to sexuality and argues that "gay/lesbian identity [is] an indispensable tool for political mobilization" (Dynes 1995). I will come back to the identity versus post-identity debate in Chapter Three in my specific discussion of the sex and gender politics of the zines, but I wish to invoke this critique here to demonstrate
the types of critiques levelled at political approaches emanating from poststructuralism. Dynes goes on to state that in Queer the only "appeal is one of rebellion, defiance, and transgression ... they [the politics of Queer Studies] amount to a revolution of subtraction, eroding existing norms and verities, rather than a revolution of addition, creating new values" (Dynes 1995).

This lack of normative bases is a result of many Queer theorists’ attempts to evade the constraining effects of fixed identities. Queer has thus often posited itself as a verb, not a noun, so that “Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.” (Halperin in Sullivan 2003, p.43).

As I have demonstrated, “poststructuralism”, if it can be generalised, is linked only by its common critique, including the critique of foundations such as those of humanism or structuralism, and also, certainly in the cases of Foucault and Butler, by an opposition to domination. But a common accusation of such transgressivity is that it lacks moral norms and thus limits and can become a naïve and ethically vapid oppositionality. For example, Nussbaum (2000) critiques Judith Butler's work for being unable to elaborate “any positive normative notion” (p.8), suggesting that “for Butler, subversion is subversion, and it can in principle go in any direction. Indeed, Butler’s naively empty politics is especially dangerous for the causes she holds dear ... you cannot simply resist as you please” (p.9). Palmer similarly (although in less critical terms) suggests that
contemporary poststructuralist approaches to subjectivity are “anarchic” in the dictionary
sense of “anarchy”:

If by anarchy one understands a state of human affairs lacking cannons of
validity, lacking foundational rules of conduct and lacking universal order, then
the culture of our time [which Palmer suggests is 'postmodernism']…is in a state
of anarchy… Pure Reason, as a universal healing power, and the complementary
ideal of the self, as the unifying center of experience, have been displaced by a
constellation of ‘isms’ each of which is dedicated to the destruction of some
canon, foundation or order. (Palmer 1993, p.577)

With a similar definition of anarchy, Nussbaum concludes that Butler's “pessimistic erotic
anthropology offers support to an amoral anarchist politics.” (2000 p.11).

These critiques are evocative of the debates I referenced in the previous chapter which
have occurred in punk and anarchist scenes in Australia, wherein DIY anarchism’s
subversive politics, reliant as they are on what they reject, do not really offer positive
alternatives but merely re-affirm what they seek to replace. This is a “purist” criticism
which suggests that subversive tactics cannot offer normative bases.

This, then, is where DIY anarchism, and indeed, Foucault and - in my reading - Butler
diverge from what is posited here as a merely transgressive poststructuralism which is
unable to provide normative bases for political action. This is also where DIY anarchism
diverges from this definition of “anarchy” as merely without governance, in that DIY
anarchism seeks to provide normative bases (albeit non-foundational bases) for an
anarchist politics, in order to evade this limitless deconstructive downward spiral to “an
amoral anarchist politics.”
Normative bases - self-governance

What then are these normative bases present in the work of Foucault and Butler which I suggest resonate with normative bases in DIY anarchism? In the DIY anarchist context, the following quote sets out the intentions of the “CrimethInc.” authors of DIY anarchist book *Days of War, Nights of Love*:

> we've limited ourselves for the most part to criticism of the established order, because we trust you to do the rest. Heaven is a different place for everyone; hell, at least this particular one, we inhabit in common. This book is supposed to help you analyze and disassemble this world – what you build for yourself in its place is in your hands (CrimethInc. 2001, p.11).

Despite an attempted eschewal of any normative intentions and the claims to pure critique, there are ethical norms here. These norms, which can be deduced from the stated intention to “help you analyse”, resonate greatly with the normative point of departure within governmentality studies which catalyse the project of uncovering the techniques of government. Even though the analytics of government “does not tell us how we should practise our freedom” (Dean 1999, p.38) it does reveal “a commitment to self-rule” through its very foci of analysis which has as its aim the uncovering of the “contingency of regimes of practices and government, [through which it] identifies states of domination within such regimes, and allows us to experience a state of domination as a state of domination.” (*ibid*). In this way studies of governmentality acknowledge the limits of the nature of power I discussed in Chapter One, which preclude any notion of
“liberation” from “repressive” power. An “analytics of government is thus in the service not of a pure freedom beyond government … but of those ‘moral forces’ that enhance our capacities for self-government by being able to understand how it is that we govern ourselves and others” (Dean 1999, p.37). In other words, the normative point of departure here, derived from Foucault, is an aversion to forms of governance which are also domination, and is “in the service” of “moral forces” which valorise self-government.

This value-stance differentiates DIY anarchism from the “anarchy” of limitless anti-government which Palmer posited as characteristic of “postmodernism”. This particular moral value stance of DIY anarchism is a result of the genealogy of anarchism as “a tendency of thought and action” (Chomsky, Blackened.net), which I suggested in Chapter One is predicated on a valorisation of certain types of governance. In the classical anarchist context, the humanist governance of “natural law” was valorised over State law, but in the poststructuralist context, a less foundational form of governance needs to be posited.

One of the few (semi)academic books dedicated to the subject of “zines” as a general topic, which I outlined in my literature review, argues that zinesters have a "fascination with the margins" (Duncombe 1997, p.9). Allowing for zines to be analysed in the terms of Foucault’s similar fascination with marginal discourse, attested to by his valorisation of “the insurrection of subjugated discourses” (1980, p.81), Foucault’s later work on ethics allows us to see how these transgressions present in subjugated discourses might
provide a *positive* way forward. What is then of interest is what it is that makes these marginal/subjugated discourses preferable to the discourses they seek to transgress, on what value stance such a valorisation is predicated. In reference also to poststructuralist approaches to anarchism, Heckert (2005) stated that "breaking rules for the sake of breaking rules is merely transgressive. Breaking rules to produce new realities is prefigurative" (p.42). It is through analysing on what values these attempted "new realities" are based that we can place some limits on prefiguration through analysing its ethical norms, to save it from the potential ceaselessness and moral vapidity of transgression "for the sake of breaking rules".

An interesting embodiment of the different points of departure for prefiguration are the ethical practices of veganism and straightedge in different elements of the Australian punk and hardcore scenes and the different “*mode d’assujettissement*”, “the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations” (Foucault 1991, p.353) which are linked with the different *teloi* of the ethical practices of veganism and straightedge. For example, in Childs’ (2003) study of the Adelaide scene - which she acknowledged with reference to *On Fire* zine - she describes the scene as “overly image orientated.” She suggested that one of the main reasons for prevalent veganism in the Adelaide scene is “self and scene imposed expectations” of an adherence to a set hardcore identity. Thus, in this scene “the abstinence from the use of all animal products, normally perceived as a feminine quality, is recreated instead as tough, dangerous and radical.” (Childs 2003). This represents veganism as a marker of a person perceived as the embodiment of “hardcore”. The author’s own *mode d’assujettissement* to the practice
of veganism, however, was expressed as “both an altruistic self-denial, to protect the rights of ‘innocent animals’, and also as an attack on mainstream values and practices of normalised meat eating.” Thus her veganism is posited both as a deconstructive transgression and as an issue of ethico-political value: an ethical practice, the telos of which is to become both a critical and empathetic person. The *mode d’assujettissement* and thus the moral stance of the more DIY anarchist scene can also be demonstrated by *Ahimsa Ahoy!*, a vegan cookbook / zine from Wollongong, distributed by *Beating Hearts* distro. This zine posits veganism to be an ethico-political practice, “an existence based on equality, mutual aid and freedom.”

In the context of the practice of straitedge, Wood (1999 & 2003) has emphasised in his studies of straitedge in the USA, that there are widely divergent bases for such ethical practices. This is similarly attested to by a member of Australian hardcore band *xcationx*, who says that “If you ask a hundred different people what straitedge means, you’re going to get a hundred different answers” (in *On Fire*). The particular motivations for this person’s practice is also partially transgression, based as it is on a valorisation of a critical *mode d’assujettissement*. This is demonstrated by his statement that it is “pretty important … because its something that isn’t reflected in mainstream society.” (On Fire); it is important “not because of something you’re ‘not doing’…but it’s the fact that you’re doing something different to 90% of the population” (On Fire). However, there is also another orientation less explicitly alluded to by this same person, based on the value-stance that a person should be responsible for their own actions, thus indicating that he subscribes to an ethos of self-control. This contradicts common assertions of a
traditionally punk\textsuperscript{20} notion of transgressive rejection of all authority for the sake of rebellion, and suggests that the transgression to which he refers is transgression from unwanted / coercive domination, which is not in turn preclusive of an ethos of self-governance.

Articulations of straightedge from an anarchist pamphlet entitled \textit{Wasted Indeed} and in \textit{Personality Liberation Front} posit straightedge from these same value-based stances, extolling responsibility and self-creation as the \textit{mode d'assujettissement}.

Thus it is that the telos of straightedge and veganism in the specifically DIY anarcho-hardcore context - “the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way” (Foucault 1991, p.355) - is one that values ethical self-governance (a type of dominance) for the liberatory ends of other beings.

I have already referred to the “everyday” redefinitions of revolution necessitated by productive notions of power which preclude an uncontaminated “outside”. Similarly, when poststructuralist anarchist theory takes the ethical aim of anarchism (freedom) and applies it to the productive context of poststructuralist notions of power, it expresses this aim of “freedom” as “firstly the freedom of inventing oneself.” (\textit{Nomadology.com}). Holloway distinguishes this notion from articulations of freedom predicated on the repressive hypothesis ("freedom from-") by calling it "power to- ... liberate human doing" (Holloway 2002, p.213). In similar terms, Davey posits "the struggle for liberation as

\textsuperscript{20} By traditionally punk I mean the 1970s punk which has been described as mostly concerned with rebellion: “early punk was, in part, simulated ‘anarchy’ … performances of anarchy” (Clark 2003, p.233).
one of self-determination and autonomy” (*Queen Psychotic Rage*).

The notion of freedom as self-creation (self-governance) is reflected in the broader DIY anarchy-punk culture. For example, *Hunter / Gatherer* zine suggests a contemporary rearticulation of what freedom would mean within a productive understanding of power, so that a “free human is not a law-follower or a law-breaker, but a law-maker and re-maker” (CrimethInc., *Hunter / Gatherer*). This reflects not only a rejection of an outside to power, but also a non-humanist rejection of the foundationalist notions of “natural law” on which classical anarchism is predicated, and makes the anarchist aim of freedom compatible with the poststructuralist productive hypothesis.

The strain of Foucauldian thought which picks up on his work on ancient Greek ethics, where he similarly posited that in this context "freedom for the Greeks signifies non-slavery" (Foucault 1984, p.286), utilises the fact that this freedom did not preclude a relationship of self-governance. Foucault elaborated that in this context "being free means not being a slave to one's appetites, which means that with respect to oneself one establishes a certain relationship of domination, of mastery, which was called arkhe, or power, or command." (1984, pp.286-287) This moral norm in Foucault’s work offers an alternative genealogy for DIY outside of a poststructuralist deconstructive approach.
Non-foundationalist points of departure

Now we know what the normative limits of much DIY anarchism are by analogy with Foucault’s valorisation of self-governance, we can ask the question, how could such normative limits be reconciled with a non-foundationalist point of departure? It has been proposed that “postmodernism makes the task of political organisation more difficult. We need a politics built on carefully articulated moral choices that defy deconstruction.” (Farganis in Sim 2002, p.96). Elsewhere, May has noted that “the naturalist justification allows anarchists to assume their ethics rather than having to argue for them” (1994, p.64), thus suggesting that in the context of the anti-humanism of poststructuralist anarchism, anarchist ethics are “chosen” (in the words of Sim) and justified by being “argued for”.

A useful way of approaching a chosen non-foundationalist point of departure, such as this particular moral stance, is by inspecting the non-foundationalist bases upon which Rorty is able to “argue for” his invented moral stance of “contingency, irony and solidarity” (1989). Rorty’s ideal is a pragmatic creation of aim based on political-value rather than the discovery of aim in foundations, as with a humanistic a priori. He suggests that through the contemporary historicist turn we have been able to “substitute Freedom for Truth as the goal of thinking and of social progress” (Rorty 1989, p.xiii) and his telos is that of a non-dominating humyn (which would create his goal of freedom), achieved through relationships of empathy with other humyns. Thus he posits that through a “cosmopolitan conversation of humankind” we can "widen the circle of human
solidarity" (Rorty in Barker 2000, p.29). His *mode d’assujettissement* for this appeals to humyn’s pragmatism, that is, he “argues for it” in ethico-political terms, eschewing appeals to foundations.

Rorty can be used to argue for the point of departure that DIY anarchism takes in the context of collectivity, in that the foundations for a politics of poststructuralist anarchism are not foundationalist identity or strategy, but rather aim or principle. This is summarised by Chris Lego in *Coughing up Legomen* zine, when he invokes an undefined but empathetic “we” with the statement: “who we are is not as important as what we want”. What replaces foundationalist collective politics (such as gay and lesbian identity politics), then, is an alliance-based and pragmatic politics organised around ethico-political aims. This is an approach I will discuss in more detail at the end of this chapter.

The ethical relationships to which Foucault refers are in fact predicated on non-essentialism, rather than existing despite of it, or as a compromise with it. As Foucault notes, in the ancient Greek context, this practice of self-creation was not predicated on any subjective foundation, but rather on ethical principles, so that “scientific understanding, was secondary to and guided by ethical and aesthetic concerns” (Rabinow 1991, p.360). In this way, like the pragmatic points of departure which I invoked above, the ethic of self-creation was a “politico-aesthetic choice” (Foucault 1991, p.357). In a similar but less explicit way to Rorty, then, Foucault argued for an ethos on ethico-political terms, as one suggestion among many. Foucault concludes that “from the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we
have to create ourselves as a work of art … [we] should relate the kind of relation one has with oneself to a creative activity” (1991, p.351). Having said this, Foucault is reluctant to defend or justify any general or universal approaches, instead approaching his role as one of making the familiar strange: an approach exemplified by his genealogical projects.

Foucault’s study of alternative relationships of self-to-self (ethics) are useful for an anarchist value-stance due to the fact that they represent a demonstration of the possibility of autonomy, in the sense of “non-slavery”. As Patton has noted, Foucault’s studies of this kind demonstrated a conception of people as at least imbued with the capacity for such a relationship:

autonomy must be understood as a capacity to govern one's own actions which is acquired by some people, in greater or lesser degree, and in respect of certain aspects of their bodies and behaviour. However it has been acquired and in whatever manner it is distributed, this capacity for autonomous action is sufficient to explain resistance to forms of domination...Foucault does not think that resistance to forms of domination requires justification. To the extent that it occurs, such resistance...is an effect of human freedom. (Patton 1994, p.69).

**Capacities and exemplars**

Such value-stances of valorising self-governance then can be analysed as predicated on pragmatic ethico-political claims of the preference for one type of domination over another. This is an issue which is complicated when we introduce the idea that the development of the capacities which are necessary for the valorised self-governance are,
in a non-foundational and productive context, in fact contingent on certain forms of “dominance” or “governance” themselves, even if these forms of governance are only through “exemplification”.

Addressing this issue, Patton (1994) theorises that “good” examples of domination in Foucault’s terms are those which have the effect of enhancing a person's capacities and "developmental power" (a term he has adapted from Macpherson 1973 in Patton 1994, p.66). He concludes that

Macpherson’s concept of developmental-power democracy provides a moral basis on which to reject any system of domination which sustains a form of extractive power. Any such system is incompatible with all being able to maximise their ability to use and develop their own powers. (Patton 1994, p.66)

Judith Butler’s value-judgement seems to be similarly autonomist, in that, in the context of the inescapability of power - functioning, as she sees it, through the availability of normative discourses and conventions - she sees the way forward as a value-based discrimination between types of power, so that activism becomes

about distinguishing among the norms and conventions that permit people to breathe, to desire, to love, and to live, and those norms and conventions that restrict or eviscerate the condition of life itself. (2004, p.8)

The Zapatista movement is exemplary of the attempt to foster specific “developmental” capacities for autonomy. The entry under “collectivity” on Nomadology.com exemplifies this by positing the Zapatista developmental form of “power” as its ideal for collective arrangements. It reads: “Marcos writes that the Zapatista movement has “neither the
desire or [sic] the capacity to bring together all the Mexican people around its own project. But it has the desire and capacity of inspiring the people to fight for freedom”” (‘multiplicity’, Nomadology.com). The careful use of “inspire” is demonstrative of the developmental, as opposed to extractive, intentions of such an approach.

### Intentions of prefiguration

I have already quoted anarcha-hardcore-folk band 1905 to discuss prefiguration in Chapter One. There I invoked their lyrics to demonstrate the function of DIY anarchism as a tactical prefiguration, in the sense of the necessity working towards aims within the circumstances one is implicated with a sense of contextuality and temporality, i.e. the subversive nature of DIY politics. Their metaphor for this was that of bricks being laid in the context of today, for the aims of “tomorrow”. The following passage demonstrates another function for DIY practice:

An opinion changed by something you said.
A lifestyle adjusted by what you suggested
A brighter path taken by directions you gave.
A world revealed by what you did.

(1905, Voice, 2002)

This passage of course involves a value-judgement that the “path” they recommend is “brighter”. But more than this, it demonstrates how DIY seeks to function as activism in a sense of exemplification. In this way the DIY approach towards changing society is
through changing the individuals who constitute society, via non-coercive prefigurative approaches of exemplification. Duncombe (1997) suggests that zines can embody a similarly exemplary prefigurative function, as “a radically democratic and participatory ideal of what culture and society might be ... ought to be” (p.2).

This is another aspect of the “everyday revolution” tactic to which I alluded in Chapter One. Brisbane punk Dave likewise introduces this notion of DIY punk politics working as ethical exemplification when he says that “I just live my life the way I would like to, try to set a bit of an example ... I think just doing it as an example works better than trying to shove your ideas down someone else’s throat.” (Byrne 1999, pp.12-13). In Belladonna DIY zine there are further expressions of this approach, one participant defining the function of DIY as follows: "DIY projects serve as practical examples of defying the ideals of...social hierarchy" (Belladonna DIY zine, emphasis added). The following quote was a definition in the same article as the previous quote, but from a different contributor:

Most of the things we do we could easily buy, so what is valued here is the creative process and the self-sustaining process ... The conscious attempt by people to create a culture...It’s also about taking it upon yourself to learn new, practical skills. I feel the foundation of this idea is empowerment. (Belladonna DIY zine)

This suggests that DIY is a distinct approach through its “conscious attempt” and that it differentiates itself from the coercion of what it seeks to be an alternative to by being a consciously developmental and not coercive or extractive process (cf. Patton 1994).
This notion of exemplification is still a form of governance, with its own norms, however "transgressive": a practice that tries to “shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups.” (Dean 1999, p.12). The “developmental” notion of governance emphasises again the limits to definitions of anarchism, especially DIY anarchism as merely “anti-governance”. This is the difference between “anarchy” (as a state of chaos) and “anarchism” (as a tendency with identifiable normatives). As Dean states: “Even those practices of government that have as their objective the specific emancipation of a certain group in a particular way may result in – or even require – intentional or unintentional domination” (1999, p.35). What Dean is arguing is that “the capacities and attributes of subjects and the kinds of freedom which they make possible are shaped within regimes of government.” (1999, p.35) In terms of DIY anarchism, the capacities for autonomy may necessitate their shaping through a regime of government, in the sense of the “conduct of conduct”. The attempt of the DIY approach to avoid becoming a coercive form of dominance and to embody a developmental dominance, however, is perhaps an explanation for attempts to make its intentions as self-conscious and transparent as possible.

Congealment

One of the “lifestyle” aspects of anarchy-punk politics - straightedge - has been theorised by some practitioners as a practice which aims to function prefiguratively. These writers
emphasise their vehement rejection of doctrinality and place straightedge in terms of ethical exemplification of a specific moral code:

Like any lifestyle choice, be it vagabondage or union membership, abstention from alcohol can sometimes be mistaken as an end rather than a means. The only strategy for sharing good ideas that succeeds unfailingly (and that goes for hotheaded, alienating tracts like this one as well!) is the power of example - if you put ‘ecstatic sobriety’ into action in your life, and it works, those who sincerely want similar things will join in. Passing judgement on others for decisions that only affect them is noxious to any anarchist. (CrimethInc., *Wasted Indeed*)

The value-judgement of the writer is made clear by the reference to this as a “good idea.” Indeed this tract suggests that example is the only real anarchist approach to “sharing” such “ideas”.

In *Personality Liberation Front*, Kylie argues that by becoming a fashion and a tendency, straightedge practice has lost its voluntary status and function as an exemplar and has congealed into a doctrine. Similar developments were noted by Childs (2003) in reference to both veganism (which I have referred to) and straightedge in the Adelaide hardcore scene. The tendency of congealment of particular choices into doctrine, exemplifies the way that reading exemplification as intended requires a specific capacity on the part of the reader. This is noted in *Wasted Indeed*, which includes a postscript entitled “How to Read this Tract” in order to counter this problem. What the example of straightedge emphasises is that, unless it is made explicit, such non-doctrinaire “suggestions” through example can be received (and indeed used) by other actors in coercive terms.
In another example, it is undeniable that there has congealed a certain stereotype and “identity” of the ideal anarcha-punk DIY “kid”, just as straightedge has congealed as an identity, as opposed to the critique and idea intended by its creator\textsuperscript{21}. This congealment of the image of the punk rock “scraper” is demonstrated in this quote:

> I’m in Gainesville right now, a new place to be inspired by and concentrate on finishing this [zine] up. I’ve got to say the hospitality has been impeccable – good friends, a copyshop that works on the honour system, a beautiful typewriter and the sweetest loaner bike in the world. I feel like I’m living some timeless, archetypical zine life – hours spent scamming copies, all jittery in the harsh neon glow of the copy place, sour aftertaste of coffee in my mouth. Late-night beer-fuelled bicycle rides and swimming in apartment complex pools. Basically, the ‘bling bling’ of our set, the scrappers, punks and zine kids. (Gerken in \textit{Nowhere Fast / Anywhere But Here}, Kylie 2004)

This quote suggests that there is indeed a paradigm of “our set”: that of “the scrappers, punks and zine kids”. This assumption of a fixed identity and standard strategies for DIY punk in the form of the “scrapper” has led to the kinds of charges that I referred to in Chapter One: that DIY punks react to, and rely on, what they oppose, in this case doctrinality and conformity. This charge forms part of the debate around the CrimethInc. published zine and (later) book \textit{Evasion}\textsuperscript{22}, a narrative of one boy’s approach to living DIY anarchist principles. His approaches to “evading” what he rejects (consumption, money etc.) have been adopted widely, a result which sparked huge debate around this book’s effects as articulating a fixed identity for DIY anarcha-punks and a doctrine of

\textsuperscript{21} As I charted on p.26, Ian McKay, who coined the term “straightedge”, distances himself from straightedge as a movement or doctrine on the grounds that this is not what he intended by its invocation.

\textsuperscript{22} Dan describes \textit{Evasion} in \textit{On Fire} #3 as follows: “This book is a huge, non linear collection of hilarious stories about travelling, going hungry, sleepless and breaking the law”. \textit{Evasion} started as a personal zine about one white heterosexual American punk boy's attempts to live without paying for anything and all issues of the zine were eventually collected into a book of the same name, published and distributed by CrimethInc. It charted his tactics for this aim and has often been read, and criticised, as an instruction manual on how to do the same.
how to achieve this identity, and was thus charged as being “not anarchist” enough.

Many different “CrimethInc.” publications have since emphasised that the intention of these approaches was to act as exemplars. After the Evasion controversy in many punk and anarchist cultures, an entire one-page broadsheet was produced and distributed by “CrimethInc.” for free to address and dispel the issue of the “scrapper” paradigm. In the Australian context, this broadside was sent free to distros or individuals who ordered anything else from the “CrimethInc.” distro. This CrimethInc. Worker Bulletins 47 & 74 poked fun at the recent accusations of vanguardism and prescriptive doctrinairality, with not only the ironic name, but also the sub-heading "top secret communiqués now released to the public"; much of the content featured ironic references to the "CrimethInc. inner circle" and the "CrimethInc. Central Committee for Decentralization".

This publication outlined how the scrapper paradigm which derived from Evasion, was intended as an example of how the anarchist DIY ethos has been achieved in a specific context by a specific actor. The cover of CrimethInc. Worker Bulletins 47 & 74 reads: “The most important question for the revolutionary is how to escape disciples and enable equals”, which echoes the rejection of fixed ideology inherent in the DIY anarchist aim of autonomy and the valorisation of developmental power. Thus, “CrimethInc.” suggests that the function of “its” existence as a moniker or “placebo revolutionary organisation” is to foster capacities for autonomous action: “Whether you act autonomously as ‘CrimethInc.’, or under any other name, is immaterial - the important thing is that you begin to act autonomously, to discover your own capabilities.” In this way the Bulletin
zine printed to contribute to these debates can be seen as an element of the “developmental power” of DIY, fostering certain ways of reading which develop an autonomous self-governance ethos.

In an analogy to this problematic, Judith Butler has been reluctant to apply her ideas of the “performativity” of gender and subversion as a tactic to all cultural practices. What she has found, however, is that her examples of drag as a method for literalising and thus subverting gender in her germinal work *Gender Trouble*, has been taken to be the defining embodiment of the theory which she had intended to function as resources, with drag as one example of how this may be embodied.

Again, this demonstrates that approaches of exemplification assume a capacity in readers to understand examples as the writers intended. In a related example, Dynes (1995) has suggested that the ability to wield the term “queer” with a detoxified context is also a contingent capacity, reliant on a Queer ethos. “By no means universally embraced among the homosexual and lesbian masses, the word queer often functions as a wedge issue separating generations and classes (working-class gay men and lesbians have displayed little enthusiasm for it)” (Dynes 1995).

In the punk context, this contingency has been acknowledged in the zines and their DIY cultures, and articulated most commonly in reference to the problem of “the punk rock sanctuary” (Greg Bennick of *TRIAL* in *On Fire*). In *No More Waiting*, Amy refers to it

---

23 Detoxified = A term which refers to a positive reappropriation / resignification of a previously negatively signified word.
as an anarchist “enclave”, which is what makes the intended reading of *Evasion* so
contextual to punk rock scenes. The problem is that the intention of compiling *Evasion*
from a zine into a book was to reach a wider audience in order to act as an ethical
exemplar for people who were not already part of DIY culture. What this intention failed
to consider was that the ability to read the accounts in *Evasion* in this specific way as
“exemplification” is a specific capacity fostered contingently on an autonomist ethos,
fostered by exposure to DIY autonomist approaches.

Even though *Evasion* is not a work of political theory, or a prescription of tactics,
but clearly a personal account, a memoir - even though we’ve maintained from the
beginning that there is no single strategy for insurgency, but that everyone must
invent and reinvent their own - it was inevitable that we would be misunderstood
by some...In publishing it, we wanted - to articulate this for the thousandth and
last time - to introduce an account (one of many) of work-free living to a wider
readership (CrimethInc., *CrimethInc. Worker Bulletins 47 & 74*)

These intentions, however, were not made so articulate in the text so that, if it did reach
audiences outside of the “enclave” context, it would necessarily be read in this specific
way.

Judith Butler and others have sought, in the poststructuralist rejection of transcendental
signifiers, to address possible explanations for why such “misreadings” or unintended
readings occur, in terms of the specific capacities required for specific modes of reading.
For example, Hurley quotes Hunter to the effect that “different readings of texts indicate
different trainings, not simply differences in subjective (private) points of view of a given
text” (1990, p.157). Likewise, Hindess’ observations demonstrate that there may be a
contextual imbalance contingent on access to discourses as “ways of being”, since
“decision and action depend on the deployment of particular discourses and means of action, and therefore on their availability to the actors in question” (Hindess 1986, p.121).

Likewise, eschewing either a voluntarist or structuralist conception of subjectivities, bell hooks assumes that whilst humyns have the potential for such capacities,

it is obviously most difficult for individuals who lack material privilege or higher levels of education to make the elaborate shifts in location, thought, and life experience cultural critics talk and write about as though it is only a matter of individual will. (hooks 1994, p.5)

This “necessary error” (Butler 1993, p.230) of congealment then, or the temporary stabalization of identity, is present in both the use of “queer” as an identity - to which I also return in Chapter Three - and in the stabalization of certain punk prefigurations which were intended only as resources and examples, and yet had unforeseen consequences when used as new discourses from which to “be”.

In Chapter One I introduced a concept of the limited agency of actors that can now explain the need for such stabalisations. As Judith Butler acknowledges in her later work, “there is a desire for norms that might let one live.” (2004, p.3) Thus it is that what I have called the “Evasion problem” of exemplars being misunderstood as fixed identities, is considered by some an inevitability. This is also an element of what I referred to as a tactical approach to politics in Chapter One, in that the seeming compromise of identity is seen as a “necessary error” (Butler 1993, p.230) because the “critical relation depends…on a capacity, invariably collective, to articulate an alternative, minority version of sustaining norms or ideals that enable me to act” (Butler 2004, p.3). In this
way, it is possible to see the different DIY / scrapper / punk paradigms as necessary alternative minority discourses which allow those seeking to challenge the discourses presently available to them, to do so.

How can one avoid or at least minimise the chances of temporary stabilisations becoming fixed? How can the Evasion trap be evaded? One approach to the developmental relations of fostering a mode of reading required by autonomist attempts at exemplification, is the self-conscious oxymoronic irony of producing such things as DIY guides, and the Bulletin zine which was produced to contextualise Evasion. The tactical nature of the implementation of developmental power through such guides is predicated on the exaltation of the value of autonomous thought, exemplified by this extract:

yes, we too are making suggestions about which desires you pursue. We would be scoundrels to deny that! But we would be scoundrels not to make these suggestions, not to extol freedom and self-determination in a world that discourages them. Exhorting others to ‘think for themselves’ is ironic - but today, refusing to oppose the propaganda of the missionaries and entrepreneurs and politicians simply means abandoning our society and species to their control. (CrimethInc., Harbinger #4)

This extract is able to differentiate in value between the “propaganda” which it purports to be an alternative to, and its own “suggestions” by appealing to the level of self-consciousness and transparency involved in each. The irony of preaching ideas of personal example in a piece of propaganda is again not lost on those who produced the tract under the personally anonymous moniker “CrimethInc.”. The intention is to foster the “autonomous” capacity to read such a tract simultaneously as a “caricature of polemics in the anarchist tradition” (CrimethInc., Wasted Indeed) and as “a reminder for
all those who choose to concern themselves that *another world is possible*” (CrimethInc., *Wasted Indeed*). The tract, in literal terms, encourages the reader to not read the piece as an attempt to recruit people to their way of seeing - a charge which they level on some drinkers, straightedgers, Christians, Marxists and anarchists - but as an exemplar. This capacity to grasp the simultaneous sincerity and irony is contingent on some familiarity with traditional anarchist propaganda, and with previous “CrimethInc.” literature. This approach can also be analogised with the nexus of sincerity and irony on which camp operates. Sontag (1964) stated, for example, that “Camp involves a new, more complex relation to ‘the serious.’ One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious.” Through such techniques as this “serious frivolity” then this tract is attempting to equip the reader with a critical capacity with which to read it. Hoping for such a critical reading, its authors must be counting on pragmatically convincing the reader that the values extolled therein are preferable to the values it seeks to replace, and hope to accomplish this, not as a result of the tract operating as convincing propaganda by appealing to foundations, but as the result of it being a viable ethico-political argument.

Butler’s own response to the problem of her examples congealing into fixed replacement-identities was to make the exemplary function of her illustrations as explicit as possible through her writing in later works such as *Bodies That Matter* and, much later and much more materially grounded, *Undoing Gender*. Here she emphasised temporality, as in the case of the assertion that queer "will doubtless have to be yielded in favour of terms that do that political work more effectively" (Butler 1993, p.228). This temporality then is a tactic to attempt to avoid a citational authority for Queer, wherein it congeals into a fixed
identity, rather than the position or approach which it was intended to be.

A similar temporality is often advocated as a method for avoiding vanguardism through a dissolution of revolutionary organisations. Those who coined the moniker “CrimethInc.” attempted to create this idea of the revolutionary organisation dissolving by not being an organisation at all, while simultaneously being an organisation involving potentially anyone. In this way its intentions were similar to those of other anarchist monikers, such as the E.L.F.\textsuperscript{24}, \textit{Food not Bombs}\textsuperscript{25} and the \textit{Black Bloc}\textsuperscript{26}. This is to say that they intended to exist only in name, in order for the people who decide to take it up to shape it and embody it: "CrimethInc. is not a membership organization, it belongs to anyone who has the audacity to claim it ... If CrimethInc. is everyone, then, by the same token, it is no one. There is no enchanted inner circle working secret spells on the world" (CrimethInc., \textit{CrimethInc. Worker Bulletins 47 & 74}).

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Earth Liberation Front}: A moniker available for anyone to attach to various acts of environmental activism: "Because the ELF structure is non-hierarchical, there is no centralized organization or leadership. There is also no ‘membership’ in the Earth Liberation Front. In the past, individuals have committed arson and other illegal acts under the ELF name. Individuals who choose to do actions under the banner of E.L.F. do so only driven by their personal conscience." (http://www.earthliberationfront.com/). "The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) is a radical environmental movement. It is a loosely-knit organization that, according to the ELF, ‘uses \textit{direct action} in the form of economic sabotage to stop the exploitation and destruction of the natural environment’, mainly in the \textit{United States}, \textit{Canada} and \textit{England}" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Liberation_Front).

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Food not Bombs}: An anarchist practice which occurs in many different cities in the world, again diffuse and available to all, of dumpstering and preparing (usually) vegan food and giving it out on the street, in order to oppose militarism and highlight food waste and poverty.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Black Bloc}: A moniker for the temporary groupings of anarchists at political actions. All “members” need to do is wear black to be indistinguishable for the police, and many wear masks. "A \textit{black bloc} is a group of protesters often dressed in black, who cooperate in small, autonomous affinity groups to resist police. There is a mistaken belief, especially among the mainstream news media, that the ‘Black Bloc’ is an international organization of some kind, when in fact it is nothing more than a tactic used by protesters" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_bloc)
Collectivity – an autonomist approach to the necessity of identity

Addressing this issue of the conglomeration of what is intended as a resource becoming a fixed identity, there is the issue of the commonalities in the “scene”, and the identity of punk, and the extent to which they constitute a pre-existing identity, a “minority alternative” discourse which people can uncritically adopt. The zines and the DIY/anarcha-punk cultures share with poststructuralism a wariness of the potentially homogenising effects of Romantic illusions of “unity” in collectivity. Aaron Borg, one of the individuals behind Endless Blockades distro in Brisbane, writes that “if unity equals conformity, you can fucking count me out”. A member of Melbourne band Schifosi stated in a MaximumRockNRoll interview in reference to homogenous punk fashion, that

> I find it empowering, but at the same time annoying. In a sense, it’s kind of tribal. It does give you a sense of identity, something to be recognized by. But also, instead of being used to challenge, it sometimes inhibits. Like when the fashion trends come around and adopt elements of punk’s style, it can work in the opposite way, and that’s when it starts boxing you in. (MaximumRockNRoll)

These quotes represent the ethos of non-coercive self-creation and difference, and the extent to which a homogenised “punk identity” is not continuous with this ethos.

Solutions to the problem of collectivity without homogeny in the contemporary context have come in the form of various theories, including the non-foundationalist “solidarity” in postmodern theory (Rorty 1989) which I have already discussed, and “coalition” and “alliance” in poststructuralist and Queer Theory (Phelan 2004, Guterman 2001). Bey suggests similar foundationless alliances in the nomadic (in the sense of temporary)
model of “the band” (Bey 1991, p.56), reminiscent as it is of the "primitive post-moderns" (CrimethInc., *Hunter/Gatherer*) articulated in a DIY anarchist context. Contemporary punk has indeed been asserted as an embodiment of this in post-punk theory where Clark asserts that punk today is “a loose assemblage of guerrilla militias” (2003, p.234). Like the temporary nature of queer which Butler and others have advocated, coalitions are intended to be transient: “their grounds are shifting, provisional, passionately felt, yet unreliable. Coalition politics makes sense for mobile subjectivities” (Ferguson in Gutterman 2001, p.69).

Zines can be read, then, as an embodiment of what Phelan (2004) calls “Alliances and Coalitions: Non-identity politics”, which she suggests is a model of radical democracy (p.700). Zine maker Don Fitch suggests that zine culture already embodies such a non-foundational model; he states that anything he can “think of worth being termed ‘zine culture’ is vague, amorphous, constantly changing, always an accidental combination of independent individuals, with little or nothing to bind the constituent parts together” (Fitch in Ware 2003, p.11). Likewise, Chris Lego suggests that this coalitional ideal is embodied in the diverse and overlapping cultures of the activism in which he is involved.

This is not a mass movement, it is a fragmented network, an autonomous web, a crystalline communication, a disorganization, a celebration of the beauty of chaos. This is not a surface distortion, it is a disassembly of the structure of power, where no new singular order will arise (*Underload* #1, Chris Lego)

Further, in *Coughing Up Legomen*, he theorises the May First protests in Sydney as an embodiment of the tactical alliance of many different groupings of resistive people, a
blockade made up of “lots of diverse people doing their own thing”, which he calls a “mess-mass.”

Australian hardcore band *Blood of Others* are quoted in an interview in *On Fire*, as advocating a similarly non-homogenised ideal of their community.

Any notion of ‘scene unity’ is always going to be untenable I think. The reason being ‘unity’ as most people want it is draconian and leads to crippling conservatism in some form … No room for the individual … What we need is people strong enough to be able to work together without having the exact same ideas (*Blood of Others* in *On Fire* p.40)

What I would suggest is that armed with the ethos of self-governance and the awareness that collectivity can lead to homogenisation, DIY anarchist culture, and zines through their very form, represent an ethical valorisation of difference and multiplicity. This ideal of collectivity, then, through the fostering of autonomy or self-governance, would consist of "a mass of individuals, each one fearlessly blurting out his [or her] own convictions" (Wendell Phillips in Goldman 1969, p.79).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have interrogated the ethico-political aim of DIY anarchism and addressed how this aim is carried out in practice. By suggesting, through poststructuralist reconceptualisations of “power”, that notions of “governance” are necessarily present in all action, I have problematised a simple “anti-governance” stance for anarchism. A
neutral conception of “power” as analogous with “social relations” means that a
poststructuralist anarchist politics would require a value which can distinguish between
desirable and undesirable manifestations of governance. I was able to demonstrate that
DIY anarchism is, in fact, based on a value stance which valorises self-governance over
coercive governance, along with an ethos of solidarity based collectivity. These values
are predicated not on appeals to essences such as “nature” – as was the case with classical
anarchism – but on pragmatic appeals which are argued for. Such appeals to pragmatism
can be posited as the intention of DIY prefiguration, which attempts to function as
transparently as possible so as to abide by the principle of non-coercion. Thus it is that
appeals to pragmatic considerations of the DIY anarchist ethos attempt to foster an
autonomous, self-governing ethic in the process of presenting an alternative, but non-
foundational, option. The telos (or outcome) of such an ethical practice can then be
posited as an enshrinement of multiplicity and difference, and an aversion to
homogeneity.

This is an ethos which can be likewise applied to the context of the gender politics of
DIY anarchism. Following the pattern of these first two chapters, then, in Chapter Three
I will suggest that the post-gender aims of DIY engagements with gender politics are
predicated on an ultimate ethico-political aim of gender self-governance. In the process it
will become clear that the gender politics of the zines, as is the case with the broader
anarchist politics, cannot be addressed from a merely theoretical paradigm.
Chapter Three: Poststructuralism in DIY Anarcha-punk Gender Politics

Introduction

This chapter addresses a specific aspect of DIY politics by focusing on gender and, in the process, continues my task of addressing the assumptions of the ethico-political approach of DIY anarchism which makes use of some of the conceptual vocabulary of poststructuralism.

I begin by demonstrating how the conceptualisation of gendered subjectivity in the zines differs from theories of “social actors”. In particular, I note that while the zine producers draw on some poststructuralist theories of how power and discourses function, they still assume that the discourse of “gender” has congealed into a level of citational authority or hegemonic control which constitutes subjects. This is what the Butlerian notion of “performativity” suggests, and it is in reference to this ethico-political practice that I discuss approaches to gender in DIY anarchism, with reference to the zines.

The potential to resist what some anti-foundationalist feminists regard as an historically congealed “hegemonic discourse” of gender requires the development of a specific feminist ethos. This ethos enables feminist ethical subjects to “posit and transcend” the structure of gender. Such an ethos was theorised by Wittig and has been advocated by Butler and de Lauretis, who describes it as a “doubled vision”, which I emblematise in the practices of subversion and “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 1994). By identifying
this form of resistance as a specific ethos I am able to redescribe how various aspects of
the zines and DIY culture function deconstructively as part of a feminist subversive
practice.

I then apply my second chapter’s interrogation of the foundations on which the value-
based DIY anarchist ethos was predicated, to this particular feminist ethos, to assess the
values which are demonstrated by this deconstructive practice. I argue that these values
correlate with the broader ethico-political project of DIY anarchism. In the process, I am
able to demonstrate an application of this ethos to a particular problem of governance:
gender.

In my discussion of specific features of these feminist practices in the Australian DIY
anarchist culture, I address the problematic of the particularity and limits of such a
specialised ethos of doubled vision. I am thus able to develop further the discussion
instigated in Chapter Two, of DIY culture as a means for fostering particular intellectual
and ethical capacities.

Gender: “spurious aggregate” / “congealed citationality”?

Feminist critics have posited the problem they seek to address as a system of “patriarchy”
or, more recently, of “gender normativity”. The notion of “social actors”, which I have
addressed as demonstrative of a poststructuralist analysis of socially located technologies
of power, problematises those approaches to feminism which assume that the terms “patriarchy” or “gender normativity” signify repressive structures determining the possibilities for action.

In Hindess' Foucauldian-derived account of “social actors”, “men” as a social group are not actors, and neither would be the nebulous systems some feminists invoke to describe feminism’s problem, since according to the definition I cited in Chapter One, an actor is an entity able to make decisions and act on them, and should not be confused with mere “aggregates that have no identifiable means of formulating decisions, let alone acting on them” (Hindess 1986, p.124). Governmental analyses of power as productive and tactical, dispersed and plural - as opposed to being repressive and strategic, concentrated and unified - lead some theorists working in a Foucauldian tradition to question general theories of subjectivity, “Just as power techniques and discourses cannot be attributed to a generalised bourgeois subject, neither can they be attributed to a generalised male subject.” (McHoul & Grace 1993, p.123). In this way, Foucauldian theorists such as Hindess have argued that groups such as men or mooted structures like the patriarchy are “spurious actors”, and that appeals to such aggregates are as misleading as appeals to aggregates such as “capital” or “the ruling class”. Hindess’ argument is as applicable to structuralist feminists when they appeal to “the patriarchy” as a pre-determining structure, as it is to structuralist Marxists, when they claim to comprehend the ideological workings of a social totality.
In Hindess’ account, appeals to “spurious actors” constitute problems for politics since they do not reflect the “conditions and processes responsible for the phenomena in question” (Hindess 1986, p.125) and are thus of dubious value in theorising the “political questions” of how to intervene in such processes. By reconceiving these “spurious unities” as the results of particular technologies of power, then, Hindess opens a theoretical space for making the tactics to transform these conceptualisations of power and subjectivity themselves as matters of political thought and action.

Thus while “the patriarchy” may be a useful tool of generalisation to express an outcome of certain decisions and actions, to indicate the historical contingencies of certain technologies of power, it can also impose an unhelpful totalising vision on disparate processes or mechanisms, and thus set unnecessary limits on political interventions. In this context, then, “patriarchal consciousness” – the subjective counterpart of an overdetermined “patriarchal structure” – can be seen as an effect, not a cause of oppressive social relations; as Wittig suggests in reference to gender and sex, “what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the mark” (Wittig, 1981).

If we are to understand “men” and “the patriarchy” not as prediscursive structures or social actors but as “spurious aggregates”, it is reasonable to ask what the repercussions would be for feminism, how feminists would consequently identify their key problem. Using the concept of actors, it is possible to posit that those social actors designated “men” or “women”, while not constituted in a structure per se, are both enabled and limited by the institutional contexts within which they act. Hindess emphasises the
historical nature of these capacities to think and act, rather than their structural
determinants. He places this notion of necessarily limited agency in the context of
governmentality and seeks to demonstrate that these capacities are themselves contingent
on our histories in various institutions and disciplinary regimes which enable (and thus
limit) our possibilities for action.

What poststructuralist approaches, then, are useful for understanding invocations of “the
patriarchy” and systems of gender in these zines? I take No More Waiting zine as an
example, not to attempt to fit it into a particular analysis, but as a point from which to
discuss the complexities and limits of notions of subjectivity in feminist and
poststructuralist theories.

As I outlined in Chapter One, the zines can be read as expressing an aporia, wherein their
approach to subjects can be placed on neither side of the structure / agency binary within
which the “subjectivity” issue was traditionally approached. This is especially the case in
regard to gender, where fluctuation can be noted between assumptions of agency and
assumptions of structure. This instability is apparent in No More Waiting, when Amy
invokes the subjected “structure” side of the subjected / subject-hood binary
characterising “subjectivity”. On the topic of the gendered effects of sexual assault, for
example, Amy comments on how much her experiences have made her realise that
“women really are subject to men’s privilege.” She then posits a totalising structure that
lies behind these gender relations, when she states that the "patriarchy that did this to me
still exists." The following quote, however, shows a shift to a more analytical approach that invokes a sense of agency:

I can feel her fighting in there...she wants to be independent, free thinking, secure and confident. But there’s the other side...the one they’ve taught her to be...whimsical, needy, insecure, pleasing. She desperately tries to cling to the person she identifies as when there is no boy around. (Amy, No More Waiting)

This quote can be read as assuming a bifurcated subjectivity: a prediscursive “she” or core identity that is able to be conditioned, and a prediscursive outside. A second reading of the quote, however, invokes a “she” who is constituted by, and in fact is, these very conditions. This is suggested by the fact that she “is” these things (independent / needy) rather than has them, but this is then confused by the fact that in the same quote a prediscursive “she” only “identifies as” them. What is interesting is that the quoted passage does not posit either one as the “true” Amy to be uncovered, but rather the possibility of both, which points towards the ongoing constitution of subjects; Amy’s “core” identity is, after all, simply one “she identifies as”. What is also interesting is the value-judgement which attaches different levels of desirability for the different selves. The passage can be understood as part of a feminist ethical practice that asserts the desirability of becoming the “independent, free thinking, secure and confident” “she” which Amy “wants to be”, an ethical practice to which I will shortly return.

I would argue that the zines follow those feminist approaches which adopt poststructuralist analyses of power to an extent, yet retain an adherence to the notion that there is an overarching gender structure or patriarchal symbolic order which discursively
constitutes and thus limits subjects. This is a divergence from the notion of social actors, wherein limited freedom comes not from discursive constitution, but from an actor’s historically accrued capacities to act, as well as from the limits imposed by other actors’ decisions and actions.

These feminist discursive approaches, then, are emblematised by Judith Butler’s poststructuralism, and by Teresa de Lauretis’ deconstructive subversive approaches to gender. One of the primary elements of poststructuralist conceptions of power which have been adopted by feminists, and specifically Butler and de Lauretis, are theories of how power operates productively to constitute specific fields of action. Particularly relevant to feminist ideas has been the notion that discourses constitute us and thus both enable and limit us, through the subject positions available to us, wherein the limits of discourses within which subjects can “be” represent the limits to subjects’ agency. Feminists have adapted this account to theorise the conditions and effects of gendered subject positions. I discussed this particular “subject position” theorisation of poststructuralist agency in Chapter One, where I posited subversion as paradigmatic of the resistive potential of such a delimited tactical agency. Thus the meta-discourses of gender normativity are feminism’s problem in a more poststructuralist context. In this way, the “the patriarchy” can still be invoked, but to symbolise an effect of the limits imposed by discourses of gender normativity.
“The essential difference”

In terms of gender, then, Butler posits that we are limited by a “discursively conditioned experience” (Butler 1990, p.9), the limits of which are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality. Constraint is thus built into what that language constitutes as the imaginable domain of gender. (Butler 1990, p.9).

This passage demonstrates the different departure point of this feminist poststructuralist ethical practice from its counterpart that emphasises “social actors”. It refuses to surrender its specific notion of a totality of, or a Discourse of, gender, even if this is saved from charges of “structuralism” by positing it as diachronic, and thus not the synchronic structures of structuralism (an issue which I address below).

It has been suggested that this particular approach to feminism which retains a kind of structure in a poststructuralist context, is analogous to the strand of Queer Theory which, in positing a conceptual order of “heteronormativity”, provides an ethical guarantee for its own ethos of transgression. Indeed, Seidman sees this strand of poststructuralist Queer Theory as paralleling “the Marxist or feminist claims about the bourgeois/proletariat and masculine/feminine oppositions, [in that] Queer analysts claim for the hetero/homo binary the status of a master category of social analysis” (1995, p.132).
In maintaining - contrary to the charge of “spurious unities” - that “the patriarchy” or “gender” structures do determine action, these feminist approaches are working with a notion of hegemony. However, this can be historicised in part, through the limits to agency which occur from our need for discourses with which to “act”, and through the domination of particular discourses to the detriment of others, which constitutes a form of hegemony. This is analogous to Foucault’s assertions of an historically congealed discourse of sexuality which, while contingent for its illusory unity on an economy of productive discourses and techniques, still affects conducts through what Butler would call its “citational authority” (1993, p.225).

The first volume of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* is paradigmatic of a notion of an historically specific structure, which is how I will go on to redescribe certain feminist poststructuralist accounts of an abstract gender structure. What Foucault addresses in *The History of Sexuality* is how productive power constitutes actors so that they see themselves, through a “spurious unity” of otherwise disparate characteristics, as subjects of “sexuality”. He does not posit “sexuality”, then, as a fixed characteristic of subjects, but rather as “the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to the self.” (Foucault 1991, p.333). Thus while the discourses of sexuality do not constitute a totality, their endurance and ubiquity can nevertheless appear hegemonic.

In a desire to retain some notion of gendered subjects, Miller suggests that the ease with which male theorists have been able to adhere to postmodernist concepts is reflective of
their privileged subject position of “universal personhood” (Butler 1990, p.9) in the very
gender structure they seek to deny:

[The] postmodernist decision that the Author is dead, and subjective agency along
with him, does not necessarily work for women and prematurely forecloses the
question of identity for them. Because women have not had the same historical
relation of identity to origin, institution, production, that men have had, women
have not, I think, (collectively) felt burdened by too much Self, Ego, Cogito, etc.
Because the female subject has juridically been excluded from the polis, and
hence decentered, “disoriginated,” deinstitutionalized, etc., her relation to
integrity and textuality, desire and authority, is structurally different. (1986,
p.106)

Applying her lessons regarding the delimited agency afforded by theories of discursive
subject positions to the meta-discourses of gender, as Foucault did with sexuality, Butler
posits that poststructuralist agency constitutes a “practice of improvisation within a scene
of constraint” (Butler in Gray 2005). Butler is keen to emphasise in her later work that
“we are constituted, invariably and from the start, by what is before us and outside of us.”
(2004, p.3). De Lauretis (1986) similarly rejects both voluntarist and structuralist
approaches to what she calls the “possibilities of existence”, stating that these
possibilities are not “simply the effect of one's subjective limits and discursive
boundaries; but neither can they be simply attributed to an immutable deployment of
socioeconomic forces that will be changed someday when conditions are right.” (pp.5-6).

In Butler’s and de Lauretis’ feminist poststructuralist accounts, gender relations
constitute a structure of definite but limited discourses that guarantee a deconstructive
response. Thus they “have a position and a ‘truth’ that offer ways of understanding
aesthetic and social practices in the light of the production of – and challenge to – gender
relations.” (Hutcheon 1989, p.149). As Butler (2004, p. 11) writes of the meta-discourse of gender, it “figures as a precondition for the production and maintenance of legible humanity”.

These poststructuralist approaches are saved from a deterministic structuralism through the diachronic analysis of how these gender relations operate as a technology historically. In this way there is only the illusion of a conglomeration, an illusion which nonetheless is implicated in sustaining its hegemonic effects. These feminist approaches also diverge from structuralist accounts through positing discourses of gender as operating productively and constantly from the micro to the macro in order to sustain the effects. Butler has articulated this effect as gender’s “citational authority” (1993, p.225). As I have noted, Foucault similarly conceived of sexuality as a disparate unity that is reified nonetheless: “That it should have this historicity does not mean it is deprived of all universal form, but instead that the putting into play of these universal forms is itself historical.” (Foucault 1991, p.335). Yet while this feminist theory of the citational nature of gender discourse assumes that gender is constructed, it also conceives of gender as an effect we cannot “be” without (Butler 2004, p.3). Spivak has drawn similar conclusions, stating that “what is one’s own, supposedly, what is proper to one, has a history.” (1994, p.158) She goes on to refute a strategic (in the Marxist sense) and teleological analysis of these pre-delimiting discourses within which we can act, by stating that “history is unmotivated but not capricious” (Spivak 1994, p.158).
I argue that Butler’s, Spivak’s and de Lauretis’ approaches, then, are poststructuralist to the extent that they characterize an historicist and productive structuralism, in that they understand us as being preceded or constituted by a structure, but a non-foundationalist structure that is an effect of an historical citation constantly producing / constituting its effects. This form of poststructuralist-feminism is predicated on the assumption that gender normativity is a determining domination resulting from a congealed asymmetry of power (Patton 1994, p.64), by which I mean that “the relations of power, instead of being variable and allowing different partners a strategy which alters them, find themselves firmly set and congealed.” (Foucault in Patton 1994, p.64). While in this sense it appears to attribute the status of “actor” to gender normativity, the approach is capable of a more nuanced poststructuralist analysis, like that of governmentality, which can account for how this illusory congealment is sustained and how it can be resisted: a conclusion that can only really be drawn from an analysis of the mechanisms of power.

By de-universalising the system of gender but maintaining that it still affects action in some form through developing “citational authority”, just as Foucault did with sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, feminists are able to talk about “a specifically modern (as opposed to an eternal and essential) patriarchy” (McHoul & Grace 1993, p.124). Thus Butler holds that while the effects of power are a totalising and hegemonic system of gender, the approach to intervening in its mechanisms should acknowledge their micro-political productivity: “The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a
different set of terms.” (Butler 1990, p.13). The premise of an historical gender structure, then, is what makes Butler’s approach unequivocally an ethico-political feminist project.

Butler’s notion of “performativity”, which holds that we cannot “be” without “doing”, while assuming that gender is an ongoing process and not fixed, still assumes a hegemonic, congealed gender structure or Discourse to which we refer when we attempt to “be” or perform within hegemonic gender subject positions. This is similar to Hall’s assertions that such invocations of “structural” unities, which Hindess would call “spurious unities”, have “served to function as the signifier of the condensation of subjectivities in the individual”; a function which “cannot simply be dismissed because, as Foucault effectively shows, it is not true” (1996, p. 11). Thus it is possible to theorise such conglomerations - or in Hall’s words, condensations - in a contingent way, while also understanding that they form and maintain a hegemonically operating normativity, not strategically as in structuralist analyses, but through productive and dispersed means. It is also possible to understand invocations of historicised symbols such as patriarchy or gender structures as “mobilizing slogans” (Spivak 1994, p.166) so people may use a “mobilized unity to do something specific” (Spivak 1994, p.167). This, then, is a potential redescription of feminist poststructuralist invocations of gender structures wherein feminists are able to self-consciously invoke a nebulous unity, such as “feminist” for specific ethico-political purposes.

As in the governmentality perspective, the limits of this totality functioning in actuality as only the appearance or symbol of normativity in the technologies of governance opens
the spaces in this seeming omnipotence. That is, the effects of normativity depend on the specific mechanisms of governance which maintain it. These effects may appear pervasive and their reach may be wide, yet the mechanisms of their operations do not constitute a totality.

While some poststructuralist theorists argue that invoking spurious unities is “an obstacle to serious and informed political discussion” (Hindess 1986, p.124), feminists refuse to accept that their experience-based and politically motivated assertions of “the essential difference” constitute such obstacles. Thus it is that feminists are willing to “take the risk of essence” (de Lauretis 1994, p.33) in order to maintain their ethical project:

If feminist theory remains unwilling to take the risk of essentialism seriously while continuing to gesture toward it from a respectable distance, call it post-structuralist/deconstructionist…or simply anti-essentialist, it will remain unable to be both feminist and post-structuralist…And the question is, in that case, can it remain feminist? (de Lauretis 1994, p.33)

Thus feminists who use poststructuralist tactics for the deconstruction of perceived gender structures are in some ways unapologetically essentialist. They are essentialist in the specific and nominal sense of asserting that the discourses of gender continue to constitute gendered subjects, which has the effect of creating an “essential difference”. Like Hall, these feminists insist on setting limits to the power of “Theory” to dispel error. In this way, these feminists are determined that it is possible to be anti-essentialist while also working with or from “essentialist” categories in a non-foundational way. They refuse to subscribe to the corollary from poststructuralism that “if there are no women as such, then the very issue of women’s oppression would appear to be obsolete and
feminism itself would have no reason to exist” (de Lauretis 1994, p.10). Instead, these feminists seek to re-define women on non-foundationalist terms, acknowledging the materiality of discursive practices which I emphasised in Chapter One and the usefulness of invoking this nominal kind of essence and using “the mobilized unity to do something specific.” (Spivak 1994, p.167). Alcoff neatly summarises such stances:

If we combine the concept of identity politics with a conception of the subject as positionality, we can conceive of the subject as nonessentialized and emergent from a historical experience and yet retain our political ability to take gender as an important point of departure. Thus we can say at one and the same time that gender is not natural, biological, universal, ahistorical, or essential and yet still claim that gender is relevant because we are taking gender as a position from which to act politically. (Alcoff in de Lauretis 1994, p.10).

If we take seriously Butler’s claim that we are limited in our agency by the discourses within which we can position ourselves, then the invocations of such categories seem an inevitability. I have already addressed Amy’s invocations of “the patriarchy” in No More Waiting, but allow me now to use some quantitative and qualitative content analyses to demonstrate the resilience of and reliance on seemingly “essentialist” gender and sex categories in the zines.

It is interesting that those zines most articulate about their deconstructive aims or ultimate goals are those that invoke foundational categories the most, pointing perhaps towards the necessity of invoking the very thing which one seeks to deconstruct, in order to do so. For example, Ugly Duckling #7 uses the word woman eighty-eight times, representing zine creator Carmen’s dedication to specifically “women’s” issues as part of her deconstructive practice. To contextualise, she also uses the term queer eleven times
and gay/lesbian only four. She also invokes an alternative to “woman”, in the form of “grrrl” forty four times. What contextualises the use of these appeals by feminists, like Carmen, who proclaim themselves to hold a non-foundationalist approach to gender, is the means and reasons for their use. An article in *Ugly Duckling* which engages with essentialist discourse through the use of a Liberal feminist text is emblematic of the deconstructive tactic of a critical use of something considered “inaccurate yet necessary” (Derrida 1976, p.xiv). Carmen dedicates three full A4 pages of her thirty six page zine *Ugly Duckling #7* to a discussion of the book *The End of Equality* by Australian Liberal feminist or “equality” feminist Ann Summer, including extensive sympathetic reprintings of large sections. This article draws attention to “Why feminism is still relevant” – this being the title above the first page - through a list of reprinted statistics, which demonstrate the under-representation of wimmin in the public sphere in Australia. The reprinting of one A4 page of these statistics and the title chosen suggest that Carmen deems them highly relevant. However, the article *does* simultaneously critique the book’s preferential Liberal concentration on the sphere of work as the primary site of “equality”, on the grounds that it perpetuates a public/private divide and lacks discussion about men’s responsibility to redress gender balance. In Carmen’s words, “NOT ONCE does she [Summers] suggest that maybe men should take more responsibility for childcare”.

In the context of this unavoidability of working from or using the discursive positions which both enable and limit us, the question becomes, rather, *how* we use them, and if their invocations can be subverted to create new discursive positions from which to act.
Bearing in mind the “tactical” approaches to theory and politics that I discussed in Chapter One – my argument that it is not what is used but how and to what ends - it is my contention that Amy’s invocations of “the patriarchy” and Carmen’s invocations of “woman” and “women” deconstruct the foundational status of these seemingly fixed terms through a tactic of self-conscious critical repetition.

**Stated aims**

In order to gauge the intentions of invocations of essentialist gender, it is imperative to gain an understanding of the intended “ends” to which I alluded above, that is the assumptions regarding what “gender” is that are shared by the zine makers and participants in DIY anarchism, and concurrently, the aims of engaging with it. This is a topic to which I return in a discussion of the specifics of the normative ethical bases of a deconstructive feminist approach, but for now, in order to contextualise my demonstration that the approaches to essentialism in the zines are tactics towards ethico-political aims, it is necessary to at least address these aims or ends.

The wider anarcha-punk literature takes a generally critical deconstructionist approach to gender, describing it as: "Another false division of life into arbitrary categories, none of which can adequately describe or contain any of us...There is no male. There is no female." (CrimethInc. 2001, p.107). This is evocative of Foucault’s assertions of sexuality, and Butler’s assertions of gender, as discursive productions which categorise
disparate characteristics. A “CrimethInc.” poster/zine, entitled the *Gender subversion Kit*, which has been circulating in anarcha-punk distros in Australia, and a copy of which was given to every attendee at *Belladonna DIY fest 2003*, suggests that it is through this realisation and the subsequent subversion of the constructed-ness of gender that “liberation” and “freedom” is to be gained,

For every girl who is tired of acting weak when she is strong, there is a boy tired of appearing strong when he feels vulnerable. For every boy who is burdened with the constant expectation of knowing everything, there is a girl tired of people not trusting her intelligence. For every girl who is tired of being called oversensitive, there is a boy who fears to be gentle, to weep. For every boy for whom competition is the only way to prove his masculinity, there is a girl who is called unfeminine when she competes. For every girl who throws out her E-Z-Bake Oven, there is a boy who wishes to find one. For every boy struggling not to let advertising dictate his desires, there is a girl facing the ad industry’s attacks on her self-esteem. For every girl who takes a step towards her liberation, there is a boy who finds the way to freedom a little easier. (CrimethInc, *Gender subversion Kit*)

What this liberation / freedom might look like, however, is something which I will address after my discussions of the particular deconstructions, as I believe that it is through an understanding of what is rejected that what is valorised really becomes clear.

**Tactical / ironic essentialism**

Many feminists have expressed anxiety over deconstructions of gender *and* sex, on the grounds not only that these need to be protected as the bases of the feminist political project, but that they do in fact constitute essential categories, and that deconstruction is
always a regressive attack on feminism’s gains\textsuperscript{27}. This wariness of the abstract anti-foundationalism of poststructuralist and postmodernist critiques is exemplified by this extract from \textit{Off Our Backs} feminist magazine which assumes that “postmodern” feminists necessarily negate to consider the “material” effects of gender:

Given that we are obviously not living in a free and equal society, why are we behaving as though we can just retreat from the struggle to the abstract world of postmodern feminist theory, where we can spend our days debating if there is such a thing as “woman” and completely ignoring the real plight of real women in a society that has no qualms about applying this label to half the human race? (Johnson 2003, p.24)

Johnson’s appeal to “real women” demonstrates that she advocates working with essentialism, despite her assertion that “woman” may be a “label” applied to “half the human race”. However, invoking post-humanist, poststructuralist or deconstructive approaches in the feminist context has rarely been as context free as these critiques suggest, just as most feminism has rarely been as “essentialist“ as some proponents of poststructuralism would believe\textsuperscript{28}. Thus de Lauretis reminds us that

the ‘essence’ of woman that is described in the writings of many so-called essentialists is not the real essence, in Locke’s terms, but more likely a nominal one. It is a totality of qualities, properties, and attributes that such feminists define, envisage, or enact for themselves (de Lauretis 1994, p.3)

\textsuperscript{27} My personal experience of this reaction / backlash was at NOWSA (Network of Women Students Australia) conference 2004 in Lismore, wherein the opening plenary was delivered by mainly Lesbian Feminists asking the question “Has feminism in the new millennium lost the plot?” In this plenary it was suggested that postmodernism was a conspiracy to take back the gains feminism had made on the basis of its invocations of difference. There was also the step to rename the University’s Queer space for the week as a Queer and Lesbian space.

\textsuperscript{28} For example, de Lauretis (1994) interrogates the premises of claims by Weedon in \textit{Feminist Practice and Post-structural Theory}, (1987) that an homogenous radical-feminist theory is predicated on “an essential womanhood” (de Lauretis 1994, p.5), suggesting that such claims are a necessary myth for many post-structuralist theorists to claim non-essentialist bases for feminism as their own innovation.
As this passage makes clear, de Lauretis is keen to eschew the dichotomising essentialist / non-essentialist debate, and instead wishes to re-construct the “essential difference” of feminism on non-foundational terms.

Many of those accused of regressive postmodernism have explored the issue of the resilience of, and potential need for, gender and sex as categories of identity. Indeed, the gender subversion advocated by Butler and others is predicated on this resilience, on the notion that gender is something that we cannot “be” without; it is deconstructionist in the Derridian sense of being “inaccurate yet necessary” (Derrida 1976, p.xiv). It is this precondition which leads Spivak to “remind the feminists who want so badly to be anti-essentialists that the critique of essence a la deconstruction proceeds in terms of the unavoidable usefulness of something that is very dangerous.” (1994, p.156). Thus while some feminists retain a truly essentialist notion of women, like Johnson above, for many others the essential difference, as I outlined in the previous section, is a not a biological one, but is nonetheless a material one. As I have also noted above, one of the main proponents of this deconstructionist feminism, Judith Butler (1993, p.225), has emphatically referred back to the citational authority which gender enacts through its mechanisms as a congealed discourse. This has led her to conclude that because “the “I” that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them” all we can hope for, as actors, is to “endeavour...to live in ways that maintain a critical and transformative relation to them.” (Butler 2004, p.3).
Working more closely with the zines and materials from the surrounding DIY cultures now, I propose that the delimited agency apparent in poststructuralist-feminist notions of gender is a basis for the practice of “tactical essentialism”\textsuperscript{29}. This refers to an attempt to find a way forward within these discursive limits towards poststructuralist-feminism’s particular value-based telos of a “double-visioned” consciousness. Such a tactic aims to deconstruct gender while working from within it, and make this deconstruction apparent in order to foster subversive readings, and avoid readings which reinforce what it is intended to subvert, so that this practice can indeed function as deconstruction.

Poststructuralist feminism, from its nominally essentialist stance which constitutes the “essential difference” of this feminist ethos, takes as its project the revelation of what it perceives as the constructed-ness of gender structures. This section seeks to posit that the feminist consciousness of “doubled vision”, which poststructuralist feminism recommends as a method of undertaking this project in the context of the inescapability of said structures, is characteristic of feminist deconstruction (Culler 1983, pp.52-53).

This ethico-political project is based on the point of departure that I outlined above, that of a gender structure (albeit historically congealed) which the holder of the “doubled vision” may become capable of identifying.

I suggest a reading of the above tendencies to invoke essentialist gender categories in the zines, then, as an embodiment of deconstructive, tactical subversions of gender. This is an approach which is emblematic also of a certain strain of post-riot grrrl / third wave

\textsuperscript{29} This is usually called “strategic essentialism” but because of the implications of the term “strategy” in the way that I have invoked it in Chapter One in reference to structuralist conceptions of power and hegemony, the way that these feminists use “strategy” is more accurately described as “tactics” in my terms.
feminism that has close alliances with Queer, but which also retains a strong sense of its feminist genealogy.

**Feminist “ironic essentialism”: Because “they” will try to convince “us” that we have arrived.**

Tactics to self-consciously invoke essentialist categories in order to deconstruct them are predicated on the notion that these binary categories have material effects. This is a notion predicated on the idea that gender has congealed as a perceived “essence” and that one of the primary ways in which we come to be subjects is through this gender system’s “citational authority” (just as Foucault described sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*). These tactical invocations of essentialism diverge from what they perceive to be an essentialist “difference feminism” in that their ultimate telos is to produce a capacity to transcend hegemonic *binary* gender and to move towards a multiplicitous and limitless self-creation. In this post-gender ethos, the arbitrary collection of characteristics considered to be gender is no longer a hegemonic discourse constituting subjects.

These tactical invocations can be analysed in a genealogy of the *practice* of third wave feminism, which is itself closely allied with a particular strain of Queer gender politics in terms of both ethical goal and the means for achieving this. Indeed, all of the zines, or writers of the zines, which I have chosen for this study who are women identify as feminist, third wave feminist or “riot grrrl”, the latter being a form of feminism that grew
from the punk scene (*Ugly Duckling, Lezzarine, Personality Liberation Front, No More Waiting, Secret Archives of the Recent Past*). In common with the specific strains of poststructuralist-feminism and Queer Theory within which I have analysed tactically subversive approaches, much third wave feminism is concerned with deconstructing gender, sex and sexuality, while retaining the "the social-critical power of feminism" (Sim 2002, p.91). I argue that this is attempted through temporary, tactical and ironic invocations of the foundational gender and sex identity within which, according to notions of gendered subject positions, we must act.

*Le Tigre* are a contemporary DIY feminist electro band who are acclaimed in punk scenes, perhaps because they feature Kathleen Hanna, formerly of germinal riot grrrl / punk band *Bikini Kill*, and often cited as a founder of “riot grrrl” in the early 1990s. They may also be revered due to their adherence to a DIY ethos, despite their musical divergences from punk and the level of their popularity and success. *Le Tigre* are often posited as emblematic of third wave feminism, an association they themselves perpetuate, with songs such as *Third Wave Girl*. *Le Tigre’s* 2001 album *Feminist Sweepstakes* is their most successful. It featured the song *Tres Bien*, which ends with a manifesto of sorts for contemporary feminism. This manifesto plays on a riot grrrl staple of the manifesto, as it utilises the same format as Hanna’s famous early 1990s *Riot Grrrl Manifesto* (Hanna), which begins with “Because…”, followed by a reason for the necessity of feminism / a separate wimmin’s / grrrl’s sphere, and which has been adapted and used by scores of riot grrrls since. This new manifesto from *Le Tigre* is as follows:
[1] Because they will try to convince us that we have arrived, that we are already there, that it has happened. [2] Because we need to live in the place where we are truly alive, present, safe and accounted for. [3] Because we refuse to allow our writing, songs, art, activism and political histories to be suppressed or stolen. [4] Because we refuse to be embarrassed about the mistakes and faults and [5] choose to move forward with a political agenda bent on the freedom of all. (Le Tigre 2001, my brackets)

My interpretation of this manifesto is that it is emblematic of the approach of much third wave feminism and potentially some aspects of the “New Gender Politics”, which I will discuss later. I draw this conclusion from its invocation of a materialist gender politics compatible with a non-essentialist politics of alliance and an invented - in the sense I discussed in Chapter Two - ethical aim. I reach these conclusions by reading the five points as follows:

1. “Because they will try to convince us that we have arrived, that we are already there, that ‘it’ has happened”

With a knowledge of le Tigre’s dedication to feminism, as well as their affiliation with queer politics, I read this point as an assertion of the materiality of a “citationally congealed” gender hegemony or normative sexuality; it is an assertion that directly confronts those who would claim that such a “hegemony” can be dismissed as not effecting action because “it is not true”. Thus it is a self-invocation of categories through the use of “we” which I read to be tactical in the way that Spivak suggested the invocation of mobilized unities for specific purposes.
2. “Because we need to live in the place where we are truly alive, present, safe and accounted for”

I read this as an allusion to the need for the tactical and contextual creation of separate space for the undefined “us”: a project necessitated by the above posited material context of citationally congealed gender / sexuality structures which have the effect that “we” are often not “truly alive, present, safe and accounted for”. This is a further acknowledgment of the need for enactments - albeit temporary and tactical - of identity / mobilized unities; it is a similar pragmatism to the one Butler called for in her consideration of “what maximises the possibility for a liveable life, what minimizes the possibility of unbearable life or, indeed, social or literal life” (Butler 2004, p.8) This pragmatism she was able to address in conjunction with deconstructive aims and simultaneous with her post-gender ethical goals of self-creation which form the telos of her critical feminist subjects.

3. “Because we refuse to allow our writing, songs, art, activism and political histories to be suppressed or stolen.”

A major problem with early 1990s riot grrrl as a political movement was its appropriation by commerce. I read the reference to “stolen” as a reference to this co-option and a reassertion of the need for an autonomous culture and language. The reference to “suppressed” can be assumed to be referring to the resistive
potential of what Foucault (1980, p.81) called “the insurrection of subjugated knowledges”, that is the prefiguration of different discourses within which to act.

4. “Because we refuse to be embarrassed about the mistakes and faults”

I read this point as an articulation of the relationship of contemporary feminisms (be it post/third wave/riot grrrl) to past feminisms, a reluctance to place feminism and poststructuralism in a binary opposition, and an unapologetic ethico-political dedication to feminism. It is often noted that Queer could only have happened through feminism (Prokhovnik 1999, p.158) and this proclamation suggests that feminists of the present wish to use the term “feminism” without having to apologise or be embarrassed for divergences with past feminisms or from present poststructuralist theories, even as they contextualise them as necessary but insufficient (Spivak in Derrida 1976, p.xiv).

5. [Because we] “choose to move forward with a political agenda bent on the freedom of all.”

I read this final declaration as an articulation of their ethico-political aim as “the freedom of all”, an agenda which, in this case, can be considered “postmodern” because of its predication on non-essentialist terms. This point then is the unashamed assertion of “a political agenda” which, as I addressed in Chapter
Two, must necessarily be predicated on foundations, no matter how contingent, ironic or “postmodern”.

An important aspect of this manifesto is that it uses “we” and “our” to invoke a group identity, without specifying this identity in traditionally essentialist terms. *Le Tigre* invoke various group identities in various songs, perhaps pointing towards the “multiple alliances” which they refer to in *Fake French* (*Le Tigre* 2001). On the *Feminist Sweepstakes* album, these group identities include “the ladies and the fags” (*LT Tour Theme, Le Tigre* 2001), “dykes” (*Dyke March, Le Tigre* 2001) and feminists in *FYR*: “Feminists we're calling you. Please report to the front desk.” (*Le Tigre* 2001). This is invoked alongside the context of *Le Tigre’s* deconstructive Queer aesthetic30 and their ethico-political “agenda bent on the freedom of all.” This reflects the more broad foci of the New Gender Politics to which Butler referred in *Undoing Gender* (2004): a politics acknowledging that gender discrimination applies now not just to wimmin (although she is careful to emphasise the continuation of this), but also to anyone who transgresses a fixed gender identity (p.6).

In Mary Celeste Kearney’s (1998) study of riot grrrl as a feminist practice, she frames riot grrrl’s invocations of separatism in the context of “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 1994). Such an approach has been posited as a feminist ethico-political practice, articulated by Braidotti (1994) who describes various poststructuralist-feminist critics’

---

30 JD Samson of *Le Tigre* aesthetically deconstructs gender by confusing readings of her gender with a gender fucking image combining the signifiers of masculinity and femininity most easily described as a drag king look. It is an identity that she does not choose to perform temporarily, but rather lives. She is biologically female but performs (not quite) male and has a permanent and natural moustache. She has a non-gender-specific name and chooses to use female pronouns.
valorisations of essentialism as “political fictions”: invocations of foundationalist terms with in-built rejections of this very foundationalism. Barker has countered feminist fears of a loss of the identities traditionally used as political points of departure by emphasising that anti-essentialism “does not mean that we cannot speak of truth or identity. Rather, it points to them as being not universals of nature but productions of culture in specific times and places” (Barker 2000, p.21). According to Barker, the specific and contingent uses of “truth” and “identity” present in poststructuralist-feminists’ ethico-political practice of “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 1994 p.153), have a similar basis as the “ironic” points of departure (Rorty 1989) which I invoked as a parallel to the non-foundationalism of poststructuralist anarchism in Chapter Two.

The “feminist figurations” that Braidotti groups together as emblematic of an approach which acknowledges the limits within which we can “be”, yet which seek to re-construct these limited discourses on feminists’ own terms, are all instances of ironic (in the sense of lacking fixed foundations) “tactical essentialism”, undertaken in the name of a subversive and deconstructive ethico-political aim. Braidotti cites as examples of this project Monique Wittig’s “lesbian,” Judith Butler’s “parodic politics of the masquerade,” Nancy Miller’s “becoming women,” Teresa de Lauretis’ “eccentric subject,” and Maurizia Boscaglia’s “fellow-commuters’ in an in-transit state” (Braidotti 1994, p.3). De Lauretis historicises these nominal uses of essence by feminists, describing them as "more a project...than a description of existent reality; it is an admittedly feminist project of ‘re-vision,’ where the specification feminist and re-vision already signal its historical locations." (1994, p.3). Such approaches owe much to the deconstructionist tactics
proposed by Derrida and exemplified by his tactic of “Sous Rature” (to put a necessary but insufficient term “under erasure” (Spivak in Derrida 1976, p.xiv)). This is certainly one of the major inspirations for Spivak’s “strategic essentialism”, her germinal preface to Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1976) demonstrating her early interest in questions of tactics, which she later applied to the question of “essentialism”. These specific essentialist invocations, far from developing from the desire to reaffirm gender as an essential defining feature, are the results of a vehement dedication to anti-essentialism which acknowledges the violence / materiality of (non-critical) essentialism. As Spivak has emphatically stated, “I’m attempting to bring anti-essentialist metaphysics to crisis because I care...[because of the fact that] you deconstructively critique something which is useful to you that you cannot speak any other way” (1994, p.179).

Sim's (1999, p. 91) definition of “postmodernist feminist theory” seems to apply to these uses of “tactical essentialism” when he asserts that such a theory is "pragmatic and fallibilistic". In *Irony and Crisis*, Sim suggests that feminists have addressed the postmodern “crisis” of feminism's subject, through pragmatic and ironic fallibility. He defines fallibilism as “not needing to be known with certainty...a pragmatic attitude to knowledge, not requiring absolute proof” (Sim 1999, p.256). This is similar to Rorty’s definition of an “ironist” as “the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires - someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist” (1989, p.xv).
An example of subversion in the zines is the “centre-fold” of A4 sized *Ugly Duckling* #7. This image is characteristic of the zine creator Carmen’s style. It also reflects a common approach (in terms of form and content) in zines more broadly: a collage featuring a reappropriated image of a Hollywood actress, with the literalising caption “A message from Hollywood” and a bubble from the actress’s head reading “Thank God I’m not FAT.” This intends to interrupt conventional readings of such images and reinscribe them through the tactics of exaggeration and literalisation to “reveal” the congealed discursive subject position of femininity. Literalisation is also apparent in an example of “queering” in the same zine, in an image reprinted from *No Frills* zine that shows generic people symbols in a heteronormative family group (adult ‘male’ symbol, adult ‘female’ symbol, female ’child’ symbol and male ’child’ symbol) with the word “BREED” printed below, again fostering new readings of familiar discourses. *Queen Psychotic Rage* also undertakes subversions of visual discourses through recontextualisation. The creator of this zine “queers” old-fashioned illustrations of schoolboys under the title “the uncensored boy’s own”, using images such as two schoolboys holding hands and sitting with their legs crossed, the original context now lost by this act of *detournement*.

In the broader punk context Lynn Breedlove of queercore band *Tribe 8* suggests that a seemingly aporic enactment of reverse valorisation or affirmative action can also be a temporary tactic towards a deconstructive “queer” ethical goal: “We’ve been excluded for so long that we have to balance out the imbalances…It’s like affirmative action; *for a while*, you have to go to the opposite extremes” (in Arnold 1997, emphasis added). A similar reversal of dichotomous gender hierarchy is a feature of much contemporary
anarchist literature, where, for example, the default second person of “he” is replaced with “she”, in an act which presumably aims to disrupt or decentre readings and interrupt conventional readings of the “universal personhood” of the default male. This tactic is present in many “CrimethInc.” publications, including the book *Days of War, Nights of Love* (2001) and the papers/zines *Harbinger, Hunter/Gatherer* and *Inside Front*. It is also used in Holloway’s (2002) *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*. This is especially notable in reference to CrimethInc. book *Days of War, Nights of Love* (2001), whose (initially seemingly aporic) aims are unmistakable when read in conjunction with their explicit analyses of the socio-historical nature of “gender”. It is from this same book that I earlier quoted a post-gender stated aim, predicated on genders constructed-ness, that gender identities/categories cannot “adequately contain any of us”.

While Butler posits the poststructuralist corollary that “the feminist subject turns out to be discursively produced by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipations” (Butler 1990, p.2), she only states that “an *uncritical* appeal to such a system for the emancipation of ‘women’ is clearly self-defeating” (Butler 1990, p.2, emphasis added). Her work on performativity, subversion and parody then demonstrates what such a *critical* appeal could look like. These refigurations in the guise of an ironic tactical essentialism are perhaps examples of what Butler envisaged when she called for “a new sort of feminist politics...to contest the very reifications of gender and identity,

---

31 It is notable that some academic post-structuralist anarchist texts consciously do not address the issue of gendered language. For example, Saul Newman’s 2001 *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* which continues to use the traditional academic “he” and “man” as universal default, which the author claimed to be due to both the Enlightenment vernacular of classical anarchism and a reaction to Politically Correct language policing (from private correspondence with author).
one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal” (Butler 1990, p.5).

Subversion

To reiterate, then, subversion, such as that of the critical repetition of “tactical essentialism”, is emblematic of the delimited agency posited by Butler’s “performativity”; by assuming that a “doubled vision” is possible, it allows us to work from the discourses which constitute us - indeed it is impossible not to - but also to gain limited agency through realising (via deconstruction) that this subject status is contingent, not essential. Working from the feminist a priori that gender structures affect action, which is its necessary and unapologetic limit, Hutcheon proposes why deconstructive tactics are particularly pertinent for those defined as women:

It seems to me that... women are often in the position of defining themselves against a dominant culture or discourse. One way to do that, a way with great subversive potential, is to speak the language of the dominant (which allows you to be heard), but then to subvert it through ironic strategies of exaggeration, understatement, or literalization (Hutcheon 1997, internet ref.)

Here we can see that Hutcheon, like the feminists I discussed above, posits that there does indeed exist a gender meta-discourse, which motivates her turn to deconstructive tactics. Thus it is that non-essentialist feminists such as this, informed by deconstructive
assumptions, choose to embrace the irony that it must be that “feminists fight to put an end to gender” (CrimethInc, *Hunter/Gatherer*, p.2).

Many of the subversive tactics of deconstruction recommended by Hutcheon are apparent in the zines’ content provided by both women, and non-heterosexual people (Coughing Up Legomen, Lezzarine, Personality Liberation Front, Queen Psychotic Rage, Ugly Duckling) as I have already demonstrated above. This demonstrates a brandishing of specifically subversive tactics of deconstruction by those whose subject positions are associated with the subordinate ends of the binaries that poststructuralist-feminists posit as the reified structures of sex and gender. Kylie addresses this double-bind - one of the characteristics of tactical invocations of essentialism that I outlined above - in Personality Liberation Front zine.

The fact that those who are the “subordinate others” in gender and sexuality binaries commonly invoke tactics of subversion, which are predicated on invoking that which they seek to deconstruct, demonstrates that subordination is all the more inescapable and unforgettable. This is the feminist notion that the subordinate is marked in contrast to the “universal personhood” (Butler 1990, p.9) of the dominant position. As much as invoking the subordinate is an inescapable necessity, then, some poststructuralist theorists have argued that by doing so one becomes implicated in its pernicious effects. Kylie discusses this issue in relation to “an enlightened freethinking punk scene where we are encouraged to speak as women”. But this, she states, is where the very problem lies; by

---

32 There are also instances of men using such deconstructive tactics to demonstrate their dominant positions in terms of gender, which I address at the end of this chapter.
speaking as **women** we are of course reaffirming the gender order we seek to deconstruct.

It is here that the notions of *temporality* and the *explicitness* of such tactical approaches become paramount. I discuss these matters in the following sections, where I first outline the emphasis on temporality in such tactics, owing to them leading towards a particular ethico-political aim. After this, I emphasise the importance of a meticulous explicitness of the tactical nature of these approaches, in order that the tactically essentialist approaches of the zines, and the feminist theorists I have cited, elude reinstating what they seek to deconstruct and foster instead subversive readings and “doubled visioned” ethos.

**The ethico-political foundation of poststructuralist feminism**

As I have suggested with reference to Seidman (1995), there is a strain of “Queer Theory” which utilises poststructuralist deconstructionism in order to work towards an ethico-political goal of overcoming what it perceives to be a hegemonic “heteronormativity”, just as the above feminists seek to use these tactics to overcome a hegemonic gender normativity.

It is here that I wish to take the diversion to interrogate the ethico-political values and aims on which such projects are predicated, towards which I have already gestured, to demonstrate that they too are predicated on foundations, even if these foundations are
anti-essentialist and “ironic”. This discussion re-affirms the necessity of foundations for feminist projects, immaterial of how much they rely on poststructuralist tactics.

In the context of Butler's assertions that “we cannot be without doing”, the refigurations demonstrated above are emphasised as temporary tactics which “provide for the moment the only social form in which we can live freely” (Wittig in Abelove et. al. 1993, p.108). This temporality is an important aspect of Butler’s thought, in that she views the use of identities only as “temporary totalization”[s] (Butler 1993, p.230) which point towards an imagined telos on her part. If “queer2 is a

necessary error [a term she has borrowed from Spivak], then the assertion of ‘queer’ will be necessary as a term of affiliation, but it will not fully describe those it purports to represent. As a result, it will be necessary to affirm the contingency of the term: to let it be vanquished...That it can become a discursive site whose uses...expose, affirm, and rework the specific historicity of the term. (Butler 1993, p.230)

The transgressive aims assumed in certain readings of Butler’s and others’ approaches to “Queer” suggest that they intend to foster an ethos which can “posit and transgress” the constructed hegemonies of gender and sex normativity. In Queer Theory, Seidman argues that Fuss also invokes the tactical “necessary error” of identity as a temporary tactic towards such an aim:

the very subjects positioned to trouble the hetero/homo hierarchy are invested in it. Deconstructive critique cannot disavow identity as it is the very subjects who claim identities as man, woman lesbian, and gay who are the only agents of change. Thus the queer project aims to deconstruct and refigure identities as multiple and fluid (Seidman 1995, p.132)
Seidman posits Fuss’ ethical aim or telos then, as a multiplicity of fluid identities, thus demonstrating the normative basis of this particular approach (the “posit and transgress” approach) to deconstructive queer theory.

The uses of gender, sex and sexuality categories as verbs and not nouns seek to make explicit their constantly constitutive nature, developed from the theory of performativity. This practice, which hopes “to queer” categories that are usually engaged fixedly, along with the assertion that queer should be superseded in order to avoid a congealment of it into identity, supports a reading which points towards queer as defined by critical opposition. This is apparent in the zines, when, for example, in _Coughing up Legomen_ #13, Chris states that he writes “from a queered perspective”, which can be read as an attempt to reject the fixedness of claiming queer as an identity. The very title of this zine suggests an ethos of transgressing norms. Thus Chris asserts that the implication of the title “coughing up legomen” is to “to cough up normativity, it tastes bad anyway.”

Again, this alludes to a deterministic “normativity”, however historically it may have been produced. Like the deconstructive subversive approaches of DIY which I demonstrated as considering themselves to be purely critical, however, such orientations cannot evade the possession of some normative points of departure.

The “tactically essentialist” feminists’ desire to maintain temporality makes clear that they take the “variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal” (Butler 1990, p.5). Making the feminist
consciousness that is the goal of this ethico-political project explicit, de Lauretis likewise emphasises this temporality when she says that identity is not the goal but rather the point of departure of the process of self-consciousness, a process by which one begins to know that and how the personal is political, that and how the subject is specifically and materially en-gendered in its social conditions and possibilities of existence. As it is articulated in the context of the debate on identity politics...this feminist conception of identity is not at all the statement of an essential nature of women, whether defined biologically or philosophically, but rather a political-personal strategy of survival and resistance...the search for identity may be, in fact, a ‘rewriting’ of self. (de Lauretis 1986, pp.8-9)

This notion of temporality has gained much currency with activists seeking a political point of departure in the context of non-essentialist theories. An example is the activist students who enacted “strategic essentialism” at UTS (University of Technology Sydney) Student Union, wherein they made an important distinction between separatism as an aim and separatism as a tactic. In this way they came to define their ethno-cultural space as follows:

There is nowhere in the world that a person of colour can feel completely comfortable. And I’m not just talking about Australia. When you go to Malaysia and turn on the TV, you’re bombarded with white propaganda telling you how to look, how to eat and how to live. MTV, Baywatch, the NEWS… when public space is everyone’s space, then we will let Anglo-Saxons come into the ethno-cultural space…The ethno-cultural space is not there to exclude. It is there to provide a space that is missing. It is trying to correct what is wrong in our world so that indigenous peoples, people of colour from a NESB can feel empowered in a world which continually tries to oppress them. (Chi, 2004)

---

33 The ethno-cultural space follows in the tradition of queer / women's spaces in Australian student unions which are generally open to any queer / wimmin-identified students. This justification of context, non-essentialism and temporality is usual for such enactments of autonomous organising.
To relate this back to temporary invocations of “queer” as an identity category, I note that Sullivan has suggested that “queer” used as an identity “functions in similar ways to the term ‘political lesbian’” (2003, p.44), which I cited as one of Braidotti’s “feminist reconfigurations” of tactical essentialism. Political lesbians have been defined as “people occupying provisional subject positions in heterosexual society” (Phelan 2004, p.701) so that such an identity is contingent on the context of “heterosexual society”. Like the metaphors I invoked in Chapter One, which articulated the “necessary error” of seemingly regressive “reformist” tactics for poststructuralist anarchists’ ethico-political projects, Anzaldua (1991) has emphasised the temporality, but contextual necessity, of the use of “queer” as an identity:

> Queer is used as a false unifying umbrella which all ‘queers’ of all races, ethnicities and classes are shoved under. At times we need this umbrella to solidify our ranks against outsiders. But even when we seek shelter under it we must not forget that it homogenizes, erases our differences. (in Sullivan 2003, p.44)

Yet if this temporality demonstrates that there is a definite ethical basis to these tactics, a telos towards which these deconstructions can lead us, what are the specifics of the ethico-political goal that such tactics are temporarily invoked in the struggle for? As I suggested in Chapter Two, deconstructive techniques retain an implicit normative basis: the assumption that what is being deconstructed deserves to be deconstructed. This can be a project predicated on a regard for the value of a critical positionality for the sake of critique, as is the case of Fuss’s “analysis interminable” (in Seidman 1995, p.132) or it can be a project predicated, as I believe it is here, on the notion that another truth is pragmatically preferable to that what is being deconstructed. This is apparent in Spivak’s
assertion that she puts her ethico-political aims ("difference") before theoretical purity. She says that "building for difference, rather than keeping ourselves clean by being whatever it means to be an anti-essentialist has taken on much greater emphasis for me at this point" (Spivak 1994, p.155). This is resonant of the tactical use of theories in the service of ethico-political aims, with less regard for theoretical consistency, that I demonstrated as emblematic of DIY anarchism.

Such propositions of an alternative truth need not necessarily be posited on essentialist foundations, as I made clear in Chapter Two with reference to Rorty (1989), who suggested that a non-foundationalist created aim must only retain conviction of its value and, instead of relying on "truth" for its justification, must be argued for. Hutcheon has argued that such an ethical orientation is feminism’s point of departure:

> While feminisms may use postmodern parodic strategies of deconstruction, they never suffer from…confusion of political agenda, partly because they have a position and a ‘truth’ that offer ways of understanding aesthetic and social practices in the light of the production of – and challenge to – gender relations. This is their strength and, in some people’s eyes, their necessary limitation (1989, p.149)

As Adair (2002) put this, in a discussion of Butler’s manner of treating gender as a “necessary error” (Butler 1993, p.229), it is understandable as “part of an ascetic practice for treating one’s own sense of ‘substance’ as a problem to be overcome” (Adair 2002 p. 150). This ethos works in the service of a telos of self-creation, and takes the “variable construction of identity as…a political goal" (Butler 1990, p.5). This “variable construction” resonates with the “multiple and fluid” goal of Fuss and the “difference” of
Spivak. It is comparable with the poststructuralist-anarchist ethico-political telos of self-creation to which I dedicated much of Chapter Two. The gender politics of the zines and DIY anarchism thus integrate as part of the general DIY anarchist valorisation of self-creation.

When Seidman discusses the problem of an under-theorisation of the ethical in much Queer Theory, he suggests that Butler's approach is predicated on an “ideal of difference - by the possibilities of a social space where selves can fashion bodies, gender identities, and sexualities without the normative constraints of compulsive heterosexuality and bipolar gender norms” (1995, p.136). These ethical ideals of the self-creation of “gender”, “sex” and “sexuality” are shared by DIY anarchism. Where Seidman calls Butler’s reluctance to describe “what this would look like” as under-theorisation, I would identify it as a tactical approach predicated on the principle of autonomy. An important difference between the normative bases of valorisations of gender and sex self-creation in a non-foundational context, such as those of the Gender Subversion Kit which I referred to on p130, as opposed to humanistically predicated norms for autonomy such as those of Critical Theory, are that non-foundational assertions of autonomy evade setting limits to what this autonomy would / could look like. Butler’s seeming evasiveness follows from Foucault’s desires not to set limits to humyn freedom via a transcendental notion of freedom, but rather to view “the subject of freedom…[as] a subject of power in the primary sense of that term.” (Patton 1994, p.68). This is to say that, if the assumption of the capacity for autonomy is historical, there is no telling what subjects of different power arrangements could produce. This is an example of how Foucault’s “thin”
conception of subjects provides a basis for a non-foundational autonomy, the effects of which cannot be predicted or limited.

**Prefiguration: Fostering capacities**

I seek now to apply the discussion of the required capacities for subversive ethos which I began in Chapter Two to this particular feminist ethos. In this way I can develop the discussion of how “radically participatory” DIY culture functions to foster capacities for an ethos of autonomy or self-creation.

The intended readings of the subversive tactics employed by poststructuralist-feminists in their ethico-political project requires a particular capacity to read, the prerequisite of which is the “doubled vision” with which they create such “double intentions” (Derrida 1976, pp.xvii-xix). It has been proposed that the extension of such practices to a paradigmatic political aim is a universalisation of the particularly, institutionally fostered capacities of the critical intellectual: a “philosophico-historical projection” (Hunter 1988, p.70). Hunter charts this as a tendency running from the eighteenth century through Hegel to Marx to “universalise the specialist dialectic of ethical cultivation by projecting it as a model for the ‘culture’ or historical development of ‘society as a whole’” (Hunter 1988, p.70).
Chris Lego is likewise keen to emphasise the contextual limits to universalist adaptations of these specialist modes-of-reading.

Empowerment can only occur within the limits of a person’s material circumstances. It’s one thing for a bourgeois intellectual such as Pat Califia to embrace queer and then to have F-to-M gender reassignment, but the actual difference...queer will make to the life of a working class woman with two children who decides that she might not be heterosexual is highly questionable. (Chris, *Coughing Up Legomen* #13)

Thus it is that, in this context, it is not the discourses in the sense of languages or “notations” which are of interest for an ethico-political project, lacking as they do according to poststructuralism a transcendental signified which can guarantee a subversive reading; rather it is how they are used, how they “take their form and function from their deployment in ensembles of other techniques, institutions and practices.” (Hunter 1991, p.51) which provides them with the potential for a subversive function. To make this more clear, Hunter states that

it is not to the category of discourse that we should look. Rather, it is to the particular techniques of living and department of existence where, under specifiable historical circumstances, a certain practice of reading and writing forms part of a discipline of personal cultivation. (Hunter 1991, p.52)

In relation to DIY anarchism, then, I ask how it is that the DIY scene utilises particular discourses to foster certain capacities in order to work towards its ethico-political goals.

Institutional limits to reading are a potential flaw in the prefigurative practices within DIY anarchism which attempt to implement gender deconstructive or post-gender
language without context. This is emblematised by the “Evasion debates” to which I referred in Chapter Two. These practices are nevertheless potentially transformative, not only via an ability to reveal the contingent nature of truths through the discourses transcendental meaning, but rather in how these revelations open the space for prefiguration. As I have previously emphasised, deconstructive revelations are integral to the project of demonstrating how things might be different. In this way, the moment of revelation is important, but only in the wider context within which such subversive tactics can be understood as intended.

Refiguration “on our own terms” (Kylie, Personality Liberation Front #3) can be seen as one of the aims of the much-critiqued “difference feminism” of the Second Wave, which de Lauretis (1994) has sought to defend. The practice of consciousness raising is so often assumed to be an essentialist practice attempting to uncover a “true consciousness” repressed by the nebulous but all-powerful structure of “the patriarchy”. Instead, like Wittig (in Abelove et. al. 1993, p.108), de Lauretis proposes that this practice can be understood as aiming to create – as distinct from uncover - a class of wimmin, in order that they may form a political point of departure for challenging such a created class. Whether or not these really were the intentions of much second wave consciousness raising is not the relevant issue here, however. What is of interest from de Lauretis and Wittig is that consciousness raising has been read as, and has the potential to be, a practice involving a non-foundational telos of self-creation.
Many of the zines in my analysis engage with second wave refigurations of the spelling of “women”, including wimmin and womyn. While having associations with an essentialism assumed to be a characteristic of second wave “difference feminism” however, these uses can instead be read as the ironic non-foundationalist refigurations which de Lauretis and Wittig have theorised above. Indeed, the invoking of various terms used in riot grrrl, such as “ladies” and “grrrls”, represents another act of refiguration of terms. Here Elke of the “grrrl zine network” explains her non-foundationalist, but still feminist, redefinition of such terms:

With ‘grrrl and ladies’ I think of rebellious, resistant ‘girls’ (which does not mean you have to be born a woman!) who are not afraid to call themselves feminists!…The terms ‘grrrl’ and ‘lady’ are not meant to be exclusive, this project is definitely boy-friendly and open to all non-sexist, non-discriminatory, anti-racist/homophobic contributions and includes transgender issues (Elke in Ugly Duckling #7)

In some ways, then, these undoubtedly feminist refigurations function in a similar way to the other deconstructive tactics of Butler and others, who place inverted commas around such essentialist terms\(^\text{34}\) in order to interrupt conventional readings, so that their employment of such terms may be read as referring not to an “essential difference”, but to a constructed difference.

How then can such actions be read as tactics? This is the problem of fostering a feminist ethos which can understand that “a strategy is not a theory” (Spivak 1994, p.154).

Spivak’s suggestion for this is demonstrating the “strategic use of a positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (Spivak 1994, p.153), that is

---

\(^{34}\) See Butler 2004, p.10 for an example.
making the tactical nature of such uses *explicit* enough to elicit a deconstructive reading. In Chapter Two I identified this as a method for fostering the desired readings of DIY anarchist prefigurations without them congealing into doctrines. I also applied this to the problem experienced by Judith Butler’s example of drag as exemplary of performativity congealing into a kind of doctrine.

My participant observation within anarchist environments has shown attempts to make the temporary nature of tactical invocations of essentialism “scrupulously visible” (Spivak in Schor & Weed 1994, p.153). For example, a “womyn only” music workshop at anarchist / DIY festival *Belladonna* 2003 acknowledged its temporality and contextuality in the write-up for the workshop which asserted that “Unfortunately the Hardcore/Punk/DIY music scene is dominated by males. As a means of addressing this issue this workshop is designed to create a space by womyn for womyn” (*Belladonna DIY Zine* 2003). This context is also demonstrably accepted by some men in the scene who acknowledge that the “privilege still hangs towards boys being encouraged to sit around and play guitar and girls aren’t given the encouragement and support in that” (Aaron ‘Pure Evil’ in *On Fire III*). In 2004, the first day of the festival was wimmin-*centred*, and contained the workshops “anti-patriarchal living and loving” and “Why is punk rock so straight? aka. Queercore.” Having discussed this issue with a wumun who was a festival co-organiser I believe that the deliberate choice to make the day wimmin-*centred* as opposed to wimmin-*only* was a tactic to evade appealing to a natural “essential difference”, to encourage men to engage with the political terrain of gender and to expose the invisible "universal personhood" (Butler 1990 p.9) of maleness
within punk, anarchism and hardcore. This precludes the oft-made assumption that wimmin-only space always represents an aim of separatism (which would necessarily be predicated on essentialism) by demonstrating a desire not to exclude men, but rather to include them in the process of working towards a common poststructuralist-feminist ethos. Indeed, the co-organiser stated that this decision arose from debates within the scene as to the essentialising reversal of a wimmin-only day, in order that the aims of such a tactic may be clarified, may be made “scrupulously visible”. Again, the wimmin-centred day at Belladonna 2004 is exemplary of the aim of deconstructing gender, within the tactical acknowledgment that we cannot be without doing gender.

Within the zines and the broader DIY, queer and anarchy-punk scenes there have been attempts to implement post-gender languages to reflect the post-gender ethos of the gender politics generally adopted. Belladonna DIY Zine and an article in Ugly Duckling #7 reprinted from Ember zine, for example, use the term “humyn” in attempts to eschew gender binarism. From my participant observation I noted that there are also attempts to apply the use of non-gendered pronouns and non-gender specific names in radical punk (but mostly radical queer punk) scenes. For example, an untitled zine I obtained through the Brisbane punk scene, by Anika Vinson, uses “co” and “ze” in place of him/her or s/he. Likewise, a CrimethInc. DIY Guide has a guide to “DIY Pronouns.” The guide to non-gendered pronouns, while proclaiming itself to be a “guide” to “DIY pronouns”, while being “do-it-yourself” not “do-it-how-we-do”, is in reality an exemplification of a particular use of post-gender pronouns. This demonstrates the need, in the context of the delimited agency of subject positions, for “an alternative, minority version of sustaining
norms” (Butler 2004, p.3) from which to challenge the dominant norms and the fact that it is how discourses function in the patchwork of social relations that makes them of interest to governmentality, not the words themselves. Additionally, as I noted of DIY anarchist literature in Chapter Two, such an exemplification is employed without claims to being any more “true” than other approaches, but rather represents an argument for its particular use. This non-coercive “developmental power” engaged in by such “guides” represents an attempt at fostering capacities towards the autonomous aims of a DIY anarchism, making the (non-coercive but still governmental) means by which it attempts to do so as “scrupulously visible” as possible, in keeping with this ethos of autonomy. The implementation of post-gender language, then, demonstrates how languages play an “instrumental role in a particular form of calculation or technique of living” (Hunter 1991, p.41). In this case that technique of fostering an autonomous ethos is done through the non-coercive approach of “scrupulously visible”, “developmental” power.

The issue of the capacities needed to unproblematically communicate an ironic function is exemplified by the following example of the ironic and tactical political fictions consciously employed in the performances by some participants designated male in the anarcha-punk scene.
Hyper masculinity and hardcore performance

Elements of the DIY anarchy-hardcore sub-community of punk, with a potential genealogy in the subversions of queercore, have developed the capacity to read the hyper-masculinity of hardcore-punk performance\(^{35}\) as revelatory of the repeated performativity which sustains gendered subjects-as-processes. This is to say that they have fostered a reading of these practices which re-frames them as “critical repetition”. This is apparent in the recent popularity in radical DIY punk communities of drag-king parodies of punk masculinity, and also in ironic readings of normative performances. The ironic readings of normative performances are testament to the notion that it is not so much the intention of the user of the discourses that is of importance, or the discourses themselves, as it is the ethical and conceptual capacities of the “reader”. These ironic readings through a capacity for “doubled vision” are exemplary of the feminist “practice of freedom” (Foucault 1984), which Butler and de Lauretis advocate as a possibility for the self-creation ethos within the limitations of our reliance on discourses which both enable and limit our conducts.

A male vocalist / guitarist of Sydney hardcore band Pure Evil demonstrates his subversive capacity when he says that

[a friend] was saying that, at the end of the day, there’s nothing challenging about a bunch of boys getting up and rocking out, its something that is age old. And I argued that there are certain things challenging about it, from my perspective a lot

---

\(^{35}\) Hardcore punk as a music genre is undoubtedly male dominated, and contains certain sub-genres which employ exaggerated masculinity in live performances (i.e. at “shows”) by both the musicians and the audiences, such as “metalcore” and “youth crew”.
of what I am rocking out about has to do with trying to break out of typical moulds of male activity, but at the same time its done through a stereotyped ‘angry male’ display. (On Fire #3)

This statement expresses the band member’s intent to engage with such a masculine vernacular, as a self-conscious and thus subversive political fiction. According to poststructuralist critiques of a transcendental relationship between signifiers and signifieds, the capacity to comprehend this performance as intended requires a pre-existing and operating ethico-political stance on questions of gender, which would make one want to read as such. But for this performance to function in fostering such a capacity, for the moment of revelation to sufficiently confuse normative readings, it would also require pre-existing knowledge of the absurdity or aporia of such a hyper-masculinity coming from this particular man; it would require some knowledge of the context of his moral and political stances.

Hutcheon's study of irony identified similar limits to such a practice, in that the “only way to be sure that a statement was intended ironically is to have a detailed knowledge of the personal, linguistic, cultural and social references of the speaker and his audience.” (Guant in Hutcheon 1994, p.116). And herein lies the limits of such ironic “political fictions”: the gamble of communication is contingent on one making these fictions so “scrupulously visible” (Spivak 1994, p.153) as to ensure or foster an ironic reading. In the words of Nehring (1997) – writing in specific reference to riot grrrl - “whether the audience get the joke, of course, is always the sticking point” (p.170). Elsewhere Michael Hurley (1990) has articulated what Hutcheon presents as a contextual contingency in more productive terms - which go further to address the causes of and
possible interventions in these contingencies - as “reading formations”. He quotes Catherine Greenfield to the effect that the “reader is the bearer of these discursive forms according to various and changing institutional trainings which confer special competencies.” (p.158). Like Hunter (1991), Hurley makes a broadly poststructuralist argument when he first asserts that the “meanings generated do not come from the text itself” (Hurley 1990, p.157) and then points towards ways of reading as specific techniques, the uses of which require particular kinds of intellectual and moral training.

The contextuality and “detailed knowledge” which Hurley refers to as a “reading formation”, and the resulting capacity to read these practices as ironic, were fostered for me in the specific case of Pure Evil through various DIY practices. These included the lyric sheets accompanying hardcore-punk shows and musical releases (which, as I have outlined, often include explanations of the songs), the spoken word explanations between songs, and the zines which are all such an integral aspect of this "decentralized, radically participatory, do-it-yourself underground" (CrimethInc., Hunter/Gatherer) culture.

Indeed Kylie noted this important contextualising function of zines for the culture when she claimed that

Zines are the essential lifeblood of punk and…we have to work towards zines having higher importance in our community. Although I think its possible to be politicised by music, zines give you a sense of the community and the communication and how global it all is. Zines are the place where all the radical thoughts that get condensed down into song lyrix [sic] and paragraph explanations get explained in further detail, and they show that punk is so much more than music, or ‘more than noise’ if you will. (Personality Liberation Front)
Other attempts at context-making are parts of the live performances of the music. In the above example of *Pure Evil*, and the intention of the band to deconstruct masculinity through its critical repetition, my reading of their performance, when first watching them play at *Belladonna DIY Fest 2003*, was greatly transformed by a short explanation of the song to come, which stated that it was about the tyranny of gender norms. My reading was then transformed a little more after obtaining the lyric sheet at the show and reading it. The lyric sheet helped me understand their stance on this topic and my understanding was developed further after reading interviews with the band in various zines. This is one instance where my capacity to read was fostered by the cultural products of the Australian DIY anarcha-hardcore-punk culture, wherein these discourses enacted a “developmental power” over me, not at odds with the empowerment ethos of poststructuralist anarchism. Hurley quotes Bennett to define reading formations as “discursive and intertextual determinations which organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways.” (1990, p.158). In this way, DIY anarchist culture and the zines which are so central to it, can be figured in the context of “reading formations” in the sense that, in rejecting transcendental meaning in the text, the zines and other cultural texts are a means of fostering particular reading subjects.

In terms of gender, then, the reading formations apparent from *Pure Evil* seek to foster a reading subject armed with the “doubled vision” to deconstruct the invocations of gender on the part of *Pure Evil* as revelatory of the performativity of gender. The gradual “rewrites” revealed after the initial acts by *Pure Evil*, through the spoken word, lyric
sheets and zines, embody the ethico-political ideal envisaged by Gutterman in his article, “Postmodernism and the Interrogation of Masculinity”:

By utilizing the fluidity of identity and the shield provided by cultural presumptions of normalcy, profeminist men can thereby gain access to other men and then reveal the ‘rewrites’ they have made in the cultural scripts of masculinity as well as encourage, challenge, and nurture other men to rewrite the scripts of their own identity. (Gutterman 2001, p.67)

This “encouragement, challenge and nurturing” is another example of a developmental “power over”. Punk rock zine On Fire #3 is perhaps the zine version of this profeminist potential of reading formations which Pure Evil have used for gender subversive ends. The zine proclaims its target audience to be the Australian “DIY Hardcore Punk Community”, which is undoubtedly in the wider context male dominated. This zine is in many ways a typical hardcore music zine with interviews and reviews, but it is the content and focus in this format which are subversive through their potential to foster specific reading subjects. This subversion or deconstruction functions prefigurativley as a “developmental power to-”, to demonstrate that not only is the subverted identity socially constituted, but that other approaches to identity are thus possible.

Conclusion

Building upon the previous two chapters’ discussions of limits to agency and “resistance”, in this chapter I have used the example of gender politics in DIY anarchist culture, and the specific feminist ethos they seek to foster, to further demonstrate DIY as
an ethico-political practice of fostering specific intellectual capacities in order for participants in the culture to develop an appropriate ethos. Without compromising its ultimate goals in terms of a self-creation post-gender ethos, the DIY culture is able to embody the necessary “alternative, minority versions of sustaining norms” (Butler 2004, p.3) that Butler identified as pre-requisites for any project for change. Thus the “necessary error” of the “punk rock sanctuary” that is DIY culture, is integral to developing capacities for a particular ethos of gender self-governance. Yet while I have shown that this ethos of gender self-creation, like the general DIY anarchist ethos, may draw upon the conceptual resources of poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, I have also argued that it demonstrates the possibility of basing ethical foundations on something other than essences, and that it assumes that we can only act to envisage and secure our ethical and political goals within the circumstances in which we operate.

**Thesis Conclusion**

DIY anarcha-hardcore punk in Australia is a dedicated and culturally vibrant scene, preoccupied with the embodiment of its particular anarchist ethos. I posited the aim of this thesis to be a redescription of the specific self-conscious anarchist politics of contemporary Australian DIY anarcha-hardcore punk culture. My method was to analyse a selection of the zines produced and circulated in this culture, with an eye to establishing the usefulness of poststructuralist theory for redescribing the culture and its politics. It
was my aim to interrogate how the culture considers itself to be political, how it understands these politics as functioning, and on what values these politics are predicated.

By identifying how DIY anarchism - as articulated in the zines of my study - diverges from classical anarchist theory, I was able to posit some aspects of poststructuralist analyses of power which may be useful for explaining how DIY does understand its practices to be political. I applied Foucault’s theory of “governmentality” to the cultural and discursive aspects of DIY to examine the question of how these aspects can be understood as political. I was further able to argue that prefigurative practices, which are emblematic of DIY anarchism, are considered “resistive” and “revolutionary”, owing to certain poststructuralist assertions that power operates productively by enabling action within definite limits. In this context, DIY anarchism can be understood as an approach which is deconstructive and subversive for the sake of demonstrating new “ways of being” which acknowledge the “limits of knowing” and the “limits of being”.

Across my first and second chapters I developed a description of anarchism which demonstrated that certain theoretical inconsistencies in DIY anarchism, such as “tactical” engagements with macro-political symbols of power, continue an anarchist ethico-political project; and that if DIY anarchism is accounted for as an ethico-political practice that uses sometimes incompatible theories - including the conceptual vocabulary of poststructuralism - it becomes questionable to attempt to describe or assess it in terms of “Theory”.
In Chapter Two I argued that DIY anarchist culture can never be free of domination or governance, since “domination”, as poststructuralism shows us, can be understood in a nominal, value-free sense, as a characteristic of all social relations. Yet I also demonstrated that DIY anarchist culture is dedicated to a necessarily value-based ethico-political project of fostering self-governance. This is emblematized by the tactics of the developmental relations of “exemplification” best embodied by those “prefigurations” that are such an integral component of DIY anarchism.

After establishing the ethico-political, rather than purely theoretical context of DIY anarchism, I investigated the question of how this ethico-political stance has been able to operate since diverging from the humanism of its classical anarchist predecessors. I posited the DIY anarchist appeals to self-governance, then, to be based not on a foundational assumption of what humyns essentially are and so must be, so much as a productive notion of what actors can be. In other words, I referred the DIY anarchist ethos to the similarly “thin” conception of humyn capacities within which Foucault was able to valorise self-creation. In terms of the values on which this is predicated, I was able to demonstrate an analogy with postmodern non-foundational “pragmatism”, which in a similar way to DIY prefiguration, appeals to what could be in terms of political value.

This is one way in which my question was answered, in that by rejecting the traditional domination/resistance model within which “counter-cultures” are usually analysed, I was
instead able to turn to an interrogation of the ethico-political practices of DIY anarchism. Following the groundwork of the analyses of power developed through my discussions of poststructuralist theory in Chapter One, in Chapter Two I was able to begin to address the issue of the contingency of the capacities for such ethos. This is a problematic which I developed further in relation to gender in Chapter Three, where I was able to argue that zines are elements of a technology of reading (a “reading formation”) particular to the DIY ethos.

In Chapter Three I demonstrated that a dedication to fostering self-governance is equally true of the ethico-political approach to gender politics in DIY anarchism. The deconstructive approaches to gender resemble the strands of Queer Theory and feminist poststructuralism which valorise transgression of the presumed conceptual structure of gender normativity. Post-Foucauldian accounts of “governmentality”, which I applied to my own account of DIY culture’s expansion and multiplication of the terrains of “the political”, make it possible to posit the perceived structure of gender normativity as a domain of political significance for an anarchist project. This is on account of the DIY ethos’ dedication to minimising external-governance, which according to DIY anarchist values is detrimental to the attainment of self-governance. The poststructuralist feminist ethos which I posit as emblematic of the DIY approach to gender asserts that gender normativity exerts a “citational authority”, a coercive or non-developmental mode of governance to which the DIY ethos is opposed, on the grounds that it limits actors’ freedom - their capacity for self-governance.
Addressing criticism that a primarily de-constructive practice cannot found an ethically predicated political project, I was able to show that subversive approaches to gender are like the DIY practices of prefiguration: when they deconstruct in order to reconstruct in new terms, they are grounded in a non-foundational ethos. In place of the authority of gender normativity, such practices continue the DIY anarchist valorisation of self-governance, in the name of fostering capacities for experiencing gender in autonomous terms.

In both Chapters Two and Three I identified this ethos of self-creation assumed by DIY “radically participatory” (CrimethInc. Hunter/Gatherer) culture as being contingent on particular social and institutional contexts. I was able to describe how the DIY culture explicitly and implicitly confronts and attempts to overcome impediments to this development. I did this by arguing that zines and DIY culture more generally are components of the particular “reading formations” required for a DIY anarchist ethos. Again this was emblematised specifically by the approaches to gender that I discussed in Chapter Three, wherein I tackled the problematic of the specificity of the “doubled vision” of the non-foundational feminism apparent in DIY. I argued that this ethos does, in fact, depart from a structuralist notion of social agency as being synonymous with a subjectivity that is enabled and thus limited by subject positions. I showed how this feminist approach seeks to cultivate, through subversive tactics, an ethic of self-conscious and ironic gender essentialism, as part of its project to undermine gender normativity. The various texts of the scene were then proposed as technical elements of a reading formation central to this ethos and project. I was then able to conclude that the aspects of
transparency or “scrupulous visibility” in these tactics are not only attempts to avoid coercive relations which diverge from the “developmental” self-governance ethos, but that they are also attempts to make clear the subversive intentions of prefigurative politics.

In my Introduction I professed that rather than replicate what I view as a “plundering” of the culture for academic ends, – a charge often leveled at “ethnographic” subculture studies – I aimed to offer “new descriptions of the world” (Barker 2000, p29). I undertook this task by avoiding the imposition of a “pure” theoretical critique – one that limited its object to a narrative of theoretical succession, or which focused exclusively on conceptual claims and counter-claims – and instead approached my object of study through analyses and descriptions of its various theoretical and ethical features and operations. Having undertaken this task, it is my contention that a useful perception of contemporary DIY anarchist zines is that they form an integral element of the “developmental power” of DIY anarchism, with a function of fostering the reading formation necessary for the specific DIY anarchist ethico-political aim of self-governance.
Bibliography


http://eng.anarchopedia.org/index.php/postanarchism

*Aphra Behn* 2003, Untitled Demo, Wollongong, (aphra_behn@wildmail.com)

Arnold, Gina 1997, *Queer to the Core*, Metroactive Music,


Bail, Kathy 1996, *DIY Feminism*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, N.S.W.


Byrne, Louise 1999, * A Critique of some media and academic representations of the punk subculture and how these representations relate to the lived experiences of members of Brisbane’s underground punk scene in the 1990’s*, MA Thesis, Griffith University.


CrimethInc. (n.d.) *CrimethInc. Worker Bulletins 47 & 74*, CWC, Olympia.

CrimethInc. (n.d.) *Gender subversion Kit*, CWC, Olympia.


Frederick, Jenn 2003, Breaking the Waves: Continuities and Discontinuities Between Second and Third Wave Feminism, a thesis in progress, retrieved on 9/9/2003 http://home.comcast.net/~theennead/bean/waves.htm


Herrup, Mocha Jean 1995, ‘Virtual Identity’ in Walker, Rebecca (ed.) To be Real: Telling the truth and changing the face of feminism, Doubleday: NY.


Hoff Sommers, Christina 1995, Who Stole Feminism?: how women have betrayed women, Touchstone, NY.


hooks, bell 1995, ‘Beauty laid bare’ in Walker, Rebecca (ed.) To be Real: Telling the truth and changing the face of feminism, Doubleday: NY.
hooks, bell 1994, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, Routledge, NY.


Hurley, Michael 1990, ‘Homosexualities: fiction, reading and moral training’ in Threadgold, Terry & Cranny-Francis, Anne (eds), Feminine/Masculine and Representation, Allen & Unwin, Sydney


Johnson, Amy 2003, ‘Seeking Sisterhood: A Voice From the third Wave’ in Off Our

Kitzinger, Jenny (n.d.), Qualitative Research: Introducing Focus Groups http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/311/7000/299, retrieved on 28/8/05.


Lake, Marilyn 1999, Getting Equal: The history of Australian feminism, Allen and Unwin, NSW.


Le Tigre 2001, Feminist Sweepstakes, Mr. Lady Records.


Marchart, Oliver 2003, ‘Bridging the Micro-Macro-Gap: Is There Such Thing As a Post-Subcultural Politics?’ in Muggleteon, D & Weinzierl, R (eds), The Post-Subcultures Reader, Berg, New York.


Newman, Saul 2003, The Politics of Postanarchism, Institute for Anarchist Studies,


(eds.) *Queer Cultures*, Prentice Hall.


Sabin, Roger (ed.) 1999, *Punk rock, so what? The cultural legacy of punk*, Routledge,
London.


Schultz, Jason 1995, ‘Getting off on feminism’ in Walker, Rebecca (ed.) *To be Real: Telling the truth and changing the face of feminism*, Doubleday: NY.


Schenk, Victor 1978, *If the Kids are United*, Polydor.


Sontag, Susan 1964, *Notes On "Camp"*, retrieved on 31/8/05 at http://pages.zoom.co.uk/leveridge/sontag.html


difference, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.


Walker, Rebecca (ed.) 1995, *To be Real: Telling the truth and changing the face of feminism*, Doubleday: NY.


Cambridge.


Zines

Case Studies


Coughing up Legomen # 13, Chris Lego, Sydney, hugsnotdollars@hotmail.com

Lezzarine #3, Melamoo, Brisbane, 2003, goughsgrrl@hotmail.com

No More Waiting, Amy McMurtie, Sydney.
On Fire #3, Dxxx, Wollongong, xonfirex@hotmail.com

Personality Liberation Front #3, Kylie Lewis, Brisbane, unigeek@yahoo.com

Queen Psychotic Rage, David, Sydney, radgayboy@hotmail.com

Secret Archives of the Recent Past, Anwyn, Sydney, anwyn_@graffiti.net

Ugly Duckling #7, Carmen Seaby, Brisbane, 2003, uglyducklingzine@hotmail.com

Others

Ahimsa Ahoy!: Vegan Cook Zine, various, Wollongong.


Anywhere But Here – Nowhere Fast / Here’s to Adventure! Just For the Hell of it, Kylie & Sophie 2004 Brisbane and Sydney. unigeek@yahoo.com


Existence is Dead, various, Brisbane, 2003.

Factsheet 5 1994 on http://www.reconstruction.ws/042/bailey.htm

Her Heroes Aren’t Gone, Kylie Lewis, Brisbane, 2001, unigeek@yahoo.com.

Hitchers do it with their thumbs #1, Dxxx, Wollongong
Hitchers do it with their thumbs #2, Dxxx, Wollongong, 2003

In_Tree_Cat_Cunt #1, Cheryl & Rin, Brisbane.

Ladies Liberation Handbook #1, Kylie Lewis, Brisbane. unigeek@yahoo.com
Ladies Liberation Handbook #2

Lezzarine # 1, Melamoo, 2002, Brisbane, goughsgrrl@hotmail.com.
Lezzarine # 2, 2003
Lezzarine # 2.5, 2003

Lucy Fur, Sheryl, Brisbane

No Longer Blind #8, Dxxx, Wollongong

Not a Queer Issue, Melamoo and Loocy, July 2003, Brisbane.

On Fire # 1 (We Want the World and We Want it on Fire), Dxxx, April 2002.
On Fire # 2 Dxxx, Wollongong

Personality Liberation Front # 4, Kylie Lewis, Brisbane. unigeek@yahoo.com

Profane Existence # 42, various, Spring-Summer 2003, Minneapolis USA.

Reclaim the Streets, various, Brisbane, March 2003

Strumpet, Brisbane.

Ugly Duckling #1 Carmen Seaby, Brisbane, uglyducklingzine@hotmail.com.
Ugly Duckling #2,
Ugly Duckling #3
Ugly Duckling #4
Ugly Duckling #5
Ugly Duckling #6

Underload, Chris Lego, Sydney, hugsnotdollars@hotmail.com.

Varla's Passed Out Again (4), Red Chidgey, London, 2002

Ventricle #1, Paul, Newcastle.
Ventricle #2