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LOST, BEAT, BLANK: THE PUNK UNCONSCIOUS IN SUBVERSIVE AND TRANGRESSIVE CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

A Thesis

by

JOEL R. WEST

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2015

Major Subject: English

LOST, BEAT, BLANK: THE PUNK UNCONSCIOUS IN SUBVERSIVE AND TRANGRESSIVE CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

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August 2015

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ABSTRACT

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Although punk was not used as a signifying term for a subculture or its cultural production until the 1970s, the punk spirit can be identified within cultural texts that precede the term. A punk aesthetics includes rejection of societal norms, class-consciousness, and spontaneity, or a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach that is antagonistic toward the modes of production. In this thesis, I claim and develop a concept I call the punk unconscious; in the texts I examine, punk aesthetics can be found just below the surface through the employment of specific theoretical frameworks, namely Fredric Jameson's political unconscious and Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic imagination. This thesis will examine the works of three major movements of the twentieth century: the Lost Generation, the Beat Generation, and the Blank Generation. In my analysis, texts by Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, and Richard Hell will be read through the lens of the punk unconscious. Punk songs inspired by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy will also be analyzed through the course of this thesis to establish a shift in mindset and consciousness. The goal is to recognize the role of the punk unconscious within these movements, as well as the shift from unconscious to conscious acts that fit within a punk aesthetics and sensibility.

DEDICATION

Arriving at this point in my life would not have been possible without the unconditional love and support of my family, specifically my parents, Mick and Sharon West, my sister Brooke West-Fick and her husband, Preston Fick. To my daughters Katherine Brooke, Gillian Marie, and Vivienne André, who have been watching me go to school in one form or another throughout their lives: I hope that you realize that all of your goals are attainable if you work hard and never stop looking for what it is you seek. Finally, to my fiancée, my future wife, Katherine Villarreal: I am so happy we have come together to create the life we desire with all of our mutual passions in mind. Our life together wouldn't even be a possibility if I had never embarked on this academic journey. I dedicate this thesis to all of you with nothing but love in my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would be remiss if I didn't thank Dr. Rebekah Hamilton and all of those I worked with at the University Writing Center when I returned to the Rio Grande Valley in 2013. Working on campus and immersing myself in my studies was one of the most rewarding time periods I've ever had the pleasure of experiencing. If I could do it all over again, I absolutely would.

Finally, if my life hadn't taken so many unexpected twists and turns, I don't think I would have pursued graduate coursework. Life had simply become too comfortable and easy. To those who diverted my path and altered my trajectory: thanks for the push.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What it means to be punk oscillates through time as the term itself continues to undergo further revisions and refinement. Roger Sabin examines this phenomenon exhaustively in the introduction to a collection of essays published in 1999 entitled *Punk Rock, So What?* The author asserts that there are not only different interpretations of when and where the movement began, but also what each of these movements represents in their respective scenes. The subject of Sabin's work is the cultural legacy of punk rock; what I seek to elucidate is the multiplicity of antecedents present in cultural texts that predate what could be considered to be the "original" punk movement. His book tackles issues of punk identity and the origin of the movement from the outset, yet Sabin also creates space within the narrative surrounding the punk mythos for new interpretations. As the author indicates when discussing these phenomena as they relate to punk, "there is still a need for interpretative flexibility, and for a recognition that its followers were as much its creators as created by it." (Sabin 5) The same could certainly be said of punk's antecedents—which are what this project primarily deals with. I contend that this "interpretative flexibility" should be extended backwards through history in order to account for certain precursor cultural texts—an invocation of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "dialogic imagination," if you will, and the framework I intend to employ will make this clear: that of Fredric Jameson's political unconscious. My reading of the cultural texts that follows will employ these two key theories, and they will work in concert to lay bare the conditions necessary

to produce what I dub the "punk unconscious." In order to achieve this end, I will use the definition of punk offered by Roger Sabin in his work on the cultural legacy of punk rock, with an acknowledgement similar to his: that punk scholarship reflects a "narrowness of the frame of reference" as well as "the pressures to romanticize." (Sabin 2) We will examine the "identifiable attitudes, among them: an emphasis on negationism (rather than nihilism); a consciousness of class-based politics (with a stress on 'working-class credibility'); and a belief in spontaneity and 'doing it yourself'." (Sabin 3) We will, using the author's words, "explode" this "narrow" frame of reference and look further back for antecedents to punk in this work using Sabin's own definition as a point of departure. (2) In light of punk's humble beginnings, where the goal was to intentionally subvert systems within the hegemonic cultural narrative, punk has changed dramatically, almost becoming something much like the vestiges of the 60s countercultural movement. Punk's aesthetic triad of values, its non-corporate nature, its lack of virtuosity in regard to training and skill, and its overt political subject matter, has required the constant revision alluded to above in order to maintain its authority and its solvency as a subcultural movement—that is, if its multiplicity of aims and desires as a whole are not to be subsumed within the pop culture abyss. For the purposes of this thesis, we will condense Sabin's observations into what I will refer to as the punk "stance," as it relates to a punk aesthetics and sensibility: rejection of societal norms, class consciousness, and spontaneity, also referred to as DIY.

The subterranean is the home of punk, an arena in which the participants often choose to use the subversive, the vulgar, the grotesque, as a form of expression to deliberately circumvent the co-optation that is the natural course in late capitalism; if anything gains a fair enough amount of attention, someone will eventually throw some capital at the endeavor, in hopes that

some gains can be made. Hence, the commodification of punk and anything that could be deemed "punk" for a quick buck, as we see with the current resurgence of power-pop and pop-punk-style bands that cater to the "tween" market, with stores such as Hot Topic that have attempted to turn punk into little more than another mass-marketed pop-cultural phenomenon, and a general desire to attach labels to ever-increasing cultural output that capitalizes on the phenomenon without understanding punk, let alone its antecedents or its legacy. Punk—real punk—is not so easily subsumed, however, and my thesis will explore some ways in which punk aesthetics and the punk ethos can be employed in new ways to read cultural production that may well have led to the movement itself in the form of the punk unconscious.

Aside from economic concerns, however, many threads of this subculture have ultimately been woven into the fabric of the historical totality; these threads can be isolated, then pulled upon, and their origins are found located in the very core of certain movements within the punk subculture. If we employ the analogy of punk as a cottage industry, weavers, if you will, one can almost view certain scenes and movements as the looms with which the swatches of textiles are produced, then patched together, in terms of the fabric of totality. The term patch is here employed for various reasons, among them the fact—in many cases—there is not one consistent pathway that illuminates why some aspects of punk subculture still exist, while others have become historical footnotes. The point is, however, that some of these traits are extant due to their subtle subversive influence on culture at-large, and that these traits are like patches stitched over other areas of cultural production (literature and film, for example) that have seemingly evolved independently—but this is certainly not the case. As we participate in our culture at-large, our cultural output is influenced by different ideas and approaches due to the heteroglossic nature of our culture, especially in the terms of electronic flickering signifiers. The very core of

who we are is infiltrated and these disparate elements are integrated into our collective identity—whether consciously or not—and this is what makes punk and punk-influenced cultural output worthy of further study.

If we extend the metaphor of teasing out the threads of certain movements of punk subculture and using these threads to stitch these "patches" onto the fabric of historical totality, we have a point of departure. In my thesis, I will isolate these threads and then negotiate the task of showing how these threads can be used to stitch—or safety-pin, if you will—my arguments onto the tweed jacket of the academic conversation—which is, itself, cut from the heteroglossia of the historical totality; it is the totality that provides the raw material from which new designs can be woven into the fabric. We can rip these texts from their current place within the canon and reattach them onto a new location within our cognitive map. What is ultimately most important is that we see the nearly limitless interconnectivity available to us within the greater academic conversation if we just give ourselves time to reflect on how and why we accept only certain interpretations of culture, art, and cultural texts. Movements within punk subculture will be used, their traits expanded upon, and then the connections will be utilized to execute this metaphorical maneuver both forward and backward in the literary continuum.

Thematically, I will address a number of themes and motifs that arise when discussing punk aesthetics and sensibility. A punk aesthetics and sensibility includes the following: subversive narratives and transgressive subject matter; reification of human relations, objectification, and alienation, and the ensuing results within the punk ideology, for lack of a better word; commodity fetishism and its influence upon punk and how punk subcultural movements reconcile this with "traditional" hegemonic Western ideals; and, finally, the multiple dialectical relationships created within the greater punk narrative: (cognitive) dissonance vs.

harmony, collectivism vs. individuality, and certainly others, as they arise. Using these concepts, we can apply the definition of punk posited by Roger Sabin and apply this to narrative and literature that predates the movement by locating the unconscious strands that lie just beneath the surface in some of the most prominent works of literature from twentieth century generational movements.

There are many directions with which one can approach a thesis regarding punk aesthetics and its lineage in terms of cultural output. I claim Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* as an early example of subversive and transgressive—punk, if you will—fiction, although some may argue that if you claim lineage to now-canonized American literature, one could go farther back, perhaps with Walt Whitman as the ultimate precursor. One could even venture to argue that the earliest forms of the novel, and even Milton himself, could fall into this category if the argument were unpacked in the proper manner. It goes without saying that each of these theories could be its own thesis, dissertation, etc., which is why I have decided to leave many of my more far-reaching claims for another body of work altogether. I will, however, make clear distinct, punk parallels in my argument regarding Hemingway's seminal work, particularly how this novel aligns with Sabin's operative definition of punk.

I will also demonstrate a clear lineage from the Beat Generation of writers through to the original punk movement—this is evidenced in William S Burroughs' moniker, "The Godfather of Punk," which will be further expanded upon at length, especially considering the work of "Blank Generation" author Richard Hell. This thesis examines punk rock and other "punk" cultural texts from a variety of angles: we will examine the theoretical underpinnings, not only of punk rock from its infancy, but also its evolution up to this point, which falls fits nicely within Jameson's theory of the "political unconscious." These approaches will play a critical role in

how I approach the material throughout the course of this thesis. Additionally, we will take a look at how punk rock was affected politically by a specific incident: the assassination of President John F Kennedy. This pivotal moment in American history changed the cultural landscape and inspired cultural texts that begin to claw at the machinations of so-called propriety, ultimately serving to break the machine that prevented individuals from sharing even the most transgressive of intimations in the form of poetry, novels, and, especially, music.

As is the case with many, if not most, cultural texts, it is often difficult to judge or interpret a text until it has had time to interact with society and the conversation has had the opportunity to include as many voices as possible in the discourse. That said, placing texts within a punk paradigm required time and distance from the moment of creation, something of great importance that we will flesh out more thoroughly when we outline Fredric Jameson's theory of the political unconscious. In *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Fredric Jameson identifies his intentions from the outset of his expansive theoretical approach, namely that he intends to defend "Marxist critical insights […] as something like an ultimate semantic precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts," (75) but noting that this will only be possible if taken into consideration within "three concentric frameworks" (75). These three frameworks, also referred to as horizons, are: the political/historical moment of the creation of the text; the social struggle surrounding the text as it interacts with different social classes; and, finally, the greater historical sense, "conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production […] from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us" (75). Jameson's three horizons begin with the first criterion in the center: the antagonistic and symbolic act of creating a narrative to resolve a contradiction that cannot be resolved in the real world. The second criterion contains the first within it and deals

with the socially subversive aspect of the narrative that brings the heteroglossia of the myriad social reactions into the larger conversation and acknowledges the impossibility of any real resolution. Finally, the third criterion is the historical, which situates the novel within the modes of production; this encompasses the first two criteria within the ever-expanding frontiers of the totality of history. Employing this framework will help readers of this thesis to understand the ways in which works of literature, written even years before the word punk was used as an adjective, can be closely read within this paradigm.

With all of that said, it wasn't possible to place some of these texts within a working theoretical framework that could be reconciled with a paradigm for judging what constitutes punk literature until we were able to place time and distance between ourselves and the objects of our study. When I began reading the many works required to prepare for this project, I was looking hard for threads to pull on that stitch of punk cultural output together over time. I began looking at the origins of the punk movement in the United States and very quickly found that a handful of the key players in the early years of the punk scene, namely Richard Hell and Patti Smith, had originally set out to be poets and writers, spending time in the New York art scene with the likes of Andy Warhol and William S. Burroughs. This intrigued me, so I took a closer look at what some might consider the inception of the punk scene in the U.S.

In punk scholarship and history, there is much debate about where the punk movement actually originated. Some say that it began in New York City, with the Ramones and their seminal album, *Ramones*, that changed the face of rock and roll; others say that it began in earnest with the Sex Pistols in the U.K., and their song, "Anarchy in the U.K." The divergent ways each of these bands treated their music and subject matter created a schism in what punk rockers considered to be punk; each band's emergence on the scene began creating subgenres of

the punk form almost immediately afterward. The focus of this work is not to argue either of these points, but to look at a period in the underground music scene in New York City that predates either of these events, something that seems to have influenced both, but that is rarely talked about in the prevailing narratives regarding punk and its emergence into the cultural conversation. Because much of the history of punk is anecdotal, it is hard to discern where truth and mythology depart; it is the interstices and gaps within the narrative of its inception where we find space for the development of counter-narrative. This isn't saying that these things have been deliberately suppressed; however, as within most oral histories, certain details are eventually left out or added later for continuity.

Connections here can be made through the works of other American authors who have been credited—or burdened, some may argue—with being the voice of a generation. The important thing to understand is that each of these events occurred in their own time and I am retrofitting Jameson's theory as a way to employ a paradigm of punk that fits authors that may at first glance appear to be tenuously connected at best. However, I plan on demonstrating the strength of this argument through the antagonistic act of creating narratives that transgress the social and cultural norms of the time period in which they were created and demonstrate how these works can only be viewed as "punk" per se after time and distance—and the properly terminology and paradigms—have been in place. This works within Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic imagination, specifically that literature and other forms of cultural production are in conversation with their predecessors and then initiate a conversation with the works that will come after them. With this in mind, I was able to connect what Richard Hell labeled as "Blank Generation" writing and style back to the Beat Generation of writers, particularly Jack Kerouac, even though his material would at first glance appear to be more in line with William S.

Burroughs. I then trace this literary lineage further back to the Lost Generation, namely Ernest Hemingway, for factors that will be explained further in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. What follows here in the introduction is a very basic outline, in the order which they appeared historically and culturally, since we have worked our way backwards, of the arguments I intend to tease out throughout the course of this thesis.

The so-called Lost Generation of writers was an appellation assigned by Gertrude Stein when referring to Ernest Hemingway and his expatriate cohorts in Paris during the 1920s. This is a well-known fact, and the epigraph of Hemingway's seminal work, *The Sun Also Rises*. Here, as in the case of other key generational writers, the name was bestowed upon the group externally, and the label stuck for a group of writers whose work could certainly be read together, but who never willingly chose this designation for themselves. The publication of this novel was a sea change for Hemingway and his peers, and positioned him to be "the voice of a generation," a theme we will continue to address through the development of this argument in the following pages. Hemingway does become this voice, whether willingly or not, and gains notoriety for his work; however, the body of Hemingway's work indicates the author's contempt for words—words are lies—and, knowing this, Hemingway's words cannot possibly contain "truth" representative of an entire generation. This ultimately ties into what would eventually be called subversive writing, as well as the political unconscious, because the work antagonistically seeks to resolve a problem in the real world through the creation of narrative. In *The Sun Also Rises*, as we will see, Hemingway inverts gender roles and destroys characters who represent the "old" ways before war, creating a counter narrative with his expatriate cohorts in a place where everything his American counterparts were denied was freely available. Because of this, however, Hemingway truly does embody someone "lost," a designation that indeed becomes

representative of his generation in spite of his contempt for words and titles. This sense of being lost will directly lead to the Beat Generation, in which meaning is sought after with a lust for life and experience beyond what is deemed acceptable.

The Beat Generation comes on the heels of the end of World War II, and much like the work of Lost Generation writers, the Beats were trying to reconcile what was expected of them as American culture was becoming homogenized and plain in the face of the post-war status quo. Beat writers, specifically Jack Kerouac, sought experiences outside of the societal norms and attempted to once again reconcile the gap between expectation and desire in the face of this homogenization. John Clellon Holmes, a Beat Generation writer himself, was friends with Kerouac and wrote a New York Times article entitled "This is the Beat Generation," which introduced the Beats to the general public. Once again. the name of a new generation of writers was applied by someone else in reference to a body of work, and the meaning of "beat" was debated and later co-opted, much like punk would be decades later, although Jack Kerouac repeatedly insisted Beat meant beatific, and referred to the beatitudes in the Bible. When *On the Road* was published, Kerouac unwittingly became the "voice of a generation," much like Hemingway, and was burdened in an increasingly connected society to fit into molds created by those outside the movement, which quickly became commodified. Unlike Hemingway's, Kerouac's seminal work was published years after the events in question happened, and Kerouac was no longer the Sal Paradise character the fans of his work expected, but a man approaching his forties who had moved on from the exuberant antics portrayed in his work toward more spiritual aims in his life and his writing, although his struggle with alcohol ultimately brought him down, much like the former. Contending with the burden of being the spokesperson for the Beats became increasingly difficult, and his decline was documented on television interviews,

which was something Hemingway didn't have to deal with until he was many years further along in his career. The hippie movement of the 1960s has also been attributed to the Beat Generation, particularly because Allen Ginsberg played a large role within this movement. Nestled within this time period, a pivotal event happened that would forever change the American cultural and political landscape, leaving wounds that would eventually become catalysts for new, even more antagonistic forms of artistic expression: the assassination of President Kennedy.

In a later chapter, the Kennedy assassination will serve as an interlude between the literary examinations and the conclusion: because the cultural output discussed in this chapter will come after the initial punk movement, this will make sense as the argument unfolds. It is mentioned at this point because we are first approaching these ideas chronologically, as they occurred. This traumatic event within our national narrative arguably inspired many changes within politics, the civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, and all forms of cultural output. Music and literature changed; the innocence of postwar America was finally to be shed for more politically overt content. Punk rock would eventually appropriate this event and turn it on its head, creating songs and images that were intended to disturb and incite, to jar people from their presuppositions about what it meant to be not only American and an adherent of the dominant ideology, but how to interpret the assassination and its long term effects on society at-large. This is where punk—and Richard Hell—comes in.

To say Richard Hell was the voice of a generation, like Ernest Hemingway and Jack Kerouac, whether they chose these roles or not, would be an overstatement. People who know their punk history, especially that of New York, most certainly know who he is, but his name isn't the first one thinks of when they think of the beginning of punk. Considering their growing popularity in recent years, most people probably think of the Ramones. Because of the lack of

cohesiveness in the scene and dismissal from the cultural conversation until recently, and especially in light of the newfound interest in punk cultural studies, many of these insights have been lost upon those who do not seek out the information. Punk books are being released more regularly, and likely my interpretation will be received with backlash from various punk communities, considering how they self-identify, but the truth of the matter is that there really isn't much study out there as of late that links up any sort of literary traditions that stem from the original movement.

It goes without saying, then, that the Blank Generation Richard Hell introduced in his 1977 album by the same name will be something lesser-known at the time of this thesis, especially in regard to canonically accepted works like those of Hemingway and Kerouac, but this also is something that typifies the cultural output from this period. It wasn't intended for mass consumption, cultural relevance, or posterity. It was done because it had to be done. Much like the Beat Generation, its cultural output inspired a movement—the punk movement—that ultimately transformed and mutated, because its participants and adherents had ways of identifying with the movement and their interactions among one another.

By the end of the 1970s and the flurry of music, art, and small press literature created in the wake of this underground Downtown scene in New York, so many divergent pathways were created in the subculture that it would ultimately require years of intervening time to capture the aftermath of the time period. We will examine the connections between the Beat and the so-called Blank Generation, and then extend our analysis to Hell's first novel, *Go Now*, in order to understand the repercussions of the punk movement on an author whose work required nearly twenty years before it was ready for the public to witness the "blankness" that typified his generation and its cohorts. Although this is one of many expressions from the time period, it will

become clear that his story is indeed indicative of what came to be associated with the New York punk scene that is still portrayed in the anecdotal histories readily available for public consumption.

Ultimately, we as readers will understand that our perceptions must be jarred by the antagonistic act of creating a narrative before we are ready to accept the changes that these generations and their acolytes bring forward. We must understand that it requires time and a larger social conversation for this to take place and for the contributions of these artists and writers to become part of a larger, more connected whole in the narratological continuum. Finally, we will acknowledge how, indeed, we can affix the title of punk onto some of our now-canonized authors, not because they chose to be, but because being punk itself can be an unconscious process.

CHAPTER II

LADY BRETT ASHLEY AS MATADOR IN *THE SUN ALSO RISES*

If punk is a stance, or an approach, for reconfiguring material made available in historical totality in order to reject a set of norms and to create new ideals, then Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* certainly meets this criteria. In Roger Sabin's work on the cultural legacy of punk rock, he asserts that punk "stood for identifiable attitudes, among them and emphasis on negationism (rather than nihilism)." (3) This negationism includes the rejection of prevailing attitudes and conditions that affect human relations, something that exists just below the surface throughout the novel, especially in its antagonism toward outmoded chivalric value systems. When we employ the political unconscious to investigate the time period when *The Sun Also Rises* was created, a movement had already begun that ran counter to the dominant narrative as a response to the state of affairs in the world after the end of World War I. In the novel, Hemingway transgressed the boundary of what is deemed socially and culturally acceptable through the antagonistic act of creating a narrative that ran counter to the dominant discourse in the United States at the time. Rather than staying at home and suffering, like the main character of his short story, "Soldier's Home," Hemingway's characters in *The Sun Also Rises* are expatriates who are free to explore different lifestyles than those deemed acceptable at the time.

Hemingway employs a stark style—one that would ultimately become his signature—and frankly discusses foreign traditions and relates tales of drunkenness and debauchery that were doubtless occurring in the U.S. as well, as in the case of *The Great Gatsby*. However,

Hemingway's characters in *The Sun Also Rises* have less extrinsic pressure to adhere to the societal norms of the United States because different laws, traditions, and codes of conduct are observed in the countries where these characters have chosen to relocate. The feelings of alienation these characters have experienced in their home countries seem to be temporarily ameliorated by their mutual, self-imposed exile. Because of this, these characters move past the pressures of being treated as outlaws, if you will, enjoying themselves and finding release outside the parameters of acceptability, and are therefore in a better position to subvert systems more directly within the narrative. If the act of creating a narrative is an antagonistic act that creates space for new modes of thought and seeks to fulfill wishes about how things could be, *The Sun Also Rises* puts many "wishes" into play regarding society that will come to fruition many years later; in some cases, these battles are still being fought. One way the author challenged norms and existing social structures was by taking stances that weren't always popular, but were nevertheless effective because of his passion for the causes he endorsed. This will become even more apparent as we read Hemingway's seminal work through a lens that inverts common perceptions regarding his attitudes toward gender roles.

In Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, Lady Brett Ashley has been analyzed from many different angles. Early critics and feminists viewed Brett as a prime example of Hemingway's chauvinistic tendencies exemplified in written form. Lady Brett Ashley has been read by scholars and critics as victim, bitch, whore, destroyer of relationships, loose woman, New Woman, even proto-feminist, and this list continues to develop. It appears that many critics have failed to recognize, however, the significant changes in the male/female dynamic within the United States for thirty or more years leading up to the publication of *The Sun Also Rises*, ignoring "Hemingway's knowledge of and respect for the New Woman" (O'Sullivan 227).

These women had been closing the male/female gap since before the U.S. Civil War broke out. Women were already working in offices and participating in traditionally "male" vocations, and the number of women who chose to do so multiplied each year in the United States. More than a decade before the novel was published, "the flapper…not only looked but behaved like a man. She smoked, drank, drove, slept around, and earned a living" (O'Sullivan 230). The behaviors listed for this subcultural group can certainly be read as an antagonistic act, and including a character that can be identified in this way reveals Hemingway's motives for making Brett such a central character in the novel. In the initial description of Brett, we learn "her hair was brushed back like a boy's," the narrator states, "[s]he started all that." (*SAR* 30) From the very outset, Lady Brett Ashley's character is subverting systems within the dominant narrative and creating a space that is uniquely her own and one that challenges traditional, binary gender roles.

There have been positive portrayals of the relationship between Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley, yet there is a particular connection that scholars seem to have overlooked. This connection is directly related to an *afición* that brings them together in ways so subtle, yet are plausibly unified through the application of several approaches to perform a unique reading that acknowledges various fragments of this particularly cumbersome iceberg in the Hemingway canon. Several scholars have developed portions of the larger argument that I intend to present, but no one that I am aware of has come out and stated it directly thus far in the existing scholarship related to the novel. *The Sun Also Rises*, a novel about the bridge between the old values of the Victorian Age and the newer, pragmatic values of post-war America turns many values on their head. According to Hemingway scholar Michael S. Reynolds, "[t]hose were the days when women changed the rules of the mating game," an excellent choice of words in relation to the reading that will follow, as the notion of a game, or sport, becomes quite literal

through the lens of the bullfight. I will explore scholarship related to the characters of the novel, some of which will typify the consensus of certain character readings of *The Sun Also Rises*; scholarship that runs against these "typical" readings will be explored as well. Then, I plan on performing a close reading of passages from the text that will demonstrate that Lady Brett Ashley is indeed the *matador* by the end of the novel as she "slays" some of the "bulls" in the herd she runs with in Pamplona. There are many reading lenses we may peer through when approaching a novel whose iceberg's submerged portion has yet to be fully identified, let alone explored. According to scholar Wolfgang Rudat, "We are forced to reread and re-reread the novel for intricacy and compactness of meaning as we would a poem—and thus to appreciate Hemingway's writing principle of the iceberg—if we wish to really understand what 'happens' in *The Sun Also Rises*" (Rudat 11). By taking a closer look at the fragmented topography of this work's iceberg, many theories hold and work sychronistically to provide a framework for a reading of the novel in an interdisciplinary manner. In order to chart the fragmented topography of the "*Sun* Iceberg," this chapter will examine the novel from a new, unified angle within my proffered theory of the punk unconscious that brings together various readings of Lady Brett Ashley, Jake Barnes, and some of the other expatriates in Pamplona for the *Fiesta de San Fermin*.

It has been nearly nine decades since the novel was published, and during that time, much has already been written related to the critical reception of *The Sun Also Rises* in 1926. According to Hemingway scholar Michael S. Reynolds, "reviewers of Hemingway's first serious novel fell into three camps: the repulsed, the antiexpatriate, and the effusive" (Reynolds 9). This dovetails nicely within the larger framework of Jameson's political unconscious outlined in the introductory material. The snapshot of a time period captured by the creation is then exposed to

the myriad social reactions in the heteroglossia of reactions to the work, from outrage to dismissal. Most of what initial detractors had issues with in regard to the content of the novel are still so commonplace at the time of this thesis that criticism of sex and drunkenness portrayed in a novel would be laughable at best. Because of the shifting of values in America at the time *The Sun Also Rises* was published, "the repulsed reviewers were morally offended by the life-style depicted in the novel," (9) due to Hemingway's portrayal of "continuous drinking, occasional fornication, profane language, lack of religious belief, and [the] pervasive lack of sustaining values" (9). Many of these complaints are lodged toward cultural productions that challenge the value systems of the day, which are often deemed subversive and, therefore, dangerous. Surely a sign of the times, the aforementioned "fornication" is only alluded to, but it is never elaborated upon by Jake Barnes throughout the course of the novel. In fact, it takes many levels of inference to arrive with any certainty as to what actually transpired between characters in the novel when Jake is not present, which is not only the limitation of an unreliable first person narrative, but also another way we as readers experience what is not said in the interstices, the unconscious motivations for these omissions. Even if Jake would have been more explicit, unanswered questions would undoubtedly persist. Hemingway wrote on "the iceberg principle, omitting details, even facts, to encourage reader participation and, to judge from subsequent critics, to test readers' awareness" (Hays 238). In the case of the fragmented nature of the times and interpretations of the text itself, other characters must be examined as fragments of the iceberg itself, so that we may establish that the facets and angles through which we choose to examine the text, and the primary reason for this reading is because of the subversive stance revealed from the point of view of the punk unconscious. We must be willing to shift from centrifugal readings, where we separate the parts from the whole and then return to the

centrifugal, where we return all of the parts, viewed in a different light, as a new and unified whole with the unconscious antagonisms revealed. This approach comes from *The Dialogic Imagination* by Mikhail Bakhtin, where we are able to examine cultural productions as being in conversation with one another over time, discoursing with what came before and initiating a dialogue with that which has yet to be created. First, we will establish Jake Barnes as the "steer" in the story, after which we will identify two of the "bulls" within the text, in order to arrive at the conclusion regarding Lady Brett Ashley.

Arguments have been made that Jake Barnes is not the only male character in *The Sun Also Rises* who may have been castrated in one form or another—physically, metaphorically, or even both simultaneously due to the fragmentation in the world at the time of the novel and, arguably, within the novel itself. This is significant in what I am labeling as the punk unconscious because the narrator does not exemplify a "whole" man, but quite the contrary. Conversely, this individual may be physically fragmented, yet as a result of this fragmentation, his humanity is laid bare for closer examination by himself and others. Perhaps the man who is left intact physically is equally dismembered within, and this is the societal model that has been upheld as the exemplar, subverting these tropes in line with the argument for the punk unconscious. Particular attention to Robert Cohn's unwillingness to acknowledge this castration is expanded upon in Greg Forter's article, "Melancholy Modernism: Gender and the Politics of Mourning in *The Sun Also Rises*," where Forter identifies several points in the novel that illustrate Cohn's steer-like qualities. Within this article, however, Forter also acknowledges that the one character that has actually been castrated, Jake Barnes, has been able to demonstrate more masculine tendencies than any of the other characters that are physically intact. Forter explains:

> The actual loss of a penis, in contrast, functions paradoxically as the sign of real manliness, saving Jake from the related perils of sexual pleasure and affective connections, from the risk of sentimental softening that would render him, in Hemingway's eyes, insufficiently "hard," insufficiently modern—and therefore, insufficiently manly. (60)

Nothing is as it seems in *The Sun Also Rises.* If Forter's assertion is true, another paradoxically masculine and penis-less character, Lady Brett Ashley, may possess enough of Jake's "manly" character traits to qualify as being sufficiently masculine to be read as a matador in the novel. "Though Brett holds the position of 'lady,' again and again she proves herself unworthy of the title, and of the admiration afforded her by the various men who love and serve her," says one critic of the novel. (Moreland 31) Brett presents herself as one of the guys and repeatedly refers to herself as a "chap" throughout Part One of the novel (*SAR* 36, 40, 64). In fact, the first description we have of Brett juxtaposes her "curves like the hull of a racing yacht" with "hair [that] was brushed back like a boy's" (*SAR* 30). Jake is castrated, and, therefore, impotent; Brett isn't artificially in this position—as a woman she was born that way; values and social constructs are at odds with one another within the novel, and these paradoxical character readings are what helps to categorize these characters into the distinct roles proffered in this reading of the text.

In Chapter XIII of *The Sun Also Rises,* a conversation between Mike Campbell and Robert Cohn takes place regarding the role of steers in the bullfight, which ends with Mike's comparison of Cohn to that of a steer. Critics have used this passage to demonstrate the irony of the chivalric character that Cohn is supposed to represent, compared with his often-passive behavior within the group dynamic while participating in the Fiesta at Pamplona. Jacqueline Bradley's 2006 article on this reading of Cohn, however, takes a different approach with the text,

and casts Jake in the role of steer within the novel. Jake, as the castrated man, "proves in the course of the novel to be the quintessential steer-like character," and, furthermore, "his role as steer significantly affects the emotionally embattled community of expatriates in Spain" (Bradley 237). According to Bradley's reading of the novel, it would certainly follow that the other male characters (who haven't been castrated and are physically intact) are the "bulls" within the context of this reading. Jake's "steer-like character" is essential to the group dynamic in the context of the narrative, because, just as steers play an essential role within the *corrida* itself, "[w]ithout the steers, the bulls are dangerous both to themselves and others; the nonthreatening sexless steers who can calm and distract the bulls are skilled peacemakers—characteristics much more typical of Jake Barnes than the accused Robert Cohn" (237). Although Jake's lack of a penis would seem to be a hindrance, especially in the context of a large group of men celebrating a festival replete with violent acts, the subversive subtext exists—this "incomplete" man is the only perspective offered. Bradley's argument is that "Jake is to his herd of friends in Europe as the steers are to the bulls as they enter the ring in Pamplona," an assertion that allows for further expansion. If there is a herd of bulls that is being led around by a steer, this only begs the question: Who is the matador? One by one, these bulls will fall to the matador—symbolically and most poignantly with two exemplars of chivalry and old world values: Robert Cohn, who represents pugilism (boxing), and Pedro Romero, who represents tauromachia, or bullfighting. If the exchange of values so often discussed in reference to Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero is indeed inverted, as it is in relation to these representations of chivalry, then there is a need to closely and briefly examine these two characters as they appear in the novel.

Robert Cohn is an amalgamation of the many types of characters through which an expatriate author may choose to represent the country he has chosen to leave. More clearly,

Hemingway shares several different stylized versions of American men of the times, including Robert Cohn, Jake Barnes, and Bill Gorton. Robert Cohn is *not* a typical American, yet his uniqueness exemplifies the opportunity that purportedly exist in a country like America; however, reconciling all of these great characteristics in one man places a lot of stress upon that character and they don't always come out on the other side as Cohn does. Robert Cohn is an author, a tennis player, a bridge player, Ivy League graduate, and he is a Jew. Also, quite importantly, Robert Cohn is a boxer, which during these changing times could in and of itself contain multiple layers of meaning. Pugilism, like tauromachia, is considered by many sports aficionados to be a formal, artistic expression and an embodiment of chivalric values. These chivalric values are exemplified by the real men, by the "bulls." Boxing is also a sport that Hemingway wrote about at some length, and it is a sport that he participated in regularly and extensively. During this time period, and possibly before, boxing was beginning to be corrupted by bookies and gambling, which would not have sat well with Robert Cohn, a "bridge figure" who "lives in the waste land but does not adhere to its values" (O' Sullivan 232). At its core, the narrative demonstrates that the existing, widely accepted way of being a man is being outmoded and corrupted by economic relations and changing value systems. In this reading, the corruption of chivalric values is intended to subvert existing institutions of masculinity, only to be infiltrated by a woman who fits no man's mold. This corruption is completely at odds with bullfighting and the other "bull" character in the novel: Pedro Romero. Of course, nothing is cut and dry in *The Sun Also Rises*, and Hemingway juxtaposes these two sports in a conversation between Brett and Jake before the *Fiesta* begins in the novel, which not only compares bulls and boxers, but places boxing, a sport that spectators bet upon, side-by-side with a sport whose *aficionados* look down upon betting, as is the case with bullfighting:

> "My God, isn't he beautiful?" Brett said. We were looking right down on him. "Look how he knows how to use his horns," I said. "He's got a left and a right just like a boxer." (*SAR* 144)

This passage only further demonstrates the layers of meaning for possible interpretation within *The Sun Also Rises*, and serves to confirm the argument that Robert Cohn can be read as a bull for the purposes of this argument. For Robert Cohn, however, his chivalric social armor will not protect him. Ultimately, he ends up "face down on the bed, crying" (*SAR* 197) when Brett is finally finished with him; there is no hope for chivalry in a world where "true knighthood [is] an impossible goal for the modern man." (Moreland 31). This point is driven home further when viewed in light of the punk unconscious: a stance had to be taken in the course of this narrative to dismantle representations of the increasingly insolvent old guard in order to make space for something new and drastically different.

Pedro Romero, on the other hand is a *torero*, a *matador*. Unlike boxing, bullfighting is not a sport that had been as extensively corrupted by money at the time this novel was written. Although Romero and Cohn don't share many characteristics, they are both sufficiently chivalric and sufficiently "manly" by the prevailing contemporary paradigms to be referred to as "bulls." This is telling, because given the expatriate status, it may be more likely that Hemingway would be willing to dismantle the chivalric male persona represented by Cohn in this reading His status as expatriate alone is subversive, but Cohn has never committed to staying away from the United States entirely, as Jake Barnes has. The antagonism of the narrative becomes far more pronounced when we are asked as readers to watch as the anachronistically traditional figure of Romero is taken down by a woman who looks like a boy and who ultimately acts more like a typical man than most of the other male characters. In Hemingway's 1932 nonfiction treatise on

bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon*, he wrote that Pedro Romero, the progenitor of bullfighting as we now know it and namesake of the character in the novel in question, was "one of the first and greatest of professional fighters, but that Nino de la Palma "started to be great but after his first severe goring developed a cowardice which was only equaled by his ability to avoid taking risks in the ring" (*Death in the Afternoon* 43). Interestingly, when *The Sun Also Rises* was in draft form, Hemingway had identified the character we now know as Pedro Romero by the name of Nino de la Palma. Author Michael S. Reynolds states "[o]ur confusion about the book's theme is due, in part, to Hemingway's own confusion when he began the novel, for it did not start out to be Jake Barnes's story" (Reynolds 24). Because this original manuscript dealt more specifically with Brett Ashley's relationship with Pedro Romero, "the question of the bullfighter's corruption remains a peripheral issue in *The Sun*" (24). This, however, gives even more credence to the fact that this novel, in which the bullfight, or *corrida,* plays such a significant role, could be yet another situation Hemingway may well have chosen with which to invert not only values, but the roles the characters play in the context of the larger *corrida,* or bullfight, that the novel represents in this reading. This is especially significant, when we know that Hemingway based the character we now read as Pedro Romero on a fighter who only became more cowardly as time passed, which still remains in the Romero character to some degree, but seems to indicate a significant and subversive gesture by Hemingway that could be explored in further detail as a separate argument.

These bulls—Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero—are doing their best to be chivalric men and the steer Jake leads them into the "ring" to meet their demise at the hand of Brett, the matador. Several different "rings" exist within the novel, the first of which could be the Jake's circle of friends. When this circle is introduced in Chapter 3, Brett is presented to readers

through repetition, a chanting of sorts through the use of the phrase, "with them was Brett," (*SAR* 28) while *surrounded* by flamboyantly portrayed men. First, Cohn meets Brett because he is part of Jake's social *circle*, and then later on in the novel, Pedro Romero is introduced to the same *circle* of friends during the *Fiesta.* Another "ring" is literally formed around Brett when she is denied entry to the church in Chapter 15 and Jake relates the tale of how "dancers formed a *circle* around Brett and started to dance" (*SAR* 159, my italics). Furthermore these dancers "were all chanting," (159) much as a crowd at a bullfight would, and Bill and Jake are then placed within the "ring" with Brett. Jake is already unable to be a suitable adversary; fortunately for Bill, Brett's sights will soon be soon be set on another "bull." The metaphorical "slaying" of these bulls is markedly different than Brett's previous "bulls," here meaning sexual partners. In her marriage to Lord Ashley, a character that readers never meet in the course of the story, a literal ring existed as a symbol of their union, and once Brett is through with this man, she chooses to exchange his ring for one that she will presumably receive from Mike upon their impending marriage. These challenges to the institution of marriage also fall within the notion of an unconscious wish for progress and change based on the current systems by treating them with subversive contempt. The praxis for many of the new concepts of sexuality and gender roles proffered in the novel in this reading would be subsumed much later, but this was a hard-won battle, much like bullfighting. Each experience with a bull is going to be unique for Brett, and we learn through Mike Campbell's words in the novel that Brett's appetite for men is nothing new to him; *matadors* don't fight once, they do it because of their *afición* . He tells Robert Cohn that Brett has "slept with lots of better people than you" (*SAR* 146), and then elaborates a few moments later, in the presence of Brett, that she has "had affairs with men before," and she tells him "all about everything" (*SAR* 147). Mike may be one of a long line, but he knows his place

within the herd after all, as does Jake, whose wound prevents him from exploring sexual satisfaction with Brett and helps him to prevent the other men in the group from straying away from the herd, as a steer would.

When reconciling the notion of Brett Ashley as a bullfighter, Forter argues that "the aesthetic character of the bullfight…results from the matador's objectification of himself in a purely compositional pattern or configuration—a pictorial sequence of organized 'lines'" (62). In Chapter 5, Cohn uses similar terms to describe Brett, although he has only just met her: "There's a certain quality about her, a certain fineness. She seems to be absolutely fine and straight" (*SAR* 46). Brett is already composing herself in a peculiar way that seems to be difficult for the other characters to pinpoint, and she is portrayed early in the novel as a character that follows a very specific pattern that can be quite predictable. Later in the novel, Jake goes to great lengths to describe Pedro Romero in a similar fashion, noting how his form "was straight and pure and natural in line," which evoked "real emotion, because he kept absolute purity of line in his movements" (*SAR* 171). There are several patterns of Brett's behavior readers can turn to within *The Sun Also Rises* when seeking support of this particular reading. Scholar Charles Nolan Jr. has explored Brett's behavior patterns by turning to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*) and notes that Brett's "disastrous relationships…have certainly resulted in part from her impulsive sexual behavior and have left her depressed and lonely,"(Nolan 114). This leads Brett straight to the use of alcohol and other self-destructive patterns that tend toward a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, which would explain why Brett presents such strikingly contradictory character traits throughout the novel. At times Brett seems to be utterly carefree, yet she frequently exhibits feelings of despondency as well. Although Brett rarely composes herself in a manner becoming of a woman

in her time, these patterns shed light upon Brett's fragile mental state and further exemplify that certain patterns are at the heart of this matador's behavior. Forter continues that this pattern in bullfighting and the aforementioned "sequence is rendered meaningful by the physical danger that it courts" (Forter 63). Sexual activity can be seen as fraught with danger for a man or woman in any day and age; the risk of sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy alone can be deterrent enough for promiscuous behavior. During the time period that *The Sun Also Rises* was written, another danger of promiscuity is that a woman could indeed become labeled as a whore, or worse. Brett, however, is undeterred by these potential outcomes because she has proven time and again that she simply cannot be alone.

That said, Brett's use of sexuality as an example of "becoming one" with another mirrors the act of bullfighting as an art form into the "physical fusion of [wo]man and bull," with obvious implications (Forter 63). As with a traditional bullfighter, this oneness, although temporary, provides release; emotion and art are seen as inseparable by Brett at the moment of oneness, as interpreted through her *afición,* which is in this case applied toward the bullfight, or sexual act. As Jake explains in Chapter 13, "[a]fición means passion. An aficiónado is one who is passionate about bull-fights. All the good bull-fighters stayed at Montoya's hotel; that is, those with afición stayed there" (*SAR* 136). If reading this statement and replacing the concept of *afición* for bullfighting with *afición* for sex as it applies to Lady Brett Ashley, the quotation still makes sense. Brett did stay at the Hotel Montoya after all, along with all of the others in this circle of friends. To further illustrate this level of *afición*, Hemingway scholar Michael Von Cannon explains, "[t]he concept of afición alludes to the unity of spectator and participant. While there are those amateur spectators and mere tourists who cannot or will not appreciate what is happening in the arena, Jake, as an aficiónado, understands that the bullfight is based on a

communal experience of tragedy" (Von Cannon 62). And Jake, it seems, has passed this new level of *afición* on to Brett, and experiences the ensuing tragedies both within his community, but is also able to bear witness to the repercussions of Brett's actions on the community in Pamplona as well, through the effect the relationship has on Pedro Romero's ability to fight. When examining Brett from the angle of that of borderline personality disorder, this makes the point all the more salient since sex is Brett's art form, her bullfight, and this unity of spectator and participant mentioned above is quite obvious within the group of characters as they participate in the *Fiesta*. When she begins to dissociate, certainly she becomes more of a spectator than a participant and will act accordingly. Her acting out sexually intensifies, which continues the cycle of erratic behavior and the presentation of atypical personality traits. When the group has witnessed Pedro Romero's bullfighting prowess firsthand, Jake describes the experience as "that disturbed emotional feeling that always comes after a bull-fight, and the feeling of elation that comes after a good bull-fight" (*SAR* 168). When read using the bullfight as a metaphor regarding sexual expression as a symptom of a larger problem, this quotation is all the more poignant. Fortunately, Brett does have "a good bullfight" and decides not to "be one of those bitches that ruins children" (*SAR* 247) after realizing that no matter how different a bull can be, in the end there is only one outcome between matador and bull. As in an honorable bullfight, it is bad form to let the animal suffer, and it must be put out of its misery. Brett "kills" her bulls by removing her attention from then and moving on.

In 1932, Hemingway published *Death in the Afternoon,* a non-fiction book dedicated to illuminating all facets of bullfighting that the author could summon from his years of firsthand observation. Throughout the first chapter of *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway goes to great lengths to explain the reasons one may enjoy bullfighting, making comparisons between the bull

fight and the symphony, as well as to wine. Just as a symphony concert cannot be enjoyed by isolating the individual parts, the bullfight cannot be individuated; the entire act must be seen in its entirety. The same could be said of *The Sun Also Rises*. While it may be simpler to work with individual episodes, the work as a whole must be examined to see the extent to which Hemingway employed the construct of the bullfight in the narrative. To love the novel, one must be an *aficiónado;* the pieces—the fragments, if you will—cannot be taken without looking at the larger whole. As Hemingway stated in *Death in the Afternoon*, "[t]he aficiónado, or lover of the bullfight, may be said, broadly, then, to be one who has this sense of the tragedy and ritual of the fight so that the minor aspects are not important except as they relate to the whole" (*DIA* 9). Additionally, the wine comparison should not be overlooked; one may develop a taste for many things in life, although they may not ultimately be good for an individual. The same could be said for Brett Ashley's "taste" for different types of men. Hemingway continues his discussion of afición as it relates to wine:

> One can learn about wines and pursue the education of one's palate with great enjoyment all of a lifetime, the palate becoming more educated and capable of appreciation of wine even though the kidneys may weaken, the big toe become painful, the finger joints stiffen, until finally, just when you love it most you are finally forbidden wine entirely. (*DIA* 10)

He continues by explaining that, "[t]he thing, of course, is to avoid having to give up wine entirely just as, with the eye, it is to avoid going blind. But there seems to be much luck in all these things and no man can avoid death by honest effort nor say what use any part of his body will bear until he tries it" (*DIA* 11). Clearly, even in Hemingway's code, too much of any good thing can produce unwanted results if pursued to the bitter end, and this seems to be the case

with Lady Brett Ashley by the end of the novel. She ultimately becomes a caricature of herself, as all of the other men in the novel have, especially those who attempt to reconcile the current conditions with how they have chosen to live. A new paradigm is required to do this, and the best Brett can offer is deciding to not be a bitch. At this point, that's all she's willing to do with any certainty.

Hemingway's style lends itself to multiple layers of meaning, and these meanings are still being sought after in *The Sun Also Rises* decades later. In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway wrote of his "theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted [it] and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood" (*AMF* 71). Applying this to *The Sun Also Rises*, one may infer that this theory was indeed employed when composing the novel. Additionally, Hemingway's attitudes towards criticism, scholarship, meaning, etc. are so convoluted that one may not truly know exactly how the author felt about anything, but in this reading that is immaterial When we look back using Jameson's political unconscious and Bakhtin's dialogic imagination, we isolate the threads of antagonism and subversion that transgress the boundaries of the prevailing wisdom and dominant narrative. In retrospect, the author's literary transgressions were effective in multiple ways. Hemingway seems to have devoted his career to hiding meanings, creating irony, and establishing doubt through ambiguity. Within schools of Hemingway criticism, the author can be identified through various characteristics. Early criticism pinned the author as a hedonistic male chauvinist, while subsequent scholarship has read him as homosexual, androgynous, and even feminist. None, or all, of these readings could very well be the case. In time, Hemingway wrote, "they will understand the same way they always do in painting. It only takes time and it only needs confidence" (*AMF* 71). This reading allows for both.

One aspect of Hemingway's writing that scholars and students of his work ultimately agree upon is the author's fragmentation and the myriad modes of assimilation through close readings. His self-described "iceberg theory" is further evidence that his work certainly should be read through multiple viewpoints, because the submerged portions can yield heretofore unseen mosaics from the fragments. Hemingway was known for his contempt of the well-educated and scholars alike, yet dropped breadcrumbs for these readers nonetheless. He dedicated time and attention to dismantling his peers and colleagues, never allowing himself to acknowledge those who helped him arrive at a place where his literature would ultimately be read by millions—a very punk thing to do indeed, although this denial goes in waves as well; dialectically, community develops around subversive ideas and those who are willing to put them into the larger discourse, especially through art. Within the pages of *A Moveable Feast* alone there are many notable instances where Hemingway takes the time and attention to carefully assassinate others' character for posterity. And, although we know Hemingway felt contempt for critics and scholars, he also felt that he was able to compose "true sentences." This is an attempt at humility while at the same time carefully crafting more examples of stories that could be read in multiple ways. This is more than likely because of his deep-seated feeling that words were ultimately lies, and words are not to be trusted, which connects characteristics of his work to that of the Beats, particularly William S. Burroughs.

At the end of *The Sun Also Rises*, we as readers are left with a range of themes and larger concepts to reconcile. Far from writing "true" sentences, Hemingway loaded the novel with an incalculable amount of possibilities through which we can read and interpret the fragments of the story, which could possibly be labeled as proto-cubist writing. The submerged portion of the "*Sun* Iceberg" takes on a holographic quality—once we as readers begin to see the myriad

possibilities for interpretation, especially when viewed within the context of the punk unconscious. Each episode within the novel, each conversation, in fact, can be unfolded, researched and expanded upon through a variety of existing scholarship and used to create a completely different angle through which readers can engage with the narrative. In this reading we have arrived a conclusion that labels Lady Brett Ashley as a matador for a number of reasons detectable within the larger narrative; the threads just need to be pulled out, much in the same way the subversive and transgressive threads that made this interpretation possible can be used to attach this reading to the argument proffered in the introduction. Though this reading requires a deeper understanding of the existing scholarship concerning the novel, it is still possible to absorb many previous readings because of Hemingway's own admitted style of omission and his attitude toward interpretation. Irony, paradoxical meanings, and the exchange of values are clearly present throughout the novel, beginning with the epigraph. *The Sun Also Rises* was written not to define a lost generation but demonstrate the regenerative and recursive qualities within storytelling and the engagement of the reader. This coincides with the concepts employed throughout this project, namely the political unconscious and the dialogic imagination, and continues the conversation with these threads from the punk unconscious to stitch this argument upon the totality of academic scholarship on the novel.

CHAPTER III

FROM BEAT TO BLANK: SUBCULTURAL INTERTEXTUALITY

The legacy of the Beat Generation of writers is one that has been written about in countless works, and by many accounts their influence upon subsequent writers and artists has been immeasurable. When viewed through the lens of the punk unconscious, where we identify punk attitudes that lie beneath the surface at the subterranean level, the correlation is readily apparent. The rejection or negation of traditional value systems is present in nearly all Beat literature; alternative lifestyles and spaces are sought on the page and on the road. Burroughs spent his entire career dismantling systems of control. Beat texts address class consciousness within the frame of the larger narrative by acknowledging the disparities within society and shedding light upon subterranean cultures. Finally, "a belief in spontaneity and 'doing it yourself'" (Sabin 3) is at the heart of the Beats' enduring legacy, especially that of Kerouac's concept of spontaneous prose . When this group of writers began their frenzied period of production and publication in the 1950s, the reception was mixed to say the least, especially within critical circles. In time, this original lukewarm reception has ultimately led to the canonization of many works by writers from the Beat Generation. Biographer Victor Bockris directed attention to this phenomenon in an interview with Phil Weaver, discussing his book, *Beat Punks*:

> By 1995 the U.S. literary establishment recognized the Beats far more widely and positively than ever before. There was a great revival of Kerouac in 1995. All his

> books are now in print and sell. College reading lists are not complete without at least Burroughs, Ginsberg and Kerouac.

Bockris has authored biographies on cultural figures of the 1960s and 70s New York Downtown cultural and art scene, including Lou Reed, William S. Burroughs, Andy Warhol, and Patti Smith, to name a few. In *Beat Punks*, Victor Bockris aims to establish a lineage between the Beat Generation of writers and authors and those of the early punk groups in New York City.

That said, *Beat Punks* is a curated collection of interviews and firsthand accounts of the time period of the early- to mid-1970s in New York City and the relationships between many of the key figures in these intersecting scenes at the time. Much mention is given to two subjects of Bockris' other exhaustive biographical works: William S. Burroughs and Patti Smith. There are certainly other features within this volume that are of interest to those interested in the cultural output of the Downtown scene in New York, a scene that ultimately yielded what would one day be called "punk." Although there is plenty to work with as far as valuable anecdotal information, there are interstices within the layout of the material that begs for further connection and analysis.

One such area is that of the seemingly tenuous connection between the Beats and the Punks. While the title of the book would seem to indicate that a clear lineage will be established within the pages of *Beat Punks*, it is far less straightforward than one might assume, and we as readers are left to assemble our own picture. One of the clearest indications within the book that there is indeed a connection between the two "generations" is that extensive interviews and pieces with Burroughs are present, side by side and often interacting with figures of the earliest moments of what would one day be referred to as punk, such as Debbie Harry, Patti Smith, and Richard Hell—but, still, the connections are not laid bare as readily as one might presume. In

order to fully understand these connections, we will have to take a look backward at the Beat Generation and what constituted said group. Then, we will take a look at their influence upon youth movements of the 1960s, namely the group that would ultimately become known as hippies. Once we establish this lineage, it will be easier to see the lineage from the Beats to the Punks, vis-à-vis what I will be referring to as the Blank Generation, an appellation that comes from Richard Hell, an artist I will associate with the likes of Burroughs and Kerouac in his level of influence over large groups of people, who, unlike the two Beat figures, has remained largely unknown outside of those who have chosen to learn more about the humble beginnings of a subculture that remains extant to this day.

In the introductory material to *The Portable Beat Reader*, Ann Charters devotes several pages to outlining a lineage between the Beat and Lost Generation writers, while at the same time pointing out the many differences between these groups. One of the chief differences is that the Lost Generation writers "attacked the system from the safeguard of their life abroad as expatriates, but the Beat Generation writers protested their country's excesses on the front lines." (xxxi) This was achieved by the Lost Generation by subverting commonly held structures, belief, and roles, as covered extensively in Chapter Two. The Beat Generation helped to erode away at a system that had been embraced by society at-large after the end of World War II because there was hardly any room for objection in those days unless one chose to live on the outskirts or fringes of society. The Beat Generation writers chose to do this, to alienate themselves from society in an attempt to create a counter narrative; they ultimately spawned large amounts of support in the years following John Clellon Holmes' publication of "This is the Beat Generation" in the *New York Times Magazine* on November 16, 1952.

Although the generation that Holmes described in what reads as a manifesto of sorts would not fully materialize until the latter half of the 1950s, especially once Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* began to reach larger and larger audiences, its adherents and figureheads remained occupied with the task at hand: creating copious amounts of poetry and prose, living life and shunning square society in an attempt to flesh out their dreams of living in a world that wasn't laid out in a predestined format created for ease of consumption. Again, this operates within the framework of the political unconscious, and employed the use of narrative as an antagonistic act that sought to reconcile what seemed unattainable within the constraints of the social conditions of the day with their desires for a world that reflected the artistic work they produced. Holmes described a whole swath of society—youth and young adults—as disaffected, disenchanted, and disenfranchised people who felt that everything the United States had fought for was nothing but more of the same in "a world which seems to mark its cycles by its wars" and noted the similarities between what others before them had felt after the end of World War II, noting that "it is already being compared to that other postwar generation, which dubbed itself 'lost'." (Holmes, "This is the Beat Generation," para. 4) Naturally, those in charge of maintaining the status quo certainly didn't like hearing their detractors being published in long-winded manifesto style, especially in the *New York Times Magazine*, so the Beat Generation had to wait a little while longer to get their moment in the sun—but the word was out, and eventually their works would be read by many in the ensuing years.

In the intervening time, as stated earlier, authors like William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac continued to write and create and navigate the world through experiences that would inspire other works in the meantime and they, of course, aged at the same rate any other human being does. By the time *On the Road* was finally published in 1957, to mixed reviews, Kerouac

was thirty-five years old. This is not by any means old, but his novel of youthful exuberance recounted experiences he'd shared with other members of the Beat Generation ten or more years earlier, and his works were subverting the power structure because he chose to leave mainstream society voluntarily, but still did so within the borders of the United States. This inspired youth to go out and do seek their own experiences and live spontaneous lifestyles, something different than what the dominant ideology suggested. Kerouac and his peers had the audacity to challenge a system and keep tabs on how they had done so by recounting these tales in their semi-autobiographical works; in the case of Kerouac, these very real experiences were thinly disguised as novels and revealed a vibrant and intriguing subterranean culture. As Ann Charters states in her introduction to *The Portable Beat Reader*, "[t]hey [the Beats] advocated personal and social changes that made them heroes to some readers, and heretics to others." (xxxi)

Ultimately, members of the Beat Generation would go their separate ways, not always viewing the world with the same utopic vision as the more vocal members of the group, such as Allen Ginsberg, especially during the sixties when his public life caused irreparable rifts between members of this loose collective of artists. Later in life, Kerouac resented being referred to as anti-American or rebellious; he maintained that he had only been trying to demonstrate the beatific qualities of the downtrodden, not to overthrow any systems of control. As a matter of fact, Kerouac believed in America and the values it purportedly promotes within its citizenry. Kerouac did not at all wish to be associated with Allen Ginsberg's left-leaning, Marxist-inspired hippie movement, which came directly from the Beat Generation.

Before the twentieth century, there simply weren't what we would necessarily call generational movements, as we have in more recent memory. Perhaps this has more to do with the fact that it allows for packaging and easy consumption—it allows for those who wish to find

authors who express similar ideas to come together under one heading. Whether this is the case or not, it is very clear that the three authors many may think of first when the Beat Generation term is thrown around are Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Kerouac. Though Ginsberg worked hard to keep this group as cohesive as possible, these figures ultimately forged their own paths, illuminating different corners of the national psyche that may have never seen the light of day otherwise.

When looking into the concept of the generational spokesperson, if we look further back into the Lost Generation of writers, we see a very similar pattern. Although Ezra Pound and Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald were saying similar things, they certainly weren't always on the same page. They did, however, initiate the conversation and made space in the narrative for others to begin finding ways to articulate their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Probably for the first time in history, literacy levels were so high that wider and wider audiences were eventually able to be reached for the first time, and we were able as a society to have larger and more meaningful discussions through our cultural output than ever before. However, the members of the Lost Generation of writers did not tell others within society how they should live and die. They had simply seen too much of that to put their faith in anything anymore.

By the time of the Beat Generation, the gripe was something different. The United States had been involved in yet another war, and to paraphrase what John Clellon Holmes said, it seemed like we were beginning to use wars as the measuring stick for everything we were doing in the United States. It was almost as if nothing we did counted if we didn't fight to the death for it. What happened after World War II was over, however, was something quite different. Rather than becoming disenchanted on the surface, much of society eased into a very drab, although brightly colored, lifestyle of complete conformity. If you weren't ready to seize your God-given,

hard-won right to own a little slice of America, replete with two kids, a dog, a cat, and every shiny new appliance and invention that was ever created, then you couldn't be trusted, and you were therefore a commie and should be watched closely. This is why when the Beats came along with their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the status quo, they were called beatniks to align them somehow with a Russian-sounding, and, therefore, communist name that implied they felt this was political; this term quickly became commodified and soon beatniks and hipsters were ubiquitous, but it became harder to tell who was actually hip. Although some of the writers of the Beat Generation may have been influenced by the writers of the Lost Generation and the Modernists, that doesn't mean that they were themselves those things. Each generation and its cultural figures can exercise influence upon subsequent generations, and this may be based on what came before them, but it is not possible for a writer in 2015 to be a Lost Generation writer, nor can one be a Beat Generation writer. New work can certainly be produced in the spirit of any cultural precursors, yet still cannot be connected to that generation as if it were created at the same time. And so it goes: eventually the Beats would come to influence their own set of cultural and subcultural groups because they embodied different sets of ideals. The Beat Generation generated attitudes and ideas that would exist long after the founders of the original movement would cease to exist. The Beats and their so-called beatnik adherents would become the hippies and flower children of the 1960s, and their efforts would go on toward helping to assist with change into the far-reaching future. Hippies, or adherents to a particular set of values that are related to the hippie worldview or ideology still exist—in fact there are certainly still those who self-identify as hippies and this population continues to grow and develop, and the dialogic quality of this group continues to exert influence both forward and backward in the continuum.

There is another, lesser-known movement that came on the heels of the hippies, and I argue that this group is the rightful heir to the Beat lineage: the Blank Generation. Much like the Beats before them, the Blank Generation is the group of writers and artists associated with the Downtown scene in New York City in the early- to mid-1970s, and they are specific to a particular time period and grouping because of the diversity of cultural output created by this early group and their subsequent influence on culture at-large. During this time period, there were many young adults in their twenties and thirties who had grown up during the hippie movements and saw that what had been going on had lost its solvency; the potency behind the original vision had become diluted and the original intent behind the messages had become so far-removed it barely resembled what they had originally signed on for.

During this early time in the new movement, writers, artists, and musicians worked together around the goal of finding new forms and modes of expression that challenged the conversation in new and interesting ways. Many of the figures in this early scene were born during or immediately after World War II and had seen the tides change in an effort to make sense of the world. Much like the early key figures of the Beat Generation, by the time the Blank Generation began making headway in its influence of its youth movement—the punks—the founding members would be well into their thirties while helping to change youth culture for the next two decades, much like their Beat forefathers. Strangely, as cohesive as this movement appears to be in retrospect, it was multifaceted and constantly morphing at the time.

In this chapter, I will pay special attention to the work of Richard Hell because it contains tropes and ideologemes, discrete units within ideology, that demonstrate a direct lineage between the Beat Generation and what would ultimately become the subcultural movement we refer to as punks. I refer to them as the Blank Generation because Richard Hell was part of a group called

The Voidoids that put out an album by the same name, although Hell had been performing the song with other musical groups before it was finally released in 1977. The following year, this name was also used as the title for an Ulli Lommel film that was released in 1980 that was an attempt at capturing the essence of this particular era in New York Downtown culture. Although the film itself is mainly known for its live performances at the well-known Bowery venue CBGB, the name speaks volumes about the group of artists and writers who forged into uncharted territory with their cultural output.

Much like the original group of Beat writers based out of New York City, the members of the early Downtown New York City movement quickly gained a following that included many well-known names from across the artistic spectrum, among them Lou Reed, William S. Burroughs, and Andy Warhol. Some of the lesser-known names amongst this group at the time included Patti Smith, Debbie Harry, and Richard Hell. In Hell's autobiography, *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp*, the author goes to great lengths to dissociate himself from his predecessors in the Beat Generation, especially that of Jack Kerouac. Mainly, this had to do with Kerouac's embracing of spontaneous prose, and Richard Hell originally considered himself a poet with a desire to publish small magazines and devote his life to poetry.

Without rewriting or paraphrasing the entire autobiography, there is something to be said about Hell's desire to distance himself from the Beats in that much of his story seems to play out like a Beat novel. Perhaps this is because so much of Hell's early life as an outsider would have been influenced by this burgeoning counterculture and the youth subcultures it spawned that he wouldn't have been able to separate this from his reality regardless. In the Richard Hell mythos, he ran away from Kentucky in order to move to New York City to be a writer with one-hundred dollars in his pocket and spent the next several years working odd jobs in book stores and film

shops while he worked on publishing his own small magazine, called *Genesis: Grasp*. In the small amount of scholarship on Hell outside of standard book reviews, this publication seems to have garnered him the most attention and one scholar in particular, Daniel Kane, has established a clear lineage between these small presses in the early stages in the development of punk in New York's Lower East side by comparing the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos and look of the small press mimeographed magazines and the look of early punk records. Certainly, the DIY ethos played an integral role in the development of punk music, and the earliest of these bands, specifically Richard Hell and the Voidoids were produced by the record company counterpart: the small, independent label. In the case of Hell's band, Ork Records would release a handful of albums, but *Blank Generation* would be its crowning achievement. Unlike albums that would later follow a characteristically simple "punk" arrangement, *Blank Generation* was complicated both lyrically and musically, delving into subterranean themes unlike their counterparts The Ramones, whose simplistic and catchy lyrics and musical style maintained a surface-level simplicity and lack of virtuosity that caught audience members' attention while causing them to ignore the often transgressive lyrics. Scholar Daniel Kane distills this phenomenon thusly:

> Hell's punk posture was informed to some extent by his literary imagination and immersion in avant-garde traditions (particularly those associated with French symbolism, surrealism, and his own contemporary New York scene). This material engagement in poetic praxis, combined with Hell's subsequent musical output and the discourse that developed around him as it was promulgated by the music press at the time, helped mark early American punk rock as iconoclastically erudite, anti-academic, and fundamentally populist. (336)

Richard Hell's lyrics at the time belie a nihilistic angst that's characteristic of disaffected youth, yet the writer was nearing thirty by the time his anthem was being heard and/or seen in its various incarnations. Much like Kerouac, the original intent of the work no longer held water once it had been removed from its context. Many read Hell's lyrics as a strictly nihilistic:

> I belong to the blank generation and
>
> I can take it or leave it each time
>
> I belong to the _____ generation but
>
> I can take it or leave it each time

Many early followers of the bands that would come to be known as punk identified with the emptiness and isolation in the lyrics. Never a fan of being painted into a corner, Hell, however, would try and offer counterpoints to the most basic readings:

> People still always ask me what the song "Blank Generation" means. If I trust them, I might tell them it was partly a joke, a joke that was meant to be understood by people compatible enough with me to get the joke, being that it was also a solo personal ad addressed to those "people compatible enough." But it was also a description of a state of consciousness that came from having lived through what people my age had lived through: the Vietnam War, the inevitable failure of the flower children, the exposed corruption and venality of the politicians, the sleaziness of patriotism, the flood of drugs, and the overwhelming media data flow of the late sixties and early seventies. That had been numbing and alienating, but, yes, in wearing away all of your illusions, it did leave you in a place where the option of remaking yourself from scratch did come to mind. But really the song was an evasion of explanation, as most all attempts to write

something decent are. Inevitably it was a self-portrait, still. "I was saying let me out of here before I was even born," it began.

These feelings of alienation would characterize the youth of the punk movement and serve as the impetus to forge forward with the re-formation of self, and to create spaces in which this process could be completed, ultimately giving rise to the cornerstone of the punk movement: don't wait, DIY. Finding new ways to express oneself became the driving force behind many, if not most, of the bands in the scene that Richard Hell was a member of in New York City, at the now infamous Bowery club, CBGB. In a 2008 documentary entitled *House of the Rising Punk* by Cristoph Dreher, the director uses archival footage and interviews to get a sense of what the early CBGB scene meant to its participants. Richard Hell was allegedly one of the first musicians to approach club owner Hilly Kristal and ask for a venue to play his music. Originally, CBGB stood for Country, Blue Grass, Blues, but Kristal agreed to let one of Hell's early musical projects, Television, play there on Sunday nights. The interesting thing throughout this documentary is that each of those interviewed reiterated that there had been no real cohesiveness to this early scene at the beginning, which is very similar to the Beat Generation and its lack of cohesiveness in its early days. If one were to examine the music and lyrics of all of the bands coming out of CBGB at the time, there would be no uniformity, no overarching theme holding the disparate groupings of people together—outside of the fact that they were all trying to find their place in the scene and to express themselves in their own way. This is perhaps why I like to think of Richard Hell as a founding father of the Blank Generation that he named quite appropriately. There was now a blank space within which the artists and musicians could carve out their own niche, and they flourished in this environment.

According to most sources regarding the punk movement, it started in earnest in the United States with The Ramones, but the band that ultimately placed punk upon the worldwide stage was the Sex Pistols, from London. Although the information is available only anecdotally, it is interesting to note that multiple interviews with Malcolm McLaren, the manager of the Sex Pistols for the duration of their brief career, has given credit for the band's look—especially that of John Lydon, also known as Johnny Rotten—to Richard Hell, who apparently chose to display himself in a fragmented, torn barrage of safety-pinned t-shirts, suit jackets, and jeans with holes in them, with handwritten messages adorning these items, along with short, spiky hair. This is what would come to iconically characterize the punks for years to come, and safety pins and spiked hair still seem to signify punk at its very core. Interestingly, it's important to note that this wasn't a uniform of any kind among the early scene:

> I just thought Richard Hell was incredible. […] Here was a guy all deconstructed, torn down, looking like he'd just crawled out of a drain hole, looking like he was covered in slime, looking like he hadn't slept in years, looking like he hadn't washed in years, and looking like no one gave a fuck about him. […] And this look, this image of this guy, this spiky hair, everything about it—there was no question that I'd take it back to London. By being inspired by it, I was going to imitate it and transform it into something more English. […] Richard Hell was a definite, hundred-percent inspiration, and, in fact, I remember telling the Sex Pistols, "Write a song like 'Blank Generation,' but write your own bloody version," and their own version was "Pretty Vacant." (McLaren qtd. in McNeil and McCain 198-99)

Much in the way that the Beats ultimately spawned a movement that became far-removed from its original vision, the Blank Generation occupied a brief moment in time, but inspired many that came after them. Just as there as still hippies, there are still punks, and although the veracity of these modern day adherents to these generational vestiges may be contested by those who have been there since these movements' respective inceptions, there is no doubt that those who count themselves among the ranks of the hippies or the punks believe in what they do, and that is what happens when strong figures begin a movement, whether it is done intentionally or not. In the case of the Beats, we now know that even the meaning of the word "beat" itself and how it applies to that group has been contested since John Clellon Holmes' first public use of the term. In the case of the Blank Generation, it appears that they were too busy creating music and art to actually decide on a name for what they were doing, and ultimately a multitude of expressions found their way into the conversation, leaving it up to those outside the scene to offer some sort of signifier to ensure a common reference point. Using the word punk as a signifier for this group came as a result of John Holmstrom and Legs McNeil's magazine, simply called *Punk.* Several of the artists from the CBGB scene started appearing in this magazine regularly, and the term started being used to join together disparate groups of musicians because the likes of Debbie Harry from Blondie, Joey Ramone, and Richard Hell, among others, had found a community in its pages.

What is clear is that, although Richard Hell might not be as well known as Joey Ramone, he continued to produce music for a while, but he ultimately returned to writing. John Clellon Holmes may have named the Beat Generation, or at least used the term in a way that made it memorable, and it stuck. Unfortunately, not many outside of those who study Beat literature know who Holmes is, but they certainly know his peers from those early years in New York. In

Richard Hell, we find a parallel figure, but one who seemed to be trying to herald the same kind of announcement, but it simply didn't stick. Hell was singing his "Blank Generation" anthem in nearly every band he played in, but it was not released on a record until 1977, after the punk movement was in full swing and his influence was waning due to excessive heroin use. The film version, named eponymously, is an attempt at capturing the scene at CBGB, but most critics will agree that the only actually substantive material in the film is the live performance footage of Richard Hell and the Voidoids. Although Hell may have tried to distance himself from Beat influence, in the opening scenes of *House of the Rising Punk*, Hell's "Blank Generation" plays in the background while he recalls running away to New York City in the mid-1960s and his fascination with 19th century French Romantic poets; he then immediately discusses the major influences of the Beats on youth culture during the day. Hell was likely more influenced than he would care to admit early on, especially considering his desire to distance himself from mainstream culture, but it is quite clear from one of his short pieces in Victor Bockris' book *Beat Punks* that Hell was enchanted by William S. Burroughs. Entitled "My Burroughs," the piece starts with

> I consider Burroughs the real Rimbaud. Rimbaud's program to banish the ego and destroy the controlling, classifying ,structuring function of the brain ("derangement of the senses" in order to "become a seer." -AR) was self-evidently desirable, came naturally to Burroughs. "The ego is excess baggage,: he wrote. (AR: "I is another.") Burroughs' life was one long cultivated coma. (Bockris 185)

What becomes clear is the depth to which Richard Hell's admiration for Burroughs eventually overcame him as a man, and, for a while, as an artist—especially in the realm of addiction to heroin.

Hell maintains throughout his body of work that he was largely influenced by Arthur Rimbaud, much like the Beats and many other twentieth century artists and musicians who sought out authentic experiences and decadence in order to find true poetry in the ensuing events. Although Kerouac himself was an admirer of Rimbaud, it is curious that Hell wishes to distance himself from the work of Jack Kerouac, as well as Allen Ginsberg. Hell mentions Ginsberg twice in his autobiography, *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp*, and neither time has much good to say about him. The first mention of Ginsberg seems like some sort of back-handed compliment:

> In the course of that construction job Allen Ginsberg once liked my looks on the street and invited me over. It made me think of Walt Whitman admiring the sweat-sheened torsos of laborers. I declined without hesitation, automatically, never having felt much rapport with Ginsberg from his writing, and because it wasn't within my range to give encouragement to a gay guy trying to pick me up, though it didn't bother me. (*I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp* 52-53)

It's curious to note that he doesn't say no right off because Ginsberg is gay, nor does he even seem to have any interest in talking or meeting with one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century on top of that, even with his aspirations of wanting to be a writer and poet. This type of dismissal would become characteristic of the punk movement later on, with its dismissal of anything that could possibly be considered mainstream, even if it had to do with a countercultural icon. From Hell's earlier explanation of the lyrics to "Blank Generation" we can

also see his desire to distance himself from movements and figures he deemed to be insolvent in one way or another. But this event came long before Hell penned these lyrics. Just two paragraphs later, Hell admits quite a lot about himself as a writer:

> I'd been making an ignorant teenager's stabs at writing, without any real foundation of values except the most base, namely to express my poor, lonely, sentimental, grandiose, poetic self. I did have confidence in my insights into situations and people, and also in my basic aesthetic discrimination. But for the longest time (which at that age was three or four years) I was only a writer because I conceived of myself as one. […] As a poet or writer, I would become an example of how if you wear a mask long enough it becomes your face, or, to put it more kindly, how vocations often begin as poses. (*I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp* 53-54)

Perhaps this denial of his lineage is some sort of homage to Rimbaud, who didn't much care for the work of those who came before him either. Later, however, when publishing his own small magazine, *Genesis: Grasp*, Hell found good use for one system of control: that of editor and publisher. Hell used his small bit of power to slight Allen Ginsberg and made sure to note this occasion in *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp*:

> Our finest moment was getting a poem from Allen Ginsberg for the magazine, which he'd kindly sent on receipt of our pathetic solicitation, and then rejecting it. It didn't meet our standards of craftsmanship. He wrote a cold angry couple of sentences back. We literally did not know what we were doing. (69)

Much like the movement that would follow, Hell decided to part ways with even those figures that helped create the legacy he was now taking in a different direction. He chose to ignore the dialogic nature of what was being produced

Ultimately, Richard Hell would retire from music in 1984 and return to the writing life. Although it would take another twelve years to reach stores, his first novel, *Go Now*, would ultimately shed light on the mind of a musician who has outlived his own scene and fallen into the throes of heroin addiction. Much like his literary hero, William S. Burroughs, Hell's debut novel would delve into the depravity of the mind of a junkie trying to kick a habit while on the road, and *Go Now* seems to echo/invoke as much of Kerouac's *On the Road* as it does Burroughs' *Junky*. In the following analysis, we will analyze the discourse that occurs between Hell's novel and works that characterize the Beat Generation, which will further serve to solidify the connections between these two generations of writers.

Rather than being tenuous or direct, there is a dialectical connection between the work of the Beats and Blank Generation author Richard Hell. Although the release of his first novel is more than twenty years removed from the time period, Hell still embodies the characteristics of the Blank Generation, or at least the narrator, Billy Mud certainly does. By using the trope of the travel novel, we will examine how, rather than really mapping out the United States in a series of anecdotes about friends getting their kicks in an exuberant tale of the road, Hell uses the road as a vehicle to map the interiority of a junkie's mind while trying, unsuccessfully to kick his habit. Additionally, the detailed conversation related to the use of junk at times confirms, while at others, diverges from Burroughs' use of this motif.

Clearly, the work of Richard Hell is in conversation with those who preceded him; it is nearly impossible not to do so, especially when living and working within a scene that contained

so many cultural vestiges from the hippie movement just a few years before. The influence of the Beats upon Hell cannot be overstated, and often what is ignored will prove to be telling in regard to what and who helped shape his writings, especially in light of the analysis of *Go Now* that follows.

It's hard to decide which of the Beats, Kerouac or Burroughs, exerts more influence upon the writing of Richard Hell. Certainly, much of the subject matter is similar to that of Burroughs in *Junky*, but with less detachment. Hell's narrator in *Go Now* is named Billy, either an homage to Burroughs himself or the narrator in *Junky*—either way we also know that many of Hell's contemporaries, including Patti Smith were close with Burroughs, and that his writing was likely influenced by a mixture of multiple styles, that of Burroughs included, although Hell's style is far more lyrical in *Go Now* than Burroughs' narration in *Junky*. To sort out some of these stylistic variations, we will engage directly with Jameson's theory by examining *Junky* using the three aforementioned horizons of the political unconscious, and how certain features of Burroughs' work interact with *Go Now.*

As mentioned above, Jameson's theory contends that creating a narrative is a symbolic and antagonistic act that seeks to fulfill a wish that cannot be fulfilled at the time of the novel's creation; this is the first horizon of his three concentric frameworks, and would be found in the very center. Generally speaking, this is intended to say that an author may, at times, be providing readers with a better version of what they consider to be reality. When one reads *Junky,* they may ask themselves what could possibly be the wish at the heart of this novel. There are actually several answers to this particularly interesting question.

In *Junky*, Burroughs writes in a matter-of-fact manner, somewhere between Jake Barnes of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and hardboiled detective novels by the likes of Raymond

Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Not only does this approach leave little room for sentimentality, but it also addresses certain topics of social import with a hardened manner, as if exposure to the experiences being recounted has left the narrator desensitized. With hardboiled detective novels, the treatment of crime, death, intrigue, and human relations provides societal commentary on the alienation and complete reification on the lives of the characters portrayed; overexposure has made them insensitive to what normal people might very well call atrocities and trauma. The same goes for *Junky*: Burroughs approaches the underworld in the same way—he has been overexposed to the point that his language has changed. In the world portrayed by Burroughs in *Junky*, everyone is able to get their fix one way or another, and generally they get away with making it through day-by-day until they meet some unwanted end. It is a completely disconnected, dispassionate portrayal, even when Bill Lee finds himself in legal trouble. He addresses this subject with the same amount of distant love as he does for finding that perfect vein when the shot is just right.

As an unwitting and unconscious antagonistic act, this aspect of Burroughs' narrative demonstrates what he hoped for: a society where he could get what he wanted, when he wanted it, without repercussions that affected his liberty. When the narrator gets caught, it isn't that big a deal specifically because Burroughs himself doesn't see anything wrong with the behavior from the beginning. Additionally, Burroughs alludes to his queerness head-on in certain parts of the novel, without preparing the reader that they will soon be entering foreign, transgressive territory, especially at the time that this novel was written, which is more than likely why these sections were omitted from the "unpublishable" novel until later editions, including the publication of *Queer*. Again, this represents the wishes of the author, which likely cannot be fulfilled at the time of the novel's creation.

Within the second horizon of Jameson's framework is the heteroglossia of social reactions to a work. When *Junky* was published, it was met with a variety of reactions, ranging from indifference to outrage, depending upon how those that engaged with the material self-identified. This may, at this point, seem like a very logical or even obvious observation, but this is how previous attitudes are ultimately subsumed by new ones, and how mores fall in and out of fashion. Art in its many incarnations helps to create these changes, sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly. In the case of *Junky*, Burroughs' work was first introduced to readers of cheap pulp-style novels, the double-sided Ace Paperback, something that could be read and tossed aside. Within just a few short decades, however, it would be seen as one of the first Beat novels, and a seminal work on drug addiction in the postwar era. These are just a few brief examples of how a work can interact with society. Works of art, as long as they are extant, will continue to elicit reactions ranging from indifference to outrage and all points between. This is why cultural output continues to change not only in its sphere of influence, but its level or rate of subsumption as a result. Burroughs and his place is punk history is more than likely related to his unwillingness to waver in the face of pressure, his ability to create his own signature style than ran counter to that of the status quo, and his desire to live on the fringes of society and document his activities through art with little formal training. As a result, Burroughs' writing and recording experiments have left us with a style that we not only identify with one particular man, but a group of stylistic innovators known as the Beats who have exerted their influence on subsequent cultural output as well.

Ultimately, in the final horizon of Jameson's theoretical framework, we are able to view *Junky* in its place in historical totality: it is a snapshot of its place in space and time. The novel—any novel, for that matter—is a time capsule that allows for multiple levels of

exploration once enough time and distance have been placed between the moment of creation and the moment of analysis. Specifically in this case, we are able to bear witness to what it was like for a heroin addict in the post-World War II era in the United States. The novel also captures linguistic markers and slang/jargon from a specific point in time and even provides a glossary for posterity. This in itself reiterates the second horizon because many of the words that required glossary definitions when the novel was published are now used in daily vocabulary; others have fallen by the wayside. The continuum of exchange between this work and the present moment will endure and persist subconsciously in the works of others until one, the other, or both cease to exist.

Once we have used the concept of the political unconscious and its three concentric horizons to analyze *Junky,* understanding the influence of Burroughs and other beats upon the works of Richard Hell's first novel, *Go Now*, is a more manageable undertaking. First and foremost, much of the subject matter in the novel would have been considered highly inappropriate if Burroughs hadn't opened readers' eyes to the junkie way of life—and heroin ultimately became part of the punk experience, especially in New York City in the 1970s. This was something not generally used within the hippie movement, and was associated with something more subterranean than even that counterculture was willing to accept wholeheartedly. According to Dee Dee Ramone in Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain's oral history of punk, *Please Kill Me*, "Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell [of the proto-punk band Television] were very calculating, grown-up, determined people. Everyone else was just kind of blundering into everything, but they were different. I thought they were beatniks." (McNeil and McCain 165)

Just as the Beats had many different incarnations, styles, and purported intentions, so, too, did those in the early punk movement. According to interviews with Hell, he enjoyed using heroin because "it felt like the fulfillment of all my fantasies, the way you got to dream, but direct your dreams like a movie director" (McNeil and McCain 166). This is a feature of heroin left out by Burroughs, likely due to the depth of his addiction when *Junky* was penned, or perhaps because *Junky* came together over time. Richard Hell had put nearly twenty years between himself and the experiences he chronicles in *Go Now* (1996) before publishing them in a cohesive manner and the distance and even the memory of these events seem to be romanticized from the outset. Hell's narrator in *Go Now* is recalling an experience that nearly comes straight out of Kerouac's *On the Road*—a cross country road trip, but one that is filtered through the eyes of a staggeringly heroin-addicted former punk star. In first horizon of the political unconscious, we can see that Hell wanted to be the director of his dream, and in the course of *Go Now*, we see Hell's narrator Billy Mud earn both of his names—the first, I contend, is an oblique reference to Burroughs; the second is essential self-explanatory. Water, the stuff of life, when combined with the dirt and filth laying about in the gutter, combines to become a substance that stains and is hard to wash away without some effort. When the reader is finished with this novel, the only thing that feels appropriate is a long bath or shower.

If this book had been written and published during the time it chronicles, the early 1980s, the social reactions to its subject matter may indeed have been treated quite differently. Punk rock itself was under fierce scrutiny when bands like the Dead Kennedys were deemed "obscene" for album artwork that featured hand-drawn penises on a very limited pressing of one album on a small, independent label. Transgressive fiction such as *Go Now* would have likely found its way into this category if its main protagonist, a punk rocker with a heroin problem, had

been put out into the public during the scene's heyday. As Victor Bockris says in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, the Beats were experiencing a Renaissance in regard to their writing being more widely read. Since *Go Now* was published in 1996, during this Beat renaissance of sorts, the book was fairly well received, although reviewer Laurie Stone from *The Nation* states quite early in her review:

> Richard Hell's *Go Now* is a novel presented as the memoir of Billy Mud, who is 30 in 1980, when the story takes place, and who, like the author, has accrued a patina of fame as a punk music innovator, a poet of romantic nihilism and a wafer-thin drughead. Since the book is presented as fiction, we have to leave aside whether its contents happened to Hell and consider how Billy measures up as a memoirist. I was captive shortly after word one, and I'm going to make a case for the book's accomplishments, but let's face it, surrendering to a work depends more than anything on needing it, and usually the need dawns once you see you've been transported. If a junkie diary isn't where you want to live, don't bother reading on. (Stone 28)

Stone's review of the novel is a great one, but one that is predicated on a reader's desire to "live" inside of this junkie's experiences, which is arguably one of the vicarious pleasures for those of us who haven't experienced the ups and downs of heroin withdrawals and all of the ways we can hurt those we care about. However, I would argue that there are far more reasons than this desire for reading a book like *Go Now.*

According to Terry Ork, president and founder of Ork Records and former manager of Television, Richard Hell "had both feet in the ooze:"

> Hell was definitely the one thinking in subversive terms. Hell was the one who always had the most awareness of what the text was trying to denote. Hell was a boulevard surrealist, groping for the breakthrough, the one grasping for liberation. (McNeil and McCain 167)

Ork was referring to Hell's poetry, lyrics, and musical sensibilities in this case, but readers can certainly make the connection between Ork's observations regarding Hell and Hell's later work. *Go Now* bounces between Laurie Stone's reading of poetic, "romantic nihilism," the surrealism Ork mentions above, and the detached, hardboiled style of Burroughs and negotiates similar subject matter as the Beats did with a punk ferocity that will shake readers to their very core when the climax is reached.

Within Hell's narrative is the desire to wait for these moments we exist in to become memories, because, as in the words of narrator Billy Mud:

> Memories are better than the future. Nothing I'm part of is good until later. I love what time does. I make my decisions on the basis of sensing what will produce the best memory. They're my finest works: all that multidimensional and liquid maze of experience minus the fear and uncertainty, or with the fear and uncertainty changed to something else. Because they are already finished. I've made them up and they comprise me. It's as if experience is only the dark, chaotic factory where these little infinity jewels are pressed into being. Everyone is the poet of their memories. (29)

Hell uses poetic language and allusions to eastern thought here to explain the complexities of how we manage our memories and experiences once we've left the present moment, inverting the philosophy he appears to be invoking. Much like other road novels, Bully Mud knows that

the story that comes out of being paid to travel across the country in a souped-up '57 DeSoto Adventurer will one day be something greater than it was at the time—mythological—even though he will eventually say that "[t]he trip was an abortion" (175). The withdrawals on the road will be captured in notebooks and rewritten with wise, poetic eyes that thoroughly illustrate the experience. This is where Hell's work coincides most with that of the Beats. Although Hell's Billy Mud feels "beat and desperate and spastic," (Hell, *Go Now* 98) Hell's beatific portrayal of this trip is poignant, painfully nostalgic, most definitely beat, whether he likes to pay homage to the beats or not. With this comes a tale of control and freedom, and of love and sex and need that exists within the realm of junk for the junk-sick. The end of the novel leaves the reader feeling that this beautiful catastrophe they have just witnessed is akin to being friends with a junkie. It feels as if you've placed your trust in this seemingly reliable narrator, because you feel like he has been so brutally honest with you for the entire telling of the tale that he wouldn't possibly hurt you. But he does—severely, some readers might say. The transgression perpetrated by Mud upon the reader is shocking, disturbing, grotesque, and unforgettable. Billy Mud knows he is destined to hurt us and at the end asks the reader for forgiveness:

> I'm on my knees before you. The words are on their knees. This dull, stunned dimwit. With his brain whirring. He's probably going to laugh. Ready to go. All the words. All the words since the beginning of time. The ending is words. The person in a cloud of them, like a cloud of bugs.

Billy knows that words—and the attempt to house memory within verbal constructions—will fail to reproduce something that's in your head. He's tried to show the beauty in the horror of his dopesick trip where he alienates every single person who's important to him, including his newfound friend and confidant, the reader. He knows this and decides to get some more dope

and keep enjoying himself on his own terms because that's what he was going to do anyway—punk till the end.

CHAPTER IV

THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION AND PUNK ROCK

After the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, widespread changes in popular culture began to take place; although these changes had been taking place for some time, this incident became a galvanizing moment for the country and a catalyst for much of the social activism that would subsequently take place. Overtly political music before this time had been limited to the folk music revival, which "helped democratize bohemian cultural rebellion," (Hale 93) but the followers of this musical revolution preferred live performances to radio, so much of its socialist (and socially conscious) message was not broadcast to the country at large. After the assassination, however, political music began to creep its way onto the airwaves and into the national consciousness. In this chapter, we will shift from viewing cultural texts through the lens of the punk unconscious and recognize characteristics that embody punk consciousness, particularly through a historical materialist framework for judging punk cultural texts and productions. According to Marxist scholar Dave Laing, "[d]uring the 1960s, popular music underwent a qualitative change, through the work of The Beatles, Bob Dylan and their successors. This new and ambitious music was closely associated with the various youth and 'counter-cultural' movements of the decade" (Laing 123). By the end of the decade, popular culture had absorbed some aspects of the socially conscious counterculture, while largely disregarding the issues that had united the youth and, as a result, "for all the advocacy of alternative life-styles and Utopian idealism, the power structures remained intact" (Laing 123).

Punk rock began in the mid-to- late 1970s as an openly hostile call to action due to the failure of the 1960s counterculture to effect lasting social changes in the United States and, according to Laing:

> That hostility took three major forms: a challenge to the "capital intensive" production of music within the orbit of the multi-nationals, a rejection of the ideology of "artistic excellence" which was influential among established musicians, and the aggressive injection of new subject-matter into popular song, much of which (including politics) had previously been taboo. (124)

In this chapter, I will argue that a number of punk rock bands from America and Great Britain appropriated the Kennedy name and the assassination of John F. Kennedy using the three criteria mentioned above to challenge the complacency of American consumer culture and to de-romanticize the Kennedy legacy. In contrast to the preceding chapters, where punk has been an unconscious thread, this subversive, transgressive approach to expressing societal outrage and desire for change not only runs counter to the dominant narrative, but does so openly, without fear of retribution. This is a shift toward punk consciousness.

In order to situate this argument, we will first analyze a song that does not fit these criteria, but rather exemplifies rock music inspired by the Kennedy assassination. "The Day John Kennedy Died" by Lou Reed could most accurately be described as a mourning song, or a lamentation. The song, which appeared on his 1982 album, *The Blue Mask*, begins by invoking Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech:

> I dreamed I was the president of these United States
> I dreamed I replaced ignorance, stupidity and hate
> I dreamed the perfect union and a perfect law, undenied

And most of all I dreamed I forgot the day John Kennedy died

I dreamed that I could do the job that others hadn't done

I dreamed that I was uncorrupt and fair to everyone

I dreamed I wasn't gross or base, a criminal on the take

And most of all I dreamed I forgot the day John Kennedy died

Reed, however, changes the act of dreaming in King's famous speech from the present to the past tense, implying that these ideals are something that can no longer be attained; now these virtues are something that can only be dreamed of, as one would with wishful thinking, and the antagonistic act of creating counter narrative has begun. The song conveys a poignant sense of loss, and a longs for "what might have been," if John Kennedy had never been assassinated. Lou Reed imbues himself in his dream-like state with idealized characteristics that listeners can infer he associates with Kennedy. The song continues to describe where he was when he heard the news of the President's death and continues with the lamentation of this tragic loss. In Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," an assertion is made that within an individual experiencing melancholia that "one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost," (245) which is markedly different than when an individual is mourning. In the case of this Lou Reed song, attributes are given that may or may not have proven to become true if the Kennedy presidency had been fully actualized. Kennedy's untimely death created conditions for his apotheosis, and many saw the death of Kennedy as the end of innocence for the United States. Thus, the Kennedy name became metonymically intertwined with a sense of longing for "what might have been."

Punk rock, in its original and purist form, could arguably be identified as a soundtrack to rebellion; according to Albert Camus in his essay, *The Rebel*, "[t]o kill God and to build a Church are the constant and contradictory purpose of rebellion" (Camus 103). That said, the punk band Dead Kennedys did their best to dethrone the king who had been crowned in death by using the Kennedy name to signify the death of the American dream. Their very name created outrage within liberal and conservative circles alike, and their highly politicized lyrics kept their music marginalized throughout their musical career. The music of Dead Kennedys fits all three of the criteria with which we are measuring punk rock music in the context of this argument. The band created their own record label, Alternative Tentacles, subverting the capitalist mode of musical production; they certainly do not adhere to any form of "artistic excellence;" as a matter of fact, they strove to pummel their listeners with atonal, rapid-fire delivery; finally, the band's catalog consists of highly politicized songs relevant to their times. In "Chickenshit Conformists," singer Jello Biafra berates listeners for turning punk into "another pale cartoon," nothing more than a representation of what it was intended to be. When referring to the listeners' parents, it is implied that they were part of the 1960s counterculture that had promised sweeping change, but who also failed to deliver. This is a theme that is revisited in other punk songs that not only appropriate the Kennedy name, but also use the assassination as a rhetorical device to make strong points related to—and often indictments of—American society.

One song that fits this description is "The American in Me" by The Avengers. This song was performed in the late 1970s, around 1978, and released finally on the *Avengers EP* in 1979. The chorus of this song inverts an often-quoted line from Kennedy's inaugural address in which he states, "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." and turns it into:

Ask not what you can do for your country

What's your country been doing to you?

Ask not what you can do for your country

What's your country been doing to your mind?

This song appeared in various forms in Avengers releases in the late 1970s on different record labels, and was recently re-released on Water Records in 2012. The so-called "Pink Album" was a posthumous release that was compiled after the band's breakup and was never released on a major record label, which fits one of the three criteria proffered by Laing. The song's structure and delivery fall under the second criterion, with a basic, straightforward chord structure and lyrics that are delivered in a matter-of-fact manner, sometimes yelled at the listeners, which add emphasis to the way Americans accept things at face value, get upset briefly, and then return to complacency. Peter Margasak of *Chicago Reader Online* wrote about the band's 2012 reunion tour and acknowledged the lasting contribution of "The American in Me," calling the song "one of the best-ever indictments of blind patriotism (and one that only grows more potent as the years pass)" (Margasak). The song's political content is obvious, which fits Laing's third criterion, but isn't strictly limited to the Kennedy assassination; rather, singer Penelope Houston points to the desensitizing nature of television in the world and how it creates a voyeuristic society that accepts information unquestioningly. The second verse of the song exposes the listener to an issue closer to the band's East Bay California roots, which has long been a countercultural mecca within the United States. The lyrics refer to the SLA[1], or Symbionese Liberation Army, which was a radical militant group associated with the kidnapping and supposed brainwashing of newspaper heiress Patty Hearst. The incendiary verse reads:

[1] FBI files related to the SLA can be found at http://www.paperlessarchives.com/sla.html

It's the American in me says it's an honor to die

In a war that's just a politician's lie

It's the American in me that makes me watch TV

See how they burn the SLA. They say…[followed by chorus]

The Avengers' choice of lyrics in this case would certainly serve the subversive purposes of punk rock; the SLA would be viewed in modern terms as a homegrown terrorist group and the chances of a song alluding to this group being played on mainstream radio would be close to nil. Punk rock at this time made a real effort to comment on mainstream society, while at the same time not participating in its power structures, which enabled many artists to write about American societal ills and the hypocrisy of the hero-worshipping mindset, especially in the case of John F. Kennedy.

In 1979, the British punk band Adam and the Ants released *Dirk Wears White Sox* on an independent British record label, Do It Records, which again fits within the criteria laid out by Dave Laing. For American audiences, the album featured a stylized cover of singer Adam Ant and a different track listing, which eliminated a controversial song about JFK, entitled "Catholic Day." Stylistically, this song inverts the traditional verse/chorus formula, and begins with a sample of "Hail to the Chief." Lyrically, the song starts out with what would seem like a lamentation, in which Adam Ant sings "Poor John F. / Kennedy died in '63," yet the song shifts in tone, illuminating issues American audiences may have found uncomfortable or disrespectful. In the first verse, Ant alludes to Kennedy's not-so-secret affair with Marilyn Monroe, then he discusses Kennedy's appeal with "middle aged ladies" because of his "sporty young hairstyle," emphasizing that people have a selective memory when public figures die before their time. In the second verse, Adam Ant alludes to Kennedy's use of "soft drugs" and "playing the space

race," placing emphasis on Kennedy's youthful appearance once again and reduces JFK's desire to place a man on the moon to little more than a child's game. In the same verse, a reference is made to "Levi's Sta-Prest," trousers Kennedy apparently wore, which, incidentally, were worn by punk rockers in the 1970s for their low-slung fit and "skinny" legs. The chorus at this point is altered, with Adam Ant offhandedly invoking the assassination itself, talking about Jackie Kennedy: "Poor Jackie-Kennedy's wife with his brain on her knee." Other sound bites of Kennedy speeches are sampled which discuss the great Republic, and Ant ironically sings "I see the chickens have come to roost" repeatedly, alluding not only to the idiomatic meaning of the phrase, but also to the Malcolm X speech where the Kennedy assassination was referred to as an example of "chickens coming home to roost." Ant then returns to the opening of the song, once again reducing the memory of Kennedy, selectively alternating between his popular, youthful image, and his understated sexual prowess. This song is not the only punk rock song that alludes to the relationship between Marilyn Monroe and John Kennedy, nor is it the only one that seems to feel that the assassination was imminent; there are songs that express outright hostility and ambivalence toward the fallen president and the assassination itself.

The Misfits released "Bullet" in 1978 as a seven-inch single on their own label, Plan 9 Records; the artwork on the cover of the album featured a smiling Kennedy waving from the limousine in the Dallas motorcade, with a red graphic representation of his brains being blown out over the black-and-white photo image. Before examining the song, it is important to note that Glenn Danzig, founding member and singer of The Misfits was a devoted Marilyn Monroe fan and chose to name the band after her final film, Arthur Miller's *The Misfits* (1961). On later Misfits compilation albums, Glenn Danzig's 1981 single "Who Killed Marilyn?" appears with the rest of the band's singles; the song emphasizes the singer's contempt for the Kennedy family

and accuses them of being involved with her untimely death. That said, the irreverence within "Bullet" has a clearer context. The basic three-chord structure of the song belies the deeper meaning behind the lyrics; however, the song starts out with the brutal images from the motorcade moments after Kennedy was shot:

> President's bullet-ridden body in the street
>
> Ride, Johnny ride
>
> Kennedy's shattered head hits concrete
>
> Ride, Johnny ride

Immediately, listeners are taken to the scene of the crime, to "the bullet-ridden body" whose fragmented skulls "hits [the] concrete." When Danzig sings, "[r]ide Johnny, ride," several things are happening at once: the "ride" continues in spite of the sudden death, implying that we are all on a "ride" we cannot simply exit at-will; secondly, the culturally shared image of the motorcade driving away from the scene of a national tragedy is invoked; lastly, an allusion to the 1966 Wilson Pickett single "Mustang Sally" is made. Interestingly, an examination of Pickett's lyrics here gives one pause and requires further examination. Within the song, Pickett's girl won't stop "riding her Mustang all over town," which creates an allusion within "Bullet" to Kennedy's running around with other women. In the bridge, Danzig refers to Texas metonymically, blaming the values the state embodies to outsiders for the death of the president and what will ultimately happen to Jackie O., if she wishes to seek redemption:

> Texas is an outrage when your husband is dead
>
> Texas is an outrage when they pick up his head
>
> Texas is the reason that the president's dead
>
> You gotta suck, suck, Jackie suck

At this point, Danzig's lyrics become sexually explicit when he refers to the former First Lady:

> Arise Jackie O, Jonathon of Kennedy
>
> Well, arise and be shot down
>
> The dirt's gonna be your dessert
>
> My cum be your life source
>
> And the only way to get it
>
> Is to suck or fuck
>
> Or be poor and devoid

"Jonathon of Kennedy" here refers to JFK's rise to knighthood in the fictional Camelot the Kennedy family will forever be associated with; only in death would this be possible. References to the "dirt…[and] desert" may have something to do with fertility myths, and the dead President must enter the dirt by being buried to enter the desert, a mystical place where one can receive revelations, which is a precursor to apotheosis, as in the case of Jesus Christ. For Jackie, she will not be able to so easily be redeemed. Instead, she will have to "suck or fuck" her way up, to eventually be called "Jackie O." The public will suck the life from the real memory, leaving the truth to be raped, and, therefore, mythologized. The Misfits manage to place all of this within a raggedly performed song that clocks in at one minute and thirty-seven seconds in length. Because of its limited release, public outcry was practically non-existent, and the song didn't reappear until a 1986 compilation of Misfits songs was released, three years after the original lineup disbanded.

Most, if not all, of these songs in one form or another are dependent upon the deification—the apotheosis, I proffer—of the fallen hero in John F. Kennedy, something that typifies America and the propagandistic tendency to appropriate tragic events and re-purpose

them for our own ends. In this sense, these songs achieve the end sought after by rebellion that Albert Camus posited: they seek to kill the God-like Kennedy and deflate the Kennedy Myth, while installing a new "religion" of sorts, typified by the Marxist punk rock ethos laid out by Dave Laing. The "trinity" of this ethos has been thoroughly reiterated throughout this analysis, but it is important to recognize these unifying principles of the songs and artists I have chosen to analyze. These artists subverted the larger record companies by releasing their own albums independently, some by creating their own record labels and embodying the "do-it-yourself" work ethic. The bands themselves weren't seeking a form of "artistic perfection;" rather, the members sought first substantive material and relayed the message by whatever artistic means they had at their disposal, usually with a few repetitive chords and a matter-of-fact, terse delivery of the lyrics. Finally, these bands embraced politically charged themes in order to create a discourse out of their seemingly destructive ways. Unfortunately, this same zeal for exposing the issues "warts and all" would be what ultimately make an argument for original punk rock's failure appear to be true, not just in the case of this argument, but as a larger social movement as well. There have been many who say punk died years ago, and have made compelling arguments to back up their claims. The alienation punk rock decried ultimately became an Achilles heel, as larger audiences never overcame the alienating effects of the aforementioned trinity of values—yet mainstream success never was the point. The music of the punk sub-culture ultimately became absorbed by popular culture in a streamlined version that hardly resembles its roots in early punk productions, becoming more of an expression of teen angst over a radical movement, but this doesn't mean that the punk consciousness has disappeared, it has merely returned to its home in the underground. Punk as a youth movement ultimately suffered the same fate as that of the hippie movement: it became co-opted, cleaned up, marketed, and

distributed for mass consumption, much like the myth of the Kennedy Camelot. Fortunately, even though Camus' assertion regarding rebellion at this chapter's outset may well be true, perhaps the annihilation of false idols was part of the collateral damage in the destruction of what became an empty movement.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, we have begun to see the ramifications of examining literature from various movements utilizing a framework that I have chosen to call the punk unconscious. Due to my own experiences with punk the subculture, I started to notice trends within literary and cultural output that mirrored the punk ethos, although seemingly in an unconscious, subterranean form. Understanding the thesis proffered in these pages requires the understanding of Fredric Jameson's theory of the political unconscious, which, most succinctly put, states that we cannot examine literature and art without understanding the key events surrounding its creation, as well as the subsequent reactions these texts create. Ultimately, these texts exist within an ever-expanding historical totality.

We cannot examine cultural texts without understanding their historical context, and employing the theories used in the preceding chapters is one way in which we can firmly arrive at this conclusion. Without laying bare the circumstances surrounding these creations, we lose sight of the continuum that exists just beneath the surface. In each case, the artist worked with what he or she had at his or her disposal, which is historical totality. The impositions of the modes of production and their subsequent economic relations dictate how artists react and what they create. If we return to our original metaphor, that of artists and writers as weavers, totality provides the raw material to create intricate tapestries of creative output, which are manifested in literature, art and music. These individuals are able to put an unconscious wish, an imaginary

solution to real contradictions in the world, out there for other individuals to interact with, and whether or not something changes is entirely up to the reception of the work and the modes of production. If what I have indicated in this thesis has any bearing, the wishes extended through the antagonistic act of creating counter narrative in the subversive works that were analyzed have in some cases been subsumed and left the work to those who are still poised to produce the next work that will alter historical totality. Though this is at first an unconscious process, as indicated by Jameson's theory of the political unconscious, artistic productions are in constant dialogue, as indicated by Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic imagination.

The punk unconscious is my offering to the field of scholarship at this point. I believe that writers, artists, and musicians that predated the original punk movement held ideals and ethics—a stance, if you will—that led them to create works of art that affected change on society and culture at-large. This stance sought to subvert systems of control within the current modes of production and transgressed acceptable boundaries in order to create a narrative that ran counter to the prevailing hegemonic discourse. There are many works that are yet to be identified, and I look forward to using the mode of analysis established in this thesis to do just that with my subsequent scholarship. What I also realized in the course of this process is that there comes a point where a shift occurs, and the unconscious act of creating counter narrative in order to make a statement about the current modes of production and the imbalance of power created by the ensuing economic relations ultimately can lead to a shift in consciousness that alters the course of production once it becomes deliberately antagonistic. In punk itself, which was examined very briefly for emphasis, this means a conscious choice is made to yell, scream, point fingers, and then return to where you are. I argue that punk was an important movement aesthetically, because the degree to which these works are hostile to the capitalist modes of

production and the human relations that come out of this phenomenon create conditions that make antagonistic texts possible. Once the importance of the movement has been established, there are ways of reading cultural texts that help us to identify the precursors as well as the legacies that exist in relation to this movement. This approach in itself transgresses boundaries, because systems of control are placed aside momentarily, and the creation can speak outside of these systems and be seen as its own entity once placed in the context of historical totality. The raw material is spun into what is most desired, and then promptly return to the fabric of totality, which is forever altered, because the heteroglossia of reactions to this product will continue to develop until the cultural text ceases to exist. In punk cultural texts, the significance multiplies because the actors in the process found agency in circumventing the modes of production and creating new space within which their work was produced and distributed. It no longer mattered whether or not it was popular, but whether or not it was undefiled by late capitalist interests.

Ultimately, these antagonistic acts, too, are subsumed and new boundaries are breached by the transcendent qualities of the narrative in all of its various forms, for each kind of cultural production is ultimately a text that can be read and is imbued with all of the same characteristics laid out before you through the course of this examination. By focusing on the larger picture of the totality and then finding those small, unifying threads, we can pull events in history up to the surface for a closer analysis, and then stitch them in place with the threads we have identified. Each new narrative introduced to the totality interacts with society and will be shunned, subsumed, or ignored; perhaps through its life, it will encounter all three. The continuum of influence reverberates through totality, but like a musical note creates a sound or light wave that continues to travel indefinitely.

Unlike the political unconscious, the punk unconscious tends to be even more antagonistic in its use of key events and tropes for the purposes of subverting the hegemonic narrative. Once a manner of dealing with the object of societal anger has been exhausted, another is immediately ready to be used to continue the fight against inequality, and the Utopic wish implied by artistic creation is once again renewed. The good fight never stops, and, as angry as the punks may seem, most really wish the world was a nicer and more just place. The stark language and doubt is replaced with something different, but the intention is the same: to create another counter-narrative once the previous, solvent mode has been subsumed. Transgressive literature and other cultural productions must continue pushing the envelope to keep these conversations going, in all of their incarnations. Once something doesn't push individuals far enough, something else must be ready to go farther and longer, but the result will continue to be the same until the modes of production, and, consequently, economic relations, are altered to the point that the system no longer requires subversion because it is solvent. Until that day, it will continue to evolve in the same cyclical fashion: transgress boundaries, effect change, and subsumption. The goal of transgressive productions is to jar individuals out of their complacency and to reconsider what they accept as truth, or what it is that they value. This can be witnessed in various forms of cultural production by paying attention to the subterranean details.

Near the end of this project, I had an epiphany. Everything I read was indicating that I was on the right track, as long as I followed my thought processes through to their conclusions, as I set out to do in the summer of 2013. The process was arduous and lengthy, but I knew that I had to work harder on explicating the connections between what I have been referring to as the punk unconscious. We have come to the conclusion, through the course of this thesis, that the

punk unconscious is something that existed before the overt punk consciousness that gradually took hold in the 1970s and 1980s. Although this consciousness is not as pronounced as it once was, it is still extant, and manifests itself in various form in ways that the creators of these productions likely don't realize. The cycle continues and the effects of the original movement are still being felt; further study will likely yield many more instances of this unconscious since the initial, overt consciousness permeated society in its purest form. Unlike the Kennedy songs, which directly challenge systems of control, these are subtler, and can be teased out in various forms through the time periods examined in this thesis and beyond, in both directions historically. The punk unconscious likely lies before the Lost Generation and remains subterranean for those who were unaffected by the movement that shifted into punk consciousness. If we continue to look within and without during different periods and their respective cultural productions, the threads I have indicated in the preceding pages will be identified, and this is my goal in regard to a longer work on the subject. Eventually, I think creating an anthology of punk literature would be an exciting and challenging project, especially the works that were written with the punk consciousness engaged, as it has been defined and elucidated in these pages.

When I began this journey, I didn't think my ideas regarding the punk essence that belies certain cultural production was something that would be appreciated, and I also worried that after all the work I had done, that nothing would come of the process. I am happy to say that I was wrong. In the final weeks leading up to the completion of this stage of the larger project, I had the pleasure of visiting two musical cities with long histories of subversive artistic output: New Orleans and Austin. While in Austin, I visited two of my favorite places on the planet: Waterloo

Records and Bookpeople. At each place, I found materials that inspired me and pushed me forward in the final stages of this long process of writing and revision.

At Waterloo Records, I went in with a spending limit and a goal to work on broadening my record collection—truth be told, I wasn't in the mood for anything punk after spending the last several months finding avenues and alleyways in my research that got me quite sidetracked at times. Something, however, pulled me toward the punk seven-inch records and there I found an original pressing of the Misfits "Bullet" single—the same song analyzed extensively in Chapter 4. Nearly forty years old, it was an excellent find as a collector and fan, but the transgressive packaging and content was compelling when encountered in its original format, even if the context is far-removed. The packaging is simply a piece of folded cardboard, absent are signs of commercial interference like barcodes or even pricing information. The graphics employed a silkscreen-style picture of JFK just moments before he was shot, smiling and waving from the back seat of the convertible. Red graphic additions were made to exaggerate and foretell what would happen in the next few moments that would alter the consciousness of our country yet another time. The red vinyl record had no markings, not even which side was which, and I learned later, when I was able to play the record, that these were the first four songs released by the quartet on what would ultimately become the *Static Age* album, another item in my collection. Knowing that this was the initial impression that the Misfits sought to project was jarring, and realizing the magnitude of this was something I would like more people to understand through the course of my scholarship. These things did not happen in isolation, without influence or provocation. These cultural texts each have their own significance that can be laid bare, if the appropriate parameters are established. This encounter with the record was a very real example of how the social reactions to artistic creations change over time. I bought the

record without having the briefest conversation about its significance. In its day, it would have indeed been quite different—only those on the fringes of society would have purchased the album, and hardly anyone would have had it because there weren't many printed. As much as I love the Misfits to this day, I cannot recapture the way I felt when I first heard them, no matter how hard I try. For a fleeting moment, I almost had it. Once the transaction was completed, I walked across the street to Bookpeople.

Bookpeople has always drawn me in—it is, in itself, an example of the punk unconscious, as is Waterloo Records. In spite of the pressures imposed by economic relations in the current modes of production, the doors to these iconic businesses remain open for the time being, in spite of the fact that stores like them have died a thousand deaths all over the country. As I walked through the stacks and perused the shelves, I went to the section were literary journals are kept, and I was pleasantly surprised to find the latest Cometbus installment, *A Bestiary of Booksellers*¸among the choices. A long time zine producer, Aaron Cometbus' punk pedigree makes him one of the most well-known and recognizable writers of the genre. Since the zine's inception in 1981, when Aaron was 13 years old, the author has released nearly sixty independently-produced releases. This particular installment departed with the punk content of some of the previous installments in the Cometbus collection, but it was an interesting tale nonetheless whose characters were key players in the New York City used book trade. Although his work is no longer overtly punk, Aaron Cometbus cannot produce work without engaging the punk unconscious. Throughout the story's pages, I came across lots of the same names and allusions to much of the material that I have been reading for the last year. It felt good to understand what was going on for a change, and, finally, to feel like I've begun to contribute something to the conversation as well.

These days, vestiges of the punk movement can be found in places their creators never would have imagined. Barnes and Noble now sells *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*; transgressive literature is marketed as such—Chuck Palahniuk and George Saunders are best-selling authors who receive critical acclaim and awards for trying their hardest to tear people from their comfort zones and into alternative realities. Palahniuk, whose seminal novel, *Fight Club*, came out the same year as Richard Hell's *Go Now*, is in the process of revealing a sequel to the work nearly nineteen years later, in the form of a serially released comic book that will later be published as a graphic novel. This is yet another instance of how the punk unconscious and even punk consciousness could be potentially employed to read these new texts and the circumstances surrounding their creation and publication.

This project started because I thought this work was important, and I still do. The initial lack of confidence that I felt has shifted into a certainty that I will continue analyzing literature and looking for further connections to continue unifying and refining the results and conclusions I have arrived at thus far. Employing the theories and methods outlined in the preceding pages will produce interesting results and I look forward to seeing what other things lie just below the surface as I continue to identify fragmented portions of the totality that are connected in some way. By viewing these cultural texts from a distance, and then focusing upon certain key attributes, I'm sure that the list will continue to grow regarding works that fall into the continuum between the punk unconscious and punk consciousness.

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