THE PUNK-ROCK BRONTÉS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty at The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in English Literature

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May, 2017
"THE PUNK-ROCK BRONTÉS"

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Arthur Bishop Jr.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would personally like to thank Dr. Heather Braun, Dr. Joseph Ceccio, and Dr. Hillary Nunn for their time and dedication in the blossoming of this project. I also wish to thank David Giffels, Robert Pope, and Penny Rimbaud, as they served either as inspiration or as a guide for the development of this thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

When I originally came up with the idea for my thesis, it felt something like a lark. I was speaking to Dr. Nunn, attempting to pitch ideas for what it is I could write about for seventy-five to a hundred pages. As we talked, the only thing that would come to my mind would be the band Crass. In my youth, Crass served as the exemplar of what Punk-Rock had the potential to be: they were loud, aggressive, and spoke of freedom from religion and government. They taught me the passion of individualism; to question the ideals of the world around me. I was seventeen when I first heard the song “Do they Owe us a Living?” from their album *The Feeding of the 5000*, and I was blown away by the loud guitars, and shocking vocals:

- Fuck the politically minded
- Here’s something I want to say
- About the state of the nation
- And the way they treat us today
- At school they give you shit - drop you in a pit
- You try and try and try and get out
- But you can’t because they’ve fucked you about (Crass 1-7)

The singer’s voice was cranky and strained, and his thick cockney accent was piercing to my ears. The lyrics naturally resonated with my rebellious teenage
youth, and I was never the same. I told Dr. Nunn about the band, and she responded with, “well you can write about that all you want, but I’m not sure what that has to do with English Literature.”

It was a tough question, though one that now demanded an answer. While I was aware that several members of the band had composed books, and their lyrics certainly contained elements of poetry, I didn’t think that any of it would be accepted as being part of “the literary canon.” Dr. Nunn and I explored the idea some more, and agreed that I would have to find a writer(s) that I could potentially relate to the band Crass. As we discussed authors, it struck me that the current class I was taking, the Brontës, might just be the key ingredient to my seemingly absurd idea.

What interested me most about working Crass and the Brontës together was their interests in self-expression and identity. Both camps seemed to offer expressions of themselves that revealed a fierce independence; a will ungoverned by authority figures or society. The ideals expressed both by Crass and the Brontës not only helped shape my own ideas, but, and this is especially true of Emily Brontë, helped open my perceptions and notions toward what it is that defines an individual. It was the poetry of Emily that had the largest impact on me. The poem “No Coward Soul is Mine” resonated with me in the same way “Do They Owe Us a Living” had so many moons ago.

It was also during this time that I lived at what was known as the Bittman Beef House, which would soon become a motivating factor in my exploration into Crass and the Brontës. It was dilapidated and rundown, the walls literally flexing
from the weight of the roof, and the carpet was torn up. But I didn’t have to sign a lease, and my landlord collected the rent whenever I felt it was convenient for me to pay. Located across from the Glendale Cemetery, the house was spacious enough for four to live just comfortably enough for us all to not hate each other. My residency at the Beef House was so long that I eventually earned the space in the attic, a reward in thanks for the room’s ability to appear it was large enough to be two rooms.

During this time, my roommates and I also played in several Punk bands, and with enough time, they all began to practice at the Beef House. Before long, almost every night had at least one band ringing their song through the streets of Akron. We made sure to abide by the city guidelines of no loud sounds after eleven, though we were usually courteous enough to be done by nine. The neighbors rarely complained; if anything the neighborhood children would stand outside our fence, gazing into a world they were too young to witness. People walking by would often stop and talk to us in-between breaks from songs, and would usually pass us a compliment or two, one time in the form of offering each of us a sip from his malt liquor.

Before long we started throwing house shows. We cleaned out our dining room, dragged the P.A. up from the basement, and invited over friends and people from the neighborhood to watch bands from all over the country play where we would eat our dinner. We had a Folk-Punk band from New Orleans with a cello and keyboard player exciting kids into tearing the posters from our walls. A band from Las Vegas threw the audience in such a frenzy that they tore
the fan from our ceiling, an act that ended up being bittersweet, as the band wrote their tearful goodbye on one of the fan’s blades. It wasn’t until we realized that the living room could not support twenty people jumping on it that we had to shut the whole thing down. We could still practice in the basement, but watching the floor bow during a show made us all feel uneasy.

What this experience had taught me was the importance of art and expression, a time that I will look back on fondly. The actions of the Bittman Beef house were largely inspired by the ethos of Crass, and in their own way, the Brontës. As Crass had Dial House, and the Brontës had the Parsonage, I had found my own place to explore my art. The Brontës and Crass used their homes as a way to explore their art, and I in turn had done the same. The Bittman Beef House brought people together to experience the joy of music, the art of expression. People from all over Akron came together to celebrate life, to reel in the joys and experience of a life spent submersed in art. From these times, works of art were penned and begotten into the world, a small impact that helps reverberate through a thriving city. After living for so long within my own art space, the idea of exploring the art spaces of those I adored seemed intriguing to me. I once again found myself speaking to Dr. Nunn on the subject.

Dr. Nunn liked the idea because it seemed so strange, and originally I had but one thread to connect the band to the group of Gothic writers; and that was through the rebellion of the strange and diabolical Heathcliff Earnshaw, the entirely doomed anti-hero of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. I was aware that the man was conflicted and tormented, and convinced myself that a man so
wrapped in his inner-turmoil was also someone that questioned authority in the same way Crass had been doing. At the suggestion of Dr. Nunn, I took the idea to Dr. Heather Braun, who specialized in the Brontës, and also consulted David Giffels, who was both familiar with the band Crass, and on writing a convincing narrative.

David recommended that I attempt to contact the members of Crass, and ask if any of them would be willing to talk about either their band or the works of the Brontës. It seemed like a long shot—almost futile; did any of them even have the internet?—but I was willing to give it a try. A quick Google search linked me to the band’s original record company, Southern Studios, and I contacted the label asking if any of them would be able to help me get in touch with the band. Around a week later, I had already forgotten that I had requested to speak to anyone, yet found a response in my email stating that Penny Rimbaud, the drummer for and founding member of the band, had taken an interest in my work, and would contact me “should the mood strike him.”

The next day he emailed me, and much to my complete shock, was all the more willing to speak to me on the subject of the Brontës. Penny informed me that *Wuthering Heights* was one of his favorite books, and served as more than an inspiration within his own writing. By this point, things were glowing all the more surreal for me, and I was dumb-founded that a man who had inspired me so much in my youth was willing to talk to me about works that were currently inspiring me. I emailed him an emphatic response, doing my best not to seem so eager to speak to him. I asked when we would be able to talk, and then waited.
A few days later, he contacted me again. He informed me that he was to be in New York City in the coming months, and if there was any way I would be able to meet him there. Knowing he still lived at Dial House in the United Kingdom, I felt like I had entirely died and entered a vague form of Heaven. While the elation lasted quite awhile, it would be cut short not a month later, when he informed that his trip was unfortunately cancelled.

Not being deterred by the news, we finally agreed on a date in which the two of us could speak over the phone. This news excited but scared me, and come the big day the interview was an odd success. We spoke of Emily Brontë, her work and who she was. Penny spoke of the passion one feels within the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine, and how their radical views toward passion were so uniquely individual that it spoke so greatly to him personally. Thus, I thank Penny Rimbaud not just for allowing the time to personally speak with him, but for helping start one of the most revolutionary Punk-Rock bands: Crass.

_Crass by Name, Crass by Nature_ is a title of one of Crass’ longer written pieces, and who else but Crass indeed? The singer could barely sing, the drummer played militant snare rolls, and one of the guitar players didn’t even know how to play the guitar (instead of using guitar chords, he would palm the entire neck of the instrument and slide his hand up and down it, creating a guitar sound that was almost percussive, and entirely noisy). While certainly not the inventors of Punk music, their influence is without question considerable. The band is largely responsible for the “Do-it-Yourself” movement: an approach to
music that brought about a revolution of sorts to everyone that ever wanted to start their own band, but was afraid that they would never be accepted by the mainstream media.

At the same time, the members that made up Crass: Penny Rimbaud on drums, Steve Ignorant on vocals, N.A. (Andy) Palmer and Phil Free on guitars, Pete Wright on Bass, and Eve Libertine and Joy De Vivre on backing vocals served as the primary members of the band, but would also be accompanied by artists such as Gee Vaucher and Mick Duffield. Vaucher and Duffield’s responsibilities were to provide a visual element to the band, and Crass was capable of expanding outside the world of music, allowing physical art to accompany them on stage as they performed their rallying cries. Photographs of the band on stage, surrounded by propaganda toward anarchy and peace showed an experience that was as political as it was musical.

In an article for *Consequence of Sound*, Journalist Sam Lefebvre would speak fondly of Crass, saying “Crass’ activities as an art collective, political pranksters, record label, and group of roommates living communally outside London at Dial House reflected the venom for authority, militarism, and consumerism asserted in lyrics and artwork” (Lefebvre). In an article for *The Guardian Blog*, critic John Robb would have this to say:

Crass took Lennon’s (occasional) idealism and ran with it further than any other group. Between 1977 and 1984, Crass released a series of records that challenged the status quo and defined the meaning of the words “rock revolution.” No group has come close to their fierce idealism.
Let’s face it, no other group could be bothered to put up with the constant police harassment or the poverty. (Robb)

Indeed Crass is largely one of the more revolutionary groups in Punk music, which is why they seem to pair so well with the Brontës and their respective creative works. Just as Crass had brought about a revolution within music, the Brontës would bring about a revolution of sorts within the literary world. They would help introduce and popularize the character that is the anti-hero, as well as pen some of the most wonderful and powerful prose within Western Literature. While it is Emily Brontë that has the most connections to Crass: her questioning of religious authority, the passion not just for her art, but her explorations into passion in and of itself, Anne and Charlotte need mentioning as well. The three sisters were exemplary both in their ability to craft, as well as their possessions of intelligence, creativity, and wit. Their Gothic works helped shake the governed social roles expected of women during the Victorian period, and their strangely wondrous upbringing within the walls of the Haworth Parsonage are unique to them as well.

In an article for The Atlantic entitled “The Brontës’ Secret,” author Judith Shulvitz observed that it was around 2001 when the world first experienced a resurgence of “Brontëmania.” Several biographies about the three women were penned, including Claire Harman’s Charlotte Brontë: A Fiery Life. Additionally, a rush of new works authored by fans spring to life, such as a fan-inspired “auto-biography” of Nelly Dean, survivor of Heathcliff and Catherine’s love affair from Wuthering Heights. What makes Shulvitz’s article so interesting is that she
questions just what it is that makes the Brontës so fascinating, and pulls from Hebrew ancestry to find a word that adequately explains them: “midrash,” or as she defines it, “the spinning of gloriously weird backstories or fairy tales prompted by gaps or contradictions in the narrative” (Shulvitz); and certainly there are few words that would better describe the Brontës.

Perhaps it is the untimely death of every Brontë sibling—not a single one of them made it into their forties—and their father Patrick Brontë would outlive all of them, much of their backstory is as confusing and bone-chilling as the works they produced. Shulvitz admits she is entirely baffled as to how two women almost entirely shut off from the world were capable of producing some of the world’s most phenomenal literature, and this question is highly motivational in the development of this thesis. The focus of the work contained herein will argue that it is through their isolation and unique upbringing that such extraordinary works were produced, and it is through the lens of Crass and their Punk-Rock ethos that this information will be supported. It is through their isolation that the Brontës were in fact able to craft something beautiful, that they were able to wake their pain into a work of beauty that withstand the test of time.

Bearing that in mind, the source most adequate to be used for the Brontë children will stem from author Juliet Barker, who, along with being a Brontë historian, served time managing the Haworth Parsonage. Barker has written several biographies on the Brontës, including The Brontës: a Life in Letters, The Brontë Yearbook, and one focusing on Charlotte, Charlotte Brontë Juvenilia: 1829-1835. Barker’s clear and concise narrative into the history of the Brontës
serves as the exemplar for this work, as it is her relentless pursuit into the family’s history that is both enriching to the Brontë work, and enlightening to this project.

The intent of this work then will be to explore the “Punk-Spirit,” and how it is present through both the works of the Brontës and Crass. The decision to reference this idea as a spirit blossomed from the works of the Brontës, while also serving as an aide as the work attempts to draw parallels between the two distinct acts. Within the characteristics of this spirit are several qualities that both Crass and the Brontës share: passion for individualism, a striving toward self-expression and identity, and a willingness to question and rebel against those that may challenge or create ideals contrary to the Punk-Spirit.

With memories of a gothic past, the “Punk-Spirit” enters the home to welcome its guests. The first exploration then will concern itself with domestic space. It is here where comparisons between Crass and the Brontës can begin to emerge, as well as help serve as an argument for the importance of an artist space within a community. By looking at where an artist resides, one can gain a sense of how the artist’s work may have flourished, as well as gain an understanding of the artist’s background. In this sense, it will be the spirit entering the house, haunting the world around them in order to find the essence of their inner-selves.

Situated in Essex, Dial House was the home for many years to Crass. From inside the cottage walls sprang forth a variety of arts; from music, painting, poetry, and spoken-word, to sound and video collage and even street graffiti.
What is important to take away from Dial House is that it was brought together through a passion toward their aesthetic and individual ideals. Dial House served as an opportunity to peel oneself away from society; a peaceful byproduct of the “tune-in, drop-out” ethos of the Hippie sixties. Similarly, there was a residue of a similar idea taking form hundreds of miles away and a hundred years before, at the Brontë’s Haworth Parsonage.

The setting of *Wuthering Heights* was largely inspired by the swampy moors that surrounded the Parsonage: cold, windy, certainly dreary. The Parsonage became the home for Patrick Brontë and his children. Straddled aside a cemetery, the Parsonage would serve as an inspiration not just for setting, but house the family in a uniquely isolated way, and it would be from this isolation that passion and creativity sprang forth. While the three girls would spend much time away from Haworth, throughout their lives the home would be their ideal place to be. As children, they would compose incredibly tiny books that they would stitch together themselves, and the home was also where they crafted much of their work that we are familiar with today. Imagining them working together, conjuring ideas, and plotting out their world of Gondal, it is easy to make the connection to Crass. Both groups would work in harmony inside their homes to produce content that had personal meaning to them; the home would be their way of encouraging each other, and themselves.

The spirit enters the home, and begins to look at those that reside in it. Hence, the exploration into the individual will be necessary, with the intent being to gain a sense of what may have inspired the artists, as well as gain a sense of
what identity may mean to each sect. Exploring the individual in this way not only helps serve for a better understanding of the personal dynamics within the people that compose Crass and the Brontë family, but also helps maintain a connection between the two camps. Returning to the spirit, the spirit here is representative of the individual members; belonging to none, yet residing in all. It will be the individual spirit that flourishes from the minds of each sect, and the thoughts and ideas present in their work will coalesce into one specific essence.

Within the individual, it was Crass and their Do-it-Yourself approach to all aspects of music, art, and personal freedom that set themselves apart from other Punk bands. Together, Crass strove to sonically challenge the musical and social paradigms attributed to Punk-Rock in the seventies, and their creative attitudes are still ruminating through music today. Their iconic logo now ironically appears on seventeen-hundred dollar Punk jackets designed by high-end fashionistas; their inspiration as musicians can be heard in Punk bands today. Technically, almost any band that spray paints their name onto a subway station or brick-wall owes at least a small thanks to Crass.

The Brontës certainly had a Do-it-Yourself attitude, though it was mainly in personal strife; moments of isolation harnessed into their personal spirit and art. While they would not build their own record label, they fashioned their own books—literally by hand—and created worlds untypical of a teenage imagination. The world of Gondal that was penned by the girls served as the nucleus for the world of the Brontës known today, and these works have a cast that touches on the passionate spirit; characters that invoke emotions that ring true to all of those
that pull through the pages of the three sisters. Using the Brontës in this way also helps bring Crass into the literary world; to give a band that wrote and created so much a chance to be heard by those who may be all too willing to pass them by.

Establishing the inspiration and ideas behind the individuals within each camp, it is then necessary to look closely at the established work of Crass and the Brontës. “Reality Asylum” will serve as the work of focus for Crass, as it contains almost all of the necessary elements of a typical Crass song: strong reservations toward government and religious authority, as well as a strong intent toward individual freedoms and liberty. While the nature of the poem itself is violent and anti-authoritarian, Crass also had a quirky habit of rebelling in other ways. The importance of rebellion is that it flows through both Crass and the Brontës, as the sisters would constantly find themselves struggling against their own family and social expectations, as well as the authority of religion.

While ideally it would be the intent to explore each of the Brontë’s work separately, focus will rely primarily on Emily’s poetry. It is within her verse that the most alluring and beautiful arguments emerge, and her ideas are parallel of the philosophy of Crass. While examples from Charlotte and Anne will make their way into this work, focusing on Emily helps keep particular ideas anchored, as well as serving as the best representative of the whole. It is here that the spirit will maintain its primary essence, manifesting itself as the ideas and morals of the separate camps.

While it may seems strange at first to pair the Brontës with a Punk band, the result is something that is intriguing and fascinating. While there is no attempt
at uncovering something previously undiscovered about the Brontës, it is thinking of them through the lens of Crass and Punk-Rock that separates this work from those that have written on them. Similarly, the impact Crass has had on the world of music is not something should be lost to antiquity. Their work when compared alongside the Brontës not only rediscovers them in a new light, but reinforces the idea that their music and work has a unique and peculiar place in the literary world.
CHAPTER ONE: DOMESTIC SPACE

As an artist creates bodies of work, a space is required for this creation to flourish. What Crass and the Brontës share in common is that they both resided in house with similar parameters. Crass and Dial House located in Essex, the Brontës and the Haworth Parsonage located in West Yorshire. It would be these locations where the two collections of artists would gather and nurture their work. The Parsonage would be where Emily penned *Wuthering Heights*, and the famous scene within Part I, Chapter III where Lockwood finds himself in the presence of what he believes to be a spirit:

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, “Let me in!” and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear. (Brontë 25).

Lockwood informs Heathcliff of the apparition, and Heathcliff becomes convinced that it is the spirit of his dead lover, Catherine Linton. Just as the apparition attempted to enter Lockwood’s dwelling, so too will this chapter enter the homes of Crass and the Brontës. The primary focus of this chapter will be to explore ‘space’ through the lives of both Crass and the Brontës: from the physical
domestic spaces in which they resided, to the metaphysical spaces in which the
characters created by the artists for their characters to exist. For the Brontës, it
will be the Haworth Parsonage that will be their primary residence. For the band
Crass, it will be Dial House. It is important to start the exploration into these two
camps at the domicile, for it will serve not just as an inspiration for the two
parties, but it will be where much of their imagination and writing stems from.

The physical space in which an artist resides is important for two reasons.
The first is that it allows the artists themselves to have a place in which they may
develop and invite ideas. A home is important not just for everyone, but serves
as a place for an artist to nurture their ideas in tranquility. For Crass, Dial House
served as a retreat away from the hustle and bustle that was the sixties and
seventies era of Punk-Rock. For the Brontës, especially Emily, it would serve as
their anchor for personal refuge. Even in moments of great personal tragedy, the
Brontës would use the Haworth Parsonage as an escape from the often harsh
realities around them.

The second point is that an artist space allows people outside of the space
to become welcomed into the lives of the artist. This will be true physically, for
Crass, as their home acted as both an art space and commune, allowing those
outside of their camp to come and work at the house in exchange for an
opportunity to live there. For the Brontës, their influence will be more
predominant in the space of their work. Topology is referenced, because
exploring the work of Crass and the Brontë’s involves a thread that goes through
both reality and fiction: the worlds Crass and the Brontë’s created are familiar to
our own, yet have been shaped by various ideas and consequences that makes them unique, and at times, otherworldly. At times, these two worlds will seemingly blend, changing the states of these homes, while leaving their original space intact.

Consider a domestic space. A place for an individual to stow themselves away from the world. Often one considers this area to be where they may beget children, and start their own life. Culled from the ideology of American nostalgia from the fifties, the typical nuclear family and their two-point-five kids; the two car garage with the Ford fresh from the assembly line. While this ideal still has a certain amount of intrinsic value, it is an attempt of this chapter to explore the home as a place for one to begin exploring things that are off-kilter and untypical from the norm. The idea that the home can become greater than the individuals that reside in it. A home is capable of touching the lives of others, as well as a place to invite new ideas and spark unseen creations.

A place for an artist to reside benefits them not just with a room to lay their head, but allows them a space that they are able to call their own. A home allows an artist to pull away from the world around; to isolate themselves from the noise surrounding them; and allows the artist to germinate and flourish their creative work. For the Brontës, their home at the Haworth Parsonage would be the focal point of their lives. Many of their greatest works will become influenced from their home, as well as their time at school. Haworth will serve as an area of isolation; polarized emotions will spring forth from suffering great loss of family. This loss will often become a dark inspiration for works of beauty. For Crass, their home
would be a welcoming beacon for the creative spirit. Crass would treat Dial House, as a space for their own work to propagate and spring; inviting others to join them in their exploration for freedom and creativity.

Establishing a framework of a domestic home as an art space is largely inspired by author Gaston Bachelard, who wrote extensively on the subject within his work *Poetics of Space*. Bachelard defends the importance of a home, stating, “the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace” (6). The importance of a home for the artist is crucial, as the home is a space where the artist is free to dream and explore, to develop and nurture their ideas and their own physical well-being.

Ironically, Haworth would not entirely be a ‘safe’ space for the Brontë sisters: women who seem to carry bad luck and death on their very backs, as they would suffer innumerable loss within their home. While death is seldom a friend to everyone, this was especially true for the Brontë family. Father Patrick would experience the tragedy of out-living all of his begotten children, and the Brontë sisters will experience the tragedy of living a shortened life, while at the same time suffer the loss of their mother and their two sisters as well. While death is indeed tragic, there is the budding optimism that the surviving sisters were able to cull such beautiful works of art from their pain.

As Dial House acted as the central hub for their ideas and art, it would be the sound-stage in which Crass would help spread their message. During the infancy of the group, the stage shows would be entirely radical. One of their first and most infamous gigs involved a nightclub called the Roxy, of which their song
“Banned from the Roxy” took its name. Halfway through their set, the electric was cut from the stage, and the band was left standing in their own silence. The band’s response was to remain on stage until the power came back on, and they finished their set with blanket anonymity. Their frustration came through not just from the silence of their quiet protest, rather, this frustration would inspire them to spread their ideas further. The stage would become a second home for the band, as they continued to declare a peaceful war against government and religion.

What both the Haworth parsonage and Dial house have in common is that they serve as the primary location for both Crass and the Brontës, it would be from these domestic spaces that the artists worked, where their ideas began to flourish and grow. Where these spaces would differ is that whereas Crass would flourish from the liveliness that is a communal space; gaining inspiration from those that entered and exited the Dial House, as well as pulling from the well of inspiration from themselves and those that lived there. The Brontës would gather much of their influence from the death that surrounded them.

Haworth and the Brontës

Speaking briefly of the town of Haworth, a town the Brontës had moved to from Thornton in April 1820, the city itself invited some peculiar elements to the Brontë influence. The house being given to Patrick by the trustees of the Church, author Juliet Haworth describes Haworth as being flushed with the greenery of the moors, and boasts of the seemingly infinite hills that the moors provides.
Barker observes that the fall season in September brings about a “purple bloom of the heather and the air is heavy with its scent, the predominant colours of the landscape are an infinite variety of subtle shades of brown, green, and grey” (107). The sky is rarely a complete blue in Haworth; rather, Barker describes a sky splashed with pools of clouds that swirl with a variety of colors, as the the great wind of the town constantly shapes them from above. Barker states, “there is always a wind at Haworth; the days in the year when it is still are so exceptional as to cause comment” (107).

While it may be fun to imagine the Brontë’s living in the fantastic nostalgia that many seem to romanticize of the Victorian period, Barker reminds the audience of a Haworth that lacks many of today’s sciences and engineering. Barker observes that sewers and covered drains did not make their way to Haworth until as late as 1850. The water supply was also of poor quality, as only seven of the eleven water wells were operational, and a hundred-fifty of the town’s inhabitants were reliant on the main well. Fortunately for Patrick and his daughters, they would have their own water supply, though Juliet Barker observes that the water was sometimes so putrid, “even the cattle refused to drink it” (110). With conditions such as these, it is curious if their situation did not have a role in the early termination of the Brontë family; the lackluster quality of the water no doubt playing some role in their declining health throughout the years.

It is no surprise that a small town would lack many of the sophistications that a larger town would possess; to say that the Parsonage lacked any sort of
aesthetic novelty would be insufficient. Though Barker observes that today’s parsonage has grown hints of suburbia around its once plentiful flourishes of the familiar hills of the moors, carparks and housing have taken over the surroundings the Brontës would have recognized. Across from the parsonage was a cemetery that laid over 44,000 individuals to rest, though Barker observes that this would not be in direct view of the Parsonage; instead, the sweeping hills of the Yorkshire Dales would have been a more familiar site (113). Even with the cemetery not in full view, it would serve as a familiar backdrop, a reminder of the death that was ever present within the family.

One of their earliest biographers, and personal friend of the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell had her own opinions on the town of Haworth. In her work, *Charlotte Brontë*, Gaskell covers not only her relationship with her friend, but provides details of the world around her and her sisters. Concerning the people who resided in the town, Gaskell had her own interesting perspective, stating that they possessed “an air of independence rather apt to repel a stranger” (11), a quote that seems eerily familiar to the often cold-hearted male protagonists of the Brontë novels, specifically, the notorious Heathcliff Earnshaw. This fierce individualism will be expanded within following chapters, in particular the poem “No Coward Soul is Mine” by Emily, yet even before the Brontës entered the world did it seem as if the spirit of their creations were already in their primordial stages. Gaskell credits the mountain air surrounding Haworth for the peculiar independence the city-dwellers have, and generalizes the population solely into
the character in *Wuthering Heights* known as ‘Joseph.’ The strict desire for individualism plays in harmony with the ethos of Crass and the Punk-Rock spirit.

While Gaskell’s tendency to generalize an entire group of people seems trite to a modern reader, it is through these generalizations that the personality born within the Brontës begins to show its germinating beginnings. Gaskell’s summary extends not just to what would be present time, but takes the reader back a couple of generations. Characteristics of Heathcliff and Mr. Edward Rochester begin to emerge in Gaskell’s images of The West Riding men, a group Charlotte spoke of at least once to Gaskell. Gaskell describes the men in this way: “They are not emotional, they are not easily made into friends or enemies; but once lovers or haters, it is difficult to change their feeling. They are a powerful race both in mind and body, both for good and for evil” (12).

The West Riding men would not just describe characters from the Brontë novels, but would at least partially ring true concerning the Brontë’s character overall. As the West Riding men began to lose their ability to trade, in part due to a restriction of English-dried cloth put in place by James I, Gaskell explains it is because of the men’s “independence of character, their dislike of authority, and their strong powers of thought” (13) that the group began to fade. Within this short passage one can begin to see the heart of the Brontës begin to emerge. Certainly the love of independence, the questioning of authority, and strong intellect, are all characteristics possessed at least partially by members of the Brontë family. As shown within the chapter concerning individualism, Patrick will
display his own sense of rogue parenting, and it is without question that Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Bramwell all possessed a superb intellect.

It is easy to imagine the Brontë’s as a group who submitted themselves fully to personal isolation; the lack of a full account of Emily’s life certainly aids this, but it does not provide a full representation that is the Brontës. There were plenty of shoppes and things to do in Haworth, and Elizabeth Gaskell took note that the city contained enough supplies for “the humbler and everyday wants; but for medical advice, for stationary, books, law, dress, or dainties, the inhabitants had to go to Keighley” (33). Gaskell argues that the Brontës, especially Reverend Patrick, were unlikely to fully engage with the town’s inhabitants, noting that while Patrick and Charlotte would visit the sick, they would keep their visits impersonal in order to keep others from prying into their own lives.

The parsonage itself was erected in 1779, and Juliet Barker praises the home for its simple design, as well as a certain symmetrical qualities the building itself possesses. Concerning the rooms in the house, with the main floor of the house containing two large spaces, one being a family dining room, the other being Patrick’s study. There is a storage room behind the dining room, and the kitchen was behind Patrick’s study. Upstairs, there is two large rooms, followed by two smaller rooms. One of the smaller rooms would serve as the ‘study room’ of sorts for the Brontë children. It would be from this room that the siblings would begin their passion for writing. In their early years, they would stage plays from their room, one of which Charlotte would keep record of in great detail.
While the Brontë’s may have been surrounded by the horror of their family perishing, their ability to draw lively creations from tragedy were unparalleled. Even in their youth as they invented plays, they began to create their own imaginative world known as Gondal. Written within their own handcrafted ‘tiny-books,’ the Brontës would spawn their own world, one which helped them escape from many of the horrors around them, including the pain of losing loved ones, the anxiety of blossoming from adolescents into adults, and the awkwardness of hastily entering and exiting several different schools.

Perhaps it is in thanks to the development of Gondal that the use of space would grow largely present in the work of Charlotte, who would use the metaphysical space in her works as a way to carry the reader into her world. Charlotte’s language within *Jane Eyre* goes to such great lengths to submerge the reader into the world that the language itself warps the ‘time’ of the novel; the descriptive states of the actual spaces and emotions of the world and characters within *Jane Eyre* carry over the actual time in which the novel occurs, leaving the reader suspended. Charlotte Brontë will use the space within *Jane Eyre*, the descriptions of setting and character, to stretch out the actual time of the novel, in a sense creating two different time lines: what is happening versus how the reader will perceive what is happening.

The effect this may have on the reader draws them into a different sense of space, one that may have reflected many of the moods Charlotte had faced herself during her times away from the Parsonage. The experiences of isolation young Jane Eyre must deal with during her days at Lowood runs parallel with the
moods Charlotte may have experienced during her time away at the Clergy Daughter's School. The space in which the reader becomes submerged in *Jane Eyre* is potentially the same space that isolated Charlotte Brontë. Juliet Barker reveals that the character Helen Burns was mostly influenced by Charlotte’s own sister, Maria. The influence the Brontës would receive from Death itself would not be unfounded, as Juliet Barker speaks of the spaces created in the literary world of the Brontë sisters as an “orphan world” (160). While Jane Eyre experiences tragedy in her youth, Charlotte and her sisters would carry it with them throughout their lives.

After the death of their mother, the older sisters acted as a maternity figure for the remaining children. After the death of Maria and Elizabeth, the Brontë children became more alienated from the world around them, and Juliet Barker argues that this is a prevalent theme throughout their work, citing that most of the lead characters within the Brontë novels are orphaned. The great amount of pain that emanated throughout the house after experiencing so much loss was undoubtably tremendous. Certainly the work of the sisters and brother should no doubt serve as a testament of their character and strength.

From the home, the Brontë’s influence would be culled from the pain of eternal slumber; the loss they experienced would isolate and leave them withdrawn from the world. From their pain and loss, the Brontës would leave behind works of pure aesthetic beauty, leaving one to wonder the psychological cost of crafting a novel that leaves a resonance on the world. While it is not necessary to invoke an author when engaging with their work, doing so in the
case of the Brontës allows one to gain a better sense of empathy; a chance to get inside the lives of those who were subjected to complete torture and misery; and pulled beauty from the pain. The music of Crass, and their Philosophy in the main would serenade their audience with songs that praise artists such as the Brontës; that what the sisters had done was survived their perilous upbringing, and made the world a little better off in the process.

The importance of looking at the Brontë family in such a personal detail helps to construct a better understanding of what potentially served as inspiration for the Brontë sisters. Examining the life of the sisters and brother in such an intimate detail and setting supports a better reading of the sisters through the lens of Crass and their ethos. Imagining the family serving together in one home plays into the communal tendencies of Crass and Dial House: through the nucleus of the home, a genetic family can often help and inspire, while it will be shown that a platonic or communal family can serve as the same sort of inspiration.

Dial House and Crass

While the Brontë domicile was built upon on the backs of a tight-knit family, one built through a lineage that loved and suffered together, Crass would find their roots in building a family outside of their own. With Crass, the Dial House ideal did not originally start at what would become the actual residence; rather, the idea was first birthed at a location known as Stanford Rivers Hall, a
home divided into two halves, both being owned by a Co-Op. Author and critic George Berger observes that this original location would be where Penny Rimbaud, Gee Vaucher, and Eve Libertine would first begin their exploration into live music. While not yet entirely the band Crass, it would be one of the first attempts by some of the founding members to begin to stir in the primordial ooze that is their humble beginnings. The music made at this time was more Jazz focused; the music itself being drawn with markers and plots, rather than ink and a staph. The results becoming an entirely unconventional approach to music, something that would serve as the catalyst for what would become the band Crass. The three would eventually be evicted from the home so the owner could rent the house out to a farmworker, though it is also possible that the owner of the house was not a connoisseur of Jazz.

Penny Rimbaud writes in his autobiography *Shibboleth: A Bit of My Revolting Life* that he originally was the one to first rent Dial House, maintaining the property along with two roommates. Rimbaud describes the Dial House as “Cut off from civilization by hills that gently rose on all sides, and accessible only by a mile-long, single-track lane, the red-bricked house nestles like an upturned flower pot into a backdrop of huge oaks and elms, survivors of the great pre-war forest clearances” (34). While it would take the leaving of his two roommates for Dial House to slowly become a commune, Rimbaud would spend much of his days tending to the daily chores of the house, such as fixing up and maintaining the establishment, and tending to the garden.
It is during this time that Penny would start another Jazz-inspired band, known as Exit, and this would be where Rimbaud would meet future Crass bassist Pete Wright. Penny would also meet a filmmaker by the name of Mick Duffield. While Penny would be the one to rent the Dial House, it would be Mick that first discovered it after he noticed a peculiar house visible from a train that he and his friends would take on their daily route. Dial House would serve as an inspiration for Duffield's art, as he began to photograph Penny and Eve's art performances in front of the space. Eventually, these performances would grow into a style of art that would become known as the Fluxus movement: a period of time that author George Berger remarks as being a period that pulled from several different influences, and often blended various art forms, such as literature and film (33).

The unconventional ways in which Crass would engage their art would translate into how the Dial House operated and ran. Burger argues that those that have been to the house would swear by its ‘magical’ properties: an inexplicable characteristic to the home that seemed to invite and draw whatever guest entered. Those with a firm basis in reality may balk at the idea, though someone who has read *Wuthering Heights* more than once may be willing to entertain the notion, and the ‘magic’ present in the novel will be discussed later. Berger properly summarizes the Dial House as “different as anywhere you might find in Britain. It can even vaguely be unnerving” (41). Whatever mystical vibe the house may or may not have possessed, it would be hard to argue that the space
would allow for some of the brightest minds in Punk-Rock to begin their takeover of Britain.

Various members of Crass had their own take on Dial House. Band member Joy De Vivre found the space to be romantic, specifically the commune aspect of the house, as well as the fascination with avant-garde art amongst those residing in the home. Joy had learned of the house because the space was becoming notorious within her community as being a haven for “weirdos and hippies” (102). Mick Duffield, videographer for Crass, would soon find the house to become insufferable, as he thought that Penny and Gee were creating an oppressive space; though he would still find himself living there on and off for several years.

The space in which the artist creates has a greater influence than one would imagine. For the Brontës, death would loom over them throughout their entire lives. As early as 1821 the Brontës suffered through a torment of scarlet fever, a disease that would leave Patrick Brontë looking after his wife and all six of his children. Juliet Barker observes that the disease would cripple the already weak health of Maria Brontë, and she would pass away not long after the death of Queen Caroline. In a letter to John Buckworth, Patrick Brontë remarked she died respectively, that is, peacefully, though “not triumphantly, at least calmly, and with a holy, yet humble confidence, that Christ was her savior, and heaven her eternal home” (119). The effect this had on the Brontë’s domicile would only be the beginning of their torment, as the death’s of several of the sisters would be lurking ahead.
Maria Brontë would be eleven years old when she died from the consumption, and it was at this time that another Brontë daughter, Elizabeth, was also rapidly declining into poor health. Maria was buried next to her mother, and neither Charlotte, Elizabeth, or Emily would get to take comfort in the ceremonies. Just a short time later, the Brontë family would mourn another loss, as Elizabeth would be buried with her sister, falling ill to consumption at the age of ten. The irreparable loss the Brontës would experience would hold onto them until they reached their own fate.

With Crass, the death of Wally Hope had a significant impact on their work both individually between the members, as well as the band as a whole. Just as the Brontës had suffered through this mortal coil, so too would Crass. The effects would seep their way throughout the band's entire career, just as it would seep through the often sordid writing of the Brontës. However, the Dial House would still serve as an inspiration of life; the celebration of the living. What joins both Crass and the Brontës together is that both of their works would no doubt be that life was celebrated throughout their artistic works; even when Charlotte writes of the death of her friend within *Jane Eyre*, there is a certain beauty of remembrance: Charlotte is allowing her friend to live on through writing, a chance for the death of her friends to be given a burial fit for Gilgamesh.

Calling back to Crass’ infamous show at the Roxy Theatre, a New York City artist reveals in an interview with George Berger an inclination as to why they might have had the electricity shut off on them, when the artist recalls seeing them for the first time in NYC: “They lined up across the front of the stage,
in black uniforms with Crass armbands and the Crass logo banner behind them and you were hit by this angry sonic blitzkrieg" (94). While the band would be banned from the Roxy Theatre, causing Penny Rimbaud to pen the song “Punk is Dead,” the band would still spread their message on stage until their breakup in 1984.

While Dial House helped served as inspiration, the primary recordings of Crass would be conducted at Southern Studios, a studio that would eventually blossom into its own record label that houses many artists from the seventies to today. While the studio was outside of the Dial House, it would become a home in itself. The recording studio would not serve as a means to release their own music, but would serve as the inspiration for others to release their own music as well. Around the time of the release of their second album, Stations of the Crass, Crass began developing their own record label, one that would help spread the songs of countless bands. It was through this record label that Crass was able to continue spreading their own message, while at the same time, releasing music by other Punk bands as well.

As shown through both Crass and the Brontës, the home may serve as not just a place for an individual to reside, but can also serve as a space to nurture their talents and entertain their muse. At times the home can become heartbreaking, tearing one away from the presumed security a dwelling is supposed to bring. While death may invite an artist to strive and flourish from their misfortune, one may attempt to escape this by inviting in more artists to share the home that has been made. Attempts have been made to suggest the
idea that one should start their own creative space, whether from their home, or from somewhere else. If one so chooses, they can invite bands from all over the country to come and play music in their home, or to get a couple of friends together and act out Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Just as it important to observe the domestic space of these two artists, a closer approach to who potentially influenced them must also be explored. While the home served as an inspiration to the work of both the Brontës and Crass, there is also a need for themes of the individual to be explored. As both Crass and the Brontës have their own unique views of identity; a strong desire toward independence; a desire for camps to free themselves from the confines of a modern society, there will be specific individuals that helped inspire their own particular definitions of identity. While the domestic and artists spaces that these artists resided in helped as a spring-board for their own ideas and values, it will be through an individualistic spirit where the two camps begin to truly converge.
CHAPTER THREE: Individuality and Spirit

While the Haworth Parsonage and Dial House served as the basis for the creative nexus between the two camps, it is also the spirit of the individual that needs observed. While the chapter prior attempted to look at the domestic spaces the two camps resided in, it will be the interest of this chapter to observe the concept of the individual, and what role this concept played on Crass and the Brontës. For the Brontë sisters, the home and those within no doubt had a large impact on their creative work and production. At times, the Brontës had to respond to their environment, forcing them to be both radical and complacent. When they attempt to break away from their traditional roles, they at the same time become more of what they may be fighting against.

An example of this would potentially be Charlotte’s relationship to Arthur Bell, as well as Jane Eyre’s own fictional relationships within the novel of the same name. Both attempted to have their own independent will, yet were conflated by the desire to be with someone. While this seemingly appears contradictory, it is a tension that is essential to understanding who the Brontës were, and it is a tension that Crass would experience as well. Part of the band’s decision to break-up was the realization that they had entered the absurd: they had a desired to liberate themselves toto coalo, that is, completely and utterly, from the reservations and norms of a modern society. In turn, the band created
boundaries that had restricted them; by attempting to break away from the rules, they were forced to reinvent their own boundaries, which became ironically binding. Crass would find themselves in the same sort of predicament after spending two years in the start of the 1980’s composing *Christ: The Album*. An album that was intended to argue against the Falklands War; a war that ended up being shorter than the time it took them to compose the album. Crass would also experience such ironic strife in their demands for individuality and freedom: at what point do your arguments for an individual to be free become rally cries of imperialism?

For the Brontës, this irony would extend between the torment of desiring a life of personal freedom, while at the same being governed by the often strange teaching methods of their father. While this was something the sisters attempted to break away from, it would appear as something that subsumed them throughout their entire lives. For whatever reason, the sisters had a tendency to romanticize the male protagonists in their novels, but this over-romantization would seemingly leave them lonely throughout their lives, save for Charlotte’s brief and tragic relationship with Arthur Bell Nicholls.

It is within this contradiction that the essence of the Punk-Rock Spirit begins to emerge; the absurdity of attempting to break away from rebellion, while at the same time, becoming subsumed by it. It is a contradiction and paradox that consumed both Crass and the Brontës. Crass will find themselves crying against the government and religion to the extent that they in turn became a system that required rebelling against. In terms of the Brontës, and this is especially true with
Emily, is that they would find themselves so isolated from the particular norms of their society that they would inadvertently isolate themselves from their own essence; they would become lost in themselves and their work.

In the same way the Brontës had to respond to their home, so too did Crass. Through the death of Wally Hope, the struggle of juggling a recording studio, creative space, and communal domicile, Crass would find their own individuality becoming polarized. While both Crass and the Brontës experience parallels between their artistic and domestic spaces, it will be through their ideas of the individual that stronger connections can be made. Both had a sense of perspective that would lead many to believe that their spirits were truly free; both camps would create a sense of identity that was strongly independent and creative, and they would express it in their writing that it was an individuality that they wished upon others as well.

Throughout this section, the ideas of identity throughout both the Brontës and Crass will be explored. While looking at the Brontë children, the father Patrick Brontë will be introduced, and it will be shown through specific literary criticisms in what ways Patrick was an authority figure, and the influence he had on his children. Concerning Crass, it will be shown that many of their ideas concerning identity theory are objects that have their roots within a Punk-Rock ideology. By exploring the nature of both Crass and their lyrics, patterns begin to emerge which suggest that many of the defining elements of what makes Crass ‘Punk-Rock,’ are the same thematic elements that would allow the Brontës to be labeled ‘Punk-Rock.’
The Brontës: Patrick Brontë and His Influence

In a personal interview with Penny Rimbaud, when asked about Wuthering Heights, he responded:

“There’s a beautiful completeness to both Cathy and Heathcliff, a sort of wholeness, and we all yearn for that wholeness. Maybe we don’t want to end up in that situation, but we yearn for that wholeness, for that freedom to ‘climb the wind,’ if you’d like. [. . .] But that is the line, that “I am Heathcliff,” that’s the key. And that’s the key to love. You can change the line to, “I am beauty, I am life, I am whatever,” this is what our attachment is. This is what we are. It’s a sense of universality that we seek. This is what our attachment is. This is what we are.” (Interview 22:43)

In Volume I, Chapter XII of Wuthering Heights, Catherine laments “I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hard, and free. . . and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them!” (125). She is lost, almost subsumed, by her passion for Heathcliff, and it is this passion that Crass touches upon when they declare “There is no authority but yourself” (Crass). The Brontës expressed through their writing women and men that were not only tortured by their lovers, but by the conditions around them. It is in the same vein as Jane’s response to Mr. Rochester when he asks who will care for her, and she responds “I care for myself” (Brontë 365).
What is important to take away from the words of Penny Rimbaud is the importance of discovery within the work of not just Emily, but the Brontës in the main. It is crucial to see that *Wuthering Heights* was more than a story of two enslaved lovers, and more than a writer possibly revealing domestic abuse they experienced in the past, but that Heathcliff and Catherine touch on something that extends to the primal nerve of human emotion; their passion survives through circumstances that many only briefly touch upon. The freedom of the emotions expressed through these characters is the heart of Punk-Rock, and even music in the main. Emily Brontë managed to touch on the crux of what makes us human, what makes us alive; something that music is always striving to accomplish.

Returning to Catherine’s revelation of Heathcliff, she laments to Nelly, “I’m well aware, as winter changes the trees - my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath - a source of little visible light, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff - he’s always, always in my mind - not as a pleasure, anymore than I am always a pleasure to myself - but, as my own being - so, don’t talk of our separation again - it is impractical” (Brontë 83).

It is this within this passage that draws the inspiration for exploring the individuality within the Brontës: the seemingly paradoxical conundrum that is life and love. To explore the idea that the Brontës were extraordinary in their individuality, they seemed to both question and desire the exploration into the romantic ideal. Catherine becomes confused by her own identity as she
obsesses over Heathcliff, and it is through this line of confusion that the ideals of Emily Brontë—and if we use Jane Eyre and Tenant of Windfell Hall as examples, the ideals of Charlotte and Anne—begin to become unraveled and explored.

Throughout their work, the Brontës consistently attempted to subvert various authorities. Critic Jill Dix would observe that Wuthering Heights was “intrinsically different in its intense exploration of passions and its portrayal of a hero in rebellion against his fate” (Dix 3). The Brontës challenge the perceptions of what a woman writer may accomplish, as well as attempted to break away from the social norms during the nineteenth-century. Concerning family, while they did not often argue against the authority of their father, Patrick, the Brontës would show their ability to question and defy authority through their work. Concerning the father, Patrick Brontë, it is important to consider his influence on the children, as his methods of raising children are both unique and rather perplexing. Brontë scholars have had a tendency to romanticize, even idealize the father of the Brontë household. While it is not the intent here to paint Patrick Brontë as a wicked or vile man, it is worth considering that his influence can be negative as well as positive.

One key reason to fully explore the complexity of Patrick is that he most likely served as an inspiration for many of the Byronic heroes within the work of the Brontë sisters. It can be seen in the tortured soul of Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, in the paranoia and jealousy of Earl of Rochester in Jane Eyre, and the erratic nature of Gilbert Markham within Anne’s The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. While these influences are small, they are worth considering, as they add a different
perspective to the inspiration and creativity of the Brontë sisters. While Patrick can be seen as a Byronic anti-hero, at the same time he becomes an authority of the Brontës, at times, an authority that has an influence throughout their lives. While Patrick’s odd habits will serve as a source of anti-authority throughout the character development within the creative works of the sisters, he will become an authoritarian that requires challenging and questioning within the actual lives of the sisters.

Elizabeth Gaskell credits the philosopher Rousseau and a curious named Mr. Day as partial influences for Patrick Brontë’s peculiar method of raising children. Mr. Day being a friend of Gaskell’s aunt, Elizabeth recalls a story in which Mr. Day’s family possessed a carriage, and Elizabeth’s aunt, who had been adopted by Mr. Day, had to share her spot in the carriage with the family dog. As there was only space for one, whoever was left at home was wrapped in a blanket, of which Gaskell says her aunt “especially dreaded” (37). Another curious quality that Mr. Day and Patrick had in common was that they both thought it improper for their children to dress fashionably, or indulge in fine foods.

The story goes that when the Brontës were younger, a storm had come and the children were playing in the yard. A maid had found them some colorful rain-boots for them to wear, though when they were discovered by Patrick, he burnt them on sight. These standards would not just be held to the children, as Mrs. Brontë would experience similar distress concerning a silk dress. Mrs. Brontë had kept it locked out of sight from Patrick, yet, when he discovered it, Patrick, “cut it to shreds” (36). Though Elizabeth again uses second-hand
information for how Patrick is “indifferent to the pleasures of eating and dress” (36), the accounts still help give an understanding of the shaping of the Brontë children. For example, something similar will occur within *Jane Eyre*, when in Volume II, Chapter X, Bertha destroys Jane’s wedding veil.

While it was not unusual for Patrick to have a odd disposition toward clothes, he would also have a propensity for peculiar acts of violence. While the ideas of domestic space were explored within the prior chapter, violence was overlooked, for there is little to suggest that Patrick was directly violent to his wife and children. While not physically violent, there were moments where Patrick’s odd parenting decisions may be considered negative, and the question of something ‘bad’ leading to something ‘good’ may be considered. Gaskell again tells a story of Mrs. Brontë complaining about Patrick growing frustrated, and firing his pistol into the air around the Parsonage. Elizabeth Gaskell repeats the concern of Mrs. Brontë, when she says, “Ought not I to be thankful that he never gave me an angry word?” (36).

What is strange about this is that author Juliet Barker argues that another friend of the Brontës, Nancy Garrs, insists that Patrick would only carry his weapon on long trips away from the Parsonage, and the pistol could only be unloaded through firing. While the accounts are conflicting, it is is curious that a pistol could only be emptied through discharging the bullets. Despite evidence toward both sides of the argument, the fact remains that guns did in fact play an influence in the house, as Patrick would even take Emily shooting from time to time.
While many of these violent outbursts from Patrick may seem extreme, even dastardly, it does not appear that he was at any point a physical threat to the Brontë children. While his actions may have created psychological discomfort, there is more evidence that suggest his temper serves an archetype for Heathcliff. Volume I, Chapter XIV of *Wuthering Heights* shows a Heathcliff that is willing to carry around pistols to ward away any of Edgar’s servants that would block him from Catherine, who may be “hindering mischief” (152). Even more strange is when Linton is found to be carrying “a curiously constructed pistol, having a double-edged spring knife attached to the barrel” (139). Given this, it is perplexing in what ways Patrick inspired Emily in her writing and character development.

Another curious quality about Patrick that Gaskell reveals is that he would ask his children to perform under a mask. In notes written by Patrick, Gaskell observes that in an effort to have the children speak with all impunity, he had them don a mask as an attempt to have the children speak more boldly. Patrick would have the children stand up, put on the mask, and then he would ask them several questions. For example, he would ask Charlotte what the best book in the world is, and her response was the Bible. When asked what was the best education for a woman was, Charlotte replied, “That which would make her rule her house well” (41). It would be this peculiar line of questioning that would shape the minds of the girls, pulling them apart from their desires of personal identity, while at the same time reinforcing the views of father Patrick. The attempt to give the children a sense of anonymity would reinforce their shaping
identities, a challenge in approaching who they actually are as individuals. Yet it would be through this forcing of anonymity that would confine them to their father’s standards; a special-type of absurdity that Crass would become all too familiar with.

What is important to take away from the masks and the call-and-response between child and father is that part of what makes the Brontës so intriguing. While Patrick would seemingly give the children a sense of power through their anonymous masks, it would seem his line of questioning would lead them in a direction that was determined by him. It is here where the paradoxical desires of Jane, and to an extent Charlotte, begin to emerge; the desire of complete individualistic freedom, but one that is suffocated by a desire to grow attached to a person separate from themselves.

Looking at Patrick as an influence, one becomes curious as to how much of him can be seen in Heathcliff Earnshaw. This is not to suggest a Freudian reading of *Wuthering Heights*, but it does call into question how Emily Brontë was capable of bringing about so much raw and primal hostility through her two protagonists. If one is to look at the conversations between Heathcliff and Catherine, one can possibly imagine these words coming from the mouth of Emily’s father. For example, when Heathcliff says “Last night, I was on the threshold of Hell. To-day, I am in sight of my heaven” (328), the religious themes and particular moodiness of tone harks back to Patrick’s comments after the passing of his wife. This perspective adds a new element of sadness to the
Brontë work, as it hard to imagine that the family did not often struggle with their own internal tortures.

Concerning a synthesis alongside Crass, it would be the rules and boundaries set forth by Patrick that the Brontë sisters would find themselves rebelling from. The father’s curious parental skills would indeed give them the tools to explore and question—as evident by his willingness to let his children read whatever they wanted freely—while at the same time allowed their creativity to flourish. It is his curious attachment to religion and his particular brand of teaching that the Brontë sisters would have to distance themselves from: their rebellion in the perplexity that religion would bring upon them.

Given the evidence of the often seemingly irrational behavior of Patrick Brontë, it would not be difficult to read Wuthering Heights, and to a lesser extent Jane Eyre through the lens of a domestic violence reading. While Patrick’s actions are not physically violent, many of them are so outlandish it seems difficult for some form of trauma not to be caused. It is important not to ignore this violence between family, it is not the intent of this writing to paint Patrick Brontë as an antagonist. However, the goal of this writing is to lend support to the idea that Patrick Brontë serves not only as an example as a Byronic figure, but to again show him as a man that the Brontë children would be forced to rebel against in one facet or another.

While elements of the Byronic hero can be found in Charlotte’s Mr. Rochester, as well as Anne’s Gilbert, it is Emily who would craft the ultimate, most complex and terrifying individual: Heathcliff Earnshaw. In her article
“Sympathy for the Devil: The Problem of Heathcliff in Film Versions of *Wuthering Heights*,” Lin Haire-Sargeant explains the challenge of Emily Brontë writing a character that is “a brutal, calculating sadist, the bane of two families over two generations, in such a way that by the end of the book the reader’s horror is overwhelmed by sympathy” (167).

Heathcliff is a chimera that borders on the purest form of human expression. Even from the descriptions of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* one is able to get the sense that he is a character that is not of this world. For example, in a letter to Ellen, Isabella says of Heathcliff “Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (Brontë 136). Though, even through Heathcliff’s words can a sense of madness and obsession emerge, such as his cries for Catherine in Volume II, Chapter II, when he says “I repeat it till my tongue stiffens—Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you—haunt me, then! the murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe” (Brontë 169). After these cries, Heathcliff roars, “not like a man, but like a savage beast being goaded to death with spears and knives” (169).

As the unusual actions of Heathcliff may cast an uneasiness within a reader, so too may these also be found in Patrick Brontë. Their seemingly erratic behavior, and peculiar decisions concerning their expression of love toward other individuals, conveys the same personal strife that can be found in the writing of Nietzsche. The actions of these two men show that it was they alone that decided their own actions; that Heathcliff and Patrick have driven themselves away from the standard examples of morality at the time. They have created their
own authority, an authority that seems conflated by God and man, yet leaves the individual subtracted from God and man.

In a sense, Heathcliff also serves as an example of an individual Crass may have looked for in others. The band’s creed of “There is no authority but yourself” (Crass) can be found in the ethos of Heathcliff, a man who believed in nothing but his passion for Catherine. In a sense, this willingness to submit to one’s own internal authority is one of the most identifiable of a Punk-Rock “maxim,” and it is something that Patrick imparted on his children before even such a label as ‘Punk’ existed.

As the Brontë’s would become published, they would do so under different identities. Birthing one’s work under a new name brings about a new persona, a new identity. It is curious whether or not this was in some small part a way of escaping what they had once experienced in their home life, perhaps what they experienced at school (Barker notes that there is at least one reported incident of Charlotte’s students throwing rocks at her). The ability to leave behind the past, and create a new self that is solely based on your artistic outcome changes what the Brontës would leave behind.

Patrick would not be the only one restricting his daughters, as at the time of them attempting to publish, women would still not be allowed to complete such a task. The Brontës would have to adopt pseudonyms, something that would both allow them to blur their identity, as well as add a bit of a farcical element to the antiquated views of the time. Charlotte Brontë would find herself changing her name a third time, after her marriage to Arthur Bell Nicholls. Charlotte would
adopt his surname, and at the time of her death, carried the name Nicholls, rather than the name Brontë, into the afterlife. While one is able to read on her death certificate the name Charlotte Nicholls, it would be strange, almost unsettling, to hear someone who engages with Brontë literature to refer to Charlotte as Charlotte Nicholls. In death and life, Charlotte and the Brontë children would partially have their identity eradicated through patriarchal demands and archaic traditions, and the sisters were capable of transcending the identity imposed upon them, leaving behind a legacy that was attached to their own works, with an identity that lends to rebellion and the spirit of Punk-Rock.

Crass

One of the primary goals of Crass was to bring about a sort of self-revelation. Like Nietzsche, and to an extent Heathcliff, almost the entirety of Crass’ rhetoric aimed at the unveiling of a new persona for individuals willing to unpackaged their message. It is also a revelation the Brontës consistently struggled with—and as will be shown in particular within the next chapter—this desire for self-revelation will be shown in the complexity of Emily’s religious views, as well as in the revelation Jane Eyre would experience after leaving Mr. Rochester—potentially a revelation Charlotte would wish to bring about in herself. While the Brontës would not directly tell their readers to reevaluate their own lives, it would be through their prose and poetry that would lead the reader into a world concerned with individualism.
While the Brontës would be more of a ‘silenced’ revelation, Crass would continue to scream this message throughout the entirety of their work. They preached that it was up to the individual to question all authority, both religious and political authority, as well as creating a set of values that one can call their own. For example, on their first album, *The Feeding of the 5000* the song “So What?” is both anti-secular and anti-religious; it is one of the more powerful acts of rebelling away from religion to be released by the band. Starting with a simple three rhythmic hits on the snare drum, the guitar and bass lines almost sound like a child-hood nursery rhyme, were it not for the guitars being over saturated with piercing distortion.

After a couple of measures, singer Steve Ignorant’s thick British accent interjects with the opening lines:

They ask me why I’m hateful, why I’m bad
They tell me I got things they never had
They tell me go to Church and see the light
Because the good lord’s always right
So what, So what?
So what is Jesus died on the cross
So what about the fucker? I don’t give a toss
So what if the master walked on water
Don’t see him trying to stop the slaughter (Crass)

The religious attacks are as obvious as they are brutal. Throughout the verse, the speaker is tormented by the ideals of their peers: they are asked to
abandon their present ideals, and turn toward a religious mythos. The speaker then questions why it is that they should align themselves with such a person that is incapable of stopping the misery that currently plagues the world. The lyrics continue with this argument, harking back to the days of concentration camps present during World War II, as well as declaring that the speaker is a “human-being,” a being that deserves to live a life free from the ideology of strangers and religion, a being that wishes to discover the world through their own eyes.

The religious questioning not only challenges religion, a theme that will be present in the Brontë’s work, and will be discussed further in the next chapter, but also calls for the speaker to examine and challenge their own views of individualism. Within “So What?,” the speaker attempts to question Christianity as more than blind servitude, and asks that those listening attempt to arrive at the same sort of questioning of morality that the speaker did. This line of questioning and attempting to find one’s “spirit,” would become a predominant theme throughout the works of Crass, especially by the time their album Christ: The Album would be released.

What is particularly fascinating about Christ: The Album is that it is one of the largest and most musically-complex albums produced by Crass: an album comprised of one record of new material, one record of live-material, the album also included a pamphlet of lyrics and existential writings labeled A Series of Shock Slogans and Mindless Temper-Tantrums. The entire package was released in a simple black box, and took the band over two years to complete. What is interesting about this length of time is that many of the songs questioned
Margaret Thatcher’s input during the Falklands War, a war that was actually shorter than the time it took them to produce the record.

The album attempted to challenge not just the authority of religion and government, but also made a stronger attempt at rallying toward the authority of the individual, for the individual, and this can be seen through the song “You Can be Who?” A song that was outside the normal musical expectations of the band, and also begged the listener to judge things for themselves. While the verses present within the song would not just attack religion and government, Crass would also challenge blue-collar jobs, or any work that the listener may not want spend their life doing. However, it would be the chorus that ties all of these ideas together, in the lines:

Don’t want a life of lies and pretense
Don’t want to play at attack and defense
I just want my own life, I want to be free
So you can be you, and I can be me (Crass)

The chorus lays at the heart of Crass Philosophy, and in many ways, serves as the example of Punk Philosophy in the main. Present within the chorus is a speaker challenging people to question authority, to challenge the ideals and maxims laid out by their superiors. It is a type of personal reflection and questioning that can be seen in the work of the Brontës, as they too questioned and challenged the authority figures present within their own lives.

While the message can be wonderful and eye-opening, those that have rallied for individual freedom have all run into the same problem: how does a
group attempt to rally for the individual? How do you attempt to create an individual who has experienced revelation, an ubermensch, without creating their own group? It was a paradox Crass was all too aware of, and this was a significant factor of their break-up in 1984. This tension was similar to the tensions the Brontë sisters would face in their ambiguous identities; the contradiction of wanting to be free, yet being subsumed by the authority of others. It is in this contradiction where the Punk-Rock spirit takes its form: where the spirit develops is in the desire to be free from imposed morality, while at the same being contained herein by the contradictions of creating such an identity.

While it is unfair to label Crass as the defining Punk band (and this could very well be an argument that could go on forever), it is hard to argue that Crass did not lay a large foundation for what many consider to be in the Punk spirit of today. From their crafting everything on their own, to the way they spread their message, as well as their message itself; Crass helped create the back-bone of the Punk-Rock spirit. Thus, it is through this spirit that influences of the Brontës begin to emerge, primarily in their decisions not just to pen their own tiny books, but in their decisions to self-publish their book of poems.

Though the Brontë sisters cannot be given even partial credit for developing Punk-Rock, what they can be given credit for is providing evidence toward the argument that women writers, from antiquity to present, all contain the essence of the Punk-Rock spirit. Since early history, self-expression from the woman’s perspective has been counter to the norms of a given society. This can be seen in the death of the philosopher Hypatia, to the arguments presented by
the women writers of the early eighteenth-century. It is the revolution of these women writers, the Brontës included, that is also instilled in the lyricism of Crass. The idea that one should create their own set of morals will be shown more clearly within the next chapter, yet the argument to define your own authority is essential to the spirit of Crass, and the spirit of Punk-Rock.

It is the awareness of a self-identity in the work of the Brontës that lends credibility to their Punk-Rock spirit. Within *Jane Eyre*, Jane ultimately decides to reject St. John for Mr. Rochester, showing that while she may still be tied another individual, Jane is capable of showing a willingness to strengthen one’s own identity, and explore their own sexual and marital freedom. It is also within Emily’s brutal reality of her own mortality as shown throughout her poetry, that the Brontës, as well as all women writers, contain the essence of Punk-Rock; of spiritual revolution. In the following chapter, the exploration into Emily’s poetry will be closely examined, as well as how this relates to the lyricism of Crass.
CHAPTER FOUR: CREATIVE OUTPUT

After observing the domestic and artistic spaces that Crass and the Brontës resided in, connections begin to emerge that show the home serves as a source of creative inspiration to a particular family group. With the Brontës, the family was born of blood; their relations united through both love of each other and their undivided passion for craft. For Crass, their relations were platonic or sexual, yet the results were the same. It is now the focus to give a close look to these specific outputs. When looking at the individuals that strive within these spaces, patterns between Crass and the Brontës emerge that often show strife in their own desires in representing individual freedoms. Patrick Brontë would serve not just as a man resolute on his own ethical convictions, but play a contributing factor in the upbringing and creative content of the Brontë sisters. With Crass, their individuality was through creativity and passion; a desire and need to explore the limits of the individuals, and in many ways, it is something they share with the Brontës.

The poetry of Emily Brontë will serve as the exemplar for the sisters, for Emily not only expresses her own tortured individuality through poems such as “No Coward Soul is Mine,” but will also serve as the one that was the most willing to question the marital and religious authority that surrounded her. While many are willing to argue the religious views of Emily, there is very little argument that
Emily did not question these religious ideas throughout her incredibly short life. It is this line of questioning that pairs her so well with Crass: her desire to explore all facets of ideas and freedom that attaches her so uniquely to the band.

Crass

The important thing to remember about Crass is that they created bodies of work outside of music, including physical arts such as street paintings and video production. Street art played a massive role not just in the collective body of work that is Crass, but served as an inspiration for many artists outside the musical camp as well. Their graffiti consisted of stenciling: a process of using cardboard cut-outs to spray a simple design or message onto a physical object. These messages would usually be anti-authoritarian or existentialist in nature, and was yet another way for Crass to extend their ideas out into the world: artists such as the street-graffiti artist Banksy, who uses methods similar to Crass’ style to portray images that compel the viewer to question the world around them.

Musically, one of their earliest works, “Reality Asylum,” was a shockingly-explicit attack on Jesus Christ, and Christianity as a whole. While many of their songs would question the authority of religion—songs such as “So What,” and even the entirety of their record Christ: The Album—“Reality Asylum” would be their one of the more shocking and damning rallying cries of rebellion against the ideals and authority of the Church. The song originally was meant to open their
debut album, however, they were unable to locate a record pressing plant that was willing to press the record due to the shocking and explicit subject matter.

Prior to the song itself, the piece was originally written as a pamphlet by Penny Rimbaud. *Christ’s Reality Asylum* was Rimbaud’s answer to the growing frustrations of his experiences with Christianity, specifically, as George Burger puts it, the way “Christianity was so intrinsically wrapped into what he was taught to believe” (70). Rimbaud finished the piece in a period of two weeks, and printed one-hundred copies on an old gesturer machine. This would also be the birthing of Existential Press, a publisher that focused primarily on Anarchists works.

Two other important ideas would stem from the original release of *Reality Asylum*: the first being the incredibly real fear that Rimbaud would potentially face prosecution for his writing—a fear that would eventually be realized—while the second being the development of the iconic Crass logo. After completion of *Christ’s Reality Asylum*, Penny asked artist Dave King to design a logo to compliment the book, and Dave immediately went to work. After some time, Dave brought back an icon that bore influence from several cosmopolitan symbols that were known for better or for worse: icons such as the swastika, the Christian cross, and the Union Jack. Author George Berger describes the logo as “two snakes devouring each others’ tails. It looks for all its worth the sort of symbol you might find in an Egyptian pyramid or an ancient book of spells” (72).

The importance of this symbol is that it would serve as a distinction for Crass, something that both represented them, yet would not name them directly at all. The Crass symbol would commonly be found on many of the band’s
albums and art, as well as adorning patches atop of eager young Punk kids. The symbol also serves as a sense of visual irony: a band that adamantly declared anarchy and peace donned a symbol that was practically authoritarian. It was the kind of self-aware irony that many modern age hipsters or Literature fans could appreciate, and serves as a reminder that everything is appropriate to question and scrutinize.

While the Brontës would not adopt their own symbol to represent themselves, the closest object that would bear semblance to this idea would be the self-portrait, painted by brother Bramwell Brontë. The painting itself is largely infamous after Bramwell decided to paint himself out of it, removing himself from the family. The decision to remove himself gives a sense of isolation, while at the same time confirms the unique sense of identity the Brontës possessed. As Bramwell became an apparition in his own work, he at the same time supported his own individualism; choosing to rebel against his own art in the same manner Crass would rebel against their art, when deciding to break the band up in 1984.

Returning to “Reality Asylum,” the attacks on Christian values are made clear within the first lines of the verse:

“I am no feeble Christ, not me.

He hangs in glib delight upon his cross. Upon his cross.

Above my body. Lowly me.

Christ forgive, forgive. Holy he, he holy, he holy.

Shit he forgive. Forgive, forgive. I, I, Me, I.

I vomit for you Jesus. Christi-Christos.
“Puke upon your papal throne” (Reality Asylum)

There is an obvious desire for the poem to purposely come across as obscene, as if the only way to create true separation from the idealized ‘purity’ in Christ is abolish it through shocking and often putrid imagery. While potentially disgusting to some readers, the grossness of the words may be defended by writers of antiquity who also questioned authority through obscene language. Writers such as Francois Rabelais and Marquis de Sade would draw from murky waters in order to shock those that would watch, helping create a sense of humanity that may exist in such explicit verbiage. While coarse language often stems from a more immature place in the heart, here it serves a way to justify the conflicting and angst felt by the speaker: the words are not just a vessel to carry the message of contempt for Christianity, but for a primal frustration that runs deep within the human spirit.

The second line attaches Jesus to the cross, which in turn attaches Jesus to the speaker, for in the third line Jesus has become greater than the speaker. The fourth and fifth lines become repetitive between Christ and the speaker, this chiasmus begetting an acknowledgement toward the absurd that both speaker and Christ are connected, yet at the same time, separated. The speaker and Christ are not physically connected, but the metaphysical connection is overwhelming. The use of ‘I’ and ‘me’ creates a desire to be separate from the ideas casted on the speaker, as if Jesus Christ places them within the speaker Himself.
“Reality Asylum” also serves as Feminist rhetoric, with the reminder that Jesus was male. This can be seen during the final lines of the poem, but comes about more clearly within the poetry contained within the liner notes the poem appears on: “I was born free, free body, free mind, until I breathed the moral air and became aware that my ‘free’ body was female, Eve’s guilt, and that my ‘free’ mind was left to strive with others [sic] definitions of good and evil” (Berger 134). Attempting to maintain a feminist stance was crucial for the members of Crass, even between the men and women that made up the band, which is why the second, or b-side of the “Reality Asylum” single contained the song “Shaved Women,” which served as both a compliment and a critique to Feminist theory. With it’s repeating opening lines of “Screaming Babies / Screaming Babies / Screaming Babies” (Crass), the song also contained the lyrics, “Shaved Women instigators / Shaved Women are they traitors?” (Crass) An almost damning question, though, it would not be the first time Crass would show an interest in redefining what it meant to be a Feminist. “Shaved Women” would not be the only time Crass would question certain aspects of Feminism, and it would be this line of questioning that would allow them to create pieces of work that were not altogether serious. While critics of the band would often make comments that the band was overly serious—music critic Mark Prindle often referred to them as “Militant” (Prindle)—the band was capable of producing satirical works that still addressed the questions they were constantly attempting to raise.

In his works Shibboleth - A Bit of My Revolting Life, Penny Rimbaud writes of his time with vocalist Eve Libertine, specifically when she was asked a
question during an anarchist-feminist gig. Penny recalls that the singer of a particular band had asked the almost all feminine audience who among them would actually be willing to “suck a dick” (116). The crowd unanimously agreed that they would not, whereas Eve Libertine shouted back, “Me, if it belongs to someone I like” (116). It was a response that went against the ideals of the crowd, and while Penny observed that the audience was still a long way away from trusting the opposite gender, perhaps rightfully so, at the same time observed that the band was attempting to reach a level of mutual respect between the genders. This problem would appear in the works of the Brontës, as they strived for their own individualism, while at the same time feeling as though they had to adopt the standards of the time in order to acquire a potential suitor.

From this idea sparked a bit of creative energy for Crass, and the band attempted to record a parody of the song “Lipstick on Your Collar” by Connie Francis. However, wishing to avoid whatever legal ramifications that may have stemmed from releasing such a parody, the band decided to scrap the idea in favor of an original parody. Titled “Our Wedding,” the band had created a song that was so over the top farcical in terms of syrupy-sweet sentimental non-sense, it gave Eve fits of laughter as she attempted to record her vocals. With lyrics such as “Never look at anyone, anyone but me. / Never look at anyone, I must be all you see” (Crass), it is easy to see why Eve would have such a hard time singing the lyrics, which is why Joy De Vivre was asked to pick up the slack.

Recording in hand, it was then up to guitarist Andy Palmer to shop the song around to various labels and magazines. Dressed in his Sunday best,
Palmer declared he was from Creative Recordings and Sound Services, and was able to convince the magazine *Loving*—a magazine Penny described as “a teenage romance magazine specializing in exploiting loneliness” (118)—to produce the record. The record was pressed to “virgin-white” plexi, and was released alongside the “Bridal Issue” of *Loving* magazine, and it would not be until months later that the hoax would be exposed.

Though it would fall mostly on the shoulders of those working for the magazine, the pranks and hoaxes that Crass would play would not be as silly or altogether innocent. Sometime after the slow demise of the band, a tape now made infamous was patched together by the bass player, Pete Wright. The tape was a fake conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, in which the two discuss the sinking of a British destroyer-ship known as *Sheffield*. According to the tape, the *Sheffield* was nestled between two aircraft carriers, *Hermes* and *Invincible*. During this time, the *Invincible* picked up two missiles on their radar, and the *Invincible* warned *Hermes*, but not the *Sheffield*, even though the missiles dropped off their radar after twenty-six miles. Penny Rimbaud suggests that it was due to Prince Andrew, one of Britain’s royal sons, being onboard the *Invincible* as a reason to why it was sparred, though Rimbaud claims there is no official documents suggesting why the *Sheffield* was hit.

In addition to this potentially fraudulent information, the tape also splices together fake threats from Reagan, suggesting that he will engage with Britain in nuclear war in order to best protect America’s interests. After completing the tape, Pete Wright smuggled it out of Britain, and while in Amsterdam, began
sending copies of the tape to as many news outlets as he possibly could. Though it took six months of silence, the tape finally made it into the hands of those in Washington, D.C., and immediate blame was placed on the Russian group KGB. The tape caused a great uproar among news outlets, who also attempted to place the blame on the KGB, and Penny laments that the band was confused about whether or not they should admit to having collaborated on such a grand hoax. While it is often a hard question as to whether one should reveal themselves, they were not given much time to quell on their decision, as local newsgroup *The Observer* had somehow managed to uncover Crass’ involvement with the tape. For a brief time afterwards, Crass and its individual members were given the air time to explicate their grievances toward their government and homeland.

Rebellion would not be the sole motivation behind the output of Crass, as they would continue to push forward with their Do-it-Yourself ethic, they would in turn continue to encourage and inspire their audience to create their own works of art. From their album *Yes Sir, I Will*, Crass argued “Everything we write is a love a song” (Crass), and this in turn was to suggest that they wished to pass along this love, the love of art and the love of creation, to those that needed the inspiration. It is this line of questioning that the Brontës seemed to have considered almost a century prior to Crass. While the sisters would not craft outrageous pranks or spectacles, they would have their own ways of trying to make their voices heard, and it is through these voices where acts of rebellion begin to emerge.
Sub-Section Three: The Brontës

While the Brontës would not be as intentionally obscene as Crass, they too would question love and religion within their poetry and work. While the Brontë’s would not be as overly silly with their work, there is no question that much of their writing still opened an investigation into what makes for a “proper woman.” The Brontë’s would release a book of poetry published under their own volition entitled *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*. Like Crass, the purpose would be to take a Do-it-Yourself approach to the art world they the Brontë’s so desperately longed to be a part of. However, contrary to Crass, it would not be as successful in their time, selling only two copies. Though each of them were endowed with their own ability to craft a poem, it would be Emily that stands out from the rest. It is through her poetry where Emily explored religious and individualistic ideals, and critics seem to be in contradiction in terms of exactly where here issues on these matters stood.

The poem “No Coward Soul is Mine” by Emily is not just Crass in nature, but is evidence of a young girl attempting to shake loose the standards and conventions that commonly bound her. Literary critic Miceal M. Clarke writes of Emily Brontë’s ‘mysticism’ in his article titled “Emily Brontë’s ‘No Coward’s Soul’ and the Need for a Religious Literary Criticism” argues that the debate concerning Emily’s true philosophy is conflated and somewhat muddled. Clarke
argues that many contemporary literary critics, such as Stevie Davies, Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert would argue that Emily is a ‘heretic’ writer, leaving *Wuthering Heights* to be a “Bible of Hell” (195). As “No Coward Soul is Mine” is one of Emily’s last poems, Clarke argues that at the end of her life she had accepted the presence of a divine being.

While the work of Clarke seems more passionate toward calling back to antiquated theism; his argument that Emily was indeed passionate about a creator toward her death is seemingly obvious. Indeed “No Coward Soul” is without question a poem about divine acceptance:

No coward soul is mine
No trembler in the world’s storm-troubled sphere
I see Heaven’s glories shine
And faith shines equal arming me from fear
O God within my breast
Almighty ever-present deity
Life, that in me hast rest
As I Undying Life, have power in thee (Brontë 1-8)

While the verse is both poignant and beautiful, it shows a speaker that is unquestionably strong in her faith for a Divine Being; faith that had earlier been muddled by her more skeptic youth. It would be the elements of Crass and their desires for an individual to judge their own morality where the connection can be seen. While Clarke would exclaim that within the poem, “the imminent and the transcendent merge, and the Oneness of all creation finds its fullest expression”
(Clarke 211), Jill Dix Ghnassia would argue that the poem shows Emily struggling with her faith. While Clarke acknowledges the work of Ghnassia, he also argues that she, along with Davies, argue from false-interpretations of Emily's past poetry. Concerning “No Coward Soul,” Ghnassia acknowledges the speaker's strong fascination with a deity, saying, “It is strong to reconcile this contentment in her domestic life with her rebellion and anti-theistic inner world. Yet Brontë seems to have managed both and moved with ease between the two worlds in which she lived” (Ghnassia 196).

It is not the attempt of this work to pigeonhole Emily Brontë into one particular theism or philosophy, which is why it is important to take in the works of Clark and Ghnassia with the same logical openness. Ghanassia's criticism seems more in harmony with the acceptance of skepticism present through the early years of Emily's life, whereas Clarke is more than convinced that Emily was always supportive of a divine being. With that being said, it is the intent to show that Emily did indeed question her spirituality, to the point where it seems at times it must have pained her. Poems such as “The Philosopher” show a speaker that is tortured by their own inner-workings; by the torment of an unknown afterlife:

‘Enough of thought, philosopher!
Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unenlightened, in this chamber drear,
While summer's sun is beaming!
Space-Sweeping soul, what sad refrain
Concludes thy musings once again? (1-6)

The speaker laments of the philosopher’s isolation; as if Emily herself is tormented and questioning her own loneliness. Bordering on existential, the speaker is seemingly growing tired of their own consciousness; a certain ennui that comes with the dread of an afterlife, conflated with the isolation of the exasperated speaker:

“‘Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity
And never care how rain may steep,
Or snow may cover me!
No promised heaven, these wild desires,
Could all, or half fulfill;
No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
Subdue this quenchless will!’” (7-14)

It is within this stanza that elements of Heathcliff begin to emerge; as if Emily Brontë was exploring a side of herself that questioned love, questioned the passions. The line “wild desires” invokes a line of interrogation that would support the idea that Emily may have been confused by her ideas of love. The imagery of losing one’s identity to death, as well as the idea of “no promised heaven” suggests that there’s an extreme element of doubt in the conception of the afterlife. Does the speaker feel that they do not belong in the afterlife due to their constant turmoil over their thoughts and emotions? It would seem the answer is
yes, given that even the threat of eternal damnation cannot suffer the will of the speaker; they are willing to follow their ideas and philosophy to the river styx:

‘So said I, and still say the same;
Still, to my death, will say -
Three gods, within this little frame,
Are warring night and day;
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
They all are held in me;
And must be mine till I forget
My present entity!
Oh, for the time, when in my breast
Their struggles will be o’er!
Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,
And never suffer more! (15-26)

The speaker has now identified her will and her “wild desires” as belonging to the three gods that battle within her. The “Gods” battle inside the speaker that they long for a silent death; a death that will take them away from the warring pain. It is within this questioning that the elements of the Crass philosophy begins to emerge: not that one is necessarily atheist, but that one is capable of questioning for themselves what their own views of life may be. While the speaker in “The Philosopher” seems to take it to a logical conclusion that borders on self-harm and anxiety, they are still willing to question the ideals,
beliefs, and opinions of the world around them, and question them to the best of their ability.

For Crass, the song “Big A, Little A” further evinces proof for their aggressive demands of freedom for an individual. Within The Story of Crass, George Berger gives a brief history of the song, noting that it was originally pressed on a 7" record accompanying the song “Nagasaki Nightmare,” a song that served as the rallying cry for the devastating nuclear events that America deployed during World War II. Concerning “Big A, Little A,” George Burger declares it to be “the most anthemic song they’d [Crass] ever written. Dangerously close to rock’n’roll, it began with children signing the playground song of the title before crashing guitar announced Steve Ignorant” (176). The song was in fact an anthem of sorts; yet another cry for freedom within an individual. Even within the first stanza, the mood is immediately set.

External control are you gonna let them get you?
Do you wanna be a prisoner in the boundaries they set you?
You say you want to be yourself, by Christ do you they’ll let you?
They’re out to get you get you get you get you get you get you (Crass 4-7)

The chorus of the song primarily acting as a rallying cry against both religion and governmental authority immediately challenges the listener of the song, placing them in a line of questioning that ironically borders on authoritarian; a paradox that would not be lost on the band, though in this situation one can not
lose the humor of an individual demanding another individual to find their own identity. As the song continues, the singer adopts the voice of God:

Hello, hello, hello, this is the Lord God, can you hear?
Hellfire and damnation's what I've got for you down there
On Earth I have ambassadors, archbishop, vicar, pope
We'll blind you with morality, you'd best abandon any hope,
We're telling you you'd better pray cos you were born in sin
Right from the start we'll build a cell and then we'll lock you in
We sit in holy judgement condemning those that stray
We offer our forgiveness, but first we'll make you pay (Crass)

Within the lines of this verse, one can almost hear the God Crass is imitating berating the speaker within Emily Brontë’s “The Philosopher.” The argument that sinners will find themselves burning in hell being a great source of stress for the “will” within the Brontë poem. As the verse continues, it is clear that the song is attempting to argue why one should abandon the ideals of religion, yet does not entirely provide a solution outside of becoming an atheist. The song also attempts to show that it is not just the laws curated by a creator that attempt to ‘bind’ the listener, but that it is those within the government and religious hierarchies that may also torment those without power.

Ultimately, while Emily’s poetry seemed to be an expression of her inner-questioning, her ability to write about her dilemmas allows a reader even of today to be able to bring themselves to a line of questioning away from typical religious beliefs. While Crass will choose an approach that is more explicit to the reader,
the consequences are the same: question the morality imposed onto you by others, question the world that has been placed on your shoulders, and perhaps most importantly, question yourself.

Be exactly who you want to be, do what you want to do
I am he and she is she but you’re the only you
No one else has got your eyes, can see the things you see
It’s up yo you to change your and my life’s up to me
The problems that you suffer from are problems that you make
The shit we have to climb through is the shit we choose to take
If you don’t like the life you live, change it now it’s yours
Nothing has effects if you don’t recognize the cause
If the programme’s not the one you want, get up, turn off the set
It’s only you that can decide what life you’re gonna get
If you don’t like religion you can be the Anti-Christ
If you’re tired of politics you can be an Anarchist (Crass)

It is this independence that is at the heart of Emily Brontë’s poetry, and also resides within the Philosophy of the Brontës in general. Throughout their work, the Brontës explored the heart of the individual. From Charlotte’s isolated and questioning protagonist in *Jane Eyre*, to the speakers present within the poetry of Emily. There is a desire to question the authority of those that have raised them; to question the ideals that surrounded them in their lifetime. The poetry of Emily Brontë tells a story of an isolated woman who did her best to
explore the world of questioning and imagination, even when at times it seemed to cause a personal disruption to the psyche.

Conversely Crass also led to these ideals, to the extent that it almost grew paradoxical: that if one repeats the ideas that “There is no authority but yourself” that you will eventually become an authority in your own right. This would be but one reason the band would find themselves disbanding in the ominous year of 1984. While the band could not find themselves remaining together, many of the members would spend the rest of their career fighting against both religion and the government, while maintaining their stance for a rugged individualism.
CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion

When you woke this morning you look so rocky-eyed
Blue and white normally, but strange ringed like that in black.
It doesn’t get much better, your voice can get just ripped up
shouting in vain,
Maybe someone hears what you say, but you’re still on your own at
night.
You’ve got to make such a noise to understand the silence,
Screaming like a jackass, ringing ears so you can’t hear the
silence.
Even when it’s there. Like the wind seen from the window.
Seeing it, but not being touched by it. (Crass)

Within his auto-biography Shibboleth: A Bit of My Revolting Life Penny Rimbaud writes extensively on his friendship with Phil Russel, AKA Wally Hope. Penny had met him at the Windsor Free Festival in 1973. Rimbaud observes that one of the more discerning features of the second-year festival was the fact that many of the police were making sure the undesirables were removed from the Queen’s backyard. Penny describes Wally as a man that was capable of bringing magic to those around him; Penny swears that Wally once changed the color of
the sky “as if he’d cut up a rainbow and thrown the pieces into the air” (Rimbaud 149).

What made Wally so particular fascinating to Penny was his contempt for a straight society: one that blindly supported the government; people who appreciated their property more than the value of other people’s lives. Wally Hope was a Hippie, one who loved the ideas and personalities of everyone. Hope advocated for LSD, though more in a way as an act of finding love rather than a means of ‘dropping-out.’ Wally also served as an inspiration for the Dial House commune, and even started a satirical cult known as “The Wallies” (156).

It was during their second year of attempting to piece together the Stonehenge Music Festival when Wally was arrested for three tabs of Acid. Held without bail, Wally quickly became a nuisance to the prison system, when he demanded that he was unable to wear the mandated prison clothing, claiming that the clothes caused him to break out into a rash. Hope was taken to the prison doctor, who decided to label him a Schizophrenic. During this time, Penny laments that the laws of Britain allowed any individual to become “sectioned” (165) or forced into a mental institution so long as two doctors agreed that the patient needed hospitalization. While it would take some time for Wally to become institutionalized, Rimbaud addresses this due to the perverse nature of any two doctors being allowed to imprison any individual for almost any cause. Wally would fall victim to sectioning after being heavily medicated by the state.

While serving his unspecified amount of time in jail, Wally would be prescribed an incredibly large dose of the medicine Largactil, and would become
sick from the side-effects of the drug. Rimbaud remembers that as Wally was going back to the courts, he “was so physically and mentally bound up in a drug-induced straitjacket that he was totally incapable of understanding what was going on, let alone of offering any kind of defense for himself” (168). While on this drug, Wally would be sectioned by the state to the Old Manor Psychiatric Hospital, Salisbury, for an undisclosed amount of time.

Wally would be released from the Hospital a shell of his former self. The drugs prescribed and forced upon him by doctors and nurses left him moody and distant; his physical body literally swelling due to the side effects of Largactil and Modecate. It would not be long after this time that Penny would find his friend dead. The state declared it a suicide, yet Penny maintains that it was a cover-up by the state; after all, why did it take the state over six weeks to find the commonly prescribed Welldorn in Wally’s system?

Wally Hope serves as the example of the ‘Punk-Rock Spirit’ that is embodied through the art and actions of such an outstandingly unique individual, and ultimately, the Spirit being sought after in this work. Wally possessed the characteristics that can be found both in the works of Crass, and in the works of the Brontës: stubbornly passionate and uncompromising toward his art, yearning for personal and individualistic freedom, and willing to engage anyone over these matters. While the Brontës may not have openly or directly challenged the ideals around them, they laid a critically important foundation through their works, a series of work that helped influence the free-form thinkers present in Wally Hope and Crass.
Concerning the home, the idea that the home may function as a source of inspiration—whether this may be a blessing or a curse in the case of the Brontës—as well as the importance the sense of community has on the work of those residing within the home. Though the Brontës were related, it was Crass that brought themselves together in a familia sense, and it was art and expression that closely knit the two together. While Dial House served as a home for Crass, it also served as their personal epicenter for their culture and ideas. For the Brontës, the Haworth Parsonage would be their retreat away from the world around them. Whereas Crass would extend their ideas outwardly toward the world, the Brontës would create an inward sense of expression.

The importance of an art space is not lost on the city of Akron, Ohio. The city contains several different houses whose tenants have dedicated their living spaces as a place for bands to play, art exhibits to take place, and stage-plays to come to life. These spaces have become crucial for the maintaining of a Do-it-Yourself approach to art and music, and it is in large part thanks to the Brontës and Crass that these spaces have blossomed and thrived. Crass and Dial House, the Brontës and Haworth Parsonage, are on the opposite ends of the same spectrum. Both served as an epicenter for art and culture, and both had a monumental impact on the world around them.

In terms of the individual, what Crass accomplished bordered on an almost paradoxical exploration into what it meant to be an individual; what it meant to strive past the expected norms of the time. The band achieved this through song and film, and laid the groundwork for Punk musicians that would
come after them. Crass strove for personal freedom to the extent that they felt like they were becoming too authoritarian; their chants began to feel like they were barking orders rather than truly begging their audience for “Anarchy and Peace.”

Whereas Crass attempted to shout predominantly for the liberation of the individual, for the Brontës, the individual would stem from isolation. While Charlotte would eventually find herself married, it goes without saying that the Brontë siblings spent the majority of their lives isolated from the outside world, and it was from this lack of social interaction that they were able to spawn a set of ideas that helped revolutionize the literary world, and the world around them. This in thanks partly from the disjointed and sporadic teaching practices of their father, as well as from questioning the values placed on women in the nineteenth century. The Brontës consistently questioned their place and role in the universe, and most likely died without arriving at a satisfactory answer.

Those that have read the Brontës should be thankful for what has survived from the Brontë siblings. If something dreadful had happened to Emily before the publishing of *Wuthering Heights*, the world would have lost something that resonated terribly with the human condition. What makes the novel so important is that it connected with the essence of humanity in a way not seen since Shakespeare. The passion felt by Catherine and Heathcliff touches a nerve that resides in the heart of every lover; it touches a nerve that many people have only ever felt for a fleeting moment, yet Emily was able to collect and harvest into a book that resonates within those that have ever felt or yearned for love.
Heathcliff Earnshaw is a lot of things, dreadfully passionate being one of them. He was tortured internally, and by the Heavens outside of the Earth. His actions disgusted and perverted those around him, yet he never apologized at any time for his behavior. This is why Heathcliff stands par excellence with those that have truly escaped the indoctrinated morality of a given society, why he stands outside his world, and looks in. It is Heathcliff that helps make the connections between Brontës and Crass, and while his results our questionable, they are his own.

Within the liner notes of Crass’ *Christ: the Album* is a short poem. It is left unattributed to anyone, possibly in as a means to create anonymity, which would play further into the ideology of a “true” individual:

If this morning is a sad song, sing on
such an old song, don’t mind, sing on,
keep on, don’t mind, sing on.
If all the world was as gentle as the breeze within my hands;
If all the days weren’t numbered for those who walk
aimless down the high road;
If the space between us was as solid as I feel it
there’d be no sad song
If all this was our world
not mine, not yours,
if all of this was our world
one we’d be
Can you see?
If you open your heart just a little you can whisper
new song. (Crass)

The verse sounds almost as if Heathcliff is lamenting his soul to
Catherine, as if gliding his hand through her hair while he whispers in his ear.
The poem begs for two people to unite into one, yet the repetition of “world”
suggests that this is something meant for anyone to accomplish. It is a
connection with passion and for the Earth around them that unites Crass and the
Brontës. While the world that surround the Brontës was rather secluded, it was
one that they drank in with every ounce of their energy; and that energy was
thrived upon and exerted out in the passion of their words.

After attempting to merge the ideas and works of the Brontës with the
work of Crass, one of the largest concerns that emanated throughout was the
paradoxical argument of striving for individuality. Whether this may be a
sociological, genetic, or philosophical question, it is one without an easy answer.
Just what would be the consequences of individuals all striving toward their own
personal liberty? It is a question that Crass struggled with as they attempted to
scream a message of personal freedom, while at the same time attempting to not
become an authoritarian system that they fought so hard against. The Brontës
would struggle in this paradox through an inward liberty: fighting the war between
ideals placed on them, and ideals they wished to create for themselves. They
struggled with religious ideas, and romanticized marital love to an extent that
almost plagued them.
What makes this paradox so challenging is that it does not come with an easy answer. It is a strife Nietzsche talked about extensively in his works: it can take on a Marxist approach, one that may even border on an answer typical of Ayn Rand. Choosing to view this problem through the eyes of Crass and the Brontës gives a unique perspective into identity theory, and helps reveal and preserve several different facets of two different camps of ideas.

Ultimately, the importance of this work is for one to develop their own ideals, as well as create their own sense of morality and love. What the Brontës and Crass shared is an idea that should be carried in the heart of all those who become exposed to the world. It is through the works of the Brontës that the reader is to determine for themselves the actions of Catherine and Heathcliff; judge for themselves the actions of Jane Eyre in the same way the characters in turn had to make these judgements for themselves. With Crass, it is up to the listener to judge their own morality; to create and inspire from within their own being and soul.

During the fall of 2016, I was informed by my thesis director that many artifacts from Charlotte Brontë and her sisters would be on display at the Morgan Museum and Library in New York City. After having been momentarily dismayed by the project due to the unfortunate circumstances between Penny Rimbaud and myself, I decided that at the very least this would be an opportunity to visit New York while also attempting to work on my thesis.

It had just so happened that three of my friends were also attempting to go to the city, though their reasoning was to see a Punk band called A Global
Threat. The timing almost could not have been more perfect, and we all agreed to go together. My friend Miles and I had decided to leave before them, and a good portion of our time was spent talking about my project. Miles had never been a fan of Crass, and could only respond with the joke “Why did Crass break up? Because they lost their stencil!” I always wanted to ask Penny what he thought of the joke, but never found an appropriate time to bring it up.

My friends and I stayed at a hotel in Queens across from a large and especially gloomy cemetery. A cemetery that I could convince none of my friends to go and visit, no matter how many times I mentioned the Brontës and the parallels that this may rouse within me. As a group, we awoke early in the morning, but we all divided our plans. I was unable to convince anyone to visit the Morgan Library with me, so I had to agree to meet up with them later. I took a train and stood by the window, watching as the string of lights hugging the walls of the tunnel zoom and blur past me.

Outside the station, the bright light faded my vision, the hustle and the bustle of the city had me walking in circles before I finally found the museum. Grey and boxy, it seemed more like a corporate warehouse than an art gallery. Fitting, as I learned when I got the building that “Morgan” stood for J.P. Morgan, one of the more successful bankers of antiquity. Paying my way in, I decided to look at the library itself, which was separate from the Brontë exhibit. As I stepped inside, what was revealed was a room far too beautiful for one man to own: the ceiling adorned with art that told the story of the world’s own history; the books unfortunately sitting behind a cage. I sat there quietly, drinking it all in, until I
remembered I was here for the Brontës. I left, and took the elevator upstairs to their exhibit.

As this was the infancy of my thesis, the thoughts of how to connect these two groups together was not immediately registering to me; the idea that I would actually have to synthesize the two groups together in any sort of factual or meaningful way seemed altogether impossible. I knew there was a nexus in the fact that they both shared a space, and crafted art together, but I had not yet understood the larger connections; the deeper passion both groups experienced in the undertaking of their work; the ability to cull their own pain into something beautiful, something beyond the capacity of themselves; the strength to express themselves as individuals working against the grain society; and their decisions to abandon the values of their society and adopt their own. Combing the Brontës with Crass resonated with me, but I was still unsure as to why.

Opening the doors immediately greeted me to a dress small and colored by history with a fading blue. It was a dress that had belonged to Charlotte Brontë, and as I glared at it, I couldn’t help but imagine the spirit of her still lingering around in the tiny frame of her small blue dress. I saw one of Charlotte's tiny-books, a play untitled *The Poetaster: A Drama*. In the most delicate and gentle font, the front page was inscribed “Published by no one, possessed by everyone.” It reminded me of the Crass ethos, “There is no authority but yourself.” It always felt like it was an idea that was intrinsic to everyone; the desire one feels for freedom and liberation. The tiny yet careful font in which Charlotte had written was as minuscule as her dress. It seemed fascinating to me
that someone so small had taken on such a large amount of pain from the world, and still allowed herself to grow strong.

It was staring at the incomprehensibly small letters that Charlotte had penned by hand that I began to realize the project I was undertaking, it was Charlotte's death certificate that solidified the legitimacy of my work. Encased in glass alongside a photograph of Arthur Bell Nicholls was Charlotte Brontë’s memorial card. It read “In Memory of: CHARLOTTE NICHOLLS, WHO DIED MARCH XXXL, MDCCCLV, Aged 38 Years.” I saw before my eyes the transformation of Charlotte Brontë. Though it was not Emily, it was the last name Nicholls that inspired my muse to sing her prosperous song to me. It was the escape from identity that was my inspiration; the separation from name and identity of which I became enthralled. I put my hand on the glass, and sighed a breath of relief.

The last piece I looked at was the sibling portrait painted by Branwell. Encased in a basic and smooth gold frame, the painting was cracking, and appeared as if it lived several years folded over itself in someone’s treasure chest. I stood seemingly forever staring into the gaze of the three sisters: Emily, Anne, and Charlotte looming over each other, with the washed out yellowish glow of Branwell lurking behind them like a shadow. I walked away from the painting, took the elevator back downstairs, and went outside. The city was still moving, still glowing with the energy it had when I arrived, and I walked down the street in search of my friends.
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