

Rock against Gender Roles: Performing Femininities and Doing Feminism among Women Punk Performers in the Netherlands, 1976-1982

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On November 8, 1980, a collective of women—inspired by the Rock Against Sexism movement in the U.K.—organized the *Rock tegen de Rollen* festival (“Rock Against Gender Roles”) in the Netherlands’s city of Utrecht. The lineup consisted of six all-women punk and new wave bands (the Nixe, the Pin-offs, Pink Plastic & Panties,ⁱ the Removers, the Softies and the Broads) playing for a mixed gender audience. Similar to the Ladyfests two decades later, the main goal was to counteract the gender disparity of musical production (Aragon 77; Leonard, *Gender* 169). The organizers argued that:

popular music is a men’s world as most music managers, industry executives and band members are male. Women are mainly relegated to the roles of singer or eye candy. However, women’s emancipation has also affected popular music as demonstrated by an increasing number of all-women bands playing excellent music. To showcase and support such bands we organized the *Rock tegen de Rollen* festival. (De Borst 40)

While the festival was a success (it quickly sold out), its reception indicates that punk feminists in the early 1980s occupied an “in the middle” position, between punk and second wave feminism. On the one hand, it proved difficult to ban sexism from punk scenes. Even during the *Rock tegen de Rollen* festival, several male attendants violated the explicitly anti-sexist space the organizers had created by throwing beer bottles and “complimenting” women for wearing “such cute dresses” (*Rock tegen de Rollen* 8). Second wave feminists, on the

other hand, applauded the effort to break with traditional gender roles by actively participating in male dominated punk and new wave music. However, most bands that performed at the *Rock tegen de Rollen* festival were dismissed as “chaotic, aggressive and immature,” and “not particularly feminist” (De Borst 40).

Yet, in theory, the ideologies of punk and feminism both encourage women’s participation in music and offer them a space (or scene) to perform alternative femininities. Punk has arguably been a watershed in the participation of women in rock bands (Reddington 5). In contrast to the progressive rock of the late 1960s and early 1970s, punk was relatively simple music to play in terms of structure and rhythm, cultivating passionate amateurism instead of demanding expertise (O’Meara 299-300). Furthermore, its do-it-yourself ideology meant that women (and men) were encouraged to take cultural production into their own hands (Gottlieb and Wald 255-256). This gave many young women the confidence to join a band and become “one-chord wonders” (Laing). Punk also challenged conventional notions of attractiveness and sexuality, creating new possibilities to perform non-hegemonic images of femininity (Bayton, *Frock Rock* 107-122). Feminism has also been a major catalyst for inspiring women’s participation in popular music making (Bayton, “Feminist Musical Practice”). As an ideology, feminism explicitly encouraged women to enter traditional male enclaves as such as rock music. Furthermore, the second wave feminist movement created anti-commercial and anti-hierarchical female-only scenes where women could perform and experiment with different configurations of femininity (Skinner 159). As feminist audiences were generally very supportive, they gave “women the confidence to believe that, like the boys, they could be music-makers rather than simply fans” (Bayton, “Feminist Musical Practice,” 191).

Despite the commonalities mentioned above, little dialogue took place between punk and second wave feminism in the Netherlands in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Drawing on

the recollections of female punk performers, this article instead shows strong generational conflicts between young punk musicians and second wave feminists over how to perform femininity (both in terms of style of dress and music) and how to reach gender equity (with or without men). This generational mismatch is due to the perceived rigidity of radical second wave gender politics versus punk's playful engagement with difference, contradiction and irony (Citron 53; Munford). Furthermore, many punk scenes in the Netherlands had a strong egalitarian agenda, which conflicted with radical feminists' calls for gender separatism.

Most studies on punk and feminism have largely dismissed this "in the middle" generation as playing only a marginal role within the punk movements of the 1970s and 1980s (Leonard, "Rebel Girl" 237; Piano), while crediting the American riot grrrl movement for kick starting third wave feminism in the 1990s (Attwood 240; Bulbeck). However, as the reception of the *Rock tegen de Rollen* festival shows, its in-between position actually makes this generation a particularly interesting case through which to study situated performances of femininity, as well as multiple ways of doing feminism. In contrast to the riot grrrls of the 1990s, these female punk performers were rocking against two different sets of gender expectations and norms, enacted within the contexts of male dominated punk scenes and second wave feminism. Albeit less explicitly feminist and sexually confrontational than their riot grrrl successors (Gottlieb and Wald 253), punk feminism around 1980 already combined elements from second wave feminism—the struggle of gender equality—and (what would later be called) third wave feminist practices—focus on doing feminism within mixed gender subcultural sites and performing alternate notions of femininity (Klein 221-222). By re-telling the experiences of these women punk artists, this article not only addresses a largely ignored chapter in punk's genealogy, but also contributes to understanding the complex, and often conflicting, relationships between popular music and feminism.

Method

This study examines the experiences of women punk performers, from their perspective and in their words. It is culled from eighteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews that I conducted with former women punk musicians, about how they were perceived as musicians, how they performed particular femininities, how this differed in the punk and feminist scenes, and how (or if) they did feminism. As retrospective interviews understandably include distortions due to time and the inaccuracy of memory (Rubin and Rubin 84), I triangulated the responses by administering a short survey (including questions on their involvement in second wave feminism) and by drawing on other sources as well (e.g., interviews in fanzines). The majority of the interviews were conducted at respondents' homes or workplace and ranged from time from 45 minutes to almost two hours.

Several criteria were used to select respondents. First, interviewees had to have performed punk music. I follow film studies scholar Steve Neale in defining genres as “systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics and fans in making what identify as a distinctive sort of music” (19). Therefore the selection was based on the discographies compiled by punk critics such as Goossens and Vedder, and Van Leeuwen, and included only bands that had released at least one title on cassette or vinyl. Second, I made sure my selections reflect, as much as possible, the diversity of women punk performers in the Netherlands (see below) with regard to chronology (including relatively few early adopters), geography (including women from geographically-dispersed punk scenes) and instruments (including seven singers, eight bass players, two drummers and one guitarist – see Clawson). Furthermore, all interviewees were from a white, mostly middle-class background and were born between 1954 and 1966. Third, I tracked potential respondents in various ways, ranging from contact information in old fanzines or recordings, to contacts with key figures within Dutch punk scenes. All the

performers I approached were willing to participate, and were eager to share their experiences.

Punk in the Netherlands (1976-1982): Early Scenes and Participation of Women

The formative years of Dutch punk can roughly be divided in two periods (Goossens and Vedder). The first interval starts in 1976, when the leading popular music magazine *Oor* for the first time tries to explain this new genre (*nouveau punque*) to its readers, and ends with punk's funeral oration proclaimed by mainstream media in 1979 (Goossens and Vedder). During this period, a small punk scene developed in Amsterdam, which prominently included the club DDT and the record label No Fun. In other parts of the Netherlands, however, there was only punk music, often played by professional musicians strategically turning punk (Van Bruggen). Punk music in general, and Dutch punk bands in particular, received little commercial or critical recognition. Only four Dutch punk groups were signed to major record companies in this period, and none made it onto the Dutch charts.ⁱⁱ By 1979, these bands were dropped by their record labels, and both DDT and No Fun ceased to exist. During the second period (1979-1982), punk enthusiasts without much musical expertise, inspired by the do-it-yourself ethos and passionate amateurism of the first wave, started music bands, venues (including squats) and fanzines, resulting in many local punk scenes, or contexts in "which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others" (Bennett and Peterson 1). Major punk scenes were located in large cities and organized around a few central bands, left-wing collectives and/or venues (Van Leeuwen), such as Amsterdam/Wormer (the Ex and Villa Zuid squat), Rotterdam (Rondo's and Red Rock collective), Utrecht (Lullabies) and Groningen (Massagraf and Rood/Wit/Zwart collective). These scenes were important, as they provided an infrastructure for doing it yourself artists, including access to rehearsal space, shared

instruments etc. These spaces also removed boundaries between the audience and performers. The arrival of hardcore punk in 1982 ended the second period in the Dutch punk genealogy (Goossens and Vedder).ⁱⁱⁱ

During these formative years (1976-1982), the total percentage of individual women punk musicians was limited to approximately 8%, whereas about 20% of all punk bands contained female members.^{iv} Although these numbers differ somewhat between local scenes, we can conclude that, based on their numerical representation, women performers did not play a central role in the punk movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s (cf. Leonard, “Rebel Girl” 237). Women participants themselves, for example, Karin, bassist in the all-women new wave punk band La Neue Name, confirmed this conclusion: “The unevenness in the participation of men and women was pretty clear. Girls did come to see shows, but...it was difficult to participate as performers...”

Yet, compared to the first period (1976-1979), which was dominated by trained professionals, the number of women punk musicians did strongly increase during the second interval (1979-1982). Furthermore, almost all women were indeed inspired to participate by punk’s DIY ideology. According to Annemiek, drummer in the mixed gender, experimental punk band Zero Zero:

Before the arrival of punk, you had all these hard rock bands with expensive installations and huge crews.... The cool thing about punk was its do-it-yourself attitude.... If it wasn’t for punk, I would have never played in a band. Because many boys had been practicing for years in their rooms and then started a band. But to play punk you did not really have to be all that good.... You just started a band and that’s it.

At least to some extent, punk provided a route into music, and in contrast to what previous studies have suggested (Bayton, “Feminist Musical Practice” 178), few interviewees became punk performers as a direct result of their feminist beliefs.

Performing Femininities in Punk: Treated as Equals and Other Reactions

Despite the unevenness in participation rates in punk scenes, the respondents generally experienced the male-dominated punk scenes as supportive, confirming punk's reputation for gender equality (cf. Donze 261). Despite previous suggestions that "women are [were] expected to be less good at playing than men" (Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 122), almost all the women punk performers I interviewed noted that they were generally taken seriously as musicians. For example, Terry, bassist and vocalist for the gender mixed punk band Cheap 'n' Nasty recalled, "I have never had the impression that I was judged any differently as a musician, because I was a woman." Although several respondents remembered occasionally being treated in a derogatory manner, which they attributed to patriarchy, they categorized such incidents as exceptions to the rule. Marloes, guitarist for the mixed gender experimental punk band Smexmec, remarked, "Well, one time somebody said to me: 'You play pretty well for a girl.'.... But in general it was considered quite normal that women played in bands." Even all-women bands, quite rare at that time, were regarded as full members of the punk community.^v According to Sandra, bassist in the all-women band, Asbest, which she describes as "plain and simple punk," recalls, "Guys sometimes said: 'You are only invited to play here, because you are an all-women band.' But in general...everybody thought we were truly part of our scene.."

The experiences of most of the women musicians I interviewed confirm that punk created ample possibilities to perform alternative femininities by rejecting or playfully undermining conventional notions of attractiveness and beauty (Bayton, *Frock Rock* 107-122).^{vi} Women punk performers took the freedom to adopt, or combine, elements from various modes of dress (Laing 92-94). Some women, like Margot, bassist/vocalist of the all-women "punk band Atims, had a "very asexual approach of dressing" similar to the British band the Raincoats (O'Meara 305). She said, "It was important to us not to dress too revealing. So we wore large sweaters, short hair...looking tough and not showing your

femininity” (Margot). An unadorned appearance was not only an attempt to demystify the performer/audience divide (Reynolds and Press 306-315), but also as a means of performing identification with the working classes of communist Russia or China. Another group of women musicians adopted a more masculine image, and dressed similar to their male counterparts (Kennedy 91): leather jackets, jeans, torn shirts. As Emilie, bassist for the mixed gender punk band the Scabs, described, “Actually, pretty boyish.... Black jackets and black pants.... A bit manly.” A few women appropriated girlhood by subverting girlish elements in their performance (Wald), similar to British artists Poly Styrene (X-Ray Spex) and Faye Fife (Rezillos). For example, Monique D., bassist in the mixed gender new wave punk band RIP recalls, “I wore my hair up straight and had shoes in various colors. I used to make clothes myself.... like polka dot trousers and I made jewelry out of a garden hose.” Hyper-sexualization (like Siouxsie Sioux) was a style of dress adopted by few Dutch punk women. One exception was Helen Heels, the “vocals and body” of the band Speedtwins. While she framed her S/M act in feminist terms, “a woman uses a man as a sex object,” incidents of sexual harassment and sexist music reviews demonstrate the riskiness of this brand of strategic reappropriation of hegemonic representations of femininity (Wald 592). In general, women punk performers were conscious of the implications of their appearance, and were held accountable for their behavior (West and Zimmerman). But in contrast to riot grrrls in the 1990s this performance as hardly ever a staged performance of a carefully chosen alternate femininity (cf. Harris, *Staging Feminities*).

Even though women were taken seriously as performers, and were allowed to be asexual, masculine, childish or tarty (Bayton, *Frock Rock* 65), sexism was still very present within most Dutch punk scenes. Monique K., vocalist of the mixed gender Dutch punk band Ketchup, like several other women, felt they were sometimes stared at as sex objects: “Most people did take me seriously as a women punk performer.... Others probably enjoyed seeing a

women perform in a torn t-shirt.” While the absence of music industry interest made it possible for women to perform alternative forms of femininity, instead of being pushed to feminize their punk performance (cf. Finley), women at this time did not define the rules of interaction within punk scenes, as riot grrrls would ten years later. Because of this lack of structural control, they had relatively little control over how they were perceived, and were unable to ban sexism altogether. Outside the relatively safe theatrical context of the punk space, alternate femininities were clearly sanctioned by punitive and regulatory social conventions (Keenan 382). As, for example, Astrid, vocalist in the mixed gender punk band Götterflies, experienced:

I have been spit at, I have been beaten up, I have been kicked.... One time I went to the police station to report a motorist who had cornered me.... Having green and pink hair.... the policeman asked me whether I had been lying in the gutter for too long.

Notwithstanding such harassment, many interviewees do not qualify as victim feminists, or “as helpless victims of masculinity or male oppression” (Bulbeck). For example, Ilva, vocalist in the all-women punk band Nixe, recounted how male punks bothered her and a fellow band member after a gig: “Well, Nicky and I were engaged in kickboxing, so we did not care too much.” Although these “power feminists” sometimes physically did-it-themselves (Harris, “Not Waving”), most women punks were hesitant to explicitly label themselves as a feminist. The statement, “I’m not a feminist, but...” is often used as a precursor to aligning oneself with a particular feminist principle, without labeling oneself as a feminist proper (Zucker). For example, Terry from Cheap ‘n’ Nasty argued, “Well, as I said before, I am absolutely not a feminist.... Yes of course, it contains some good elements.” Below I will discuss why many women punk performers described themselves primarily as punk instead of feminist (Kearney 216), that is, why the relation between punk and feminism was fraught with conflict.

Punk and Feminism? Generational Conflicts over Dress and Music Genre

The first explanation as to why there was little dialogue between punk and second wave feminism in the late 1970s and early 1980s was due to a generation gap between women punks and second wave feminists. First of all, when asked about their view on feminism, several respondents described this ideology as “old-fashioned,” “boring,” or “hippie-like,” something with which their mothers would have been involved. Emilie, for example, indicated she was not much of a feminist, “My mother was a fanatical feminist. That is why I wasn’t.... I thought it was kind of prudish.” In the Netherlands second wave feminism arguably started in 1967 when Joke Kool-Smit, the Dutch equivalent of Betty Friedan, published an influential article on the position of men and women in the Dutch society (Van de Loo 48-52). Not surprisingly, Emilie and several other women punks defined feminism as part of the previous generation, as something you should be rebelling against as part of youth culture.

Moreover, many women punk performers who sympathized with feminism experienced this generation gap first hand when playing, or just visiting, feminist scenes, and particularly women-only venues. From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s second wave feminism in the Netherlands was dominated by socialist-feminist organizations, (primarily *Man Vrouw Maatschappij* and the *Dolle Mina*’s, which allowed, and even encouraged, men to participate. However, by the mid-1970s, the emphasis of the women’s movement shifted from targeting capitalism to patriarchy (Costera Meijer 107-161; Van de Loo 98-121). The swift rise of radical feminism manifested itself in the increasing popularity of all-female conscious raising groups, which evolved into an extensive network of *vrouwenhuizen* (women-only venues). While these venues mainly housed political and educational functions for their local women’s movement, they also organized leisure activities such as concerts (Mostert). As the number of women-only venues increased, they competed for a limited number of all-women bands (Draaijers and Piekaar), so many women punk performers did, at some point, perform

at such concerts. But as Karin recalled, “Those women-only venues were mostly visited by older women.... We could not relate to them. We were young girls trying to find out what we wanted in life.” This generational mismatch manifested itself in conflicts over the ways (playful and multiple vs. rigid and uniform) in which women should perform their femininity with regard to appearance and music style.

Like third wave feminists in the 1990s, women punks during this period used their performances to construct alternative femininities, oftentimes indeliberately. While such transgressions and subversions were tolerated, or even encouraged, in punk locales, radical feminists generally adhered to a strict gender dualism in celebrating femaleness (Keenan), resulting in conflict when punk performances took place within radical feminist spaces. For example, Astrid, a self-proclaimed feminist, was booed off the stage, because she wore “bright colored dayglo clothes...nylon stockings, short skirts,” instead of distinctly “unfeminine” clothes (Attwood 240): Astrid recalls, “I did not know that the venue would be packed with “dungarees”The reactions were so unfriendly.... I had to leave the stage.... I took me a while to get over that experience. I never thought I would be discriminated against by other women, solely based on my appearance.” Other interviewees were also highly critical of radical feminism, which they experienced as operating like a fundamentalist religion, prescribing how one should dress (Kearney 224). Marieke, vocalist in the mixed gender band Jet\$et, which she characterizes as “somewhat melodic punk,” recalled that one almost had to abandon femininity in order to be a feminist: “Yes, we thought it was too...seventies. In our view, you should be allowed to wear lipstick and a skirt. But if you entered a women-only bar in a short skirt with lipstick on, you were likely to be kicked out.” Several punk women interested in feminism went to women-only venues as visitors. For example, Angela, bassist for the all-women punkish band No-Song Kutkotz remembers:

I sometimes went to a women-only venue. However, as I was by far the youngest, I could not relate to these women. In addition, my appearance

conflicted with the women over there. It was actually a somewhat sad... for me, because I had a totally different perspective on things. I believed you could be fashionable and a feminist at the same time. You do not have to wear those boring dungarees.... I could not relate to feminists, even though I felt like a feminist.

The second explanation for the gap between punk and feminism is that many radical feminists believed that only folk music was truly women's music, while rock was tainted by masculinity (Bayton, "Feminist Musical Practice" 185). Indeed, most bands that played in women-only bars and venues sounded "sweeter and more melodic," according to Kim, bassist in the all-women punkwave band Pink Plastic & Panties. Radical feminist audiences "were not interested in punk music," argued Charlotte, bassist in the mixed gender post-punk band A4. As such, punk concerts at women-only venues often literally ended in generation clashes, as Arie the drummer in all-women "punk rock" band Wanda's remembered:

Well, playing at women-only venues was often annoying, because it was always a disappointment. You were invited from a feminist, all-women-are-equal perspective... But the ladies generally did not appreciate the music we played. It was too loud and... masculine and therefore just wrong. On a few occasions, the organizer cut the power, and we were dragged off stage... One time they asked us to turn down the volume, because the visitors could not hear each other while playing cards. Well... so much for showing female solidarity.

Angela described being involved in similar incidents, "because of our tough image, we were treated with suspicion. We once played in a women-only venue and we were unplugged because we supposedly made too much noise. It ended in a fight."

Some respondents partially enjoyed confronting the anti-joy seriousness of second wave radical feminism as their recollections were often accompanied by laughter. In line with punk's resistant genealogy, some of these confrontations have been widely covered, even cultivated, in fanzines. Interestingly, self-defined feminists often kept strict boundaries between their feminist and punk activities.^{vii} Angela, for example, only played at women-only venues with her band Wonderwoman, whose music, in distinction to No-Song Kutkotz, she describes as "absolutely not punk."

To conclude, as women punk performers took a multifaceted, instead of a dualistic, approaches to performing femininity, and played a musical style that was often dismissed as masculine, feminist venues were not the sympathetic spaces described by some feminist scholars (cf. Skinner), at least not for punk musicians. These young women were considered a problem for feminism (Harris, “Not Waving”). As a result, much of the reluctance over being labeled a feminist stems from actual, and sometimes physical, generation conflicts, instead of persistent and powerful stereotypes of feminists as man-hating lesbians (cf. Manning).

Punk and Feminism? No Future... Without Men

The second explanation why there was little dialogue between punk and second wave feminism in the late 1970s and early 1980s was due to the dominant ideological configuration (individualist and/or left-wing) of many Dutch punk scenes. First, many women were, in principle against the exclusion of men from any scene, punk and/or feminist. Similar to third wave feminists, several of the women I interviewed saw punk as a form of individual empowerment and freedom (Harris, “Not Waving”). They therefore rejected exclusively pro-female radical feminism, as well as collectivist, left-wing politics in general. Anita, vocalist in the mixed gender band the Squits, which she characterizes as “funny punk,” argues, “Punk and feminism were rather similar...about equal opportunities...and tolerance. It is about going about doing your own things...as an individual.” But for most punk women, radical feminism did not match their left-wing political ideology. Monique K. viewed feminism as one of many aspects of egalitarian politics: “I considered myself more of an anarchist than a feminist.... Since men and women were equal it was not necessary to give women a preferential treatment.” Stemming from this focus on broad political themes, Margot felt that women’s topics were considered of less importance, particularly by male participants.^{viii} The strong emphasis on egalitarianism meant that some all-women bands also refused to play at

women-only venues. For example, Sandra stated, “We believed that everybody should have the opportunity to come and see our show.... Having a pair of tits (or not), should not matter.” Other all-women bands discussed the topic extensively before they decided whether or not to perform such concerts. In most cases, they ambitiously decided they needed every concert that was offered to them.

Second, most women, self-proclaimed feminists and non-feminists alike, believed that excluding men does not contribute to achieving gender equity. Marieke posited:

The dominant ideology within the women’s movement was that women need to separate themselves from men in order to emancipate themselves first.... We believed however that you can only achieve your objective in cooperation with men. At that time however it was considered blasphemy.

Instead of discussing abstract ideals, others took a “think globally, act locally” kind of approach in order to achieve implicitly feminist ideals (Harris, “Riding My Own Tidal Wave” 30). Margot and Astrid respectively tried to make everyday changes in their local, male dominated punk communities: Margot argues, “I thought it was important to include men...you could achieve much more. You could listen to what they were arguing and say something about it.” While Astrid claims, “If you are excluding instead of inviting people, you cannot tell men: ‘Listen, I want to go out alone tonight without being harassed.’ Therefore it is better to start a dialogue than separate yourself.”

Third, Dutch punk around 1980 was youth movement centered on music. Although it contained political elements, it was also about adolescents having fun and performing with other punks, many of whom were male. For this reason, playing in women-only venues was rather boring, according to Margot, “It was never crowded at women’s festivals. We very much missed the company of the men from our scene.” Or, as Charlotte concluded, “Punk girls wanted to be with punk boys, while feminists were rather hostile towards men.” And while many punk scenes were idealized as gender neutral, heterosexuality remained very much the norm (cf. Coates).^{ix} As sociologist Patti Donze demonstrates in her

article of the Los Angeles heavy metal and punk scenes, heteronormativity comes with particular power dynamics in which women are often naturalized as passive fans or rocker chicks, while men are scripted as sexually aggressive performers. Few women actually addressed this topic during my interviews, Annemiek was an exception, she explains, “It was a bit disappointing that punk rebelled against pretty much everything...but did not challenge the stereotypical male-female relationship.”

To sum up, punk’s individualist, left-wing, egalitarian agenda was considered at odds with the separatist agenda of the radical women’s movement. Radical feminism was not only deemed ideologically incompatible with punk, many women strongly believed that gender equity could only be reached when men were involved as well. Finally, heterosocial fun, an important element in many youth cultures, also contributed to the rejection of radical feminism.

“Punk Feminism”: Doing Feminism without Being a Feminist

While feminism “can be broadly characterized by a concern with the systematic disadvantage of women and the means by which equitable outcomes can be achieved” (Gray and Boddy 368), there are many different ways women “do feminism” within particular, local contexts and in reference to dominant conceptions of gender (cf. West and Zimmerman). So how did women punk performers of this interstitial or “in the middle” generation do feminism? That is, what exactly was punk feminism around 1980?

On the one hand, women punk performers were resisting male dominance and sexism within many local punk scenes: male dominance and sexism. The goals of punk feminism were similar to many of the ideologies of second wave liberal feminism, such as entering men’s turf (equal access to the punk stage) and expanding the possibilities of women to perform alternative femininities (Klein 222-223). As such, being in a band was, in itself, a

feminist statement, as Marloes argued: “If a girl wants to learn to play guitar or drums in a band...she is already somewhat of a feminist.... Otherwise you would not do it, because...being male is the norm.” A similar argument was put forward by Angela: “It is important that women showed that they could also play their own music, being in their own band.... At that time, rock music was very much a male culture.... I considered it a terrain that had to be conquered.” Hella, vocalist in the all-women punkwave band Pink Plastic & Panties, discussed their way of doing feminism as empowering, but also as an implicit part of being a woman. Thus, punk feminists tried to change to world just by being where they were traditionally not supposed to be (Bulbeck), that is, within male-dominated punk scenes.

On the other hand, women punk performers, whether self-proclaimed feminists or not, were also highly critical of the rigid gender concepts of the then-dominant feminist ideology, that is, second wave radical feminism. Indeed, few punk women were involved institutionalized feminism and its practice (Bail), which might have included attending demonstrations, reading feminist magazines or books, etc. As Monique K. notes, “Punk had very strong women...which already was somewhat feminist...you do not need to write additional books or pamphlets or whatever...”

The ways in which women punks did feminism differed from second wave feminism, but shows striking similarities with the third wave feminist practices of the 1990s. For example, instead of viewing feminist practice as the actions of an individual being with significance primarily as part of a larger collective (cf. Moloney and Fenstermaker 208), many interviewees refer to doing it themselves, as individuals. These women view their feminism as an activity that manifests itself through their interactions, within particular local contexts, instead of in relation to an abstract theory “out there” (Heywood and Drake). As Charlotte reflected, “I have never been a true feminist, because I...have always been more a person that simply does things, with just as much energy as boys.” Similarly, Angela argued,

“If you want to get certain things done in the world of television: ‘don’t tell them, show them.’ That is what we did back then.... Do not proclaim your theories, live them!” These arguments are very similar to those raised by young women in the 1990s, urging second wave “victim” feminists to stop complaining (*klaagfeminisme*) and start making individual changes (Van de Loo 193-195). Women punks also reacted against second wave feminism’s uniform prescriptions on how to dress and sound. Rather than opposing the content of feminist gender conceptions per se, they refused its rigid gender dualism and instead embraced multiple, sometimes contradictory and unstable, ways to perform femininity. By playfully reclaiming and redefining different femininities, resulting from situated interactions, individual women punk performers destabilized and subverted existing symbolic binaries of sex and gender often indeliberately (Gillis and Munford 171). In turn, they provided a meeting place for young punk feminists, who could not relate to existing feminist networks (Munford). And, like their riot grrrl successors, women punks’ sites of activism consisted of mixed gender subcultural music scenes, instead of separatist feminist spaces. As Ilva recalled, “We wanted to play as often as possible for a mixed audience. That was already a form of feminism.... We did not want to chitchat with women first to discuss what should be done. No, we believed we were strong enough to face anyone.” Entering male turf and doing feminism by playfully negotiate multiple femininities were both key to punk feminist practice.

Conclusion

In this article I demonstrated why there was little cross-fertilization between punk and second wave feminism, despite many well-documented commonalities, in the Netherlands around 1980. Drawing primarily on the experiences of women punk performers, this study posits two main causes for my findings: 1. generational battles that took place between young punk musicians and second wave feminists over how to perform femininity and how to reach

gender equity, and 2. conflicts between the strong, egalitarian agenda of many punk scenes and radical feminists' separatism.

Second wave radical feminist audiences were not very supportive of, and at times were even hostile to, women punk performers (cf. Bayton "Feminist Musical Practice"; Skinner). Indeed, their support seems to have been genre-specific, and rather rigid regarding expectations of gender performance. As a result, many young respondents refused to align themselves with this form of feminism. Disappointed in second wave feminism, they tried to avoid feminist scenes as punk performers, and sometimes even as visitors. Not surprisingly, many women-only venues were closed in the mid-1980s, failing to recruit young women.

Also, many local punk scenes in the Netherlands were highly politicized, having a strong egalitarian agenda that conflicted with radical feminists' separatism. Many of the women I interviewed stressed to need for men to get involved in order to achieve gender equity. Moreover, women punk performers of the period, – in contrast to riot grrrls in the 1990s, did not play a central role in their local punk scenes. And as heterosexuality remained the unquestioned norm within this mixed gender youth culture, the gendered power dynamics were largely extent left intact (Donze 279). So while most female artists, musicians and scenesters experienced local Dutch punk scenes as supportive, allowing them to perform multiple femininities, women had little control over how they were seen, and sexism was still very much present.

Thus, women punk performers were "rocking against" two different sets of gender expectations: separatist second wave feminism dominated by women of a previous generation, and elements of sexism in male-dominated, heteronormative punk scenes. How then did women punk performers, more than a decade anterior to the much celebrated riot grrrl movement, try to negotiate the ideological and physical place between punk and feminism? While their goals were often very similar to those of second wave feminism, the

ways to achieve these aims were more comparable to those identified with (what later would be called) third wave feminism, including a focus on feminism as a playful, sometimes contradictory activity enacted in local subcultural contexts. But even though women of the “in the middle” generation addressed in this article did not play a central role in early punk movements, this study shows that it is precisely their position in-between punk and feminism that strongly affected how women punk performers were able to perform femininity and do feminism, navigating between different contexts with different sets of gender norms (cf. West and Zimmerman). Thus, to understand the complex relationship between pop music and feminism, we must look beyond the numerical value of women in particular music genres and scenes, and include in our analysis, generation specific ways of doing feminism.

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ⁱ Pink Plastic & Panties also played at the first international women’s rock festival, *Venus Weltklang*, which was held in West Berlin, Germany from June 19-21, 1981.

ⁱⁱ In the United Kingdom, eight punk bands made it into the Top 30 in 1977, followed by 15 in 1978 (Laing 145). Of these groups, three out of four (the Stranglers, Tom Robinson Band and Jonathan Richman) scored a hit in the Dutch Top 40 during those years.

ⁱⁱⁱ According to feminist scholar Lauraine Leblanc, hardcore punk rejected the gender ambiguity of punk’s formative years, edging women out of many punk scenes.

^{iv} These numbers are estimates based on the discographies referred to in the Method section.

^v However, several interviewees expressed their frustration about being explicitly “marked” as all-female bands (Brekhus).

^{vi} As this article examines how female punk *performers* (and not punk consumers or fans) do femininity on stage, navigating the normative gender conceptions of punk as well as feminism, I speak of “performing femininity” (cf. Moloney and Fenstermaker).

^{vii} A few punk women were trying to close the generation gap, being involved in organizing so-called *meidenpop* (girl pop) events. For example, members of the Wanda’s organized pop music classes for girls at music venues.

^{viii} An analysis of a selection of lyrics indeed shows that of those co-written by women, about 13% (9 out of 72) might be categorized as addressing “women’s topics,” such as gender roles, sexual harassment, appearance. The vast majority, however, covers political issues as the arms race, war, poverty, the nuclear bomb, etc.

^{ix} Similarly, while the right to determine one’s own sexuality was one of the goals of the Rock against Sexism movement (Toothpaste), it was not an explicit aim of the *Rock tegen de Rollen* festival.