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Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976

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Punks against censorship:

Negotiating acceptable politics in the Dutch fanzine *Raket*

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Punk took root in The Netherlands in 1977, with scores of new bands forming through 1978–80.¹ As with elsewhere, punk's mix of spectacular imagery, nihilism and/or radical politics, shock value and a do-it-yourself approach appealed to young people.

Also in the late 1970s, the port city of Rotterdam was undergoing a process of deindustrialisation and automation. It was still being rebuilt, both literally and figuratively, following near-annihilation during the Second World War.² The city's teenagers worked together to create strong subcultural and artistic networks, heavily influenced by left-wing political groups actively vying for attention.³

The fanzine *Raket* – Dutch for 'rocket' or 'missile' – was a crucial element in all this, with its creators seeking to support those involved in punk and new wave. The first issue, published in April 1979, was designed as a two-sided informational poster to be put up around Rotterdam. By so doing, its creators announced their presence on Rotterdam's alternative scene and declared their willingness to act as a point of contact between other bands and punks in the city.

Each issue of *Raket* carried a by-line stating the makers' intentions. The first issue read:

Raket's purpose is to act as a mouthpiece for Rotterdam's New-Wave groups. That is to say, Rotterdam bands can submit lyrics, details of gigs, small advertisements and similar, but also tales from concerts and other lovely stories. Of course, people who aren't in bands can also submit articles, comic-strips or drawings. [...] *Raket* will be released irregularly and pasted around the city of Rotterdam.⁴

As a submission-based publication at a time when new wave and punk were on the rise, *Raket* expanded quickly and gained a central position in the Rotterdam scene. It outgrew its poster format just a few months later, with issue 4 (September 1979) coming out as a more standard fanzine booklet. Overall, the fanzine ran for 14 issues between April 1979 and November 1980; its gig listings and the plethora of new band announcements in each issue helped chart the dissemination of Rotterdam – and Netherlands – punk.

Whilst *Raket* remained a Dutch-language fanzine, thereby limiting its potential circulation, its focus and readership expanded beyond The Netherlands' borders, with occasional reports from other countries such as Belgium and Germany. In issue 7 the creators acknowledged the growth of the fanzine's geographical reach by changing the by-line to read: '*Raket* is a fanzine by/for punks and no/new wavers, particularly in The Netherlands'. Print runs rose to 1,000 copies for issue 2 and for issues 12, 13 and 14. Copies were sold in record shops and squats across the country.⁵

Leonor Jonker has argued that *Raket* quickly became one of the two leading Dutch punk fanzines, despite – in 1979 – being a relative latecomer to the scene.⁶ The other was *KoeCrandt*, first created in August 1977 after its makers, based at Amsterdam's Sarphatistraat squat, saw an issue of Mark Perry's *Sniffin' Glue*. Many early Dutch punk fanzines, such as *Braak Maar Raak* and *Pin*, prioritised punk's cut 'n' paste aesthetic of stencilling over text-based discussion. Others, like *Raket*, served as mouthpieces for Dutch punk.⁷ Thus, *Raket* was not unique in serving to advertise what was happening in a local punk scene, nor in inviting submissions from readers. However, it was produced by a highly-active collective who made connections through gigs across the country, which might explain its rise from representing activities only in Rotterdam to speaking to and for the Dutch punk scene more widely.

Raket's creators were part of the KunstKollectief Dubio (KK Dubio), a collective of artists who met at Rotterdam's art school and were attracted to the aesthetic and political potential of punk. KK Dubio's involvement in punk led to the formation of the band Rondos in 1978. With help from the local government, they secured a place to both live and work: the dilapidated Huize Schoonderloo. This provided the artists with a base from which to operate as they embarked on other punk and art projects, including *Raket*, a publishing house and the 'Red Rock' band cooperative which included Rondos, Rode Wig, Sovjets and Tandstickörshocks. The collective, living at Huize Schoonderloo, thereby positioned themselves as the vanguard of the Rotterdam punk scene, advocating for more practice space in the city and using *Raket* to communicate with other bands.

Rondos and the Red Rock collective took an explicitly political approach to their music and activities, with lyrics and imagery that drew on communism and, in particular, Maoism. *Raket's* purpose, however, was different. As a 'mouthpiece' for the scene, relying

on submissions and with a promise to print everything that was contributed, the fanzine's output was more politically varied. Adverts, announcements and gig listings were present throughout the fanzine's issues; however, it quickly started to attract lengthier political discussions, with conversations between contributors taking place over numerous issues on topics such as anarchism, socialism, communism, capitalism, sexism, racism and fascism. *Raket*, therefore, provides a vivid snapshot of Dutch punk in 1979–80, and particularly the growing political tensions of the time. Politically-oriented punk (primarily left wing) had by this point become an established part of The Netherlands' subcultural landscape, fostered by an organised squatting movement and a tradition of anarchism (including the Provo movement) that had engaged closely with Amsterdam's alternative cultural life.⁸ By the late 1970s, there was also a rise in the activities of right-wing political groups, both politically and on the streets.⁹ Indeed, the Dutch punk scene was not immune to rising fascism, as this chapter will illustrate.

While *Racket's* political remit was wide, directed both by its creators and its readership, the fanzine remained firmly oriented to the left. This chapter, however, will focus on the presence of fascist and homophobic submissions to *Raket*. Such pieces were infrequent; nevertheless, their presence provides an important insight into the fanzine's 'no-censorship' approach.

In this chapter, I conduct a close reading of *Raket* to discuss the ways in which these submissions were treated by the fanzine's makers and the resulting response from its readership.¹⁰ In so doing, I frame a discussion of self-censorship and boundary-drawing practices in punk, issues that are of particular importance in a subculture that has, since its inception, witnessed tensions between far left and far right ideology and iconography. This chapter therefore contributes to debate on punks' engagement with the far-right¹¹; with

issues of censorship and anti-censorship in punk¹²; and on the role of the fanzine editor as an influence on their readers.¹³ It further contributes to a growing body of literature on Dutch subculture.

Anti-censorship and punk fanzines: providing a platform to fascists?

Raket operated a strict no-censorship policy, a logical extension of publishing a submission-based fanzine to serve the Rotterdam/national punk scene. Mostly, this policy meant it received advertisements, letters, drawings and lyrics from enthusiastic fans. The zine collective took this policy so seriously that on one occasion they felt the need to apologise for having shrunk down some of the submissions in order for them to better fit on the page.

However, there were some less savoury submissions that led the collective to consider how the no-censorship policy was implemented. Issue 8, published in January 1980, was the first time they felt an editorial decision had to be exercised in this regard. They explained their thought process in the pages of *Raket*, writing:

The following letter was sent to us by the fascist organisation N.P.N [Nationale partij Nederland; National Party Netherlands]. We first considered not printing it, because we have little desire to have such fascist ideas present in *Raket*. That in the end we decided to publish it, is because we do not want to apply censorship to a single thing so you can read this letter and make up your own mind what you think about fascism.¹⁴

The NPN was a small nationalist party. Its letter to *Raket* explained its two principal demands: first, calling for a pay rise for those who worked in heavy industry; second, stating

that they wanted to 'help' 'foreigners' return home. The party was not a large force in Dutch politics; instead, the Nederlandse Volks-Unie (Dutch Peoples-Union), the Centrumpartij (Centre Party) and its predecessor, the Nationale Centrumpartij (National Centre Party), were most active on the extreme right of Dutch politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The NPN registered as a political party in 1974 but did not contest an election and left few records of its activity. However, the letter to *Raket* indicates that it was active in 1980 and it may be presumed that the NPN hoped to appeal to the same sense of punk working-class solidarity that was present in many other political submissions to the fanzine. Moreover, a police report to the Head of Homeland Security suggests that there was prior contact between Rotterdam's punk scene and the NPN. The report contained intelligence regarding an NPN demonstration in Rotterdam, which took place on 24 November 1979 (a month *before* the date on the letter). It claimed that the demonstration was attended by some Rotterdam punks and drew attention to tensions within the Rotterdam scene through reference to punk debates about whether or not those who had been to the NPN demo would still be welcome in Kaasee, the local punk venue.¹⁵ The report also contained a scan of the page in *Raket* containing the NPN letter as further evidence of collaboration – and tension – between punks and the far-right party.¹⁶

In sticking with their decision to publish the letter, the makers of *Raket* drew on a wider trend in punk. Punks in many countries (including Britain¹⁷) had struggled against state censorship of their output. Whilst record releases could more easily be banned, fanzines' underground nature allowed freedom from this censorship. As such, punk zines became a site to argue against censorship. Engaging with fascists became a strategy in a wider anti-censorship struggle even for punks who were politically opposed to the far right. Andy Martin of the British band The Apostles went so far as to protest against censorship of

punk by printing an advert for the neo-Nazi band Skrewdriver in his *Scum* zine.¹⁸ This could be further framed as an attempt to keep lines of communication open in the hope of changing opinions. In this vein, Andy Palmer of Crass stated that they would consider playing gigs for the NF.¹⁹ Fascism, in these contexts, becomes the milestone to test the extent of punks' anti-censorship position.

Raket had not itself been subjected to state censorship; indeed it had been the recipient of a local government subsidy designed to foster Rotterdam's cultural creativity. The money was used to support printing costs, details of which were printed in the fanzine along with their work with the government to secure housing, practice space and gig spaces for the city's punks. However, the fanzine's anti-censorship policy and its use in regard to fascist material can be read as part of wider punk approaches forged in opposition to state censorship.

A second fascist letter was featured in issue 10 (March 1980). In this, the street-group Utrechts Jeugd Front (Utrecht Youth Front; UJF) proclaimed they had heard that 'you are looking for trouble with fascists'. The letter, which was clearly intended to intimidate punk anti-fascists, asked for someone to share the personal details of 'Joop', 'the scared anti-fascist' who had previously written for *Raket*. The letter signed off with an illegible signature and: 'with regards to the skinheads, SEIG HEIL SEIG HEIL, Our Furher' [sic].

Much has been made of links between fascism and punk, particularly in terms of the appropriation of fascist symbols (i.e. the swastika) by early UK punks, as well as punk engagement with fascist politics.²⁰ Certainly, the rhetoric and deployment of this imagery by early punks opened a space for 'punk and fascism' to become a contested territory.

Roger Sabin argues that a process of 'myth making' by the music and mainstream presses started almost immediately.²¹ They positioned punk as *anti-racist* in order to defuse

the potential impact of their fascist provocations at a time of heightened racial tensions in the UK. Sabin highlights how this served to paper over the ways in which punks were engaged with racism and fascism and thereby erase any such links from history.²² However, this myth-making process also had the effect of feeding directly into punk practices around the world, as can be seen by Rock Against Racism, the 'Nazi Punks, Fuck Off!'²³ refrain and much of the discourse and imagery used in *Raket* itself.²⁴

Notably, while the fascist letters to *Raket* and the police records on NPN activities provide us with an insight into tensions between punks and 'Nazi punks', neither the NPN nor the UJF letter can be read as coming *from* 'Nazi punks' themselves. There are both addressed *to* punks from an 'outsider' perspective; from organisations trying to reach punks who might be sympathetic towards them, or to intimidate those who are not. However, the fact that both organisations believed that a submission to *Raket* might reach this target group shows how they felt *Raket* had a wide readership, politically speaking.²⁵ *Raket* was widely distributed and we cannot be certain of the full variety of the readership's political leanings. However, the presence of fascist and racist punks in the Rotterdam punk scene was discussed regularly in *Raket* and, as previously noted, the police assumed that Nazi punks read the fanzine.

Given this backdrop, the 'no censorship' policy might at first seem particularly curious. It provided a platform for exactly those opinions and ideas that the makers of *Raket* were struggling against, along with other punks around the world. However, I argue that the rationale for this went deeper than a liberal discomfort with censoring submissions, and explore this by unpicking *Raket's* editorialising practices.

Editorialising fascism

Whilst the makers of *Raket* decided not to censor submissions, a closer examination of the fanzine shows that they did take a strong editorial line with respect to submissions from fascist groups. This can be seen, for instance, in the aforementioned editorial comment that accompanied the publication of the NPN letter in issue 8, which asserted (in a disdainful manner) that the letter would make the idiocy of the NPN's ideas clear to any reader. However, the practice of editorialising with regard to discussions around fascism in *Raket* went further than this.

Firstly, pieces that discussed or pictured anything fascist or racist (which were commonly written from an anti-fascist/anti-racist perspective) were usually accompanied by the following image and text:

Fig 16.1 [Image about here](#) Fascism disclaimer, *Raket*, 10, March 1980 (by permission of Johannes van de Weert)

The text reads:

We know that fascism is bad. But why? And moreover what are we doing to counter it? If you wish to write something about [swastika] and [odal-rune] (drawings and suchlike are good too) then send them to us: *Raket*: [address].²⁶

This disclaimer functioned to make explicit that the creators of *Raket* did *not* support fascist views, and instead wished to foster debate on taking action *against* right-wing groups.

The editors of *Raket* also made use of their ability to influence readers through the placement of submissions. The NPN letter in issue 8 was one-page long, with three pages on

either side expressing anti-fascist messages. First was a full-page sketch informing readers that the Nationaal Jeugdfront (National Youth Front; NJF) was fascist, despite claims to the contrary. Then came two pages explaining the inner-workings of fascism and its relationship with capitalism. Finally, the NPN letter was followed by a page with anti-fascist lyrics from Rondos, Tändstickorshocks and Rode Wig. This, in turn, was followed by two pages containing more anti-fascist letters, as well as a drawing of a feminised Hitler character 'squashing' some miniature punks that posed a threat to the dream of a militarised Netherlands.

The letter from the UJF was similarly preceded and succeeded by pieces that made anti-fascist arguments. This first of these was a two-page long piece on the recent history of fascist political groups in The Netherlands. It focused particularly on links between the politically active Nederlandse Volks Unie (Dutch People's Union) and the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (National-Socialist Movement), which had been banned after the Second World War, but also mentioned the NJF and NPN. There was then a reproduction of John Heartfield's *Krieg und Leichen* ('War and Corpses'), accompanied by lyrics by Rode Wig, before the UJF letter gave way to another two-page essay calling on readers to think independently and critically in the face of fascism. The page featuring the UJF letter itself was subject to further editorialising, not simply with the usual anti-fascist disclaimer, but also with a cartoon encouraging people to 'follow no one, lead yourself'.

The anti-fascist discussion continued into issue 11, with a response to the UJF letter from 'Razzia'. Razzia ridiculed the UJF, not least for their inability to spell 'Führer', and then taunted them to try and track him down too. Unlike other anti-fascist submissions, Razzia's letter – the only direct response to a fascist submission in *Raket* – was not a piece of political critique, but instead a personal attack to undermine the UJF's standing. The letter

was designed to defuse the UJF's threat to Joop and other anti-fascists, and to make clear that their views were not welcome in the fanzine.

Practices of editorialising, through the placement of fascist articles next to anti-fascist ones or using anti-fascist drawings and disclaimers to accompany fascist pieces, has a long history, particularly in the cut 'n' paste style of punk fanzines.²⁷ Whilst the makers of *Raket* favoured a 'cleaner' aesthetic, which included stencilling, typed letters and articles, and only featured a cut 'n' paste style in pieces submitted by others, they clearly engaged in the same practices of juxtaposition through their editorial decisions. Furthermore, *Raket's* editorialising practices stretched beyond this to include explicit requests with regard to future submissions. For example, issue 10 contains this request: 'In the next issue of *Raket* (no. 11) we would like to shut down further articles about [swastika]. But you can of course still send us anti-[swastika] drawings *et cetera*.'

Such instructions were common, and their use was not limited to discussions of fascism. *Racket* also invited a debate on anarchism (issue 7), which was then shut down again (issue 8). Of course, being a submissions-based punk fanzine with a 'no censorship' approach, these pleas were not necessarily heeded by contributors. Whilst issue 9 is missing from archives²⁸, issue 10 features a number of articles on anarchism submitted against editorial instructions.

The way in which the makers of *Raket* engaged with fascism was therefore more complicated than a liberal reading of their 'no censorship' stance would suggest. Practices such as explaining the decision to print the NPN letter, using disclaimers, soliciting or dissuading articles on particular topics and taking a very deliberate approach to the placement of submissions, all served to reinforce the political line that runs through the fanzine. Counter-intuitively, it seems that the decision to publish fascist submissions worked

in *Raket's* favour as it strengthened the makers' own left-wing political message. The NPN and UJF letters raised the spectre of ties between fascism and punk. This led the fanzine's creators to call for readers to unite behind the aim of keeping punk anti-fascist and anti-racist, spurring responses in later issues. The fanzine's contents exhibited a great deal of disagreement and debate around the form that a left-wing punk movement could – or should – take. However, by allowing fascists a (limited) platform, by carefully managing the use of this platform through editorialising, and by regularly describing the links between fascism and capitalism, the overall left-wing political message of *Raket* was strengthened.

Fig 16.2 about here Punx unite against Fascism, *Raket*, 11, April/May 1980 (by permission Johannes van de Weert)

The use of fanzines to simultaneously foster debate through submissions and to promote particular lines of thought is not uncommon. Indeed, this is a criticism that has been levelled at what is arguably the most famous and influential punk fanzine, *Maximum Rockroll (MRR)*.²⁹ Craig O'Hara has argued that: '[too] many Punks now depend on MRR to inform them of who to support and who to boycott, and while I would agree with the majority of their views, their new found power is extremely dangerous and sometimes abused by the columnists and staff whose opinions have a very great influence on younger Punks'.³⁰ Whilst *MRR* operated in a different time (1982 onwards), place (San Francisco) and punk scene (hardcore) to *Raket*, the 'taste-making' power that it held over its readership allows for comparisons to be drawn.

The power that a fanzine can hold as a tool for influencing opinion, even under the guise of debate, extends beyond the role of those compiling the fanzine to all others who make submissions. As Stephen Duncombe explains with respect to *MRR*:

Tim [Yohannon, founder of the fanzine] and *MRR* are often slagged [off] for dictating what fits within a very narrow definition of punk [...] This definition took place in editorials by Tim, columns by other regular writers, and in scene reports and articles sent in by readers. But the war of definition primarily happens in *MRR*'s extensive letters section. For over twenty-five years, and over three hundred issues, punks have been slugging it out in the trenches of *MRR*'s letters column, setting up and tearing down the rules of being a punk.³¹

As such, the fanzine forms a site for policing the boundaries of punk, be they the practices of punk, or – as in *Raket* – the politics of punk. While it might seem antithetical for punk to ‘police’ anything, this is a process with a long history that can be seen from the very origins of punk.³² This practice is made all the more important in instances where terrain is contested, or contestable. As Sabin highlights with his discussion of ‘myth making’, the history of punks’ dabbling (and/or full involvement) with fascism make this an important contested site, which invites heightened boundary policing within the subculture.

In their editorialising practice, the makers of *Raket* made explicit the ways by which they directed the overall argument presented in the fanzine. As such, the fascists’ letters posed no real challenge to the punk scene or its hopes of political unity, with any threat undermined by editorial practice, by ridicule from other contributors, and by appropriation in order to strengthen *Raket*'s argument. In the next section, I highlight the importance of

this holistic approach to confronting fascist arguments by turning to another instance in which the limits of 'no-censorship' were tested.

Homophobia and *Raket's* no-censorship controversy

It is evident from the large volume of anti-fascist submissions to *Raket* – including those that directly responded to the two fascist groups' letters – that many of the fanzine's readers did not agree with what the NPN and UJF had to say. However, I have not encountered a single submission which critiqued the makers of *Raket* themselves regarding their decision to publish the letters. In instances where there was a direct response to the letters (as can be seen for example in Razzia's reply to the UJF), readers critiqued the content of the letter rather than editorial policy. It seems, therefore, that on the whole the readership understood and accepted the 'no censorship' approach by the fanzine's creators.

One letter, however, printed in *Raket* 12, did result in a questioning of the editors' decision to publish. The letter, written in capital letters, read:

HELLO RAKET! IF I EVER COME ACROSS THE FAGGOT 'RENÉ' THEN HE'S GETTING A THUMP TO HIS HEAD AND A KICK TO HIS BALLS. DESTROY THE GAYS. PUNX ARE DEFINITELY NOT FAGGOTS. YOU DIRTY SISSIES. THIS WAS A WARNING. THAT 'RENÉ' DARE NOT MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN. SECRET PERVERT.

The letter was signed 'WHOLESOME HENDRIK'.³³ It was written in response to an advertisement placed in *Raket* 10 by René, who was organising a festival in Amsterdam for 'faggot-punks/punk-faggots'. Immediately below the body of the letter, Hendrik wrote: 'You

will certainly not be brave enough to print this letter'. As is evident, *Raket's* response to the challenge was to go ahead and publish it anyway.

Raket 13 featured a reply to Hendrik from a group of punks in Utrecht, who first quoted Hendrick's threats and then stated: 'I do know that you at *Raket* don't censor anything, but that you printed a letter like this from some fascist who thinks he's a punk, I think is going too far'. On this occasion, the readers' critique is levelled *not* at the content of Hendrik's letter, but instead at the makers of *Raket* for choosing to publish the letter. While publishing Hendrik's letter was considered a step 'too far', the publication of the NPN and UJF letters was not. In considering this incident, a few further comparisons between the content, treatment and reception of the respective letters are useful.

To begin with, it is important to note that both Hendrik's letter and the one from the UJF single out an individual to directly threaten as part of wider strategy of intimidation. The UJF asked for details on Joop; Hendrik names René as his target. Given that only one of the decisions to publish was criticised it seems, therefore, that this was not a decisive factor in marking out the bounds of acceptable censorship.

I instead suggest that there are two elements that marked Hendrik's letter as unacceptable for the Utrecht punks. Firstly, and unlike the previous two examples, the letter from Hendrik purports to come from a punk rather than an outsider. Hendrik positions himself as 'in the know' regarding punk, as part of the scene. He attempts to position gay people as *not* part of punk. Hendrik's letter can therefore be read as engaging in practices of punk boundary drawing; of debating what might or might not constitute punk, as became common later in the letter pages of *MRR*. Secondly, in coming from *within* punk, Hendrik's letter demonstrates that individuals with intolerant opinions *are* present within the scene, despite the discursive efforts by *Raket's* creators to claim punk as (broadly) socially liberal

and politically left wing. As such, the Utrecht punks' criticism targets Hendrik's claim to speak for punk as 'some fascist who *thinks* he's a punk', rather than engaging directly with the content of the letter itself. In drawing a boundary for punk that does not include Hendrik and his views, these are dismissed and deemed not welcome in the punk scene.

Furthermore, none of the letters that constituted this exchange had been subjected to the same level of editorialising as the letters from the NPN and UJF. Instead, they were placed in generalised letter/advertisement sections and published without comment from the *Raket* team. It is this that antagonised the Utrecht punks and led to a criticism of the decision to publish Hendrik's letter, as the reader is left unsure of the fanzine makers' opinions. Since there is not a disclaimer, can the reader assume that there is implicit support of Hendrik's views, or not? Given this ambiguity, the need to respond in order to counter homophobia becomes greater, lest other readers be swayed by the letter. In the example of Hendrik's letter and the subsequent response, we therefore see how some believed that *Raket's* 'no-censorship' rule should be more carefully considered, rather than utilised as an absolute approach.

Homophobia and fascism in punk

Both homophobia (and homosexuality) and fascism were sites of tension for punk more widely in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, it is important that we do not unquestioningly correlate these two without recognising the wider contextual situation. Sex, including controversial sex, and particularly homosexual sex, was an important part of early punk imagery in the UK, used by some in a liberating manner but also, more commonly, for shock value. The uneasiness present in some punks' engagement with homosexuality was perhaps most notable when it overlapped with play with fascist symbolism. David Wilkinson

highlights the ‘flirtatious referencing of the historical crossover of fascism and same-sex passion’ in regards to the Bromley Contingent’s dabbling in both.³⁴

Punks in the UK, unwelcome in many (straight) bars, adopted and frequented gay bars such as Louise’s in London, Ranch in Manchester and Bear’s Paw in Liverpool; there were some prominent punks who were openly bisexual/gay.³⁵ However, societal norms of homophobia pervaded punk, especially as it became more popular.³⁶

Dutch punks certainly played with images and discourses of sex in a similar way to the UK; indeed they played more with sexual imagery than fascist imagery (which was largely only used by Nazi-punks or to express negative connotations). Band names included Coïtus, Dildos, Spoiled Sperm, Masturbation Problems and Tits. Issue 3 of *Raket* (designed as a poster to be plastered around Rotterdam) featured these two logos, side by side:³⁷

Fig16.3 about here Masturbation Problems, *Raket*, 3, June 1979 (by permission Johannes van de Weert)

One of the earliest Dutch punk bands, Tedje en de Flikkers (Ted and the Faggots) were actively involved in the Rooie Flikkers’ actiegroep (Red Faggots action group) in Nijmegen. René’s organising efforts in Amsterdam highlight that there were a number of queer bands active in The Netherlands in 1980: certainly enough to come together under the banner of ‘faggot-punks/punk-faggots’. Moreover, some of the politically progressive essays in *Raket* mention gay rights as one aspect of their fight for a better society.

However, there was also a great deal of homophobia present within punk in The Netherlands, just as in the UK. Homophobic slurs were used casually in a number of pieces in *Raket*, arguably a reflection of the language used within society at large rather than a

problem specific to the fanzine's contributors. Issue 3 featured a letter from punk Hans Kok, declaring his resignation from Rotterdam's Rock Against Racism organising committee; he had been physically threatened with violence at KaaSee punk shows for publicly displaying affection with his boyfriend. Wider societal tensions around homosexuality were therefore replicated through these subcultural spaces, despite discursive attempts to draw boundaries around what was and was not acceptable punk behaviour.

Raket – and its editorial policy – did not exist in a vacuum from wider societal norms, just as punk did not. The complex relationship between punk and homophobia was (and is today) reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of anti-fascist and anti-racist punks, who were equally liable to hold insidiously racist perceptions. Views that were – and are – normalised in wider society are not always critically addressed in subcultural spaces and it was perfectly possible for 'pro-reggae punks [to] hold racist/fascist views without even pausing over the contradictions'.³⁸ Such contradictions further complicate the way in which contested political territory is navigated in subcultural spaces and highlights the important role that fanzine editors hold in boundary drawing and taste-making.

Conclusion

The pages of *Raket* provide a snapshot of the burgeoning Rotterdam punk scene between April 1979 and November 1980. By inviting submissions from anyone and promising to publish everything that was sent to them, its makers brought together an array of views regarding what punk is, was, could be and/or should be. As *Raket* grew in size and scope to encompass the wider Dutch punk scene, tensions between different political factions started to spill onto the letters and essays pages of the fanzine.

The makers of *Raket* were – and remain – proud of their ‘no-censorship’ platform, as a political intervention at a time when punks around the world faced state censorship and regulation.³⁹ However, as this chapter highlights, the fact that they published everything submitted to them did not mean that they presented everything to the reader in an ‘equal’ manner. Their editorial practices with regards to fascism served to present submissions from fascist groups as items not to be taken seriously. Furthermore, in printing these letters alongside disclaimers and anti-fascist essays they redeployed fascist words in order to strengthen their own anti-fascist arguments. In doing so, the makers of *Raket* – along with those who submitted letters and essays to the fanzine – were engaged in a process of boundary drawing with regards to the role of fascism in punk, thereby utilising their fanzine to communicate a particular political message to the readership.

From this, we can learn valuable lessons about the implementation of no-censorship strategies in subcultural spaces. Rather than ‘shutting down’ debate with fascists, *Raket’s* editors created space for a range of different ideas and ways of seeing the world. Fascist submissions were *not* treated in the same way as those from anti-fascist punks; ‘acceptable’ words were privileged over unacceptable words. However, the (curated) presence of these viewpoints allowed *Raket’s* readership access to understanding the variety of opinions and political stances that were held by members of their punk scene and those on the periphery of punk. This meant the Dutch punks were allowed ‘to make up [their] own mind what [they] think about fascism’⁴⁰ – while being guided to the ‘right’ conclusion.

The ‘success’ of this no-censorship approach can be judged by the response it provoked from *Raket’s* readership. It ‘succeeded’, with regards to its treatment of fascism, in that it presented a diverse set of voices in a way that was accepted by the readership. Conversely, the policy ‘failed’ in regards to the treatment of homophobia due to the lack of

contextualisation and editorial comment, thereby prompting a group of readers to make a complaint to the editors. Success can therefore be read as finding an effective way to navigate punk boundary management, making the editors' political position clear whilst simultaneously allowing a voice to all through not censoring submissions.

Notes

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¹ For a history of punk in The Netherlands see Jerry Goossens and Jeroen Vedder, *Het Gejuich Was Massaal: Punk in Nederland 1976–1982* (Amsterdam: Stichting Popmuziek Nederland, 1996); Leonor Jonker, *No Future Nu: Punk in Nederland 1977–2012* (Amsterdam: Dutch Media Uitgevers, 2012); Kirsty Lohman, *The Connected Lives of Dutch Punks: Contesting Subcultural Boundaries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2017).

² Ron Blom and Bart Van der Steen, *'Een banier waar geen smet op rust': De geschiedenis van het trotskisme in Nederland, 1938 – heden* (Soesterberg: Uitgeverij Aspekt, 2015).

³ See Blom and Van der Steen, *'Een banier waar geen smet op rust'* for a discussion of the wider context of left-wing activity in Rotterdam.

⁴ All translations are the author's own.

⁵ Print runs for the first three (poster-format) issues were higher than for the first few issues that were in a standard 'zine format. Circulation figures are given in *Raket*, 14 (1980).

⁶ Jonker, *No Future Nu*.

⁷ Examples include Enchede's *Aambeeld* and Amsterdam's *Attack*. Harold Schellinx, *Ultra: Opkomst en ondergang van de ultramodernen, een unieke Nederlandse muziekstroming (1978–1983)* (Amsterdam: Lebowski Publishers, 2012).

⁸ Richard Kempton, *Provo: Amsterdam's Anarchist Revolt* (New York: Autonomedia, 2007); Lynn Owens, *Cracking Under Pressure: Narrating the Decline of the Amsterdam Squatters' Movement* (Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Lohman, *The Connected Lives of Dutch Punks*.

⁹ Rob Witte, *Racist Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, France and the Netherlands* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁰ Issues of *Raket* often had special supplements; however this chapter focuses on the fanzine itself.

¹¹ James J. Ward, "'This is Germany! It's 1933!'" Appropriations and Constructions of Fascism in New York Punk/Hardcore in the 1980s', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 30:3 (1996), 155–85; John Street, *Music & Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012); Matthew Worley, 'Shot By Both Sides: Punk, Politics and the End of "Consensus"', *Contemporary British History*, 26:3 (2012), 333–54.

¹² Martin Cloonan, *Banned!: Censorship of Popular Music in Britain: 1967–92* (Gateshead, Tyne & Wear: Athenaeum Press, 1996).

¹³ Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise!* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1999); Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008, originally published 1997).

¹⁴ Formatting as in original.

¹⁵ The police's efforts to target fascist punks did not go unnoticed by the rest of the punk scene. Issue 11 of *Raket* contains a warning to other punks that the police are hanging around outside Kaasee.

¹⁶ *Het nationaal veiligheids archief* (National Security Archives), <http://www.inlichtingendiensten.nl/groepen/npn> (accessed March 2017).

¹⁷ Cloonan, *Banned!*.

¹⁸ *Scum*, 6, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Toxic Graffiti*, 3 (1979), p. 9.

²⁰ See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979); Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985); Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991); Ward, "'This is Germany! It's 1933!'", 155–85. For fascist attempts to appeal to punk see Matthew Worley and Nigel Copsey, 'White Youth: The Far Right, Punk and British Youth Culture', *Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies*, 9 (2016), 27–47'.

²¹ Roger Sabin, "'I won't let that dago by": Rethinking punk and racism', in Roger Sabin (ed.), *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 199–218.

²² There is more work now dealing with this; see, for example, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay (eds) *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (London: Verso, 2011), in addition to those listed above.

²³ As with the song by the same name by Dead Kennedys.

²⁴ Of course, this myth-making equally served to reinforce the existence and the possibility of neo-Nazi punk, which remains in evidence around the world. See Ward, “This is Germany! It’s 1933!”, 155–85; Michelle Phillipov, ‘Haunted by the Spirit of ’77: Punk Studies and the Persistence of Politics’, *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 20:3 (2006), 383–93; Ivan Gololobov, Hilary Pilkington and Yngvar Steinholt, *Punk in Russia: Cultural Mutation from the ‘Useless’ to the ‘Moronic’* (London: Routledge, 2014).

²⁵ This, in turn, raises further questions as to why Nazi punks who might read *Raket* did not contribute anything ostensibly political.

²⁶ There are many identical images in other issues of *Raket*.

²⁷ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*. For more on the materiality of fanzines and editorial practices see Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York University Press, 2009); Michelle Kempson, “‘I just call myself a DIY feminist’: Subjectivity, Subculture and the Feminist Zine’, (University of Warwick, PhD thesis, 2012).

²⁸ The issue is missing from both my personal collection and the collection housed in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

²⁹ O’Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*; Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*.

³⁰ O’Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk*, p. 67.

³¹ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, p. 67.

³² In *The Philosophy of Punk*, O'Hara discusses this issue. But as a book written by a punk and widely read by punks, it can also be seen as an example of this policing.

³³ 'Gezonde Hendrik' translates literally to 'healthy Hendrik'. However, 'gezonde' is used both for health of the body and of the mind in a more social capacity. The translation 'wholesome' better encapsulates this social function, in which Hendrik delineates himself from the 'unhealthy' gay people he targets.

³⁴ David Wilkinson, 'Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't Have?): Punk Politics and Same-Sex Passion', *Key Words*, 13 (2015), 57–76.

³⁵ Including Pete Shelley, Tom Robinson, Bertie 'Berlin' Marshall and Gene October. For further discussion of homosexuality and punk, see Wilkinson, 'Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't Have?)', 57–76; Jon Savage, 'The Conflicted History of Queer Punks', *Attitude*, April 2016, pp. 100–103; Matthey Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976–84* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

³⁶ Savage, 'The Conflicted History of Queer Punks', 100–103.

³⁷ Scan downloaded from http://rondos.nl/raket_fanzine/index.php?id=raket_3 [accessed January 2017].

³⁸ Sabin, "I won't let that dago by", p. 205. Indeed, it is important to note that both Rundos and *Raket* took an explicitly *anti-reggae* position, which they argued was based on its links to Rastafarianism and their belief that *all* religion had a damaging effect on society.

³⁹ This is discussed prominently on the *Raket* part of the Rundos website http://rondos.nl/raket_fanzine/index.php [accessed March 2017].

⁴⁰ *Raket*, 8 (1980), quoted above.