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Research Master in Musicology

Sounds of Solidarity:

Music in the 1984–85 Miners' Strike

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Abstract

Scholars, activists, and musicians often attribute powers of solidarity to music. However, they rarely explain what ‘solidarity’ means, and how music may generate, sustain, strengthen, or express it. This thesis therefore investigates how solidarity as a political concept intertwines with musical practices. I develop a model with four prongs: ontology, sociality, mobilisation, and intentionality. Each explores a different facet of solidarity as a relation between people that centres a sense of togetherness and support.

To delimit this research, I focus on popular music during the 1984–85 UK miners’ strike. Although many musicians passionately supported the strike, their work to support the miners has not yet received thorough musicological investigation. Moreover, the strike was a moment of crisis in a period characterised by polarisation not dissimilar to the 2020s. The strike thus emerges as a relevant moment for the study of music and solidarity. I apply my model to four case studies, all of which have been linked to solidarity by the musicians or activists involved. The case studies comprise two benefit concerts, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners’ Pits and Perverts concert and Billy Bragg’s tour across the UK, and two benefit records, Test Dept’s *Shoulder to Shoulder* and the Council Collective’s ‘Soul Deep’. Using discourse analysis, musical analysis, and philosophical inquiry, I examine how musicians and activists mobilised the word ‘solidarity’ when discussing music, what this music sounded like, and what these discourses and sounds uncover about perceptions of solidarity and music’s connection to politics.

I argue that ‘solidarity’ is a multivalent and underdefined, yet rhetorically powerful word. It is therefore perfectly suited to imbue popular music with political meaning and agency, particularly during moments of crisis. In turn, popular music is perceived as a medium that can rescue solidarity from extinction, co-construct its meaning, and broadcast this meaning to the people. Musicological analysis can therefore reveal underlying assumptions about solidarity, including its fundamental processes of in- and exclusion. Inquiry into the 1984–85 strike as a musical and political moment provides new insights on conceptions of solidarity and the place of music in social movements.

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List of Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
GLC	Greater London Council
LGSM	Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners
NCB	National Coal Board
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
RAR	Rock Against Racism
SWSMC	South Wales Striking Miners Choir

Introduction

On 6 March 1984, the British government's National Coal Board (NCB) announced the closure of twenty collieries throughout the United Kingdom. This would result in some twenty thousand jobs being lost. In many mining communities, no other employment was available, and Margaret Thatcher's government would offer no substitute. In protest of the NCB's decision, miners at several collieries began to strike. On 12 March Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), urged all other collieries to follow. A protracted and bitter strike followed. The stalemate ended on 3 March 1985, many miners having already been starved back to work. The NCB had won, and executed its closure plans eventually leading to the nigh disappearance of coal mining in the UK by 2022.[1]

Although the NUM lost, politicians, activists, artists, and academics have found inspiration in its practices, particularly the support movement for the miners. As the strike dragged on, striking miners required money to live. Support groups emerged throughout the country to raise money for the mining communities.[2] Strikingly, many musicians involved themselves with the support efforts. They wrote protest songs, donated the proceeds of records, expressed support for the miners in the press, and organised or played countless benefit concerts.[3]

As a herald of the decline of the mining industry specifically and industrial manufacture in the UK more generally, and as a historical moment where traditional working-class politics and new social movements like gay liberation and feminism converged, the strike has garnered much attention in scholarship ever since the 1980s. A 1985 volume edited by sociologist Huw Beynon recounts its recent history and analyses phenomena like the miners' broad support movement, media representation of the conflict, and the politics of power in the energy industry.[4] The women's support movement (under such organisations as Women Against Pit Closures) and the advancement of feminist ideas

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[1] For histories of the strike, see: Huw Beynon, ed., *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners' Strike* (London: Verso, 1985); Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021).
[2] See, in particular: Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*.
[3] Jeremy Tranmer, '"Keep On Keepin' On"', in *Pit Props: Music, International Solidarity and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike*, ed. Granville Williams (Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 2016), 30–31.
[4] Beynon, *Digging Deeper*.

among working-class women during the strike have also undergone thorough scrutiny.[5] Historical geographer Diarmaid Kelliher has been one of the most prolific authors on the strike and its support movement in recent years, focussing especially on the London group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners.[6]

However, musicians' support for the strike is less researched. Punk music scholar Jeremy Tranmer has written two chapters on the topic.[7] Two further essays appear in a 2016 collection: a 'personal miscellany' by writer and broadcaster Ian Clayton, and an essay on industrial music collective Test Dept's work during the strike by film professor Julian Petley.[8] Lastly, the strike features in two oral histories focussing on the connection between music and politics in the UK during the late 1970s and 1980s, written by music journalists Robin Denselow and Daniel Rachel.[9] All these sources have laid invaluable groundwork in listing the artists and records that supported the strike and collecting the memories of those involved. I cite them frequently for these reasons. However, none of them truly involve musicological analysis; even Tranmer's articles are mostly descriptive, and Petley focusses on Test Dept's visual art.

Therefore, this thesis aims to make a musicological contribution to the study of the 1984–85 miners' strike support movement. Specifically, I ask how solidarity as a political concept intertwines with musical practices. I focus on solidarity for two reasons. First, scholars have ascribed powers of solidarity to music for decades. In 1966, pioneer in the study of music and politics R. Serge Denisoff described six functions of protest songs. One of them reads: 'The song creates and promotes cohesion, solidarity, and high morale in an organization or movement supporting its world view.'[10] Scholars researching the use of music during strikes (specifically industrial strikes in the US between the world wars) have corroborated this finding.[11] As recently as 2018, musicologist James Garratt agreed that

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[5] See, in particular: Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson, 'National Women Against Pit Closures: Gender, Trade Unionism and Community Activism in the Miners' Strike, 1984–5', *Contemporary British History* 32, no. 1 (January 2018): 78–100, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2017.1408540.

[6] Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*.

[7] Jeremy Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity: Musicians and the Strike', in *Digging the Seam: Popular Cultures of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike*, ed. Simon Popple and Ian W. Macdonald (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 76–86; Tranmer, '"Keep On Keepin' On"'.

[8] Ian Clayton, 'A Personal Miscellany', in Williams, *Pit Props*, 15–25; Julian Petley, '"A Sonic War Machine": Test Dept and the Miners' Strike', in Williams, *Pit Props*, 35–45.

[9] Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber, 1989); Daniel Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down: The Music and Politics of Rock Against Racism, 2 Tone and Red Wedge, 1976–1992* (London: Picador, 2016).

[10] R. Serge Denisoff, 'Songs of Persuasion: A Sociological Analysis of Urban Propaganda Songs', *The Journal of American Folklore* 79, no. 314 (1966): 582, https://doi.org/10.2307/538223.

[11] Tranmer, '"Keep On Keepin' On"', 30; Timothy P. Lynch, *Strike Songs of the Depression* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 3; Jeremy Woodruff, 'A Voice in the Dark: Subversive Sounds of the

music can generate ‘emotional solidarity through collective participation.’[12] Thus, a scholarly consensus exists that music can create or strengthen solidarity. However, scholars rarely explain what ‘solidarity’ *means*, and *how* music can generate or promote it.[13] This thesis begins to answer these questions. The second reason I focus on solidarity is because musicians and activists who supported the 1984–85 strike have frequently used the word to describe their experiences with the musical support movement. As the case studies clarify, these statements form the backbone of this thesis. I investigate how musicians and activists mobilised ‘solidarity’ when discussing music during the strike.

That ‘solidarity’ is exceptionally suited to mobilisation is a core idea here. Following social policy scholar Steinar Stjernø and political philosopher Sally J. Scholz, I argue that due to its long and varied history, the word ‘solidarity’ is simultaneously multivalent and rhetorically powerful, making it both a fascinating and difficult concept.[14] Solidarity is almost always ascribed positive value and used to describe an ideal social relation, feeling, and/or set of practices that centres mutual support and togetherness. Aside from Stjernø and Scholz’s more general theorisations of solidarity, I am influenced by political geographers David Featherstone and Diarmaid Kelliher. Both base their research on specific case studies, particularly the 1984–85 strike. Featherstone demonstrates that solidarities often arise ‘from below’: on-the-ground political struggle, rather than abstract theorisation, determines what ‘solidarity’ means. Kelliher adds that ‘cultures of solidarity’ develop *over time*. Understanding the history of solidarity movements and the remembrance and mobilisation of this history is crucial to understanding solidarity as a concept.[15]

This conceptualisation of solidarity has two implications for my methodology. First, because I recognise solidarity as multivalent and multifaceted – involving feelings, practices, and social relations – I require a mixed-method approach to address these many facets.

Living Newspapers and the Flint Sit-Down Strike of 1936–37’, *Interference: A Journal of Audio Culture* 3 (2013): 8.

[12] James Garratt, *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 13. See for two further examples of scholars who attribute powers of solidarity to music: Elizabeth Kaminski and Verta Taylor, ‘“We’re Not Just Lip-Synching Up Here”: Music and Collective Identity in Drag Performances’, in *Identity Work in Social Movements*, ed. Jo Reger, Rachel L. Einwohner, and Daniel J. Myers (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 48; William F. Danaher, ‘Music and Social Movements’, *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 9 (2010): 811, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00310.x.

[13] Throughout this thesis, I use scare quotes in order to indicate the *word* solidarity, whereas appearances of the term without scare quotes indicate its existence as a concept, feeling, practice, et cetera.

[14] Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2, 86; Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 21, 27, 34, 47–48.

[15] David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 4–5; Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 13.

Second, precisely because of the complexity of solidarity and its concomitant mixed-method approach, I need to maintain focus. Therefore, I concentrate on a particular period of time (between March 1984 and March 1985), place (the United Kingdom), and cultural practice (popular music). Historical, political, social, and cultural backgrounds all impact on understandings of solidarity and popular music. Narrowing down the scope of the research allows me to follow Kelliher's example of discussing these backgrounds and their impacts in depth.

I selected four case studies spanning a wide range of 'popular music', from Bronski Beat's chart-topping synthpop to Billy Bragg's unpretentious yet contrarian folk-punk blend, and from the Council Collective's stylish funk to the industrial music of Test Dept, which some might call too avant-garde to be popular music. What unites these disparate case studies as *popular* music is that they construct themselves as music *of the people*, specifically the 1980s British working class, rather than *the elite*. These case studies are thus well suited to analysing solidarities 'from below'. Nonetheless, my case studies also consider the tensions between this popular music as 'music of the people', and popular music as 'music of the commercial pop industry': music that circulates on the mainstream pop charts, television, and radio. Popular music is a complex cultural form shaped by its artistic form and content, institutional and social contexts, and the circulating discourses *about* music and what it can convey. Like solidarity, then, popular music requires a mixed-method approach to understand fully.[16] Therefore, I now outline the methods I use, which research objects they target, and why they are suitable for analysing the connection between solidarity and popular music.

First, I employ discourse analysis to understand the statements musicians and activists make about solidarity *and* about music. The use of 'solidarity' in any given statement should be analysed to unpick the word's rhetorical power and precise meaning in that statement. I analyse mentions of 'solidarity' in tandem with statements about music to discover how people verbalised their vision of the connection between music and solidarity.

Second, I employ musical analysis. I am interested in what the music that musicians and activists proclaimed to be connected to solidarity, sounds like. What are the sounds of solidarity? My analysis therefore departs from a phenomenological standpoint. Rather than

[16] Many scholars have made this argument: Philip Tagg, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice', *Popular Music* 2 (1982): 44; Eliot Bates, 'Popular Music Studies and the Problems of Sound, Society and Method', *IASPM@Journal* 3, no. 2 (June 2013): 26, https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871(2013)v3i2.2en; Eliot Bates and Samantha Bennett, 'The Production of Music and Sound: A Multidisciplinary Critique', in *Critical Approaches to the Production of Music and Sound*, ed. Samantha Bennett and Eliot Bates (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 6; Samantha Bennett, *Modern Records, Maverick Methods: Technology and Process in Popular Music Record Production 1978–2000* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 15–16.

formulating a logocentric 'meaning' of the songs, I highlight my *experience* of listening to the tracks.[17] However, popular music has always been biased towards multimedia representations. I therefore also analyse audiovisual material – primarily recorded performances – from this phenomenological standpoint: what is the experience of hearing a certain sound and simultaneously viewing a certain image?

This initial phenomenological analysis is enriched with a genre analysis. Following popular music scholars like Franco Fabbri and Joanna Demers, I treat genres not as discrete and fixed categories of music, but as organised sets of expectations, conventions, and norms regarding the sound of the music and extramusical elements.[18] Many major strands of 1970s popular music – especially disco and punk – had waned by the early-to-mid 1980s. Aided by the vacuum in popular music trends and the increasing affordability of synthesisers, samplers, and drum machines, musicians seeking innovation in this time freely remixed and reinvented genres for the 1980s.[19] Since genres are socially constructed and imbued with value, this blending of genres generated new musical *and* political connections. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison argue that music's most important contribution to social movements is *mobilising tradition*: retaining and reviving the memory of previous social movements strengthens current ones.[20] My musical analysis will thus pay attention to what the blending and rejuvenating of genres sounded like and how it mobilised traditions.

Discourse analysis and musical analysis examine, respectively, how musicians and activists mobilised 'solidarity' when discussing music, and what this music sounded like. With a final method, philosophical inquiry, I consider what these discourses and sounds uncover about perceptions of solidarity and music's connection to politics. This way, I aim to demonstrate how musicology and the study of solidarity benefit each other. What does a

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[17] See: Lawrence Ferrara, 'Phenomenology as a Tool for Musical Analysis', *The Musical Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1984): 355–73.

[18] Franco Fabbri, 'A Theory of Musical Genre: Two Applications', in *Popular Music Perspectives: Papers from the First International Conference on Popular Music Research, Amsterdam, June 1981*, ed. David Horn and Philip Tagg (Göteborg: International Association for the Study of Popular Music, 1982), 52, 54–59; Joanna Demers, *Listening through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11, 136–37.

[19] ; Bennett, *Modern Records, Maverick Methods*, 20, 35; Lucas Hilderbrand, '"Luring Disco Dollies to a Life of Vice": Queer Pop Music's Moment', *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 25, no. 4 (2013): 416–19, https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12044; Jeremy Tranmer, 'Rock Against Racism, Punk and Post-Punk', *Etudes Anglaises* 71, no. 1 (September 2018): 94–95; Megan Lavengood, 'The Cultural Significance of Timbre Analysis: A Case Study in 1980s Pop Music, Texture, and Narrative', *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 3 (September 2020): para. 0.6, 1.5-1.6, https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.20.26.3/mto.20.26.3.lavengood.html.

[20] Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–2.

focus on solidarity reveal about music, and what does a focus on music reveal about solidarity, that other approaches are less equipped to reveal?

My theoretical and methodological approach requires that I consult diverse sources. Regarding primary sources, I study principally the music and visuals (album covers, TV performances, live footage) of my case studies. Secondly, Denselow's and Rachel's oral histories and an interview I conducted with Billy Bragg richly illustrate the memories of those involved in musical support for the strike. Biographies, printed and filmed interviews, and documentaries are also crucial sources of their experiences. In addition, I have consulted material at two archives: the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, and (virtually) the Labour History Archive and Study Centre at the People's History Museum in Manchester. This material includes minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, magazines, and posters, and has given me a multisensory impression of the period's aesthetics and political attitudes.

This thesis finds itself at the intersection of many disciplines. I cite secondary sources from history, human geography, popular music studies, philosophy, social movement studies, and the sociology of music. By synthesising these disciplines, I aim to make three contributions to musicology and the study of solidarity. First, as I detail in Chapter One, solidarity requires more thorough theoretical investigation. Even in scholarship, the word is often left undefined, leading to misunderstandings across disciplines and imprecise analyses. This thesis identifies these pitfalls and aims to encourage more sophisticated understandings and uses of 'solidarity' in scholarship.

Second, this thesis addresses the connections between music and solidarity. One volume has been published on this topic, edited by Felicity Laurence and Olivier Urbain.[21] However, this volume focusses on one particular conception of solidarity: human or global solidarity, which emphasises the inclusion of all people, the universality of humanity.[22] Contrastingly, I consider solidarity in a highly politicised (left) context, which as Chapter One explains involves exclusion as much as inclusion. By closely examining discourses and sounds of solidarity, this thesis not only studies how music functions as a 'great connector', but also how music distinguishes, hierarchises, and excludes.

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[21] Felicity Laurence and Olivier Urbain, eds., *Music and Solidarity: Questions of Universality, Consciousness, and Connection* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[22] For an explicit explanation of this position, see: Lawrence Wilde, *Global Solidarity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Third, I aim to contribute to studies of the link between music and politics. Two common frameworks for studying this link include delineating the *functions* that music performs for politics,[23] and investigating how music aids in constituting politically significant *identities*.[24] By focussing on solidarity, I aim to show how political concepts and music interweave: how do musical practices stem from pre-existing ideas of solidarity, and how do they shape ideas of solidarity in turn? The concept-based mixed-method approach of this thesis enriches the functional and identity frameworks fundamental to the study of music and politics.

Understanding the link between music and politics is also socially relevant. Music can reveal elements of politics less easily discernible through other lenses, such as the link between politics and pleasure. I am specifically concerned with what music can reveal about solidarity that other approaches cannot. Solidarity continues to be a key term in (left) activism. The word caught my ear countless times at recent demonstrations surrounding the Dutch housing crisis, the overturning of Roe v. Wade in the United States, Labour Day, and so on. Chants of '*Hoe laat is het? Solidariteit!*' indicate that solidarity is central to left activism today.[25] Understanding what is actually meant by it is therefore crucial. Although it might then seem contradictory to study the solidarity of nearly forty years ago, I argue that the 1984–85 strike is still relevant today. Neoliberal government policies in the UK and elsewhere, political polarisation, and rapidly changing technology characterise the early-to-mid 1980s *and* the current moment. To better understand the meaning of solidarity and the intertwining of music and solidarity in the present and future, it might help to reflect on a similar past era – or perhaps the beginning of the current era.

This thesis contains five chapters. The first presents my theoretical framework. It provides an overview of the concept of solidarity, the history and use contexts of the term, and a critical evaluation of solidarity scholarship. The chapter demonstrates solidarity's multivalence and rhetorical power, but also problematises this naturalised state. I provide a base definition of solidarity as *a relation between people (whether individuals or groups) that centres a sense of togetherness and support*. This definition functions as a guidepost in my

[23] For examples of this functional perspective, see: Denisoff, 'Songs of Persuasion'; Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity'; Mark Mattern, *Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political Action* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[24] For examples of this identity-based perspective, see: Kaminski and Taylor, '"We're Not Just Lip-Synching Up Here"'; Simon Frith, 'Music and Identity', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 108–27;

[25] Literally, this chant means 'what time is it? Solidarity!'. In Dutch, it is a pun on the fact that *-teit* is a homophone of *tijd*, meaning 'time'.

model for understanding various solidarities, plural. This model consists of four prongs: ontology, sociality, mobilisation, and intentionality. I use these open categories to explore the solidarities in my case studies. To close the chapter, I discuss how my model of solidarity is relevant to studying the link between music and politics.

The other four chapters each focus on one case study to illustrate how the theoretical framework of Chapter One can be applied to particular historical moments and musical practices. The first case study centres Billy Bragg, the political folk-punk singer. I chiefly consider the benefit concerts he played in mining communities across the UK. Bragg has described these concerts as his personal political awakening and as events where solidarity could be shown.[26] The chapter demonstrates how his idea of solidarity hinges on the aesthetic and political value of *dialogue*, which promotes inclusivity and reciprocity. However, I also offer a critical perspective, showing how Bragg's idea of solidarity also depends on exclusionary discourses of political, gendered *authenticity*.

Chapter Three stars the Council Collective's benefit single 'Soul Deep'. I analyse the song on three complementary levels: as popular music, as political popular music, and as black political popular music. I examine the song's lyrics and genre history, as well as a performance on *Top of the Pops*. I uncover how 'Soul Deep' illustrates the problem of *in- and exclusion* central to solidarity: the song excludes and disidentifies with the 'aristocratic' pop music of the New Romantics, and includes and identifies with the history of black music and social movements, to articulate the Collective's vision of working-class solidarity.

Chapter Four pivots back to live music: the Pits and Perverts benefit hosted by Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM). The chapter examines how LGSM founder Mark Ashton's experience of solidarity at this concert hinges on *presence*. This presence involves physical co-presence (of different people), and I pay attention especially to pleasurable queer presence at Pits and Perverts. However, I also demonstrate how the concert involves presence that is mediated through performance: the past impacting upon the present.

The final chapter connects many strands explored in the first three case studies. I argue that industrial group Test Dept and the South Wales Striking Miners Choir's *Shoulder to Shoulder* exhibits solidarity's politics of collectivity, its relationship with (musical) labour, and its intersections between past, present, and future – what can be called 'intermundanity'. However, I again provide a critical perspective on Test Dept's conception of solidarity by

[26] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 361.

unearthing its roots in white, masculine traditions, which wittingly or unwittingly exclude marginalised groups.

In conclusion, I find that music and solidarity intertwine on many different levels. First, musical practices such as benefit concerts facilitate the material and immaterial support (raising money and awareness) central to solidarity, highlighting how music is a form of (substitute) labour during times of crisis like the strike. Second, music is felt to channel and illustrate feelings central to the experience of solidarity, such as joy or indignation. However, a focus on music also demonstrates that this division between these first two levels is reductive: in solidarity, practice and feeling are always already interlaced.

Third, and most fundamentally, the rhetorical power of solidarity legitimates the purported political import of music. Solidarity is frequently perceived a utopian panacea to societal problems, yet one that is (nearly) lost. Popular music, through its ability to connect people, supposedly retrieves solidarity from extinction which in turn validates the political significance of popular music, particularly as the musicians and activists of my case studies conceive of popular music *and* solidarity as 'of the people', as working-class. However, closely examining the invocation of political histories in music can reveal solidarity's hidden assumptions. Even as music is posed as a great connector, it also exhibits solidarity's obscured yet fundamental processes of exclusion.

Chapter One – Towards a Model for Understanding Solidarities

This chapter explains my theoretical framework. This framework, centred around the concept of solidarity, grounds the case study analyses of the next four chapters. First, I outline the etymology and historical use of ‘solidarity’, current academic theories of solidarity, solidarity’s relationship to its near synonyms, and issues in solidarity scholarship, including lack of communication across disciplines, the undertheorisation of the concept, and the problem of in- and exclusion. I conclude that solidarity has political import and relates to identity, and therefore closely connects to humans’ personal and political being. However, it is also a highly multivalent yet underdefined concept: its various meanings are easy to mobilise. Any sustained and careful use of ‘solidarity’ must account for its multivalence and rhetorical power.

The model of solidarity I employ acknowledges the multiplicity of solidarity (i.e., the existence of solidarities, plural) and the mobilisation of the concept. I provide a broad definition of solidarity as *a relation between people (whether individuals or groups) that centres a sense of togetherness and support*. However, this definition merely functions as a guideline for the model of solidarity explained in this chapter. This model consists of four prongs: ontology, sociality, mobilisation, and intentionality. Respectively, these prongs contemplate what solidarity *is* (a feeling, a practice, and so on), what its *objective* is, what the *relationship between people* in solidarity is like, and how the term is *deployed and mediated*. The prongs are open categories with which to explore different conceptions of solidarity. The chapter’s close reviews how solidarity, and particularly my model of it, connects to music. I ask why solidarity is a relevant concept for musicology, and why musicology is relevant for studying solidarity.

A Brief Overview of Solidarity Theory, or the Lack of It[1]

‘Solidarity’ derives from the Latin *solidus*, ‘solid’ or ‘whole’. In Roman law, *obligatio in solidum* meant that, if one citizen could not pay their debt, all under the law were responsible

[1] Large parts of this section are paraphrased or quoted from a literature review I performed in the context of my research internship with Dr Gianmaria Colpani: Moira de Kok, ‘Solidarity and Intersectionality: A Literature Review’ (unpublished manuscript, 12 November 2021).

for paying the creditor. Christianity has also espoused solidarity for centuries: guided by the ideas of 'love thy neighbour' and the equality of all God's creation, Christian solidarity emphasises care, peace, and equality.[2] Only in the nineteenth century does 'solidarity' become associated with the two domains it is perhaps best known in: sociology and left political activism. In 1893, Émile Durkheim developed his sociological theory of solidarity as social cohesion, linked to the division of labour within societies.[3] The nineteenth century also witnessed increased labour organisation and concomitant notions of solidarity among workers (working-class solidarity) in opposition to the capitalist bourgeoisie. Workers' associations recognised that solidarity grows naturally out of common oppression under capitalism, but urged it be *organised* for political effectiveness.[4]

This brief history of 'solidarity' betrays the enormous variety in uses of the word. Nonetheless, scholars have attempted to formulate a single definition encompassing all forms of solidarity. Political theorist Lawrence Wilde, for example, names it 'the feeling of reciprocal sympathy and responsibility among members of a group which promotes mutual support.'[5] However, such a definition inevitably becomes too broad to distinguish solidarity from other social relations such as friendship.

Therefore, the most sophisticated theories of solidarity account for solidarit*ies*, plural. Social policy scholar Steinar Stjernø, for instance, concedes that the only common thread between different solidarities is 'that an individual should identify with others, to some degree, and that a feeling of community should exist between the individual and (at least some) others.'[6] However, he illustrates that under this umbrella exist the myriad solidarities in social theory, socialism, and Christianity briefly outlined above.[7]

Similarly, feminist philosopher Sally J. Scholz defines solidarity broadly as 'some form of unity […] that mediates between the individual and the community and entails positive moral duties.'[8] She differentiates three major types of solidarity based on the

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[2] Hauke Brunkhorst, *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community*, trans. Jeffrey Flynn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 1–2; Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2005.

[3] Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, Contemporary Social Theory (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984).

[4] David Roediger, 'Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past', *American Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2016): 230–32, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2016.0033.

[5] Lawrence Wilde, 'The Concept of Solidarity: Emerging from the Theoretical Shadows?', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9, no. 1 (February 2007): 171, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856x.2007.00275.x.

[6] Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 88.

[7] Stjernø, 86.

[8] Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 5.

configuration of these three elements (unity, the relationship between individual and community, and moral duties). *Social solidarity* refers to group cohesion. Group unity – often based on shared experience – precedes the moral duties that flow from it. Examples are families or small village communities. *Civic solidarity* concerns the bonds between citizens in a nation-state: their obligations towards each other and the state itself, such as taxes and voting. Primarily the relationship between individual and community justifies civic solidarity: maintaining the rights and welfare of individual citizens is seen as essential to maintaining the health of the entire society. *Political solidarity* responds to injustice or oppression. Moral duties and conscious commitment to the cause precede the unity that they create. Members of a politically solidary group are often not already bound by their relationship to a particular community or nation.[9] Examples can be found in most social movements.

The variety of solidarity's historical and academic meanings, the fact of multiple solidarities, also becomes apparent in its many (near) synonyms: unity, community, sister- or brotherhood, comradeship, coalition, alliance, charity, sympathy, empathy, compassion, and altruism. All of these concepts denote different and sometimes contradictory or complementary aspects of solidarity. For instance, 'unity' is an abstract concept, while 'coalition' and 'alliance' imply more concrete, institutional relationships. 'Sympathy', 'empathy', and 'compassion' heavily imply a connection to emotion not necessarily present in the other concepts. 'Sisterhood' and 'brotherhood', meanwhile, indicate (gendered) exclusionary definitions of solidarity.

While some authors attempt to distinguish between solidarity and one or more of its near synonyms,[10] the boundaries between them often remains vague, both in scholarship and in practice.[11] I mention them because this constellation of (near) synonyms reveals how 'solidarity' connotes many disparate meanings. This multivalence makes it an appealing and meaningful concept, but I argue it also explains why the meaning of 'solidarity' in scholarship and activism is often implicit, unclear, contradictory to other uses, or even problematic.

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[9] Scholz, 21, 27, 34.

[10] See: bell hooks, 'Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women', *Feminist Review*, no. 23 (1986): 127–29, https://doi.org/10.2307/1394725; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 3, 7, 110–12, 116; Jean Harvey, 'Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding: The Moral Value and Scope of the Relationship', *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 23, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2007.00364.x; Michelle I. Gawerc, 'Coalition-Building and the Forging of Solidarity across Difference and Inequality', *Sociology Compass* 15, no. 3 (2021): 3, https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12858.

[11] Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 15.

The problem is not with solidarity's multiple definitions. It lies in the lack of a coherent field or forum of 'solidarity studies' in which these definitions can be debated. Philosophy, sociology, feminist theory, history, political theory, and human geography, among other disciplines, all discuss solidarity. Moreover, many scholars overlook relevant literature from other disciplines. For example, many sociologists and political theorists barely engage feminist theory, but feminist theorists may not engage literature from philosophy or human geography, and so forth. This disciplinary variety and lack of communication across disciplinary boundaries compounds the confusing multiplicity of meanings of 'solidarity'. Additionally, solidarity is studied using a diverse array of methods, often leading to conflicting conclusions.

Despite the interest in the concept across many different disciplines, solidarity can generally be called undertheorised. Many authors assume their use of the concept is accepted across different fields. When they use 'solidarity', even as a key term, they often fail to define it directly or even to interrogate its meaning.[12] This undertheorisation creates dissensus over solidarity's most basic issues, such as its ontological status. Still, it circulates, and without a commonly accepted definition or tradition of interrogation, 'solidarity' becomes susceptible to rhetorical use. Because of its undertheorisation, the meaning of 'solidarity' in a given text is often implicit. Thus, the concept gains mysterious allure and powerful baggage. It can invoke utopian visions of unity, political power, or equality, regardless of whether these visions can be rightfully attributed to solidarity.[13]

This leads me to a final issue in solidarity scholarship as well as activism. Although many people like to attribute utopian visions of unity, equality, and inclusion to solidarity, solidarity almost always distinguishes between insiders (the solidary group) and outsiders. This may even present as oppositionality or hostility towards outsiders. Wilde terms this simultaneous emphasis on inclusion and exclusion the 'paradox of solidarity'.[14] The solutions to this problem range from Wilde's radically inclusive 'human' or 'global' solidarity, purged of oppositionality and exclusion,[15] to social movement scholars and left activist scholars who define solidarity as inherently oppositional, and therefore useful for defining and achieving

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[12] See, for example: Suzana Milevska, 'Solidarity and Intersectionality: What Can Transnational Feminist Theory Learn from Regional Feminist Activism', *Feminist Review* 98, no. S1 (September 2011): e52–61, https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2011.29; Anna Carastathis, 'Identity Categories as Potential Coalitions', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (June 2013): 941–65, https://doi.org/10.1086/669573.
[13] Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 2; Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 47–48.
[14] Wilde, 'The Concept of Solidarity', 173.
[15] Lawrence Wilde, *Global Solidarity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1–2, 15.

political goals.[16] Crucially, while solidarity is technically a neutral term describing a certain social relation, people ascribe the concept ethical value. They argue that solidarity should be a certain way, and thereby imply it is an important and desirable thing.

In sum, solidarity is a complex term, gaining meaning from its multiple histories and uses in different academic disciplines and activist movements. It connects to politics, as it is often associated with uniting against oppression, as well as to identity: belonging to a solidary group constitutes a kind of identity, whether or not other kinds of identity precede or prescribe membership. Solidarity is thus perceived as closely entwined with humans' personal and political being. However, it is often poorly defined and used rhetorically, its meaning left implicit rather than explicated. Its multivalence makes it easy to mobilise, while its rich history and associations make this mobilisation effective.

A Four-Pronged Model of Solidarity

The above discussion illuminates that any sustained and careful use of 'solidarity' should include a clear and conscientious definition of the term. Following scholars like Scholz and Stjernø, I broadly define solidarity as *a relation between people (whether individuals or groups) that centres a sense of togetherness and support*. However, more importantly, under this broad umbrella exist *numerous and disparate solidarities*. I do not aim to stipulate what 'real' solidarity is, implying that there is a singular solidarity that is ethically good and desirable in itself. Instead, I focus on how musicians and activists during the 1984–85 strike defined 'solidarity', how they mobilised the term when talking about music, how their vision of solidarity connected to their political beliefs, and how their respective solidarities compare to each other.

I am inspired by David Featherstone's 'solidarities from below': the on-the-ground political struggle of marginalised groups, rather than top-down theory created by (relatively) privileged people, determines what solidarity means and how it may reshape the world.[17] Rather than forcing my case studies to fit a narrow definition of solidarity, I provide a model of solidarity structured around four prongs: ontology, sociality, mobilisation, and

[16] See, for example: Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 54; Jodi Dean, 'Feminist Solidarity, Reflective Solidarity', *Women & Politics* 18, no. 4 (January 1998): 17, https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v18n04_01; David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 12; Rachel L. Einwohner et al., 'Active Solidarity: Intersectional Solidarity in Action', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, no. jxz052 (December 2019): https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxz052, 30.
[17] Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 4–5.

intentionality. The model presents open categories with which to explore uses of 'solidarity', rather than a strict definition or typology. The rest of this section explains each prong in more detail.

Ontology

There is no academic consensus about solidarity's ontology. Some scholars refer to solidarity as a feeling or affect.[18] Statements of a 'feeling' or 'sense' of solidarity are also found among activists and musicians.[19] Others characterise it as a social relation, interpersonal bond, or the 'glue' that holds people together.[20] Still others term it a political action, or a set of actions or practices.[21] These range from strikes, protests and the redistribution of material resources,[22] to an emphasis on communication often found in feminist scholarship,[23] to organisational practices such as democratising leadership and decision-making processes.[24] Recall my aforementioned broad definition of solidarity as a relation between people. I chose the word 'relation' precisely because of its broadness: it leaves room for different emphases on and configurations of practice and feeling. As my case studies will clarify, different people emphasise different aspects of solidarity: the experience or feeling of it, certain actions or practices associated with it, and so on. The ontology prong highlights these nuances instead of indicating a definite ontological character for solidarity.

Sociality

The sociality prong encompasses all issues stemming from solidarity as a relation between people. First, this involves Wilde's 'paradox of solidarity'; in Stjernø's words, inclusiveness;[25] in mine, *the problem of in- and exclusion*. Who is included in the solidary group and who is excluded? Why? What is the character of the exclusion (openly hostile,

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[18] See, for example: Erika Summers-Effler, 'The Emotional Significance of Solidarity for Social Movement Communities: Sustaining Catholic Worker Community and Service', in *Emotions and Social Movements*, ed. Helena Flam and Debra King (New York: Routledge, 2005), 137, 141.
[19] See, for example: Jeremy Tranmer, 'Political Commitment of a New Type? Red Wedge and the Labour Party in the 1980s', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 22, no. 3 (June 2017): 8, https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.1466; David Featherstone et al., '"An Enormous Sense of Solidarity": London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike', *Soundings*, no. 69 (June 2018): 99–104, https://doi.org/10.3898/SOUN:69.06.2018.
[20] See, for example: Gawerc, 'Coalition-Building', 3; Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.
[21] See, for example: Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 5; Einwohner et al., 'Active Solidarity', 6–7, 14; Avery Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.
[22] See, for example: Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 201; Emily K. Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 9.
[23] See, for example: Dean, 'Feminist Solidarity, Reflective Solidarity', 16–17.
[24] See, for example: Einwohner et al., 'Active Solidarity', 33.
[25] Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 18.

unconscious, et cetera)? Relatedly, this prong also covers questions of difference and sameness: to what extent is the solidarity based on sameness? Does this sameness entail shared identity, shared experiences, shared oppression, shared interests, or another kind of sameness? To what extent is there room to acknowledge and empower individual difference within the solidary group? As Stjernø rightly points out, this recognition of sameness and/or difference motivates or shapes the foundation of the solidary group.[26] Finally, the sociality prong examines what Stjernø calls 'collective orientation' and what Scholz terms the 'mediation between individual and community':[27] the balance between individualism and collectivism within solidary groups. These three issues – of in- and exclusion, difference and sameness, and individualism and collectivism – are interrelated, and therefore come together under the prong of sociality.

Mobilisation

Solidarity is rhetorically powerful and easy to mobilise. Therefore, the third prong focusses on mobilisation: how is 'solidarity' mobilised? What rhetorical purposes does its mention serve? Additionally, this prong is concerned with mediation: through which mediums and practices is 'solidarity' mobilised? I maintain that the construction of what solidarity means and should be like involves artistic and specifically musical media, practices, and processes. Focussing on these media, practices, and processes, I aim to demystify the existence of solidarity and elucidate how it is constructed and mobilised.

Intentionality

Solidarity is dynamic and reacts to the outside world. It is *intentional*: directed towards something. This intention can be spoken or unspoken, conscious or subconscious, broad or specific, temporary or permanent. Stjernø compares different solidarities by their 'objective'.[28] Likewise, Scholz's differentiation between social, civic, and political solidarity rests on the intention of the solidary relation: respectively, maintaining group cohesion and caring for group members, fulfilling one's obligations to one's nation-state and fellow citizens, and combatting oppression. The intentionality prong explores the different intentions that people express when they use the word 'solidarity'.

[26] Stjernø, 18.
[27] Stjernø, 18; Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 18–19.
[28] Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe*, 18.

These four prongs – ontology, sociality, mobilisation, and intentionality – constitute my model of solidarity. The next section explains how this model of solidarity, as well as solidarity more generally, can be connected to music, and why solidarity studies and musicology may grant each other mutual benefits.

Solidarity and Music

Solidarity has emerged as an important concept in the study of music and politics. Scholars aiming to describe music's political functions find in solidarity a bridge between music and politics. Sociologist R. Serge Denisoff writes: 'The song creates and promotes cohesion, solidarity, and high morale in an organization or movement supporting its world view.'[29] Music thus creates solidarity and thereby performs an important *function* for the social movement. Political theorist Mark Mattern argues that music serves confrontational, deliberative, and pragmatic functions: respectively, communities use music to oppose other communities, develop their collective identity, and promote their interests.[30] Music helps define a solidary group, distinguish this group from its outsiders, and advocate for the group's political beliefs. That music creates or strengthens group solidarity, a solidarity which then serves a political function, is described as a natural, 'missing link' between music and politics.

However, I find limitations in the functional approach to solidarity in music. *What* do these scholars mean, precisely, by 'solidarity'? *For whom* does music create solidarity, and whom does it exclude? What is the connection between how music *sounds* and its creation of solidarity? What are the historical, political, and musical contexts that *facilitate* music to fulfil political functions? The functional perspective, which is often a romanticising and optimistic perspective, traditionally has difficulty answering these questions. Therefore, I focus less on the question of how music *functions* to generate solidarity, and more on the historical and processual aspects of *how people attribute solidarity to music*, and *what music linked to solidarity sounds like*. This is inspired by musicologist James Garratt's statement that people accord music political meaning and agency because they experience music as

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[29] R. Serge Denisoff, 'Songs of Persuasion: A Sociological Analysis of Urban Propaganda Songs', *The Journal of American Folklore* 79, no. 314 (1966): 582, https://doi.org/10.2307/538223.
[30] Mark Mattern, *Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political Action* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 25–30.

aesthetically and affectively powerful.[31] I suggest that studying how musicians and activists discuss music and solidarity, and what kinds of music and solidarity in particular, reveals more about the links between music, solidarity, and politics than if solidarity is treated as a natural 'missing link' between music and politics.

My model of solidarity provides multiple entry points for studying solidarity through music. First of all, music can be a medium through which ideas of solidarity are shaped and communicated. Second, I approach music as a social phenomenon in this thesis. I will demonstrate how music can in- and exclude, emphasise difference and sameness, and exhibit individuality and collectivity. Finally, like solidarity, music itself takes many shapes: from abstract concept to concrete practice, and from emotional experience to rational calculation. Music thus provides me a way to study the ontological flexibility of solidarity.

The above discussion explains how music studies may contribute to the study of solidarity. However, the study of solidarity may also illuminate the construction of musical value. 'Solidarity', because of its multivalence, undertheorisation, and implied goodness, is easily mobilised to legitimate a political standpoint or action, social movement, or indeed a piece of music. Because of its multivalence and vagueness, solidarity straddles the line between the abstract and the concrete. As such, it is often described as a bridge between politics, which is constructed as concrete and real-life, and music, which is constructed as abstract, hard to understand. Music is part of a separate artistic realm that musicians and activists continuously attempt to reconnect to 'real life', to politics. I therefore suggest that 'solidarity' is used to attempt to explain or justify the 'power of music', its political importance. I pay special attention to this mobilisation of solidarity throughout my analyses.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined a critical framework for investigating the link between music and solidarity. By 'critical', I mean: conscientious, not romanticised. Central to studying solidarity is the realisation that the word has an enormous variety in definitions, uses, and meanings, but that it is rarely explained. Its meanings often remain implicit; its multivalence allows speakers to have 'solidarity' mean whatever they need it to. This multivalence, and the associations the concept has with powerful ideas of community and political resistance, make

[31] James Garratt, *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 24–25.

it highly susceptible to rhetorical mobilisation. This can be dangerous when solidarity is mobilised as a desired value – whether in relation to music or not – because its positive connotations obscure how solidarity also oppresses and excludes.

The model developed in this chapter attends to the multivalence and rhetorical power of 'solidarity'. This occurs most obviously through the prong of mobilisation. However, each prong presents an open category to explore many different solidarities, to fathom solidarity's multivalence. The broad definition of solidarity provided here – *a relation between people (whether individuals or groups) that centres a sense of togetherness and support* – is only a theme with many variations. Solidarities differ in their ontology, their intentions, their social configurations, and their mobilisation and mediation. I argue that exploring solidarities through this model provides richer results than adhering to a single definition of solidarity.

My understanding of solidarity in this thesis is value-neutral: it does not accord solidarity inherent goodness or badness. It strives to explain how solidarities are perceived *from below*. Rather than determining what 'real' solidarity is and whether it was present in the strike, my framework aims to understand how people (musicians, activists) use the word 'solidarity'. What does the choice of the label 'solidarity' say about musicians' and activists' experiences with music during the 1984–85 strike? How was this choice influenced by personal, social, and political contexts? What did the music sound they attributed solidarity to, sound like, and what does this say about their conceptions of solidarity? I turn to all of these questions, and more, in my four case studies.

Chapter Two – Bringing People Together? Billy Bragg's Dialogue and the Authenticity Between the Words

Billy Bragg is one of the most prolific political musicians from the UK in the past decades. He features in many volumes investigating the link between music and politics,[1] and has also written about his own political engagement.[2] Because of Bragg's ubiquity in writing on music and politics, he stars in the first case study of this thesis. This chapter analyses Bragg's work to critically uncover his conception of solidarity.[3]

Bragg played dozens of concerts to support the miners throughout the strike. He reminisces:

> Being there [at those concerts] wasn't just a show of solidarity: it was a means by which you allowed other people to show their solidarity. In political terms it allowed you to feel that you were not alone.[4]

This quotation frames this chapter, as I argue that it exhibits how *dialogue* – two or more parties conversing together – is a central value for Bragg as a musician and activist.

First, I briefly introduce Bragg and the music of his early career. I then trace the route to his involvement with the miners' cause. This chapter focusses particularly on Bragg's benefit concerts during the strike. For their description, I rely on Bragg's own recollections

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[1] See, for example: Mark Willhardt, 'Available Rebels and Folk Authenticities: Michelle Shocked and Billy Bragg', in *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, ed. Ian Peddie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 30–48; Kieran Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause: Billy Bragg in the British Folk Tradition', in *Popular Music and Human Rights*, ed. Ian Peddie, Derek B. Scott, and Stan Hawkins, vol. 1 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 5–26; John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 79; Martin J. Power, '"Aesthetics of Resistance": Billy Bragg, Ideology and the Longevity of Song as Social Protest', in *Songs of Social Protest: International Perspectives*, ed. Aileen Dillane et al. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 509–24.

[2] Reebee Garofalo, 'Who Is the World?: Reflections on Music and Politics Twenty Years after Live Aid', *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 17, no. 3 (2005): 324–44, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1524-2226.2005.00048.x; Billy Bragg, *The Progressive Patriot* (London: Bantam, 2006).

[3] Parts of this chapter are paraphrased or quoted from a paper on benefit concerts I wrote in the context of my research internship with Dr Gianmaria Colpani: Moira de Kok, 'Rock and Roll Not Dole: Benefit Concerts during the 1984–85 Miners' Strike' (unpublished manuscript, 28 January 2022).

[4] Daniel Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down: The Music and Politics of Rock Against Racism, 2 Tone and Red Wedge, 1976–1992* (London: Picador, 2016), 361.

and the scarce footage left from the concerts.[5] Due to these limited sources, I also refer to the records he released around this time for analytical purposes, in particular the March 1985 *Between the Wars* EP: the end result of Bragg's prolonged engagement with the strike, dedicated to miners' wives' support groups.[6] The analysis concentrates on the concept of dialogue. I explain how Bragg's work during the strike stages dialogues between various musical genres: punk, British and American folk, and blues and soul. Through invoking these genres, playing various benefit concerts, and citing movements in his lyrics, Bragg also stages a dialogue between social movements. Dialogue characterises his overarching approach to music and politics too, as his work blurs the boundaries between music and labour. In the light of this analysis, the chapter then returns to the statement quoted above, interpreting Bragg's 'solidarity' through the lens of dialogue. Finally, I open a critical perspective on Bragg's vision of solidarity, arguing that it relies upon certain standards of (working-class, masculine) authenticity – meaning that musicians who do not match these standards are excluded from solidarity.

Connecting to the Coalfields

Billy Bragg was born in 1957 in Barking, in Essex near East London, into a working-class family. He was interested in poetry and music from an early age.[7] In July 1983, he released his first record, *Life's a Riot with Spy vs Spy*, followed by a second in November 1984, *Brewing Up with Billy Bragg*.[8] The primary sounds on Bragg's early records are his voice and his electric guitar. His vocal delivery is direct and simple, declamatory and raw rather than mellifluent, without much vibrato and instead full of the grain of the voice. Bragg's vowels rasp and crack and his consonants pop and gurgle. His guitar is played clean, the raw sound likely due more to playing on the bridge element and the innate sounds of the guitar and amplifier than to added distortion or other effects. His style is simple but has a large dynamic range, alternating between palm-muted chords and basslines, and chords that ring out. He strums in patterns of eighths and sixteenths, creating energetic or even agitated

[5] Some fragments of a concert during the strike (likely late 1984 or early 1985) can be seen in this documentary: 'Billy Bragg - Live Concert in DDR and Documentary', Micael Håkans, video, 55:21, 2 April 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Cvz7InJXP0. The fragments appear from 30:36 onwards.
[6] Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 17; Billy Bragg, *Between the Wars*, Go! Discs, 1985, vinyl EP.
[7] Andrew Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners: Billy Bragg*, 3rd ed. (London: Virgin, 2007).
[8] Listen here: Billy Bragg, *Life's a Riot with Spy Vs Spy*, Go! Discs, 1983, https://open.spotify.com/album/29OjAGbMa9QpwytlwptSBF; Billy Bragg, *Brewing Up With*, Go! Discs, 1984, https://open.spotify.com/album/77DQHyIGmJqkjGX7xrzCXa.

rhythms. His musical palette betrays Bragg's punk inspiration; he frequently described himself as a 'one-man Clash'.[9]

Bragg's agitational music and lyrics – already on *Life's a Riot*, he addresses issues like educational elitism, unemployment, and the sexism of the beauty industry – made him a welcome guest at concerts with political themes. Crucially, these included festivals organised by the Greater London Council (GLC), the top-tier body of government in London. The GLC festivals Bragg played in 1984 include a demonstration co-organised with the National Union of Students, and the June festival 'Jobs for a Change', which thematised unemployment and how the GLC aimed to combat it.[10] At these festivals, Bragg and his management connected with trade union representatives and miners' support group members. These people invited him to play in the coalfields and at miners' support groups.[11]

Bragg travelled easily and cheaply throughout the country by train or car, with just himself, an amp, a guitar, and an overnight bag. To keep costs low, he slept and ate in miners' houses. When asked, Bragg estimated he had played a few dozen concerts throughout the strike. These included concerts in miners' communities across the UK, and concerts for miners' support groups in cities such as Oxford.[12] One such gig raised over £200 for the local miners' food fund, giving an indication of his effectiveness.[13] Towns he performed in include Newport, South Wales; Corby, Northamptonshire; and Sunderland, County Durham.[14]

Footage of a concert in late 1984 or early 1985 evinces what Bragg's benefit concerts must have been like. His setup was very simple: man, microphone, guitar, and an amp somewhere in the shadows. The sound is accordingly bare, but certainly not lacklustre: Bragg projects all his high-voltage energy through the narrow channels of his voice and guitar. On the higher, sustained, and accented notes, Bragg nearly yells. As on his records, his voice is unpolished. He frequently spits or growls out words rather than singing them. His face shows the effort of singing, scrunching up and pulling open. He stays at his microphone, but buzzes with energy on the spot. His guitar playing is agitated in the punk manner, frequently playing primarily with downstrokes only (even eighth notes at 170 beats per minute), shaking his

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[9] Billy Bragg, interview by the author, 21 May 2022.
[10] 'Greater London Council Festivals 1984', accessed 21 April 2022, https://www.ukrockfestivals.com/glc-festivals-1984.html. See also: Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 372–75; Jeremy Tranmer, '"Keep On Keepin' On"', in *Pit Props: Music, International Solidarity and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike*, ed. Granville Williams (Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 2016), 28; Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 84–85.
[11] Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 146.
[12] Bragg, interview.
[13] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 358–59; Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 146.
[14] Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 146.

entire body. He introduces his songs with brief but quietly poetic interludes, such as 'A postcard to Mrs. Thatcher's Britain', or 'A song about war, the Falklands war, and the soldiers that fought it; not the ones who came home heroes, but the ones who came home in tears.' He keeps the listener on their toes with his large dynamic range, the push-and-pull between loud and quiet. This, and the fact that he is alone on stage yet bursting with energy, draws the audience's attention. They seem to listen intently and applaud enthusiastically after his final song.[15]

According to Bragg's manager, Peter Jenner, performing the benefits 'gave him this incredible personal link with the various unions and miners and support groups.'[16] Bragg himself has attributed much impact to conversing with miners during the strike. The Sunderland gig, on 28 September 1984, made a particular impression on him. The miners there questioned him on his stance regarding the class struggle, the Labour Party, and Marx.[17] Music journalist Robin Denselow quotes Bragg:

> There was a great mixture of people there, and I ended up just talking to miners about what it was like being on strike, and watching union videos. It had a big effect on me. A lot of bands go out and do a benefit, and then they get politicized just by talking to people.[18]

Bragg here emphasises that the political import of his strike benefit gigs lay not in his own musical contribution, but in the diversity of the audience and the conversations he had with them. Bragg has expressed that communicating with his audience is the most important part of his work: he greatly values this communication being equal and reciprocal, rather top-down as he disseminates political information from the stage.[19] His punk sensibilities urge him to smash the barrier between artist and audience, to facilitate dialogue and togetherness.[20]

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[15] Micael Håkans, 'Billy Bragg - Live Concert in DDR and Documentary', video. The fragments appear from 30:36 onwards.
[16] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 358.
[17] Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 16.
[18] Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber, 1989), 213.
[19] Nancy K. Baym, *Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, Audiences, and the Intimate Work of Connection* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 153–54.
[20] Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 213; Jeremy Tranmer, '"Nazis Are No Fun": Punk and Anti-Fascism in Britain in the 1970s', in *Rockin' the Borders: Rock Music and Social, Cultural and Political Change*, ed. Fredrik Nilsson and Björn Horgby (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 123–25.

What he offers politics as a musician, Bragg has said, does not hinge on his agency as an individual political mastermind or the agency of the music. Rather, his role is to bring the audience together, highlight their common political sentiments, and engage them in dialogue.[21] This value of *dialogue*, I argue, is central to understanding Bragg's conception of solidarity, given his statement that his benefit concerts' power lay precisely in showing solidarity *and* allowing others to show solidarity. Therefore, the next section analyses dialogue in Bragg's work during the strike.

Three Levels of Dialogue

I contend that Bragg's benefit concerts during the strike staged dialogue at three different levels. The first occurs at the level of *genre*: Bragg's music orchestrates a dialogue between different genres. I already mentioned Bragg's punk inspirations. These are audible on his early records: the raw, declamatory delivery of his lyrics and the simplicity of his unpolished guitar chords and basslines are clearly inherited from punk music. Bragg also admired the political import punk gained in the UK during the late 1970s through the Rock Against Racism (RAR) movement. RAR began in 1976, when seven rock fans wrote an open letter to three major music magazines, calling for 'a rank and file movement against the racist poison in rock music.'[22] This was catalysed by Eric Clapton's racist remarks made at a Birmingham concert, but also addressed the growing extreme right National Front party and racism in British society more generally. The letter received hundreds of responses, anticipating a national and later international movement against racism in rock music and wider society.[23] The movement peaked in 1978, when two London RAR carnivals (marches ending in music festivals) drew a combined 180,000 spectators with big-name headliners like the Clash.[24]

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[21] Power, '"Aesthetics of Resistance"', 511, 521.

[22] *Temporary Hoarding* 2, June 1977. I consulted this source at the archive of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

[23] Street, *Music and Politics*, 80–81; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 2002), 155; Ashley Dawson, '"Love Music, Hate Racism": The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns', *Postmodern Culture* 16, no. 1 (2005): https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2006.0002; Ian Goodyer, *Crisis Music: The Cultural Politics of Rock Against Racism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 11; Jeremy Tranmer, 'Rocking Against Racism: Trotskyism, Communism, and Punk in Britain', in *Red Strains: Music and Communism Outside the Communist Bloc*, ed. Robert Adlington, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 267; David Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League 1976–1982* (London: Routledge, 2018), 51; Stuart Schrader, 'Rank-and-File Antiracism: Historicizing Punk and Rock Against Racism', *Radical History Review*, no. 138 (October 2020): 132–33, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-8359468.

[24] Tranmer, '"Nazis Are No Fun"', 132–33.

RAR enormously impressed Bragg. He attended the first London carnival in 1978, which was supposedly an 'eye-opener' for him.[25] Bragg has stated that this carnival kickstarted not only his own musical-political development,[26] but also his whole generation's:

> That first ANL [Anti-Nazi League]/RAR carnival was a watershed, setting the tone for the decade to come. Those of us who were there that day would go on to support the Two-Tone movement, the miners, CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament], anti-apartheid, Nicaragua, Red Wedge, the GLC, Live Aid. It was the moment when my generation took sides.[27]

Bragg describes RAR as a milestone heralding the intense connection between music and left politics in the 1980s. It was a meaningful political experience for him, that influenced his political convictions as well as his belief in the connection between music and politics. Bragg taking inspiration from punk honours his experience with RAR and his belief in punk's political potential, as embodied most prominently by RAR.

However, Bragg was also disillusioned with the politics of one of the UK's most prominent punk bands, the Clash. He confessed that he and other punk fans believed the Clash would change the world. That belief crumbled after the Conservatives won the 1979 election. He felt the Clash had not walked it like they talked it: they had not performed enough concrete actions to make political change and broadcast their message to wider society.[28] Bragg thus aimed to avoid this pitfall with his own political music.

The miners' strike was a crucial period for Bragg's joint musical and political development. Again, he recalls the Sunderland benefit concert as a pivotal moment. First on the bill was Jock Purdon, a Scottish ex-miner who sung acapella. Bragg recalled the experience as follows: 'He's sitting down, he's got his finger in his ear, singing. And all his songs are more radical than mine. And I'm supposed to be Mr Punk Rock, you know, Mr One-Man Clash.'[29] Bragg here professes his insecurity about his own music *vis à vis* the radical folk tradition that Purdon exemplified. Bragg had forgotten about this tradition. He once listened to 1960s and 1970s singer-songwriters like Martin Carthy and Bob Dylan, but got side-tracked by punk music. Meeting Purdon and other left-political British folk singers

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[25] Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 146.
[26] Street, *Music and Politics*, 79.
[27] Bragg, *The Progressive Patriot*, 198.
[28] Bragg, interview; Power, '"Aesthetics of Resistance"', 513.
[29] Bragg, interview. He also recounts the tale in Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 359.

like Dick Gaughan and Ewan MacColl during the strike led him to reconnect with radical political folk music.[30]

Indeed, Bragg's musical style is most often described as a combination, a *dialogue* of punk and folk. Cultural theorist Kieran Cashell lists several elements of Bragg's repertoire that fit into the British folk tradition. These include his solo performance (guitar and voice), unconventional song structures, the use of a working-class accent.[31] Cashell argues that Bragg matches the 'post-industrial, realist, working-class aesthetic',[32] which connects to the long history of trade unionism in Britain and is most emblematically expressed in the industrial folk song. Purdon and MacColl are the most famous exponents of this aesthetic.[33]

Bragg's connection to American folk music adds another conversation partner to this dialogue. He explained that exposure to the British folk tradition during his strike benefit gigs opened his mind to folk music when he visited the United States the same year. Rather than the Clash, Americans compared him to Woody Guthrie, the early-twentieth-century socialist and anti-fascist singer-songwriter. Bragg soon did his research on and was inspired by this predecessor previously unknown to him. He explicitly wants to follow in Guthrie's footsteps as a musician attending picket lines, fundraisers, and other political events to play music, and sharing what he learnt at the next event.[34]

Bragg's new, socialist folk inspirations permeate the records released shortly after the strike: the 1985 *Between the Wars* EP and the 1986 album *Talking with the Taxman about Poetry*. 'Between the Wars' contains a cover of 'Which Side Are You On?'. This song was composed by miner's wife Florence Reece in 1931, in an attempt to unionise the miners in Harlan County, Kentucky.[35] On *Taxman*, Bragg embraces the instrumentation of both British and American folk music: violins, mandolins, slide guitar, and acoustic guitar. On 'There is Power in a Union', Bragg combines a Union Civil War melody with new syndicalist lyrics. The song shares its title with one by Joe Hill, songwriter with the International Workers of the World, whom – like Guthrie – Bragg first heard of while touring in the US. Finally, the

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[30] Bragg, interview; Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 15–16; Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 147; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 359.
[31] Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 11, 13–14.
[32] Cashell, 14.
[33] Listen here: 'Jock Purdon - The Miners Tale', knowndwarf, video, 4:09, 7 March 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwotQ96XsCo; 'Ewan MacColl - Daddy What Did You Do In The Strike', Donald Kerr, video, 3:01, 31 March 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbSoLqySCbc.
[34] Bragg, interview.
[35] Timothy P. Lynch, *Strike Songs of the Depression* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 67. Listen here: Billy Bragg, 'Which Side Are You On', Go! Discs, 1985, https://open.spotify.com/track/7bBoLu8ATuAAro3AWGFIvO.

song 'Hold the Fort' demonstrates the influence of Purdon's stepwise-melody acapella style on Bragg's music.[36]

However, these records always sound a *dialogue between* folk and punk. The folk elements mentioned above confront Bragg's raw vocal delivery and equally raw and agitated guitar playing. His use of the electric guitar challenged folk conventions. Through staging a dialogue between folk and punk, Bragg highlights where the two genres grate as well as synergise. According to Cashell, many elements that Bragg gleaned from folk mesh surprisingly well with punk because of punk's broad anti-establishment and do-it-yourself attitude, including solo performance (interpreting punk's do-it-yourself ethos with a singular 'you') and his working-class accent.[37] Conversely, Bragg's DIY punk attitude dovetails with the British folk tradition of making political music and performing with minimal means.[38]

Cashell argues that Bragg's continuous challenging of the folk tradition connects him most deeply to this tradition. Infusing folk with punk rejuvenates the British folk movement, and radicalises the act of passing on tradition.[39] Cashell thus finds that, through staging a dialogue between folk and punk, Bragg reinvigorates the British folk tradition and emphasises its relation to resistance and radicalism. However, Bragg experienced the opposite. He underscored the importance of (re)discovering radicalism in folk traditions for his musical and political development. Reconnecting to folk and blending it with his punk style solved several frustrations he experienced with punk.[40]

However, punk and British and American folk are not the only genres in dialogue in Bragg's music. I argue that the focus on these two (white) music genres in journalistic and academic writing about Bragg overshadows the influence of black music on his style. For instance, Cashell argues that Bragg's relatively simple, percussive guitar style has roots in punk and even folk.[41] However, Bragg himself expressed that his percussive style derives from listening to blues guitarists like John Lee Hooker.[42] Through incorporating blues, as well as reggae and soul at other points in his career,[43] Bragg brings black music into dialogue

[36] Listen here: Billy Bragg, *Talking with the Taxman about Poetry*, Go! Discs, 1986, https://open.spotify.com/album/0jMxhxH5JW3aUdVoeRKjWl.
[37] Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 11, 13–14.
[38] Cashell, 6, 10–11, 19–22.
[39] Cashell, 9, 25.
[40] Bragg, interview.
[41] Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 10–11.
[42] Micael Håkans, 'Billy Bragg - Live Concert in DDR and Documentary', video. The relevant segment starts at 32:30.
[43] Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 38; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 429, 488; Simon Frith and John Street, 'Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music', in *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, ed. Reebee Garofalo (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 78; Jeremy

with folk and punk, which are constructed as white. Precisely unpicking the influence of black music styles on Bragg's music falls outside this chapter's scope (but see the next chapter for further discussion of the influence of black music on musicians who supported the strike). However, it before becoming a punk rocker, Bragg listened to soul music of the 1960s and 1970s. This music of the civil rights movement, and leftist singer-songwriters, taught the teenaged Bragg his initial politics.[44] This signals the next level of dialogue: the dialogue between *social movements*.

Bragg invokes social movements in several ways. First, this happens through his combination of musical genres. Folk, punk, and black music all relate to different yet interconnected social movements: labour organising and the 1960s countercultural movement, RAR, and the American civil rights movement, respectively. By combining these genres, Bragg also brings their associated social movements in dialogue.

Second, Bragg was involved with social movements through playing benefit concerts. In addition to playing GLC festivals and miners' benefits, he played concerts supporting the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Sandinistas (the ruling socialist political party in Nicaragua, then under attack by CIA-backed contra-revolutionaries), and anti-apartheid.[45] After the strike, he co-organised the Red Wedge music campaign, attempting to oust the Conservatives from government in the 1987 election.[46]

Third, Bragg emphasises his relation to social movements in his lyrics. Remarkably, his lyrics before and after the strike differ in their political framework. He described his politics before the strike as 'personal'.[47] The songs on 1983's *Life's a Riot* largely thematise (inter)personal issues, such as romance or childhood experiences. The songs that do exhibit his political beliefs, such as 'To Have and to Have Not' and 'The Busy Girl Buys Beauty' (contemplating, respectively, educational elitism and unemployment due to classism, and the sexism of the beauty industry) contain no solution to the problems explained, or express resignation. The clearest example is the chorus of 'A New England': Bragg laments, 'I don't

Tranmer, 'Political Commitment of a New Type? Red Wedge and the Labour Party in the 1980s', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 22, no. 3 (15 June 2017): 8, https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.1466.

[44] Bragg, interview. See also: Billy Bragg, '"Young People, This Is Your Miners' Strike" - We Spoke to Billy Bragg About Saving Britain', interview by Joe Zadeh, *Vice*, 22 July 2016, https://www.vice.com/en/article/6vg9q3/billy-bragg-interview-2016.

[45] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, xix–xxvi; Douglas M. McLeod, 'Billy Bragg: Mixing Pop and Politics', in *Political Rock*, ed. Kristine Weglarz and Mark Pedelty (London: Routledge, 2016), 97.

[46] Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 219–21; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 390–92; Tranmer, 'Political Commitment of a New Type?', 2.

[47] Bragg, interview.

want to change the world / I'm not looking for a new England / I'm just looking for another girl.'

After the strike, Bragg's lyrics turn ideological. He recalls to have 'learned the language of Marxism': understanding how seemingly disconnected personal problems fit into a socialist framework.[48] The lyrics of the *Between the Wars* EP pull social issues out of the (inter)personal framework of *Life's a Riot*. In 'Between the Wars', for instance, Bragg still sings in the first person singular, but strongly opposes himself to the government, condemning the breakdown of the welfare state, lack of commitment to peace, and insufficient workers' rights. Instead, he favours offering a 'helping hand' to and cultivating faith in one's fellow man. 'The World Turned Upside Down' (a cover of British folk singer Leon Rosselson's original) refers to the seventeenth-century proto-socialist Diggers. 'It Says Here' attacks the British tabloid press, criticising their anti-union conservative politics as well as their sexism (*The Sun* regularly printed pictures of topless women).[49] His lyrics thus became focussed on coherent social movements, particularly socialist and union movements.

Bragg thus brought several different movements into dialogue by invoking them in his lyrics and genre combinations, and by playing various benefit concerts. This way, Bragg – alongside his contemporaries, including Paul Weller of the Style Council, Jimmy Somerville of Bronski Beat and the Communards, and Tom Robinson – expressed and even personified an all-encompassing left ideology.[50] However, as musicologist Eric Drott argues, 'social struggles waged *by means of* music often get caught up in struggles *over* music.'[51] Music, as an 'instrument of contention' can express political beliefs. However, political beliefs also affect conceptions of what music should be like: music becomes an 'object of contention'.[52] This signals the third level of dialogue: between *music and labour theory*.

Bragg has described using music for societal change as 'seizing the means of production'.[53] This view expresses that art is part of the means of production that shape society, as much as financial capital or tools and machines are. Although this evokes a functional perspective – music is described as a 'means' – it is more radical than other functional approaches. Often, a functional approach asks what music can do for politics,

[48] Bragg, interview.
[49] Listen here: Billy Bragg, *Back to Basics*, Go! Discs, 1987, https://open.spotify.com/album/14KKyoFNFXJQBNolP2m3Xr. Tracks 8, 19, 20, and 21 on this compilation album are from the *Between the Wars* EP.
[50] See: Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 217–19; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 375–79.
[51] Eric Drott, 'Music and Socialism: Three Moments', *Twentieth-Century Music* 16, no. 1 (February 2019): 9, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572219000070.
[52] Drott, 9.
[53] Bragg, *The Progressive Patriot*, 242.

implying these two to be separate spheres. Contrastingly, Bragg brings the spheres of music and politics in dialogue, demonstrating that music is not a separate sphere at all, but can be theorised *as* labour and therefore directly connects to left politics. For Bragg, performing music and thereby instigating connections between himself and his audience is a form of labour contributing to the advancement of socialism.[54] The musician is but another labourer. This complements Bragg's feelings that, although there is no special quality to music that allows it to change the world, musicians can bring people together, raise consciousness, facilitate dialogue, and express support.[55] The agency lies not with the genius musician or the music, but in this collectivity: bringing people together and generating feelings of togetherness. I theorise further on this connection between music, collectivity, and labour in Chapter Five.

Having discussed the three levels of dialogue in Bragg's music – genre, social movements, and music as labour – let me revisit his attribution of solidarity to his benefit concerts during the strike:

> Being there wasn't just a show of solidarity: it was a means by which you allowed other people to show their solidarity. In political terms it allowed you to feel that you were not alone.[56]

Bragg has described his understanding of solidarity as 'organised empathy': directing the empathy people feel towards others into organised routes to ensure that all people have the rights they deserve. Music, he feels, can be an organising tool: attending benefit concerts and listening to records gives people the opportunity to manifest their feelings of solidarity into actions of solidarity, and connect to like-minded people.[57]

Central to Bragg's conception of how music facilitates solidarity is the showing-and-letting-show in the above quotation. This is, essentially, a form of dialogue between those present at the concert, whether musician or audience member. Those present establish the similarity of their political opinions and feelings, strengthening a group feeling of togetherness necessary for building critical mass as a social movement. According to Bragg, solidarity is thus *reciprocal*: it does not simply flow from one group to another, but relies on

[54] Micael Håkans, 'Billy Bragg - Live Concert in DDR and Documentary', video. The relevant segment starts at 51:55.
[55] Bragg, *The Progressive Patriot*, 247.
[56] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 361.
[57] Bragg, interview.

the mutual affirmation of values and support. This is why I argue that the central value underlying Bragg's conception of solidarity is dialogue: the conversation between multiple entities. This dialogue occurs between musicians and audiences in the same space and time of the concert. However, it can also occur across space, as Bragg aimed to spread the knowledge he learnt in the coalfields to other places, and across time, as he invoked social movements of the past through his music and lyrics.

Solidarity, Authenticity, Masculinity

I have argued that the central value which shapes Bragg's conception of solidarity is dialogue. However, there is another value underlying his ideas about political music: authenticity. This section, opens a critical perspective on Bragg's attribution of solidarity to his strike benefit concerts, by interrogating how he perceived himself as authentic. I intend to demonstrate how the mobilisation of 'solidarity' can be exclusionary, if values like 'authenticity' go unspoken. Like solidarity, authenticity is a culturally constructed concept, connoting myriad meanings.[58] Therefore, this section aims to elucidate precisely what kinds of authenticity Bragg espouses.

Poetry and folk scholar Mark Willhardt argues that Bragg's career illustrates what he calls the *authenticity of use*. This type of authenticity demands musicians successfully balance the necessary evil of commercialism (a proper authentic musician cannot work a second job, so their music must be profitable enough to live off) with putting the status their commercial desirability earns them to good use (e.g., a political cause).[59] His close involvement with the miners and other causes allowed Bragg to authenticate his music and political beliefs, while simultaneously furthering his career and charming the music industry, politicians, and his audience.[60]

This authenticity of use – whereby (commercial) pop music is legitimated through political engagement – can be used to discredit music perceived as too commercial and/or not political enough. This coordinates with what popular music scholars Hans Weisethaunet and Ulf Lindberg call the authenticity of negation: resisting the commerce, standardisation, constraints, and conventions of the music industry.[61] I argue that this authenticity of negation,

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[58] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 78, 82, 84.
[59] Willhardt, 'Available Rebels and Folk Authenticities', 34–35.
[60] Willhardt, 39–45.
[61] Cashell, 'More Relevance than Spotlight and Applause', 8–11.

combined with his authenticity of use, is Bragg's foremost invocation of authenticity. In a documentary filmed shortly after the strike, Bragg states:

> Peop- people say that pol-, uhh, politics has nothing to do with music. This is, uh, this is rubbish. These are all people who stand on the edge of music and j-, and just wanna wear the wacky clothes and have the funny haircut. Because politics is life, as far as I'm concerned, and- and good music should- should reflect life, should reflect the society it comes from.[62]

Bragg here distances himself from a group of people he perceives to be 'on the edge of music' (rather than at its core). These people claim music has nothing to do with politics, and seem to care only about trendy clothing and hair styles. Bragg explicitly states that good music should reflect society: music is about politics, not about style or appearance. This is a statement about musical authenticity, since 'authenticity' is often given positive value: 'good music' is 'authentic music' and vice versa. Bragg thus deploys the authenticity of negation and of use: he discredits certain music for being commercial and, supposedly, apolitical.

Bragg was not alone in making this opposition between 'good, authentic, political' and 'bad, inauthentic, apolitical' music in 1980s Britain. Among others, Paul Weller of the Style Council and rock journalist Robin Denselow also perceived such a divide, with pop sensation Frankie Goes to Hollywood as the antagonist.[63] The specific group that Bragg criticised was Spandau Ballet, as he recounts: 'I thought they were the kind of antithesis of punk, in the sense that it was style over content.'[64] The comparison to punk demonstrates that authenticity of negation conspires with the authenticity of genre. This authenticity involves obeying the conventions attached to a particular genre, particularly genres perceived to be 'pure' but threatened, for instance by commercialism.[65] The negated genre is often 'pop': mainstream chart music that is perceived as commercial and apolitical.[66] This negation of pop occurs in rock and punk circles, but also meshes well with folk authenticity.[67] As Bragg

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[62] Micael Håkans, 'Billy Bragg - Live Concert in DDR and Documentary', video. The relevant segment starts at 51:10.
[63] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 351–52; Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 211.
[64] Bragg, interview. See also: Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 414–416.
[65] Willhardt, 'Available Rebels and Folk Authenticities', 31–32.
[66] This is also illustrated by the fact that Bragg refused to release a single off *Brewing Up With*, stating that 'singles were for Spandau Ballet', while he is a punk rocker: Collins, *Still Suitable for Miners*, 137.
[67] Hans Weisethaunet and Ulf Lindberg, 'Authenticity Revisited: The Rock Critic and the Changing Real', *Popular Music and Society* 33, no. 4 (October 2010): 472, https://doi.org/10.1080/03007761003694225.

inherits from all of these genres, it is no surprise he opposes himself to mainstream pop music like Spandau Ballet for its ‘inauthenticity’: its lack of political engagement.

By extension, pop-critical people may attribute solidarity to rock music, or folk music, but not commercial chart pop music. A certain group (mainstream pop musicians) is excluded from solidarity. Note that ‘solidarity’ and ‘mainstream pop’ remain artificial constructs: some mainstream pop artists accused of Thatcherite ideas of glamour and individualism actually came from working-class backgrounds, including Spandau Ballet.[68] Bragg confessed he begrudgingly acknowledged that Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet was on ‘the good side’ when he joined a Red Wedge concert in 1986.[69] Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Wham! supported the miners by signing a petition and playing a benefit concert.[70] While Bragg, Bronski Beat, and the Style Council appeared on the same pop charts, programmes, and magazine covers, the latter two even in the top 10, their political authenticity was not called into question.[71] There thus seems to be a certain (arbitrary) amount and type of political involvement necessary to compensate for chart popularity: the balance that Willhardt also characterised as central to the authenticity of use.

However, I argue that this division in authenticity is also gendered. Theories of authenticity in rock music often lack gender analysis. This is surprising, because authenticity is often heavily gendered masculine. Performance scholar Philip Auslander comes closest when he indicates that ‘female hardrockers frequently employ the aggressive vocal inflections and macho physical gestures and postures associated with male musicians, because that vocabulary is the established iconography of authenticity for that particular rock subgenre.’[72] However, he neglects to make the connection between authenticity and gender crystal clear: that some bodies (often masculine), are deemed more authentic than others (often feminine). Constructing and performing authenticity in rock music oftentimes means constructing and performing masculinity, too. When Bragg talks about ‘wacky clothes and funny haircuts’, or ‘a bunch of young herberts [Spandau Ballet] wearing their mum’s living

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[68] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 371–72.
[69] Bragg, interview. See also: Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 414–416.
[70] Tranmer, ‘“Keep On Keepin’ On”’, 30; Denselow, *When the Music’s Over*, 209–10; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 363; Adam Sweeting, ‘Pithead Ballet: Wham!/Style Council’, *Melody Maker*, 15 September 1984, 19.
[71] ‘Billy Bragg’, Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 25 April 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/22389/billy-bragg/; ‘Bronski Beat’, Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 13 December 2021, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/21709/bronski-beat/; ‘Style Council’, Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 25 April 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/20231/style-council/.
[72] Auslander, *Liveness*, 82.

room curtains',[73] and Weller about 'the pop aristocracy, with their suits and pearls',[74] this implies certain standards for working-class masculinity. Interest in fancy dress (specifically pearls and lace) is traditionally gendered feminine. Feminine sartorial choices are perceived as a distraction from working-class politics, as they supposedly play into the neoliberal beauty economy which promotes displays of individual wealth and class status. Instead of wasting their time on such decadence, left-political working-class men are expected to devote minimal time to their appearance and maximal time to the advancement of socialism (however, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, other interpretations working-class masculinity's relationship to style existed). Indirectly, Bragg's ideas in the 1980s about political music, music that can facilitate solidarity, are thus also linked to ideas on masculinity. This is compounded by the fact that punk is often linked to working-class masculinity, as well, whereas mainstream chart pop music is gendered feminine in the public imagination.[75]

Conclusion

Bragg has extensively discussed his own politics and music, and how they connect. It is therefore unsurprising that he attaches the word 'solidarity' to his benefit concerts during the strike. He has characterised the strike as a crucial moment in his political education.[76] The word solidarity reflects the gravity of this experience.

Bragg himself emphasises the value of empathy: trying to understand and support the struggles of others. For Bragg, music is a way to organise empathy, to facilitate solidarity. This chapter captured this sentiment with the concept of 'dialogue': connecting and conversing with others can build solidarity – in the sense of 'organised empathy'. Dialogue happens on a literal level, as musicians and audience members of different backgrounds are united into the same concert space (more on this in Chapter Four). However, dialogue also governs Bragg's musical palette. He stages dialogues between different genres – punk, British and American folk, and soul and blues – to highlight their differences and commonalities, seeking a radical music to match his vision of solidarity and socialist politics.

[73] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 414.
[74] Rachel, 351.
[75] Sally Robinson, *Authenticity Guaranteed: Masculinity and the Rhetoric of Anti-Consumerism in American Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018), 36–37, 77; Sam de Boise, 'Men, Masculinities and Music', in *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies* (London: Routledge, 2019), 415–17.
[76] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 359–61.

Through these genres, as well as through playing various benefit concerts and writing lyrics, Bragg also staged a dialogue between different social movements. His involvement with multiple social movements illustrates the importance of understanding and supporting the struggles of others in his conception of solidarity. Finally, at a fundamental level, Bragg's work demonstrates a productive dialogue between music and labour: music, labour theory, and socialist politics are not separate spheres, but have a symbiotic bond.

However, if dialogue is the underlying core principle of Bragg's solidarity, a more insidious principle at times destabilises it. I have demonstrated that Bragg deployed certain discourses of authenticity, whereby sufficiently political music is 'good' and 'authentic' and music that supposedly ignores politics 'bad' and 'inauthentic'. In addition, this division espouses restrictive ideas about working-class masculinity and style. By setting these standards for authenticity, Bragg divides the insiders of the solidary group from its outsiders, those included in the dialogue and those left out of the conversation.

Chapter Three – A Black-and-White Issue: Intersections between Pop, Race, and the Working Class on 'Soul Deep'

Numerous artists released benefit singles and albums to support the miners' strike. One of the most successful ones – charting in the top 30 and selling about 100,000 copies – was 'Soul Deep', released in December 1984 by the Council Collective.[1] The Collective convened specifically for this single and comprised the Style Council (Paul Weller's new project after disbanding the Jam, with keyboardist Mick Talbot and percussionist Steve White), bassist Leonardo Chignoli, and vocalists Vaughn Toulouse, Dizzi Hites, Junior Giscombe, Jimmy Ruffin, and Dee C. Lee. The single raised around £10,000, which was donated to Women Against Pit Closures and the family of David Wilkie, a taxi driver who had been killed driving a strike-breaking miner to work.[2]

The song left three impressions on me at first listen. First was how typically 1980s it sounded: the electronic drums with a synthesised cowbell and gated-reverb toms, the 'fat' synth chords with a little vibrato on the sustain, and the equally fat (occasionally slapped) bass. Second was how much it made me want to dance. The different percussion elements (a bass, snare-like sound, a shaker, the cowbell, and the toms), the bass, and the synth chords all play different staccato rhythms, generating a highly syncopated groove with different rhythms to synchronise a dance to. Third, the vocals, when they arrived after the lengthy intro (18 bars, or 35 seconds), surprised me. The surprise was not because of the delivery, which blended smoothly with the funk-inspired instrumentals as it alternated between a declamatory, rap-like style and soulful licks. It was because of the lyrics (Appendix).

The contrast between the funky, upbeat synths and percussion, and the unsubtle political message of lyrics like 'We can't afford to let the government win / It means death to the trade unions' could not be greater. Having digested the lyrics' style for a verse, I highly anticipated the chorus, and was not disappointed: the chorus ends with the phrase 'But as for solidarity / I don't see none.' The impact of 'solidarity' sits with the listener for a few bars, while the instrumentation briefly reduces to only the percussion and bass elements again,

[1] Listen here: The Council Collective, 'Soul Deep', Polydor, 1984, https://open.spotify.com/track/0Enno8tkvhJ7hYZI4TntV9.

[2] Jeremy Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity: Musicians and the Strike', in *Digging the Seam: Popular Cultures of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike*, ed. Simon Popple and Ian W. Macdonald (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 77–78.

before the second verse starts. Coupled with the cover for the single, the message is clear.[3] Against a white background, only a few lines of black text adorn the back cover (fig. 2), including the ending phrase from the chorus and the statement 'This record is about Solidarity [*sic*] or more to the point – getting it back!'[4] This chapter analyses this sentiment, explaining why the Collective felt capital-S Solidarity with the miners was lacking, and what their solidarity entailed.

I first address the Council Collective's origin story, tracing Paul Weller's political development while making the journey from the Jam to the Style Council. I consider what Weller's personal journey reveals about broader attitudes towards pop, politics, and solidarity in the late 1970s and early 1980s and particularly during the strike. Next, I analyse 'Soul Deep' on three interconnected levels: 'Soul Deep' as pop music, 'Soul Deep' as political pop music, and 'Soul Deep' as political pop music that engages significantly with black popular music. I argue that these three levels are necessary to understand the line 'But as for solidarity / I don't see none'. For Weller and the Collective, mainstream pop music was not political enough. They asserted that 'solidarity' should not be merely a feeling, but requires concrete and effective actions to support the miners, despite risks to the musicians' careers.

Figure 1: The front cover of 'Soul Deep'.

[3] The photos of figures 1 and 2 were both taken by the author.
[4] The Council Collective, 'Soul Deep', Polydor MINE X1 (881 646-1), 1984, 45 rpm 12-inch vinyl single.

"There's Brother against Brother –
There's Fathers against Sons –
But as for Solidarity – I don't see none"
Let's change that!

"The aim of this record was to raise money for the Striking Miners and their families before Xmas but obviously in the light of the tragic and disgusting event in South Wales resulting in the murder of a Cab driver, some of the monies will also go now, to the widow of the man.
We do support the miners strike but we do *not* support violence. It helps no one and only creates further division amongst people.
This record is about Solidarity or more to the point – getting it back! If the miners lose the strike, the consequences will be felt by all of the working classes. That is why it is so important to support it. But violence will only lead to defeat – as all violence ultimatly does."

Figure 2: A close-up of the back cover of 'Soul Deep'.

Paul Weller's Political Awakening

Paul Weller disbanded punk group the Jam in 1982 at the peak of their career. They had just released their album *The Gift* and the single 'A Town Called Malice', both reaching number one on the official UK charts.[5] Weller stated that he no longer enjoyed the band and wanted to experiment with new genres and instrumentations. Thus, the Style Council was born: a group heavily influenced by soul, R&B, funk, and Latin music, and unafraid to play with synthesisers and drum machines.[6]

Weller's switch between musical idioms coincided with developments in his political views. He was frequently accused of supporting the right wing during his time in the Jam.[7] In a 1977 interview, he disclosed his plan to vote Conservative in the next election. Already the next year he regretted this statement, claiming it to be joke about disidentifying with the overt socialism of groups like the Clash. Then he told *Jamming!* magazine, 'I don't really wanna talk about politics, I'm not clever enough.'[8] Weller here expresses a disinterest in politics, preferring to talk about music, instead. He later confessed to have had few political views at the time, mostly wanting to sound contrarian.[9] This began to change in the early 1980s. The Jam played a handful of RAR gigs and released songs like 'The Eton Rifles', expressing

[5] 'Jam', Full Official Chart History, Official Charts Company, accessed 27 April 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/14105/jam/.
[6] Paul Weller, 'Paul Weller: From The Jam to Catastrophe - and Back Again', interview by Paul du Noyer, *MOJO*, June 1995, https://www.pauldunoyer.com/paul-weller-1995-interview/; Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber, 1989), 205.
[7] Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 205–6.
[8] Paul Weller, 'Exclusive interview with The Jam', *Jamming!*, September 1978, https://www.ijamming.net/Jammingmagazine/PaulWellertranscript.html.
[9] Daniel Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down: The Music and Politics of Rock Against Racism, 2 Tone and Red Wedge, 1976–1992* (London: Picador, 2016), 348–49.

consciousness of class differences (Eton students jeering at a march against unemployment inspired the song).[10]

However, like Bragg with the miners' strike, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was Weller's real political catalyst. Originally formed in 1957, the CND reawakened in the early 1980s responding to the rising tension between the Soviet and Euro-American blocs. Both sides had deployed nuclear missiles in distrust of the other's. The threat of nuclear war was plainly felt, and the resistance against nuclear armament grew. In the UK, this growth became most apparent by the establishment of camps like Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (stationed to protest the arrival of nuclear missiles at RAF Greenham Common) and the spread of youth CND groups. The movement quickly attracted pop musicians. It released a benefit album, *Life in the European Theatre*, in December 1981, compiling tracks by the Jam, the Clash, and two-tone bands such as the Specials and Madness. Six months after the Jam disbanded, the Style Council first appeared live in London, at the CND Festival for Peace in May 1983. Their single 'Money-Go-Round', had just been released to benefit the CND. The group also visited Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp to donate food and clothes.[11]

By the time the miners' strike began, Weller had been thoroughly politicised. He believed supporting the miners was a black-and-white issue: you were for or against Thatcher.[12] Besides the 'Soul Deep' single, this politicisation also permeates *Our Favourite Shop*, the Style Council's record released three months after the strike ended. The album's lyrics address themes like the hollowing out of mining communities ('All Gone Away'), police violence ('A Stone's Throw Away'), and global equality ('Internationalists').[13] The Style Council was also indispensable for Red Wedge: they provided funds, personnel, and gear for the Labour-focussed campaign's first cross-country tour of 1986.[14] Always the sceptic, Weller believed supporting the Labour Party was the most practical way to oust the Conservatives from government, but also hoped the musicians in Red Wedge could function as a pressure group to push Labour further left.[15]

Weller's personal journey illustrates an attitude to pop music many others shared during the late 1970s and 1980s. A particular subset of pop musicians in the UK, including

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[10] Rachel, 349–51.
[11] Rachel, 346–48; Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 206–8.
[12] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 382.
[13] Listen here: The Style Council, *Our Favourite Shop*, Polydor, 1985, https://open.spotify.com/album/75nT99YVabgYL2UcyKrPHa.
[14] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 410.
[15] Rachel, 383.

three of my case studies (Weller, Bragg, and Jimmy Somerville of Bronski Beat) but also Tom Robinson, Jerry Dammers of the Specials, Everything but the Girl, the Redskins, the Clash, and many others,[16] was convinced that pop music *had* to be political to be meaningful. This attitude grew from the social and political context of the time, most obviously the increasingly hostile Cold War and the actions of Thatcher's government. However, it also grew from the realisation that *the* late-1970s radical music – punk – had not fulfilled its promise. Clearly, nihilism, shock, negation, and deconstruction were not enough:[17] the National Front lost the 1979 election, but Thatcher won, so how much ground had really been gained?

For Weller, especially, the time had come for *actions* rather than *words*: one had to choose sides and make an effort.[18] I argue that the word 'solidarity' was perfect to emphasise the demand that music be explicitly involved with contemporary politics, and that is why many artists used it to describe their (experiences with) music. This usage of the word attempts to solve a tension between pop and politics, to make them compatible. Keyboardist with the Communards Richard Coles formulates it eloquently: 'Pop stars have to be inaccessible because it's unmanageable, the degree of interest, and that goes against the grain of solidarity.'[19] Because of their popularity, pop stars cannot be 'amongst the people': their elevated status flouts the values of the solidary group. To elucidate the use of 'solidarity' in 'Soul Deep', I therefore first consider 'Soul Deep' as *popular* music.

'Soul Deep' as Popular Music

Weller had obtained commercial success with the Jam, and therefore had the means to own his own studio, Solid Bond. Annajoy David, whose speeches for the CND had converted Weller to the cause and who would function as Weller's de facto political advisor for years to come,[20] recalls that Solid Bond became a hub for young political artists. Weller mobilised his

[16] This list is compiled on the basis of those who supported the miners' strike and other political causes (RAR, the CND, the GLC and/or Red Wedge). See: Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity'; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 386.

[17] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 356–57; Jon Savage, 'Introduction', in *Industrial Culture Handbook*, ed. V. Vale and Andrea Juno (San Francisco: RE/Search, 1983), 4; Martin J. Power, '"Aesthetics of Resistance": Billy Bragg, Ideology and the Longevity of Song as Social Protest', in *Songs of Social Protest: International Perspectives*, ed. Aileen Dillane et al. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 513.

[18] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 382–84.

[19] Rachel, 501.

[20] Rachel, 346, 374, 384, 393–94, 434–35.

financial means and extensive network in order to help them.[21] Weller also used the money and network his commercial career gave him to form the Council Collective. He managed to engage Jimmy Ruffin, an American soul singer who had scored multiple top-ten hits in the UK since the 1960s,[22] as well as Junior Giscombe, who had a top-10 hit with 1982 single 'Mama Used to Say'.[23]

On 20 December 1984, the group performed 'Soul Deep' on *Top of the Pops*. By 1984, this BBC twenty-year-old programme was the country's most established television show for popular music. Appearing on *Top of the Pops* meant an artist had 'made it' in mainstream popular music and assured them of a large audience.[24] It is remarkable that 'Soul Deep' appeared on the programme with lyrics that so overtly took sides in the still ongoing strike. The BBC's coverage of the strike was notoriously anti-miner: the company manipulated footage of the Battle of Orgreave, a violent confrontation between picketers and police in June 1984, making it seem as if the picketers initiated attacks on individual policemen.[25]

With knowledge of the brutality of the strike and the condemnation of this brutality in the lyrics of 'Soul Deep', watching *Top of the Pops* performance creates a bizarre experience. The Style Council, Dee C. Lee, Junior Giscombe, Jimmy Ruffin, and Dizzy Hites shimmy to the beat while performing the song, the audience dancing along. Multicoloured lights flash continuously across the stage; balloons float through the space. Each singer is filmed close-up while delivering lines such as: 'There's mud in the waters / There's lies upon the page / There's blood on the hillsides and they're not getting paid' or 'Just where is the backing from the TUC [Trade Union Council]?'.[26]

That the Council Collective attended the programme to perform 'Soul Deep' indicates they aimed to broadcast their support for the miners to as big an audience as possible. Weller has stated that besides raising money for the strike, the single's goal was to increase

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[21] Rachel, 381–82.
[22] 'Jimmy Ruffin', Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 28 April 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/12754/jimmy-ruffin/.
[23] 'Junior', Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 16 June 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/19548/junior/.
[24] Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity', 77; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 360, 504; Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 189–90; Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 221.
[25] Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984–5 UK Miners' Strike* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 163–64.
[26] 'The Council Collective - Soul Deep - TOTP - 1984', TopOfThePopsFan, video, 2:55, 9 January 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqqLlv16rHc.

awareness of the miners' experiences and convince people to support them.[27] Simultaneously, the *Top of the Pops* performance strikingly illustrates that the connection between pop and politics was fraught: the contrast between the popular music industry (the programme's focus on the singles chart, colourful decoration, and casual dancing), and the country's political situation (most apparent in the song's lyrics), could not be starker. However, this contrast may have been the Collective's exact reason to perform on *Top of the Pops*. Bragg's motives for performing 'Between the Wars' on *Top of the Pops* were similar. He wanted to appear on the programme *precisely because* it was so mainstream: his message would reach a vast audience and simultaneously stand out, politically, from the other artists who performed there.[28]

Bragg's experience with *Top of the Pops* and Coles' remark cited earlier indicate that musicians were highly sensitive to the contradictions between the commercial pop industry and the socialist values they cherished. As mentioned in Chapter Two, one way that musicians attempted to absolve themselves of the original sin of pop stardom was by *disidentifying* with other pop groups. When asked about the New Romantics – groups like Spandau Ballet, the Culture Club, and Duran Duran – in a 1995 interview,[29] Weller avouched: 'I hated all those groups.'[30] The opening lyrics of the Style Council single 'Walls Come Tumbling Down', 'You don't have to take this crap / You don't have to sit back and relax / You can actually try changing it' allegedly criticised Frankie Goes to Hollywood's 1984 hit 'Relax'. Weller condemned 'all those crappy fuckin' bands who were like the pop aristocracy, with their suits and pearls.'[31] Although appearing in the same outlets of the commercial pop industry as them – such as *Top of the Pops* or the teenybopper music magazine *Smash Hits* – Weller viewed himself as a different kind of pop star. For Weller, as for Bragg, pop's commercial outlets were a *means*. The *end* was to make popular music in the sense of music *of and for the people* – more precisely, the working class. I argue that Weller's disidentification with 'aristocratic' commercial pop stars reveals his self-consciousness as a pop star, and his desire to legitimate his own political beliefs and working-

[27] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 365.
[28] Billy Bragg, interview by the author, 21 May 2022.
[29] For an overview of the New Romantics, see: Kari Kallioniemi, 'New Romantic Queering Tactics of English Pop in Early Thatcherite Britain and The Second British Invasion', in 'Queer Sounds and Spaces', ed. Anna-Elena Pääkkölä, John Richardson, and Freya Jarman, special issue, *Radical Musicology* 7 (2019): http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk/2019/Kallioniemi.htm.
[30] Weller, 'From The Jam to Catastrophe - and Back Again', interview.
[31] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 351.

classness contra his pop stardom. The next section discusses how he tackled this legitimation with the Council Collective and the Style Council.

‘Soul Deep’ as Political Popular Music

The previous section already featured some of the most blatant political lyrics in ‘Soul Deep’. This matter-of-fact style characterises Weller’s lyrics in his Style Council period. However, whereas other artists also aimed to shape their *music* in a political way (such as Bragg’s combination of folk and punk, or Test Dept’s dedication to experimentalism), the music of ‘Soul Deep’ and other Style Council work seems disembodied from the lyrics, incongruous. Take, for example, ‘All Gone Away’, which pairs lyrics such as ‘See how monetarism kills whole communities’ with a relaxed bossa nova accompaniment. I suggest that for Weller, his lyrics distinguished himself from his pop contemporaries, especially if they were likewise inspired by soul and Latin music (think, for example, of Wham!’s 1983 hit ‘Club Tropicana’). Nowhere is this clearer than in the ‘Soul Deep’ lyric, ‘But as for solidarity / I don’t see none’. With this lyric, the Council Collective positioned themselves as those who knew what solidarity was and how to express it, while scolding other artists and the general public for their lack of support for the miners.

What does ‘solidarity’ entail in ‘Soul Deep’? Strikingly, they use the word ‘see’ rather than ‘feel’ or ‘hear’, implying that solidarity is not merely a feeling of togetherness or a verbal expression of support, but an action visible to other people. The actions undertaken by the Council Collective include raising money – ‘Soul Deep’ was principally a benefit single – as well as visiting miners’ communities to speak with miners and witness the injustice first-hand.[32] Weller also allegedly picketed several times.[33] However, most relevant to this thesis is the action of raising awareness and making politics accessible, something that pop musicians had the means for because of their popularity, and that Weller hoped to achieve with ‘Soul Deep’.[34] Although the song itself contained some educational lyrics, it was a fairly accessible and danceable pop song, as evidenced by the *Top of the Pops* footage. The hardcore political education came for those who bought the 12-inch single, flipped it over, and played the B-side: a seventeen-minute interview with two striking miners from

[32] Rachel, 361.
[33] Tranmer, ‘Charity, Politics and Publicity’, 79.
[34] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 365.

Nottingham, entitled 'A Miner's Point'.[35] The miners discuss their life during the strike, especially their frustration with strike-breakers and other unions not 'showing their solidarity'; that is, not supporting the strike. They believed a defeat of the NUM would mean the defeat of all unions, describing the strike not merely as an industrial dispute, but as a 'class war' planned by Thatcher. Clearly, by including this interview as a B-side, the Council Collective aimed to spread this view of the strike as a struggle of *all* working-class people.

Until now I have described the funk-pop sound of 'Soul Deep' as incongruous with its political message. However, music journalist Robert Elms described the Style Council as 'when Weller while being at his most political became his most overtly stylish.'[36] Style was integral to the Style Council: the band were always smartly dressed, in turtlenecks, suits, trench coats, or – like on *Top of the Pops* – buttoned-up polos.[37] Their music also aimed to be stylish: unafraid to use the newer technologies like synths and drum machines, but avoiding novelty by incorporating influences from established (and, from a British perspective, exotic) genres like soul, R&B, and Latin. Sartorial and musical stylishness could make socialist ideals more relevant, up-to-date, and appealing. Moreover, paradoxically, valuing style was working-class. Elms explains that anti-materialism, dismissing the importance of style, required *having enough* to begin with (i.e., being middle-class).[38] In a 1995 interview, Weller explained: 'If you're really from the working class then you know how important clothes are to our culture. In the '60s or '70s any spare money went on clothes or records. That's the culture we created.'[39] For Weller, pop music – particularly, pop music that emphasised stylishness – was intrinsic to British working-class culture, rather than incongruous with it. He opposed himself to the New Romantics – the 'pop aristocracy' – to reclaim pop music and style for the working class.

'Soul Deep' emphasises working-classness. The lines 'Don't say this struggle does not involve you / If you're from the working class this is your struggle too' express this most clearly. The group's name – very deliberately 'the Council Collective' and *not* the Style Council –[40] also evokes council housing and the socialist ideology of collectivism. 'Soul Deep' is popular music, music 'of the people': made *by* working-class people, *for* working-class people. The song constructs solidarity as intra-group, rather than inter-group: the lyrics

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[35] Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 214.
[36] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 352.
[37] Richard Coles recalls the band taking two flight cases of clothes on tour: Rachel, 423.
[38] Rachel, 352–53.
[39] Weller, 'From The Jam to Catastrophe - and Back Again', interview.
[40] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 364.

of 'Soul Deep' worry most about the lack of solidarity *amongst* working-class people. It depicts the strike as not merely the miners' struggle, but that of the whole working class.

On the one hand, this focus on working-classness is exclusionary. It implies solidarity can only occur amongst those belonging to same class, or more specifically those *perceived* to belong: Weller's exclusion of the New Romantics depends more on his impression of their class status than their real-life backgrounds. On the other hand, the Council Collective was also inclusionary: the name already highlights collaboration and collectivism. Weller openly shared his resources with other artists, and frequently collaborated with them on his records. Moreover, he viewed the class division as 'the real rot' in British society due to his upbringing.[41] Emphasising working-class solidarity thus de-emphasised other societal boundaries, such as race. Combined with Weller's interest in soul and R&B, it is therefore not surprising that he invited black, working-class soul musicians to join the Council Collective. 'Soul Deep' emphasises that working-class solidarity and cross-racial collaboration harmonise (which, I must admit, problematises this chapter's structure). The final section of this chapter discusses 'Soul Deep' and black music in more detail.

'Soul Deep' as Black Political Popular Music

Two significant black British musical moments occurred just before the strike. The first is Rock Against Racism. Although mainly described as a punk movement in Chapter Two, RAR prominently bridged the divide between white punk and black reggae bands.[42] These bands were booked on the same RAR bills – including the national carnivals – and performed songs together.[43] According to Paul Gilroy, RAR sought 'an experience in which the emptiness of "race" could be experienced at first hand and its transcendance [*sic*] celebrated.'[44] RAR united black and white musicians and audiences under the same banner, at the same events, and thus hoped to stimulate cross-racial solidarity. Attending mixed-race concerts and listening to white *and* black music was supposed to generate the support and togetherness needed to abolish racism in British society.

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[41] Rachel, 364.
[42] Describing punk as white does not imply there were no people of colour involved at all in punk groups. Singer Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex was part Somali, and punk band Alien Kulture consisted of 3 Asian members: David Renton, *Never Again: Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League 1976–1982* (London: Routledge, 2018), 64, 159.
[43] John Street, *Music and Politics*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 81.
[44] Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 2002), 164.

Some scholars argue that RAR was a catalyst for a second black British musical moment: the two-tone movement. Peaking in the first years of the 1980s, two-tone was essentially a revival of ska music but influenced by punk, as exemplified by bands like the Specials, the Selecter, the Beat, and Madness. In the RAR spirit, these bands consisted of both black and white musicians.[45]

These two movements occurred right before the Style Council's formation: RAR lasted from 1976 to 1981, and the two-tone movement peaked between 1979 and 1982.[46] Crucially, they were high-profile movements: the two national RAR carnivals in 1978 drew a combined crowd of 180,000 people, and the Specials and Madness scored number one hits.[47] Most importantly, they were explicitly connected to social movements, most obviously to anti-racism, but also to other causes like the CND.[48] The combination of black and white music, and the collaboration between black and white musicians, therefore strongly connected to politics in early-1980s Britain, and this connection was also broadcast to a wide audience.

By invoking black music histories – specifically soul and funk – the Council Collective connected to these more recent histories of politicised black music in the UK, as well as the US civil rights movement. Moreover, 'Soul Deep' linked these movements to the miners' strike. Simon Frith and John Street explain how soul and other black musics, because of their association with the venerated American civil rights movement, lent political authenticity and musical elegance to other British musico-political movements of the late 1970s and 1980s, specifically RAR and Red Wedge. Using black music made British movements more credible, relevant, and cool.[49] This dovetails precisely with Weller's intention with the Style Council: making music that was both stylish and politically relevant.

Weller's interest in black music was not unusual. Scholars agree that many 1980s pop musicians, from Bragg and Somerville to the New Romantics, were inspired by black music

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[45] Ashley Dawson, '"Love Music, Hate Racism": The Cultural Politics of the Rock Against Racism Campaigns', *Postmodern Culture* 16, no. 1 (2005): https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2006.0002; Jeremy Tranmer, '"Nazis Are No Fun": Punk and Anti-Fascism in Britain in the 1970s', in *Rockin' the Borders: Rock Music and Social, Cultural and Political Change*, ed. Fredrik Nilsson and Björn Horgby (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 134–35.

[46] Street, *Music and Politics*, 81; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, xxi–xxiii, 333.

[47] Tranmer, '"Nazis Are No Fun"', 132–33; 'Special AKA', Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 2 May 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/18200/specials/; 'Madness', Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 2 May 2022, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/28003/madness/.

[48] Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 206; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 239.

[49] Simon Frith and John Street, 'Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music', in *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, ed. Reebee Garofalo (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 76–78.

and sometimes experienced it as a common denominator for musicians playing different genres.[50] What *is* remarkable about 'Soul Deep', at least compared to my other case studies, is the collaboration with black musicians themselves, reminiscent of RAR and two-tone. Junior Giscombe, in particular, has been vocal about his involvement with the miners' strike and Red Wedge.[51] Giscombe was from a working-class Jamaican family and class-conscious. He states: 'We were in a multiracial society but the Tories were playing working-class white against working-class black. I was showing through music that you didn't have to be white to have a radical view.'[52] However, his label, London Records, met his political articulateness with surprise and apprehension: surprise, because he was an articulate black man; and apprehension, because explicit political positioning could jeopardise his career. Giscombe's manager, Keith Harris, immediately recognised this hypocrisy: 'It was OK for Paul Weller, because that was hip, but for Junior it was, "Know your place; you're not meant to have that insight." A black pop performer wasn't perceived as being capable of talking on these issues; where would he get the intelligence from?'[53]

I already highlighted that 'Soul Deep' as a collaboration between white and black musicians linked musical support for the strike to historic black social movements, legitimising the musicians' support for the miners. More fundamentally, however, including artists like Giscombe on the record asserted that black musicians had the right and capability to speak about politics – and working-class politics in particular. 'Soul Deep' emphasises that attacking one part of the working class means attacking the entire working class, which explicitly includes black people. Even this is encapsulated in the lyric 'But as for solidarity / I don't see none', using the double negation common to the black vernacular English of much African-diasporic music such as soul and funk.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered 'Soul Deep' from three interconnected perspectives: as popular music, as political music, and as black music. All three are vital to understand the song's vision of support for the miners. First, the song was a pop song and promoted as such,

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[50] Kallioniemi, 'New Romantic Queering Tactics', para. 23; Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 428–29; Jeremy Tranmer, 'Political Commitment of a New Type? Red Wedge and the Labour Party in the 1980s', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 22, no. 3 (June 2017): 8, https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.1466
[51] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 341–42.
[52] Rachel, 443.
[53] Rachel, 365.

as highlighted by its *Top of the Pops* performance. Crucially, having formerly fronted a successful band, Weller had the means to broadcast the song's message to a mainstream audience. However, he also wished to distinguish himself from other pop artists, primarily through his lyrics. I particularly scrutinised the lyric 'but as for solidarity, I don't see none'. In the song's context, this lyric implies solidarity to be something visible, consist of actions (such as raising money and awareness), and connect intricately to working-class and black communities and histories of struggle. Moreover, the different dimensions of 'Soul Deep' reinforce each other. Its reference to black music not only legitimises its political project, but also places it in a longer history of pop music. Its insistence on style, essential to pop music, coordinates with Weller's view of working-class politics.

Weller's use of 'solidarity' typifies the cohort of pop musicians involved with the miners' strike, RAR, the CND, Red Wedge, the GLC, and other political causes in the 1980s. Weller uses 'solidarity' to emphasise the political import of 'Soul Deep', distinguish himself from pop groups he found inauthentic, and to rouse the working class into supporting the miners. 'Soul Deep' thus also marks boundaries for solidarity, determining who can (black people) and who cannot (the 'pop aristocracy') be credibly called solidary with the miners.

Chapter Four – ‘It Was Unbelievable Just to Be There’: Presence at Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners’ Pits and Perverts Benefit

Numerous feature films, documentaries, television shows, and theatre productions thematise the strike.[1] One of the most recent and publicised works is the film *Pride* (directed by Matthew Warchus, 2014), which tells the story of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM): a group of London-based lesbians and gay men which twinned with the Neath, Dulais and Swansea Valleys Miners Support Group in South Wales.[2] The film extensively uses 1980s popular music as well as socialist songs, juxtaposing ‘Solidarity Forever’ and ‘Bread and Roses’ with Dead or Alive’s ‘You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)’ and King’s ‘Love and Pride’.[3] One of the film’s highlights is its recreation of LGSM’s benefit concert, Pits and Perverts. The concert, headlined by Bronski Beat, took place on 10 December 1984 and eventually raised over £5,000 (equalling about £13,000 in purchasing power in 2021).[4]

I have previously argued that *Pride* emphasises its theme of solidarity through music: through historical contexts, lyrics, performance contexts, musical characteristics, and peddling between diegesis and non-diegesis, the characters and the audience join together in solidarity.[5] This chapter considers the *real-life* Pits and Perverts from a solidarity studies perspective, but like the other chapters in this thesis adopts a holistic approach similar to my analysis of *Pride*. I depart from the following remark made by Mark Ashton, one of LGSM’s founders:

> There was about a thousand five hundred people in that place, and the – the sheer total support for the miners in that hall, and that – that was amazing. […] It was unbelievable just to be there, [the] solidarity was really wonderful.[6]

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[1] Diarmaid Kelliher, ‘The 1984-5 Miners’ Strike and the Spirit of Solidarity’, *Soundings*, no. 60 (June 2015): 118–30; Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984–5 UK Miners’ Strike* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 163–93.
[2] Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners’ Strike* (London: Routledge, 2021), 124.
[3] *Pride*, directed by Matthew Warchus (2014; Ghent: Lumière, 2015), DVD.
[4] Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 124. To calculate the worth of £5,000 today, I used the Bank of England’s inflation calculator: ‘Inflation Calculator’, Bank of England, accessed 20 June 2022, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator.
[5] Moira de Kok, ‘Bridging the Gap: The Representation of Solidarity in the Music of *Pride* (2014)’ (BA thesis, Utrecht University, 2020).
[6] ‘All Out! Dancing in Dulais’, Jeff Cole, video, 23:20, 11 November 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHJhbwEcgrA. The relevant segment starts at 6:33.

I argue that Ashton's attribution of solidarity to Pits and Perverts relies on his experience of 'being there', of *presence*. The chapter revolves around this treasured experience of presence and its relationship to solidarity. I first provide some historical background for LGSM, Pits and Perverts, and Bronski Beat. Thereafter, I discuss the diversity of attendees, performers, and art forms on stage. This diversity indicated that musicians were classified more by their political affiliation than their genre. Juxtaposing their music with speeches and other art forms, like film, explicated the musicians' political intentions. Next, I consider pop music's connection to pleasure and queer existence. Pop music spotlights pleasure, meaning that Pits and Perverts was already politically meaningful as a gay pop concert amidst the oppression of gay pleasure by the government, police, and media. Additionally, pop music has historically made space for queerness within heterosexual society. The concert thus also facilitated the co-existence of gays and straights on the dancefloor. Finally, I synthesise all of these elements in my final analysis of presence in Ashton's appreciation of Pits and Perverts. The concert involved both physical and mediated presences and emphasised pleasurable co-existence. This analysis thus highlights the *feeling* or *experience* of solidarity rather than its practices.[7]

The Journey to the Electric Ballroom

The seeds for LGSM were sown at the London Lesbian and Gay Pride March in June 1984, when Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson decided to brandish collection buckets for the miners. They bonded over their shared working-class backgrounds and socialist ideals – Ashton was active in the Young Communist League – which infused their gay activism. After the March, they attended a striking miner's speech hosted by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and the idea to organise a support group took root. The group quickly grew from a dozen attendees at the first meeting to around fifty people. Rather than expecting a specific political affiliation, the group only required members to be lesbian or gay, and therefore consisted of a variety of political views: communist, anarchist, feminist, et cetera. Many members were from working-class backgrounds. LGSM declared itself a solidarity group focussing on raising money for mining areas, specifically the Dulais valley in South Wales.

[7] Parts of this chapter are paraphrased or quoted from a paper on benefit concerts I wrote in the context of my research internship with Dr Gianmaria Colpani: Moira de Kok, 'Rock and Roll Not Dole: Benefit Concerts during the 1984–85 Miners' Strike' (unpublished manuscript, 28 January 2022).

Such partnerships between two organisations, also called ‘twinning’, was a common strategy during the strike. Twinning engendered close connections, strengthened by the visits LGSM and the South Welsh mining families paid each other. LGSM’s primary goal was thus support mining communities, either as fellow members of the working class or as members of different communities subjected to similar oppressions by the government, police, and media.[8] A secondary goal, advanced particularly through LGSM and the Welsh miners’ reciprocal visits, was promoting the acceptance of lesbians and gays within mining communities.[9]

LGSM raised money in numerous ways: collecting money on the street and in gay and lesbian pubs, clubs, and bookstores; holding raffles and jumble sales; and, occasionally, organising large events like Pits and Perverts. Altogether the group raised some £20,000 (£52,600 today).[10] In July 1984, a mere month after the group’s formation, minutes of LGSM’s meetings already outline plans for a benefit gig with Bronski Beat, Test Dept, and Billy Bragg to take place in August.[11] To my knowledge, this concert never happened; I have not it mentioned elsewhere. However, it indicates that very early on LGSM had plans for large events incorporating live music to raise money and likely awareness, given the fact that both Bronski Beat and Bragg had growing audiences. In his oral history of LGSM, Tim Tate also highlights that the group approached activism with camp and fun. The idea to organise a pop benefit concert emerged from that context.[12] By October, it was clear the concert would take place in Camden’s Electric Ballroom on 10 December, with Bronski Beat as headliners.[13]

A self-made LGSM documentary preserves some footage of the night’s performances, but sadly the video quality and lighting obscure the audience.[14] However, it is easy to imagine what the room must have felt like. The 1,500-capacity Electric Ballroom was sold out,[15] meaning that especially in the middle of the room and close to the stage, one could not

[8] I thank Gianmaria Colpani, who is researching this topic, for pointing out to me that these were two different strands in LGSM – the former more Trotskyist and the latter more Eurocommunist – and that there existed some tension between them.
[9] For an authoritative history of LGSM, see: Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 122–37.
[10] Kelliher, 124–26; Bank of England, ‘Inflation Calculator’.
[11] LGSM minutes, 29 July 1984, LGSM/1/1, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum, Manchester.
[12] Tim Tate, *Pride: The Unlikely Story of the True Heroes of the Miners’ Strike* (London: John Blake, 2017), 210–11.
[13] ‘Bronski on Miners’ Beat’, *Morning Star*, 22 October 1984. This newspaper clipping features in the LGSM archive at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum, Manchester, box LGSM/4/2.
[14] Jeff Cole, ‘All Out! Dancing in Dulais’, video. Clips of the concert can be found throughout this video.
[15] Eric Presland, ‘Bronski Bash Nets £5,000 for Miners’, *Capital Gay*, 14 December 1984.

dance without touching another body. Concert venues of that size strike a perfect balance between intimacy and immensity: while there is a visible end to the mass of people, and a sense that only a finite, select few are witnessing this happening, one can dance with a new person and see a new face every minute of the night, giving a sense of grandiosity to the event. If the queer parties of 1984 were anything like those in 2022, all of those 1,500 people must have been dressed in different colours, silhouettes, and fabrics. Taking the attending miners into account, the audience must have been an eclectic bunch, familiar and unfamiliar bodies rubbing against each other as they danced to Bronski Beat's insistent pulse.

Bronski Beat were a three-piece group comprising vocalist Jimmy Somerville and Larry Steinbachek and Steve Bronski on synthesisers. London's first gay and lesbian arts festival, September in the Pink, organised by the GLC, catalysed the band's formation.[16] Soon after, they signed a record deal and released their first single, 'Smalltown Boy', in June 1984. The single peaked at number three on the charts; the next, 'Why?', reached number six; their debut album released in October 1984, *The Age of Consent*, peaked at number four.[17] The band fully embraced the synth-and-drum-machine sound that was so popular in the mid-1980s, but stood out because of Somerville's crystal-clear, sky-high falsetto.

LGSM could book such a popular act because LGSM founder Mark Ashton and Bronski Beat's frontman Jimmy Somerville were good friends. Mike Jackson recounts that the two were from similar working-class backgrounds and had arrived in London around the same time, 'so it was quite natural to get Jimmy and Bronski Beat to headline. We knew we'd got that resource because we knew Jimmy would be sympathetic.'[18] Somerville was indeed sympathetic to socialist causes: he was involved with the Labour Party Young Socialists and had picketed together with the miners.[19] On the night of Pits and Perverts, Somerville had also apparently brandished the collection bucket.[20] Somerville would continue doing political work with his music after leaving Bronski Beat in 1985: he and Richard Coles, as the Communards, played benefit concerts for the Sandinistas and Red Wedge.[21]

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[16] Bronski Beat, 'What Is Bronski Beat?', interview by Barney Hoskyns, *SPIN*, May 1985; Daniel Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down: The Music and Politics of Rock Against Racism, 2 Tone and Red Wedge, 1976–1992* (London: Picador, 2016), 373.
[17] 'Bronski Beat', Full Official Chart History, Official Charts, accessed 13 December 2021, https://www.officialcharts.com/artist/21709/bronski-beat/. Listen to the album here: Bronski Beat, *The Age of Consent*, London Records, 1984, https://open.spotify.com/album/6OMYQUITdN6wBaWfEtgooI.
[18] Tate, *Pride*, 211.
[19] Jeremy Tranmer, 'Political Commitment of a New Type? Red Wedge and the Labour Party in the 1980s', *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 22, no. 3 (June 2017): 5, 9, https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.1466.
[20] Presland, 'Bronski Bash Nets £5,000 for Miners'.
[21] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 410; Robin Denselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber, 1989), 152.

Aside from Somerville's political inclinations, the band fit the event for two more reasons. First, Bronski Beat's members were all openly gay, which was unusual for pop groups at the time.[22] Their lyrics and music videos explicitly thematised issues experienced by gay men, such as harassment, the higher age of consent compared to heterosexuals, and fleeing small-town life for the hopefully friendlier city. Bronski Beat therefore coordinated with LGSM's unapologetic focus on supporting the miners openly as lesbians and gays. Second, Bronski Beat were highly successful. Jackson speculates: 'I think a lot of people that night came to see Bronski Beat: perhaps people who weren't particularly committed to the miners' cause but were fans of the music.'[23] The concert had sold out, and tickets were being touted. Bronski Beat were thus a major attraction for the event.[24] Nonetheless, the group were not alone on the bill. The evening notably presented a variety of performers and attendees, as expounded in the next section.

An Assortment of Audiences and Art Forms

Attendees of Pits and Perverts recall a diverse audience. As Jackson mentioned, there were likely many Bronski Beat fans alongside those who primarily came to support the cause. Members of the South Wales mining community were present. Miners and gays mingled during the night; one miner was apparently astounded at the number of gay people from London supporting the miners.[25] The event thus connected groups that would normally not mingle, as it hovered between pop concert, political rally, and gay- and lesbian-friendly night out.

A report in *Capital Gay*, London's weekly free gay newspaper, recognised many of the evening's performers as regulars on the gay cabaret circuit.[26] Jackson remembers performances by comedy duo The Moonlighters and a drag opera singer called Michael.[27] Additionally, Welsh miner Dai Donovan held a speech, striking enough to be reproduced in *Capital Gay*:

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[22] Tate, *Pride*, 214; Lucas Hilderbrand, '"Luring Disco Dollies to a Life of Vice": Queer Pop Music's Moment', *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 25, no. 4 (2013): 419, https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12044.
[23] Tate, *Pride*, 214.
[24] Presland, 'Bronski Bash Nets £5,000 for Miners'.
[25] Tate, *Pride*, 214–15.
[26] Presland, 'Bronski Bash Nets £5,000 for Miners'.
[27] 'Music, Art and Activism', Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, livestream, 1:39:16, 17 September 2020, https://www.facebook.com/OrgreaveTruthAndJusticeCampaign/videos/635011967205130. The relevant segment starts at 40:00.

> You have worn our badge, 'Coal Not Dole', and you know what harassment means, as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us, we will support you. It won't change overnight, but now 140,000 miners know that there are other causes and other problems. We know about blacks, and gays, and nuclear disarmament. And we will never be the same.[28]

Donovan emphasises the similarities between gays and lesbians and the miners (their shared experiences of harassment) as well as the existence of 'other causes and other problems'. He illustrates that LGSM had understood and advocated for the miners' cause, but had also educated miners in the process. Donovan's speech, the anecdote of the miner who was surprised at the support from LGSM, and the variety of attendees and acts highlight how benefit concerts for the striking miners were spaces where diverse groups encountered each other, became aware of different issues, and simultaneously realised these other groups and issues intersected with their own.

Pits and Perverts was not unique for its variety of acts. Many benefit concerts during the strike mixed musical genres, from punk and commercial pop to acapella music and miners' choirs, and incorporated other acts, including comedy and political speeches.[29] This indicates three things. First, musicians during the strike were divided more by political affiliation than by genre. Bragg and Weller's disidentification with the New Romantics depends not their disdain for synthesisers and drum machines (as Bronski Beat, an accepted group, had a musical idiom similar to the New Romantics), but on the supposed bourgeois or apolitical stance of these groups. All who then *were* considered 'political enough' could be easily assembled at a concert, resulting in the hodgepodge of musical idioms at concerts like Pits and Perverts. Second, the juxtaposition and thereby association of musical performances with acts more readily interpretable as political – mainly speeches – reinforced and explicated the pop musicians' political objectives. Like Bragg and Weller, Somerville considered pop music a way of communicating political ideas. He found that by virtue of having success, pop musicians should use this success for political ends: 'We can actually make pop records to

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[28] Presland, 'Bronski Bash Nets £5,000 for Miners'. 'Coal Not Dole' was a slogan that emphasised the strike was about the right to work. Miners would rather work and dig up coal than receive a (measly) benefit for the unemployed.

[29] For examples, see: Denselow, *When the Music's Over*, 215–16; 'Aktieweek Britse Mijnstakers', poster, 1985, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, https://hdl.handle.net/10622/B307A7C7-A714-486A-B9EF-3F9623911A4A; 'A Concert for Heroes - Full Film - YouTube', A Concert for Heroes, video, 1:23:11, 20 December 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADpTOCMUtGk.

express these things [opposition towards the Conservative government]. It's a lucky position, so we think we [the Communards] should use it to the fullest.'[30] Third, the diversity of acts demonstrates that pop music was not isolated, but joined with other art forms. These include fashion (as the Style Council exemplify), design and visual art (album covers), but also film.

Capital Gay reported that Bronski Beat's set had the 1925 silent film *Strike* by Sergei Eisenstein playing in the background.[31] *Strike* portrays a factory workers' strike and its violent repression in the Russia of 1903. Eisenstein's first full-length film already embraces the editing style that would make his second, *Battleship Potemkin*, so celebrated: cross-cutting seemingly unrelated shots to create associations between them.[32] Similarly, by showing it at their Pits and Perverts performance, Bronski Beat aimed to create associations between their music, this film, and the 1984–85 strike. I suggest that Bronski Beat invoked the art of the early Soviet Union for rhetorical reasons, not to express support for the state. Somerville has described his Communards project as 'reclaiming an ideology that had been hijacked by communism,'[33] expressing distrust of the communist state. Instead, by using the film, Bronski Beat aimed to clarify that supporting the miners and playing benefit concerts not merely about raising money to combat starvation in miners' communities. For the far left, supporting the miners involved a wholesale rejection of the Thatcher government and capitalist society, and daring to imagine the alternative: socialism. As Somerville proclaimed at Pits and Perverts, in his thick Glaswegian accent: 'victory to the miners, and victory to socialism.'[34] The art of the early Soviet Union is the most obvious, almost hyperbolic signifier the band could use to express this sentiment. I further unpick this link between 1980s music, the miners' strike, and the history and art of the early Soviet Union in the next chapter.

Notably, *Strike* is a silent film: its form facilitates new alliances between image and sound. Bronski Beat replaced the original soundtrack with their 1980s gay pop, linking the two time periods and their associated movements. The factory workers' strike and its repression mirror the 1984–85 strike *as well as* the issues faced by gay people, as expressed in Bronski Beat's songs. Bronski Beat thus promoted a vision of a socialist future that

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[30] 'British Politics | Pop into Politics | Labour Party | TV Eye | 1986', ThamesTv, video, 13:35, 28 April 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIP4h3YqSRk.
[31] Presland, 'Bronski Bash Nets £5,000 for Miners'.
[32] The film is available on YouTube with English subtitles: 'Strike! -Sergei Eisenstein (English Complete)', Reddebrek, video, 1:34:24, 16 August 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLiNKaUp0AA.
[33] Jimmy Somerville, 'How Bronski Beat's Jimmy Somerville Survived the '80s', interview by Max Dax, *Electronic Beats*, 11 March 2015, https://www.electronicbeats.net/jimmy-somerville-interview/.
[34] Jeff Cole, 'All Out! Dancing in Dulais', video. The relevant segment starts at 10:20.

protects worker's *and* gay rights, since their oppression stems from the same desire to control deviance. Moreover, if a silent film is an image open to sound, popular music is a sound open to image. With the advent of MTV in 1981, music videos became central to promotion, particularly for UK artists.[35] Bronski Beat were no exception to this novel trend, but according to director Bernard Rose intended to use it to clarify their music's message. Rose's video for 'Smalltown Boy' leaves the song's narrative unambiguous, depicting a gay boy (Somerville) becoming the victim of homophobic assault, thereby being outed to his parents, and leaving (or being forced to leave) his hometown.[36] By screening *Strike* at Pits and Perverts, Bronski Beat continued to exploit the audio-visual bias of pop music to assert their political message.

Feeling Good: Pop Music, Pleasure, and Queer Existence

Pits and Perverts straddled the line between pop concert, political rally, and gay- and lesbian-friendly night out. Many people likely attended not (only) for the miners' cause, but to see Bronski Beat in concert and have fun. Popular music scholars like John Street and Simon Frith, Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, S. Alexander Reed, and Jeremy Tranmer agree that popular music, no matter how politically motivated, is still about *pleasure*: otherwise, one would just listen to a speech or read a manifesto. Crucially, however, they also argue that pleasure is *part of* pop music's politics.[37] Popular music capitalises on the desire for pleasure and escaping from society, while simultaneously being shaped by and shaping this society. Tranmer argues pop music's promise of pleasure attracts audiences for and generates positive associations with political messages, thus augmenting the reach and potency of these

[35] Hilderbrand, '"Luring Disco Dollies to a Life of Vice"', 419.
[36] 'Smalltown Boy', directed by Bernard Rose (1984), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88sARuFu-tc; Bernard Rose, 'How '80s LGBTQ band Bronski Beat's haunting "Smalltown Boy" made a difference: "It was very bold"', interview by Lyndsey Parker, *Yahoo Music*, 26 June 2019, https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/how-80-s-lgbtq-band-bronski-beats-smalltown-boy-made-a-difference-it-was-very-bold-183833092.html.
[37] Simon Frith and John Street, 'Rock Against Racism and Red Wedge: From Music to Politics, from Politics to Music', in *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, ed. Reebee Garofalo (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 67; John Street, '"Fight the Power": The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics', *Government and Opposition* 38, no. 1 (2003): 128–29, https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-7053.00007; Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 22; S. Alexander Reed, *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5, 134; Jeremy Tranmer, '"Nazis Are No Fun": Punk and Anti-Fascism in Britain in the 1970s', in *Rockin' the Borders: Rock Music and Social, Cultural and Political Change*, ed. Fredrik Nilsson and Björn Horgby (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 134; Jeremy Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity: Musicians and the Strike', in *Digging the Seam: Popular Cultures of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike*, ed. Simon Popple and Ian W. Macdonald (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 83.

messages.[38] He also indicates that during crises, such as the 1984–85 strike, musicians perform emotional labour by producing pleasure to counteract negative feelings: they boost morale.[39] However, both arguments pose pleasure as *fulfilling a function for* politics. Contrastingly, Rosenthal and Flacks note that pleasure *itself* can be a political end, 'since pleasurable activities— from sex to drugs to control of one's time—may in themselves conflict with the behavioral conformity a given social system demands,' particularly if these pleasurable pursuits are restricted by the authorities.[40]

This rings especially true for queer communities throughout history, including 1980s Britain. Although Sexual Offences Act of 1967 had decriminalised consensual homosexual activity, public and underage sex (whereby the age of consent for gays, as Bronski Beat poignantly emphasised, was five years higher than it was for straights) were illegal. Police used these caveats, and other excuses, to continue targeting the gay community. In April 1984, Gay's the Word bookshop, a central hub for the London gay community, was raided. Much of its material was confiscated for supposed obscenity and staff were charged with importing indecent material. Police also raided gay clubs and arrested attendees for drunkenness. 'Pretty policemen' lured gay men into illegal public sex.[41] The media were also hostile: the name 'Pits and Perverts' was allegedly inspired by conservative tabloid *The Sun*'s headlines.[42] Due to the AIDS crisis, negative coverage of homosexuality would worsen throughout the 1980s.[43] In 1988, Thatcher's government would pass Section 28 of the Local Government Act, stating that schools and local authorities were banned from promoting homosexuality as acceptable.[44] Regarding pop music, a group with two openly gay members, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, had their 1984 single 'Relax' banned from BBC radio and video airplay for overt references to (gay) sex.[45]

I argue that amidst these attacks on gay pleasure, Pits and Perverts was more than a miners' benefit concert. It affirmed gay and lesbian rights: rights to existence, to joy, to

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[38] Tranmer, 'Nazis Are No Fun', 134.
[39] Tranmer, 'Charity, Politics and Publicity', 83.
[40] Rosenthal and Flacks, *Playing for Change*, 22.
[41] Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 132; Daryl Leeworthy, 'For Our Common Cause: Sexuality and Left Politics in South Wales, 1967–1985', *Contemporary British History* 30, no. 2 (April 2016): 264, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2015.1073591.
[42] Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down*, 367.
[43] Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 132.
[44] Kari Kallioniemi, 'New Romantic Queering Tactics of English Pop in Early Thatcherite Britain and The Second British Invasion', in 'Queer Sounds and Spaces', ed. Anna-Elena Pääkkölä, John Richardson, and Freya Jarman, special issue, *Radical Musicology* 7 (2019): para. 9, http://www.radical-musicology.org.uk/2019/Kallioniemi.htm.
[45] Gareth Grundy, 'Frankie Goes to Hollywood's Relax "banned" by the BBC', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/jun/11/frankie-hollywood-banned-bbc.

pleasure. The concert's line-up embodies this: think, for instance, of the drag opera singer's camp, and the laughter encouraged by the comedy duo, but also of Bronski Beat's highly danceable synthpop, including the sensual 'Heatwave' and their cover of Donna Summer's hit 'I Feel Love'.[46] Pits and Perverts was an event where queer performers and audiences were allowed to laugh, dance, enjoy, and *be*.

Of course, Pits and Perverts was not the only gay and lesbian night event in London. Numerous gay and lesbian pubs and clubs thrived in the 1980s.[47] What was remarkable about Pits and Perverts was openly lesbian and gay performers and activists sharing the stage and the dancefloor with heterosexual people, specifically from mining communities. That Pits and Perverts was a pop concert matters here. Pop music's longstanding associations with gender and sexual diversity often made it a haven for queerness while still being enjoyed by hegemonic heterosexual society. Media scholar Lucas Hilderbrand argues that queerness infiltrated wider society through pop music in 1981. While disco and punk retreated, the new wave of pop music like Soft Cell's 'Tainted Love' and Pete Shelley's 'Homosapien' inherited both disco's sexual liberation discourse and punk's anti-authoritarian attitude.[48] Likewise, musicologist Judith Peraino demonstrates how late-1970s synthpop, and synthesisers more generally, signified sexual and gender deviance and ambiguity.[49] And throughout the 1970s, disco also provided a space for femininity among (gay) men, exemplified by Sylvester's unapologetic falsetto.[50] By booking Bronski Beat, who followed in all these movements' footsteps, Pits and Perverts recalled this history of queerness inviting itself into (heterosexual) society through popular music.

That Bronski Beat made dance music also matters: the emphasis on dancing makes the validity of queer sexuality, pleasure, and embodiment more tangible. Dance affirms

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[46] I have only been able to find one, unverified setlist for Bronski Beat's set: 'Bronski Beat - "Pits and Perverts" Benefit Concert - 1984/2014', Jimmy Somerville - Fanbase, last modified 20 September 2014, https://jimmysomerville-fanbase.com/index.php/bronski-beat-pits-and-perverts-benefit-concert-1984/. Other, also unverified setlists from that time can be found here: 'Bronski Beat Setlists - 1984', Setlist.fm, accessed 20 June 2022, https://www.setlist.fm/search?query=bronski+beat&year=1984. Given the data from both of these sources, and the fact that as a beginning band their repertoire was quite small, it is likely (but not certain) that Bronski Beat played a varied setlist, including more political songs like 'Junk' and 'No More War' alongside 'I Feel Love'.

[47] Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 122–46.

[48] Hilderbrand, '"Luring Disco Dollies to a Life of Vice"', 415–19.

[49] Judith A. Peraino, 'Synthesizing Difference: The Queer Circuits of Early Synthpop', in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Jeffrey Kallberg, Melanie Lowe, and Olivia Bloechl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 292–93, 297, 302, 305–6, 308, 311–14. See also: Stan Hawkins, 'On Male Queering in Mainstream Pop', in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, ed. Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Routledge, 2006), 281–82.

[50] Judith Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 180–81, 184, 186, 189, 193.

embodied presence. Moreover, musicologist Stan Hawkins argues that dancing together blurs boundaries between self and other. Differences in gender, sexuality, or race are de-emphasised as the subject position valued most in outside society – white, cis, heterosexual, male – matters much less on the dancefloor. People become feeling bodies that relinquish control to the music, rather than objects manipulated by those in power.[51] Dancing together affirms that different bodies exist in the same space while simultaneously de-hierarchising these differences. This is similar to Paul Gilroy's observation that RAR created 'an experience in which the emptiness of "race" could be experienced at first hand and its transcendance [*sic*] celebrated.'[52]

Although Hawkins' and Gilroy's remarks may skew utopian – many people have felt insecure or even unsafe on the dancefloor – shared spaces and bodily movements also relate to solidarity. Social geographer Paul Routledge refers to the 'sensuous solidarities' experienced at protests, generated by collective bodily movements imbued with reactive emotions.[53] Therefore, I follow sound scholar Christabel Stirling's finding that, while music and dance's physiological and socio-political forces do not affect everyone the same way, they can present some people (depending on their personal histories, historical context, et cetera) with the possibility of new social alliances that transcend pre-existing relations.[54] Music and dance can thus engender solidarity, in the meaning of a *feeling or sense of togetherness* – which I argue was Ashton's experience.

Conclusion: Presence

Recall Ashton's remark about Pits and Perverts cited at the beginning of this chapter:

> There was about a thousand five hundred people in that place, and the – the sheer total support for the miners in that hall, and that – that was amazing. […] It was unbelievable just to be there, [the] solidarity was really wonderful.[55]

[51] Stan Hawkins, *Queerness in Pop Music: Aesthetics, Gender Norms, and Temporality* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 34, 36.
[52] Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 2002), 164.
[53] Paul Routledge, 'Sensuous Solidarities: Emotion, Politics and Performance in the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army', *Antipode* 44, no. 2 (2012): 428, 430, 446, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00862.x.
[54] Christabel Stirling, 'Sound, Affect, Politics', in *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, ed. Michael Bull (London: Routledge, 2018), 54, 56–60, 63–65.
[55] Jeff Cole, 'All Out! Dancing in Dulais', video. The relevant segment starts at 6:33.

Ashton's delight with the event shines in this quotation. He describes it as 'amazing', 'unbelievable', 'wonderful'. The 'sheer total support for the miners' given by a large crowd particularly delights him: 1,500 attendees is impressive, especially for a relatively small and young activist group like LGSM. 'Solidarity', then, encompasses not only the support for the miners and the showing of this support at the concert, but also the elated feeling this (display of) support gave Ashton. However, I argue that the key phrase here is 'just to be there'. Ashton could have omitted it, and his statement would still express his delight with the concert, but he did not. I therefore argue that 'just being there', or *presence*, grounds Ashton's experience of solidarity at Pits and Perverts.

At the most basic level, this involves the presence of people at the concert, in the sense of physical attendance, inhabiting the concert space. For Ashton, solidarity seems to be, if not predicated on, at least strengthened by this physical presence. That people made the effort to attend the concert venue, rather than donate money from afar, is significant for him. I suggest that his explicit mention of 'a thousand five hundred people' indicates that *witnessing* and *sharing space* with many others supporting the same cause gave Ashton a powerful feeling of togetherness: solidarity is as much felt as it is visibly demonstrated. This emphasis on physical presence gives movements their drive, pressure, and social power, since showing up is the only requirement. Similarly, Jock Purdon once assuaged Bragg's insecurities about his music: '"Look, it doesn't really matter what you're singing. The fact that you're *here*, in solidarity with the miners […] that's all that matters."'[56]

Moreover, at Pits and Perverts, this physical presence involved the presence of *different* people: gays and lesbians, miners, and music fans. Ashton might thus also have implied 'solidarity' to mean solidarity *across differences*. Diarmaid Kelliher demonstrates that pro-strike activists recognised both similarities and differences between their own groups and the miners. This dual recognition governs their understanding of 'solidarity'. LGSM, for instance, emphasised that its members and the miners had similar class identities and suffered similar oppressions, while simultaneously respecting the differences in lifestyle and sexuality.[57] I argue that this simultaneous recognition of similarities and differences, the peaceful existence of different people united under the same banner at Pits and Perverts, is

[56] Billy Bragg, interview by the author, 21 May 2022.
[57] Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity*, 14. This is of course not to say that all miners were straight; in fact, there are indications that LGSM made it possible for gay miners to be more open about their sexuality in their own communities. See: Kelliher, 134.

what gave Ashton such a powerful feeling of solidarity. The concert, and the concert space, facilitated this being-together.

More fundamentally, the concert provided allowed everyone to be who they were, which is necessary to experience that feeling of simultaneous, co-existent presence in the first place. Specifically, I have argued that Pits and Perverts made space for queer existence through danceable queer pop music. Moreover, this is a *joyful*, *pleasurable* existence or presence. This also connects to Ashton's clear expressions of delight at the concert. In a time when gay pleasure was repressed by the police, media, and government, 'just being there' – let alone *enjoying* oneself – was a political statement. That Ashton describes solidarity itself as 'wonderful' here matters: while solidarity can involve negative feelings (such as fear or indignation at a threatened picket line), Ashton implies that solidarity is a *positive* feeling of togetherness overall. Being allowed to feel pleasure no matter one's sexuality likely contributed to this feeling.

Although concerts are archetypical facilitators of physical (co-)presence, I have demonstrated that they also involve *mediated* levels of presence, and that these construct conceptions of solidarity as well. By screening *Strike*, Bronski Beat invoked a particular socialist history, and their music invoked queer music histories. Through mediation, these histories (or *past presences*) impact upon the present and each other. This illustrates a larger point of this thesis: that conceptions of solidarity are always inflected by their histories. The next chapter further explores this permeation between the past and the present.

Chapter Five – Working Men of All Eras, Unite! Collectivity, Labour, Temporality, and Masculinity on *Shoulder to Shoulder*

Billy Bragg, Paul Weller, and Jimmy Somerville moved in similar pop music circles during and after the strike. All three, for instance, were key musicians in the Red Wedge initiative aiming to encourage the youth vote and defeat the Conservatives in the 1987 election.[1] This chapter, however, addresses a different sphere of popular music: industrial music.

To what extent industrial music is popular music is debated, since industrial artists often distinguished themselves from pop music, siding with avant-garde art instead. Test Dept are no different when they remember the political pop of the 1980s as follows:

> Billy Bragg, Paul Weller and the Communards were in our eyes making pop music from a socialist perspective. Obviously it was important to have a voice and get heard and then be able to say what you want. But we believed you should be saying it with the form of music as well as the lyrical content. We were trying to be political with the music as well. We looked on ourselves as musical revolutionaries, not political revolutionaries.[2]

Test Dept here clearly distinguish themselves from the other artists discussed so far, not necessarily on the basis of politics, but rather on the basis of aesthetics. They felt these other groups only implement their politics in their lyrics, not their music. This continues the theme of musicians differentiating themselves from other musicians to establish their own artistic legitimacy. This chapter investigates Test Dept's music closely, uncovering precisely how they envisioned their musical revolution.

I argue, however, that Test Dept were not that different from the other three artists mentioned. First, although industrial music mostly considered itself avant-garde, it also openly mingled with and was inspired by popular music.[3] Moreover, experimenting with the

[1] Daniel Rachel, *Walls Come Tumbling Down: The Music and Politics of Rock Against Racism, 2 Tone and Red Wedge, 1976–1992* (London: Picador, 2016), 410.
[2] Graham Cunnington, Angus Farquhar, and Paul Jamrozy, *Test Dept: Total State Machine* (Bristol: PC Press, 2015), 50.
[3] Jon Savage, 'Introduction', in *Industrial Culture Handbook*, ed. V. Vale and Andrea Juno (San Francisco: RE/Search, 1983), 4; Jason James Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music: Technology, Noise, and Modernism in Industrial Music 1975–1996' (PhD dissertation, Stony Brook, Stony Brook University, 2011), 10.

brave new world of synthesisers and flouting pre-existing genre boundaries was not beholden to the avant-garde in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Boundaries between pop and avant-garde became less relevant in this time. Throughout the chapter, the similarities between Test Dept's musical practices and those of Bragg, the Style Council, and Bronski Beat will emerge, such as playing in mining communities, utilising audiovisual technology, and blending different musical genres. However, a more fundamental similarity is how Test Dept mobilised the word 'solidarity' in relation to their music.

The back cover (fig. 4) of Test Dept's collaboration LP with the South Wales Striking Miners Choir (SWSMC), *Shoulder to Shoulder*, reads: 'As the British government waves the flag of "solidarity" with one hand, it seeks to destroy the National Union of Mineworkers and all organised workers, with the other.'[4] 'Solidarity' here does some very heavy lifting – or rather, the scare quotes do. These indicate Test Dept's sentiment that whatever the British government was touting, it was not solidarity.

Throughout her premiership, Thatcher expressed a desire to unify the country. After being elected in 1979, she cited St Francis of Assisi: 'Where there is discord, may we bring harmony.'[5] One of her most famous apothegms, 'there is no alternative',[6] also exhibits a drive towards unity. It emphasises that resistance to her vision was futile, since she felt there was no possible alternative to ground such a resistance. To obtain her desired unity, she needed to eliminate threats of certain minority groups. To paraphrase her infamous remark on the strike, these minority groups consisted not only of 'enemies without' (the Argentinians during the Falklands War), but also of 'the enemy within': the miners.[7]

With their oppositional sentence structure ('one hand … the other'), however, Test Dept convey that the government *could not* exhibit solidarity if it intended to destroy the NUM. Therefore, like the other three case studies – particularly Bragg and the Style Council – Test Dept imply that true solidarity is found among the organised working class.

[4] Test Dept and South Wales Striking Miners Choir, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, Ministry of Power MOP 1, 1984, vinyl LP. The photos of figures 3 and 4 were both taken by the author.
[5] 'Margaret Thatcher Arrives at 10 Downing Street for the First Time as Prime Minister, May 4, 1979', Mike's America, video, 2:53, 4 May 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A23PQCndPYU.
[6] See, for an example of its utterance: Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to Conservative Trade Unionists' (speech, Annual Conference of the Conservative Trade Union, Nottingham, 17 November 1979), https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104171.
[7] Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to 1922 Committee' (speech, private meeting of the 1922 Committee of Conservative backbench MPs, London, 19 July 1984), https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105563.

This chapter analyses Test Dept's work during the strike, principally their collaboration LP with the SWSMC, *Shoulder to Shoulder*.[8] I start with a historical background of Test Dept's formation, their placement within the industrial genre, and the origins of their collaboration with the SWSMC. This section prepares for the analysis, which consists of four parts.

First, I consider how Test Dept and the SWSMC's music expresses *collectivity*. Paradoxically, a collective – a gathering of individual parts – is only audible if its individual parts are also audible. *Shoulder to Shoulder*'s conception of solidarity thus emphasises the collective while allowing individual differences to be heard.

Second, I highlight that the collective on this record is a *labouring* collective. I argue that *Shoulder to Shoulder* explores the affinities between industrial and artistic labour, and that it envisions solidarity as constituted through a collective labouring process.

Third, I address the record's temporal dimension, as it exists in modernity. I use Svetlana Boym's theorisation of nostalgia, which she characterises as a quintessentially modern phenomenon, to indicate how *Shoulder to Shoulder* is continuously tugged between present, past, and future. Its status as a record exacerbates this, as Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut indicate that musical recordings are loci of the intermundane. Recordings demonstrate that the past, present, and future are not hermetically sealed worlds, but that they continuously influence each other. I establish that the record's vision of solidarity also relies on nostalgic and intermundane references.

However, the final analysis section clarifies that the specific pasts and (lost) futures referenced can be exclusionary. The working-class solidarity that Test Dept and the SWSMC emphasise builds on stories that centre white men, potentially alienating marginalised groups.

[8] Listen here: 'South Wales Striking Miners Choir / Test Dept. – Shoulder To Shoulder (1985)', Antonio de Odilon Brito, video, 45:43, 1 June 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ktC7f-I5Io.

Figure 3: The front cover of Shoulder to Shoulder.

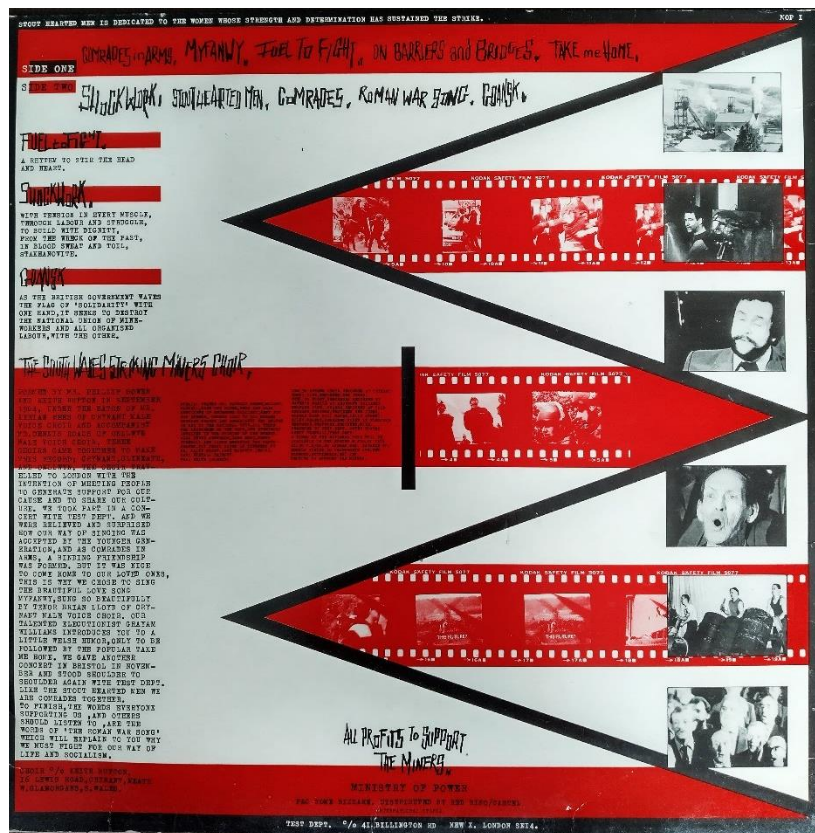

Figure 4: The back cover of Shoulder to Shoulder.

A Challenging New Alliance between the Traditional and the Avant-Garde

Shoulder to Shoulder places Test Dept's industrial tracks alongside the SWSMC's choral songs. One track, 'Comrades', is Test Dept's reworking of the album's first song, SWSMC's performance of 'Comrades in Arms'. Additionally, there are two spoken word sections. 'On Barriers and Bridges' narrates the differences between English (alienating, lonely, boring) and Welsh society (companionable, friendly, lively). The prelude to 'Shockwork' features Kent miner Alan Sutcliffe's impassioned speech about the injustices of the strike. I now devote some attention to this eclectic record's prehistory.

Test Dept originated in London in 1981. Historian of industrial music S. Alexander Reed describes the group as a mixed bunch: English, Scottish, gay, straight, unemployed, studying, musically trained, self-taught.[9] Test Dept themselves note their group's inception benefitted from two environments: the thriving squats and housing co-operatives of South London, which was an encouraging environment for art collectives, and Goldsmiths College, which provided important resources (media, network, and fanbase).[10] Their early repertoire, including *Shoulder to Shoulder*, is heavily percussive, characterised by insistent rhythms performed on unusual instruments: steel pipes, oil drums, mechanical saws, and other industrial detritus. Screamed vocals, often processed with effects like reverb and delay, accompany the percussive layers, but are not mixed louder like in other popular music. Their experimental, noisy sound situates them quite comfortably in what was known as industrial music.

Industrial music originated in the UK the mid-1970s as groups like Throbbing Gristle blended performance art with popular music sounds and avant-garde composition. Musicologist Jason James Hanley lists some stylistic cues of this 'first generation' of industrial music: noise sounds, analogue synthesiser sounds, drones, repetition, spoken vocal samples, short and repeated vocal phrases, vocals mixed at the same volume as other instruments, dissonance, non-functional harmony, sound and vocal processing, et cetera.[11] My analysis will show that many of these characteristics also appear on *Shoulder to Shoulder*. Aside from musical characteristics, music journalist Jon Savage details four further

[9] S. Alexander Reed, *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 149.
[10] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 2.
[11] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 253.

ideals in industrial music subculture: shock tactics, organisational autonomy, extra-musical elements, and access to information.[12]

Indeed, extra-musical elements and access to information – particularly in the form of social and political commentary – are central in industrial subcultures. Like punk, industrial music emerged from British society in the 1970s. The decade was fraught with economic crises, increasing class divides, political instability and radicalisation, industrial disputes, and de-industrialisation.[13] Hanley argues that industrial musicians aimed to warn people about these problems, particularly how de-industrialisation would abandon people and places previously dependent upon industrial production, as the government failed to replace industry-based jobs and husks of factories disfigured the landscape.[14]

To convey their warning, industrial musicians used tactics partly derived from preceding modernist movements. Industrial musicians were self-consciously seeking theories and histories to undergird their project.[15] Scholars have identified engagements with multiple modernist movements in industrial music, including Futurism, Dada, experimental Western art music (such as *musique concrète*), Situationism (particularly Guy Debord's theories on spectacle), and the Beat writer William S. Burroughs.[16] Tactics derived from these movements include the use of noise and machinery, found object art, cutting and sampling, Debord's concepts of *dérive* (responding to a space to reveal hidden influences on it) and *détournement* (re-appropriating and transforming the meaning of the words, symbols and actions of authorities), and Burroughs' 'information war', wherein music could function as a weapon to expose oppression in society.[17] However, despite industrial music's political message and tactics, Reed indicates that industrial music rarely articulated any solutions to the problems highlighted. Moreover, its complicated language of subversion, montage, and *détournement*, combined with its insistence on autonomy and free thinking, often precluded any definite political meaning.[18]

Test Dept, however, always clearly disclosed their political stance.[19] They defined and expressed themselves collectively, and split their earnings equally. Their art aimed not only

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[12] Savage, 'Introduction', 5.
[13] Jeremy Tranmer, '"Nazis Are No Fun": Punk and Anti-Fascism in Britain in the 1970s', in *Rockin' the Borders: Rock Music and Social, Cultural and Political Change*, ed. Fredrik Nilsson and Björn Horgby (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 117–21.
[14] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 11–12, 199.
[15] Hanley, 10, 82, 237.
[16] Hanley; Reed, *Assimilate*.
[17] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 11–12, 242–43.
[18] Reed, *Assimilate*, 186, 188–89.
[19] Reed, 188.

to expose 'faults in the system' – as most industrial artists did – but also to take a concrete political stance, for example supporting the miners. Central to their approach was working *with*, rather than speaking *for*, those involved in the struggle.[20]

Shoulder to Shoulder exemplifies this philosophy. The record grew from the collaboration between Test Dept and the SWSMC at benefit concerts. The local Labour Party in Deptford, where Test Dept were based, wanted to organise a miners' benefit. Test Dept offered to organise the event, requesting the Party to help them assemble a Welsh male voice choir solely consisting of miners on strike. The singers came from different choirs with different repertoires; many first met on the way to the Deptford concert, while they tried to compile a setlist. This group became the SWSMC. The concert, scheduled to take place on 18 September 1984 at the 500-capacity Albany Empire arts centre, sold out quickly, and attracted a diverse audience.[21] Thereafter, similarly to Bragg, Test Dept performed benefit concerts around the country, inviting local musicians and miners to contribute. They performed again with the SWSMC in Bristol, and the SWSMC continued to play their own concerts across the country. Eventually, after Test Dept had visited Wales, they recorded *Shoulder to Shoulder* together. All the record's profits went to support the strike.[22]

Table 1 shows the record's track list. The SWSMC performed songs from a variety of periods and styles, from Wagnerian opera to Welsh song to American operetta. The choice of songs provides rich intertextual references expressing desires of comradeship, revolution, and the abolition of class differences. Although the male voice choir tradition has been nearly synonymous with Welsh identity and nationhood since the late nineteenth century,[23] 'Myfanwy' and 'On Barriers and Bridges' emphasise the choir's Welshness further. Interspersed between their songs are Test Dept's industrial tracks. The first experience of this juxtaposition is of a jarring contrast between the coordinated, melody-driven male voice choir and the noisy, percussive industrial sounds of Test Dept. In the words of Test Dept, *Shoulder to Shoulder* was 'a challenging new alliance between the traditional and the avant-garde.'[24] The term 'alliance' is apt, since I will demonstrate the many affinities between the two musics as they construct a vision of solidarity together.

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[20] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 2, 56.
[21] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, 56–58; 'Music Monday: Test Dept and the Miners Strike', *Transpontine* (blog), 7 April 2014, http://transpont.blogspot.com/2014/04/music-monday-test-dept-and-miners-strike.html.
[22] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 5, 61.
[23] Rachelle Louise Barlow, 'The "Land of Song": Gender and Identity in Welsh Choral Music, 1872–1918' (PhD dissertation, Cardiff University, 2015), 22, 28, 114, 147, 286–87.
[24] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 5.

Track name	Composer	Year of composition	Performer(s)	Notes
'Comrades in Arms'	Adolphe Adam (French)	1848	SWSMC	A Welsh male choir staple since the late 1860s, associated with war and masculinity.[25]
'Myfanwy'	Joseph Parry (Welsh)	1875	SWSMC Tenor solo: Brian Lloyd	Sung in Welsh. Myfanwy is a woman's name derived from Welsh *annwyl* 'beloved'). This is a love song and another male voice choir staple.[26]
'Fuel to Fight'	Test Dept	1984	Test Dept	
'On Barriers and Bridges'	Presumably Grayam Williams	1984	Grayam Williams	Spoken word piece that humorously describes the difference between English standoffishness and Welsh hospitality, using a fictive train journey as illustration.
'Take Me Home'	Rod Edwards (Welsh) Roger Hand (English)	1975	SWSMC	Also frequently sung by male voice choirs; composed for the London Welsh Male Voice Choir by the duo Edwards Hand.[27]
'Shockwork'	Test Dept	1984	Test Dept	Preceded by Alan Sutcliffe's speech.

[25] Barlow, 'The "Land of Song"', 221–22.
[26] Gareth Williams, *Valleys of Song: Music and Society in Wales 1840–1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 76.
[27] Joe Jones, 'History of the Original "Boy Band": My Memories of a Fantastic Era for the Choir in 1972/90's', The London Welsh Male Voice Choir, accessed 31 March 2022, http://www.londonwelshmvc.org/about/history-of-the-boy-band.

'Stout-Hearted Men'	Sigmund Romberg (Jewish-Hungarian American) Oscar Hammerstein II (American)	1928	SWSMC	From the operetta *The New Moon*, about a revolutionary French aristocrat who establishes a new republic on the Isle of Pines and renounces his title.
'Comrades'	Adolphe Adam and Test Dept	1848/1984	Test Dept and the SWSMC	
'Roman War Song'	Richard Wagner (German)	1838-1840	SWSMC	From *Rienzi, der letzte der Tribunen.* In the opera, Rienzi leads the plebeians of Rome against the patricians.
'Gdansk'	Test Dept	1984	Test Dept	Gdansk was the birthplace of the Polish *Solidarność* movement.

Table 1: The track list of Shoulder to Shoulder

The Collective and the Individual

The first part of my analysis addresses the notion of collectivity on this record. Test Dept defined themselves as a collective; group members rarely spoke about their individual, personal lives. Cultural critic Alexei Monroe explains that Test Dept utilised three benefits of collectivism. First, collectivity is a defence mechanism against the state and its surveillance. Forming a collective both protects the individual members and increases their potential to threaten the authorities. Second, identifying as a leftist collective resisted Thatcherite neoliberalism, which incorporated a drive towards privatisation and individualisation – think

of Thatcher's famous maxim, 'there is no such thing as society.'[28] Third, the collective is not totalitarian: it allows members to process their individual emotions together into expressions that are more 'collectively resonant.'[29]

Test Dept's investment in collectivism – the belief that a group's interests and actions take priority over the individual's, as groups offer political strength and social support – is also audible in the tracks on *Shoulder to Shoulder*. First, the vocals do not overpower the instrumentals. Most popular music mixes lead vocals louder than the accompaniment, so that the voice and lyrics are easily distinguished. The singer stars in pop music, noticeably in music marketing and fan cultures. The vocals are how the singer – or the persona or character they portray – expresses what are received as their personal feelings and thoughts.[30] However, in Test Dept's tracks on *Shoulder to Shoulder*, like in other industrial music, the often-screamed vocals are mixed at a similar volume to the other instruments and processed with effects like reverb and delay. 'Shockwork' is a prime example: the screamed vocals lack a melody and the words are hard to recognise. The words 'shock' and 'work' are perhaps the exception – but their repetition on the first beat of every bar, lack of clear pitch, and similar volume to the percussion makes the voice but another percussive element. Rather than the expression of an individual's emotions, the vocals here become but one element of a collective.

The rhythmic texture and layering of percussive elements on Test Dept's *Shoulder to Shoulder* tracks also express collectivity. Only few of Test Dept's members were trained musicians, but they managed to improvise percussive music together. Angus Farquhar explains that fellow member 'Toby the Duracell bunny' (Jonathan Toby Burdon) could keep a steady rhythm for extended periods of time. He provided a rigid base for the other members to improvise over. This mixture between rigidity and freedom created unpredictable results, sometimes resulting in polyrhythm that emulated either the sounds of industrial labour or, according to Farquhar, 'influences from Kodō [the Japanese *taiko* performance group] or Africa.'[31] This effect becomes particularly clear on 'Fuel to Fight'. A beat on conventional-sounding drums begins fifteen seconds in. The next seven minutes, leave no semiquaver

[28] Margaret Thatcher, 'AIDS, Education, and the Year 2000: An Interview with Margaret Thatcher', interview by Douglas Keay, *Woman's Own*, 31 October 1987, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689.
[29] 'Test Dept: Notes from the Underground', Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, video, 41:44, 29 January 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKZt98DImsc. The relevant segment starts at 19:26.
[30] Enrico Terrone, 'Listening to Other Minds: A Phenomenology of Pop Songs', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 60, no. 4 (October 2020): 438, 440–41, https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayaa018.
[31] 'The Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture 2021: Notes from the Underground with Test Dept', Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, video, 1:58:05, 29 January 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EPNk-SijcI. The relevant segment starts at 1:13:54.

empty. Other percussive instruments fade in and out, sounding like metal rods hit by wooden sticks. The beats emphasised change across the track. Sometimes beats 1, 2, and 3 of the 4/4 metre are emphasised; sometimes only the first two beats; sometimes the emphasis falls on the second half of a beat, creating syncopation; and sometimes no emphasis is discernible due to the drummers all emphasising different beats. Atop the rigid base, the rhythms are not machine-perfect. Small variations in timing and dynamic emphasis, which can be called 'participatory discrepancies',[32] betray that the sound is made by humans – multiple humans. This demonstrates Monroe's statement that the collective is not totalitarian; it allows for individual variation and the imperfections of being human.

Members of Test Dept have explained what collectivity meant to them. Graham Cunnington explains that 'everything falling apart' in the late 1970s and early 1980s led to a need to 'create their own world' as a collective of like-minded people. They offered each other support; creating art together was 'an exorcism' of their (individual) struggles. Brett Turnbull, their filmmaker, adds that the collective was also a survival method: the physical activity of making music together turned negative feelings into positive ones. Farquhar later proclaims that developing a common vision, working together, and getting musical results after months of hard labour, gave him a powerful feeling. All participants feeling the same thing while making music together was intoxicating to him: it was 'liberating on a personal level', but also revealed the collective political force they could deploy outwards.[33]

Choirs, as ensembles of different voices, are also deemed musical embodiments of collectivity. The individual voice is not the focus of choral music; even when broken up into parts, the choir's sound as a collective is what matters. Related to this collectivity, Welsh male voice choirs have been construed as the epitome of community music making. Choir members have expressed that singing, and especially harmonising, generates a feeling of togetherness, community, or even family.[34] Ethnomusicologist Rachelle Louise Barlow argues that choral singing in Wales provided opportunities for social bonding and could bolster social solidarity during industrial upheaval.[35]

I argue that collectivity in the SWSMC is not merely apparent by singing in unison or coordinated harmony. Rather, as with Test Dept's percussive imperfections, the collectivity

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[32] Charles Keil, 'The Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report', *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 1 (1995): 3, https://doi.org/10.2307/852198.
[33] Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, 'The Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture 2021', video. The relevant segment starts at 1:17:21.
[34] Debbie Rohwer and Mark Rohwer, 'How Participants Envision Community Music in Welsh Men's Choirs', *Research and Issues in Music Education* 10, no. 1 (September 2012): 1, 3.
[35] Barlow, 'The "Land of Song"', 138, 147.

of the SWSMC is audible because the choir comprises *different* voices. In their songs on *Shoulder to Shoulder*, not all choir members are always perfectly in tune. Again, a collective consists of individual elements, and is only perceptible as a collective when its constituent parts are also perceptible. This is exemplified nowhere more clearly than on 'Comrades', where Test Dept drench SWSMC's recording of 'Comrades in Arms' in their characteristic reverb and delay. Percussive elements (conventional drums as well as metal clanging on metal) accent rather than intrude on the structure of the song. Earlier in the track, they punctuate the choir's phrases, while at the end, the percussion coordinates with the choir's march metre. The individual contributions of Test Dept and the SWSMC are clearly distinguishable, but create a coordinated, collective whole.

One aspect of solidarity on *Shoulder to Shoulder* is thus collectivity. This involves a shared vision and goal *and* the acknowledgement that collectives consist of individuals. Still, collectives resist individualism: the individual is not central here. Rather, the collective provides the individual with the safety to speak their voice. Collectivity is also crucial to Test Dept's collaboration with the communities affected by the problems addressed in their music. *Shoulder to Shoulder*, and 'Comrades' especially, musically expresses this ideal. Recall that as the group's name betrays, the Council Collective's 'Soul Deep' departs from a similar premise: rather than being 'the Style Council and Friends', the group presented as a collective of individuals worried about the same issue, wherein each individual nonetheless gets their opportunity to speak – or in musical terms, each singer sings their own verse.

Artistic Labour as an Alternative

Also like the Council Collective, Test Dept emphasise *working-class solidarity*. This implies that solidarity is intimately linked to *working*, to labour. The need for solidarity among workers often arises from their working conditions, particularly among miners. As mining is an especially hazardous occupation, organisation is crucial to survival. Additionally, sociologist Graham Crow notes that miners often identify with the work that their community relies upon.[36]

Test Dept's music emphasises labour and exertion. Their work on *Shoulder to Shoulder* evokes the associations between rhythm and industrial labour that workers,

[36] Graham Crow, *Social Solidarities: Theories, Identities and Social Change* (Buckingham: Open University, 2002), 75–76.

laypeople, and researchers have made for decades. Sound studies scholar Karin Bijsterveld writes that anthropologists from the nineteenth century onwards emphasised that regular rhythm made tedious physical labour bearable and allowed workers to synchronise, increasing efficiency.[37]

Test Dept's connection between music, labour, and rhythm is both visible and audible. The cover of *Shoulder to Shoulder* sports the phrase 'Our work with hammers' alongside two hammers (fig. 3); the LP's label depicts a metronome with two crossed hammers instead of its pendulum. When performing live, films and images of industrial labour were often projected behind or onto the band. At the Deptford benefit concert, footage included training videos for miners from the NCB;[38] at other times, they used Russian revolutionary films,[39] an image of Vera Mukhina's sculpture *The Worker and the Collective Farm Worker* (1937),[40] or images of colliery machinery.[41] During their miners' benefit concert tour, Turnbull filmed images of the strike in one location to be projected at their next performance in another.[42]

Images of the band playing live evoke Stakhanovite propaganda: sweaty men in sleeveless shirts who, even in a still image, seem to put their entire weight behind banging metal on metal, faces screwed up with exertion and muscles tense.[43] The 1930s Soviet Stakhanovite movement was named for Alexei Stakhanov, a coal miner who mined many more tonnes than his quota required. Propaganda inspired by Stakhanov encouraged workers to follow his example and glorified the physical exertion of industrial work.[44] Test Dept's visual and musical aesthetic can be described as Stakhanovite-inspired, as they emphasise the aesthetic value of intense physical labour, without necessarily propagandising or encouraging overproduction. Bodily exertion is audible in Test Dept's percussion; as already mentioned, the slight variations in timing and dynamics reveal these sounds are produced by tiring and

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[37] Karin Bijsterveld, 'Listening to Machines: Industrial Noise, Hearing Loss and the Cultural Meaning of Sound', in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012), 155, 160–61.
[38] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 58.
[39] Reed, *Assimilate*, 149.
[40] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 6.
[41] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 70; 'Fuel to Fight', directed by Brett Turnbull and Paul Jamrozy (1984; 2014), 12:23 min, https://vimeo.com/523518374.
[42] Marc James Léger, *Vanguardia: Socially Engaged Art and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 138.
[43] For still images, see: Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 53–54, 63, 70–71. For moving images, see: Turnbull and Jamrozy, 'Fuel to Fight'.
[44] R. J. Overy, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 258–59.

flawed human bodies, not machines. The screamed vocals also indexically signify an exerting human body as its source.[45]

Cultural theorist Marc James Léger argues that Test Dept uses physical labour to connect art and life. The level of physical exertion on a Test Dept track blurs the boundary between artistic and industrial labour.[46] The group's members have themselves expressed a desire to connect artistic practice to current political events and societal processes. Turnbull describes the physical work and the discipline and structure it offered as tools to turn negative emotions into politically useful forces. Their Stakhanovite aesthetic, glorifying the worker, reinscribed the value of labour while the British government was attacking trade union organising and closing down industrial workplaces.[47]

Male voice choral music in Wales, however, was often a leisurely pursuit. Although connected to the coal and iron industries, choral singing provided entertainment and bonding *outside of work*. It was a way to develop and express a local, national, and/or working-class identity and feeling of community, and to escape the daily hardships of life in a mining community.[48] However, Barlow notes that during industrial disputes, choirs would often rehearse and perform more often. Naturally, during a strike, the miners had more time to sing, but Barlow emphasises that singing also bolstered social solidarity and morale during strikes.[49] Aside from being a leisurely pursuit, Welsh choral singing thus also performed political and social functions. During the 1984–85 strike, the SWSMC occupied a space between labour and leisure: they utilised choral singing, traditionally a leisure activity, to labour: raising funds for their cause and sharing their culture outside Wales.

Working-class solidarity is thus a product of both leisure and labour, or more precisely, a product of both artistic and industrial labour. The *act of creating* music together, of *labouring* together, rather than the end product, is what may produce a sense of solidarity. Alan Sutcliffe's experience of watching Test Dept on stage corroborates this:

> What was the connection with the political situation I was in and what was going on, on that stage? For all intents and purposes what was taking place on that stage was

[45] Marie Thompson, 'Three Screams', in *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*, ed. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2013), 147.
[46] Léger, *Vanguardia*, 135–36.
[47] Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, 'The Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture 2021', video. The relevant segment starts at 1:09:21.
[48] Barlow, 'The "Land of Song"', 116, 147, 272–73, 286–87; Rohwer and Rohwer, 'How Participants Envision Community Music in Welsh Men's Choirs', 3.
[49] Barlow, 'The "Land of Song"', 137–38.

> both the total destruction of one way of life and the building of a new way of life. […] I would have loved to have worked down the mines with these people, they seemed to be working a lot harder on the stage than I ever did down the pit.[50]

Using words like 'destruction', 'building', and 'working', Sutcliffe emphasises the *process* of labouring, of creating music – and not the music itself – that made him realise the connection between Test Dept's art and his political situation.

Although Sutcliffe still distinguishes between industrial labour and artistic labour here – 'working on the stage' versus 'working down the pit' – the level of physicality begins to blur these lines. When Léger asks, 'Why perform industrial labour for those who do it for a living?',[51] I argue he misses an important nuance: Test Dept, like the SWSMC, are not performing industrial labour, but musical/artistic labour that aims to represent and document the value of industrial labour when this labour was a) gradually disappearing and b) unable to be performed because of the strike. Billy Bragg, too, demonstrated that musicians were labourers. The labour he wanted to perform was bringing people together, facilitating collectivity. Similarly, *Shoulder to Shoulder* exemplifies collective labour, working together. The record exemplifies how musical activity during the strike provided an alternative: an alternative to other forms of protest, as Sutcliffe was prohibited from picketing, at least outside his home county of Kent (a bail condition after being arrested);[52] an alternative to industrial labour; and, as an expression of solidarity, an alternative to Thatcherism.

Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Intermundane

Much industrial music in the 1970s and 1980s closely affiliated itself to aesthetic and academic theories. In their early career, Test Dept were rather more occupied with artistic creation and collaborating with affected communities than with reading Debord or Burroughs. However, after Test Dept reworked audiovisual material produced during the strike for the Newcastle AV Festival in 2014, they connected with music critic and political

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[50] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 65.
[51] Léger, *Vanguardia*, 145.
[52] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 65. Prohibiting miners to cross county lines, effectively blocking them from supporting pickets in counties other than their home county, was a tactic commonly used by the police during the strike. Sutcliffe mentions it in his speech on *Shoulder to Shoulder*; it is also documented in the lyrics of Billy Bragg's 'Which Side Are You On?'.

and cultural theorist Mark Fisher.[53] Fisher is best known for his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* where he discusses precisely the attitude that developed when Thatcher was in office: that there is no alternative to capitalism.[54] However, Fisher argued that Test Dept, as a 'popular modernist collective', envisioned a different future for modernity, an alternative to capitalism.[55] This merges well with Hanley's assertion that industrial music in the 1970s and 1980s was quintessentially a modernist genre.[56] Therefore, I pay some attention to modernism on *Shoulder to Shoulder* here.

Musicologist Allan Moore describes two ways of identifying modernism in art. The first is chronological: all art made during and responding to modernity is modernist. The second stipulates that modernism is but one possible response to the social conditions of modernity and is thus characterised by certain style elements.[57] Either way, modernism reacts to the so-called crisis of modernity. Hanley writes that this crisis 'suggests that the rapid pace of progress and change has unhinged us from traditional ways of life and replaced it with a sense of fear and doubt over the unknown.'[58] Reed adds that it also involves the realisation that Western society is but one among many and that its norms and values are not universally correct.[59] Modernist art aims to process and overcome this crisis through artistic innovation. As such, it chases progress, and often attempts to dismantle long-standing artistic institutions, conventions, norms, and values.[60] However, Hanley terms this reaction to the crisis of modernity a double-edged sword. Progress pushes artists further to the source of their anxiety: the unknown.[61] In Reed's words, the crisis of modernity 'both fueled and was fueled by modernism'.[62] Moore therefore concludes that modernist art is best summarised as *ambivalent* towards modernity: it is simultaneously excited and anxious about progress and change.[63] Modernist art is therefore also 'obsessed with the past and connections to that past.'[64]

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[53] Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, 'The Mark Fisher Memorial Lecture 2021', video. The relevant section starts at 1:00:55.
[54] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009).
[55] Mark Fisher, 'Test Dept: Where Leftist Idealism and Popular Modernism Collide', *Frieze*, 25 September 2015, https://www.frieze.com/article/music-41.
[56] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 10, 82.
[57] Allan F. Moore, 'Jethro Tull and the Case for Modernism in Mass Culture', in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Allan F. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158.
[58] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 17–18.
[59] Reed, *Assimilate*, 7.
[60] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 32; Reed, *Assimilate*, 6–7, 45.
[61] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 18.
[62] Reed, *Assimilate*, 7.
[63] Moore, 'Jethro Tull and the Case for Modernism in Mass Culture', 169.
[64] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 14.

Test Dept's art can certainly be characterised as a reaction to modernity. Specifically, they respond to social conditions in Britain from the 1970s onwards: neoliberalisation, de-industrialisation, the turn towards individualism, et cetera. I have already highlighted how they resisted these tendencies by invoking the collective and the value of industrial labour. Additionally, like other modernist art, Test Dept were concerned with progress and originality. They have opposed themselves to mainstream pop and rock: 'A new attitude was deemed necessary, embracing experimentation, transgression and sonic extremity';[65] 'we looked on ourselves as musical revolutionaries.'[66] However, like my other case studies, Test Dept also heavily invoke the past on *Shoulder to Shoulder*.

The record's most obvious invocation of the past is the traditional Welsh choral music. Its juxtaposition with Test Dept's progress-oriented industrial music highlights both the differences and the similarities between the two musics. The percussion-driven industrial tracks which lack an easily discernible structure stand in stark contrast to the SWSMC's romantic repertoire. The SWSMC's songs lack percussion, and these pieces have clear structures driven by melody and harmony. 'Myfanwy', with its tenor solo, is a good example. The tenor sings the melody once, accompanied by piano chords; when he repeats it, the choir assists with the harmonic accompaniment; when the melody sounds a third time, the whole choir sings in homophony. Placing 'Myfanwy' before 'Fuel to Fight' and 'Take Me Home' before 'Shockwork' highlights the contrast between the traditional romantic aesthetic of the SWSMC and Test Dept's modernist tracks. Yet this also creates an alliance between the two musics. Test Dept's percussion-driven work may incite the listener to hear the SWSMC's contributions as rhythmically rather than harmonically driven, for example in the march metres of 'Comrades in Arms', 'Stout-Hearted Men', and 'Roman War Song'. Additionally, the SWSMC's songs may symbolise the 'traditional ways of life' that the crisis of modernity mourns; they soothe the anxiety of Test Dept's tracks.

Shoulder to Shoulder thus creates tensions between progress and return as the listener is tugged back and forth between the two musics. The album can therefore be called *nostalgic*, following cultural theorist Svetlana Boym theorisation of nostalgia. Boym describes nostalgia as 'longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed.'[67] It is a particularly modern phenomenon, simultaneously obsessed with the present, future, and past. Nostalgia cannot be confined to the conventional borders of time: the expectations of the

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[65] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 2.
[66] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, 50.
[67] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), xiii.

present permeate the memory of the past, idealised pasts dictate directions for the future, and 'lost futures' – that which once was possible, but is no longer – are mourned.[68] Nostalgia revels in the liminal: a constant tugging between progress and return.

The 1984–85 strike itself was a liminal moment: there was no set ending for the strike and no certainty whether the miners would return to work or be sacked. Miners went on strike because they felt *on the brink of losing* something: their jobs, their communities, their way of life. Remembering the success of past labour struggles – such as the strikes of 1972 and 1974 – they refused to abandon hope for the future.

Shoulder to Shoulder illustrates this liminal space, as past, present, and future intersect across the record. The SWSMC's repertoire demonstrates that past movements, such as the ideals of the French revolution ('Stout-Hearted Men') and the story of *Rienzi* ('Roman War Song'), still inspire the present. Test Dept also heavily invoke the early-twentieth century Russian Constructivist movement.[69] Figures 3 and 4 show the album cover of *Shoulder to Shoulder*, an obvious visual reference to this movement: the red, black, and white colour scheme, the capital lettering, the bold lines, the stylised figures, and simple, angular shapes all scream Constructivism.

Additionally, Test Dept were inspired by Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov.[70] Vertov ran a film-car on the communists' agit-trains, which travelled across Russia to bolster morale among troops and spread pro-communist propaganda during the Russian Civil War. The film-car was essentially a travelling cinema, but Vertov also shot footage for later development while travelling. Later film trains also had equipment to develop and edit film on the go.[71] Turnbull employed a similar strategy during the band's 1984–85 tour.[72] Further references to Soviet history include the Stakhanovite aesthetic.

All these references to the past are brought to bear upon the present. Test Dept and the SWSMC aim to demonstrate that past revolutionary struggles and tactics are still relevant in the precarious time of the strike. Their music expresses a nostalgic longing for socialist movements of the past *and* the futures these movements envisioned.

Meanwhile, the present on *Shoulder to Shoulder* is fragile, on the brink of being lost, almost incongruous or anachronistic. The borders between past, present, and future are

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[68] Boym, xiv–xvi.
[69] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 50.
[70] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, 5.
[71] Adelheid Heftberger, 'Propaganda in Motion: Dziga Vertov's and Aleksandr Medvedkin's Film Trains and Agit Steamers of the 1920s and 1930s', *Apparatus: Film, Media and Digital Cultures of Central and Eastern Europe*, no. 1 (2015): 7–22, https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2015.0001.2.
[72] Léger, *Vanguardia*, 136–38.

blurred. First, while still a fact of the present, the Welsh male voice choir with its romantic idiom seems rather out of place in the technology-focussed, modernist 1980s. Second, Test Dept employed a Stakhanovite aesthetic, glorifying the worker and romanticising industrial culture at a time when industrial employment declined. Moreover, the fragility of the present and the existence of the past within the present also emerge in Test Dept's use of materials. Being based in Deptford, the group had access to scrap yards around the docklands, which they scavenged for makeshift instruments: oil drums, steel pipes, mechanical saws, and other industrial detritus. Léger articulates that alongside active labour, Test Dept thus also relied upon dead labour: the labour entombed in objects.[73] Additionally, they often performed in (post-)industrial spaces: railway arches, abandoned warehouses and factories, and so on. This demonstrates Debord's concept of *dérive*, as Test Dept's music responded to these spaces.

Test Dept expose the transient, ghostly status of their performance materials and spaces. These objects and spaces were created for one specific purpose (industrial labour), but have become obsolete under de-industrialisation, and are therefore haunted by their industrial past. However, these objects and spaces also contain possible futures, as Test Dept repurpose these objects and spaces to new musical ends. Through music, Test Dept emphasise that these objects and spaces still have a use, a political story to tell that despite attempts to silence it still sounds in the present and must inform visions of the future. 'The future' on *Shoulder to Shoulder* comprises two conflicting forces: a pessimistic and fearful one, envisioning the defeat of the miners, the decline of their communities, and the neglect of labour history; and an optimistic, hopeful, and nostalgic one, which envisions a socialist future like the Constructivists did. *Shoulder to Shoulder* encourages serious consideration of both possibilities, as it tugs the listener from the militaristic and even jovial sounds of the SWSMC to the bleak screams and clattering of Test Dept, from the anachronistic Welsh choral sound to the revitalisation of industrial rubble.

Although Test Dept and the SWSMC performed live together too, *Shoulder to Shoulder*'s status as a record matters. Hanley argues that industrial music depended on recording technology: mixing, effects, and other production elements were as important to the tracks as the musicians' performances.[74] For instance, on *Shoulder to Shoulder*, the mixing and processing of the vocals matter as much as – or possibly more than – the semantic meaning of the words, their rhythm, and their melody. Musicologists Jason Stanyek and

[73] Léger, 135–36.
[74] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 250–51.

Benjamin Piekut contend that recordings exhibit what they call the *intermundane* (literally, 'in between worlds'). Like Boym's nostalgia, the intermundane emphasises the interpenetration of past, present, and future. Stanyek and Piekut highlight how, through sound recording and editing, the people and objects of the past continue to exert agency upon the present and future.[75]

'Comrades' (track 8) demonstrates *Shoulder to Shoulder*'s intermundanity. Test Dept here rework the existing recording of 'Comrades in Arms' (track 1). They process the Welsh choir's vocals with delay, disrupting the linear, teleological concatenation of musical phrases. The harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic progressions of Adam's composition are disarranged. The track layers Test Dept's characteristic metal percussion over the singers, mobilising the dead labour encapsulated in the industrial detritus they scavenged. The voices further emphasise the objects' ghostly status. The delay causes the choir's phrases to sound repeatedly, conjuring the echoes of dozens of ghostly voices. Although the SWSMC's members were alive, Test Dept made them sound like the echoes of the dead. Conversely, the record has also *preserved* their voices, as many elderly members will have passed away nearly forty years after the strike, and carried the collective's message into the future. *Shoulder to Shoulder* is thus also a locus of the intermundane and nostalgia as a *record*. It might be described as a nostalgia fractal: it has itself become a reminder of what twenty-first century dwellers may learn from the past, from the preserved hopes and visions of the striking miners and their supporters. *Shoulder to Shoulder* remains a carrier of their agency, of Test Dept and the SWSMC and Alan Sutcliffe, demonstrated by the bare fact of my analysing the record as someone born fourteen years after the strike ended.

How do modernism, nostalgia, and the intermundane connect to solidarity? First, Test Dept's invocation of 'solidarity' on the record's back cover is a reaction against modernity, specifically the Thatcher government's emphasis on individualism and economic progress. Test Dept's collectivist solidarity is a defence mechanism against the crisis of modernity: individuals fail to overcome the fear of the unknown, but the solidary collective might succeed. Second, solidarity itself can also become the object of modern nostalgic anxiety. A reason for the continuous mention of 'solidarity' by scholars, activists, and artists is the fear that at any moment, it could slip away, or already has. Third, perhaps the most modern aspect of solidarity is its tension between the past, present, and future: solidary collectives invoke

[75] Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut, 'Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane', *The Drama Review* 54, no. 1 (2010): 14, 16, 18, 20, 27, https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2010.54.1.14.

(social movement) pasts while also aiming to maintain or improve their existence in the future. Solidarity can therefore be characterised as nostalgic in the Boymian sense, longing for idealised pasts and lost futures, and especially concerned with the sense that important matters (rights, communities, ways of life) are (nearly) lost. The medium of modern music, particularly recorded music, facilitates the exploration these intermundane permeations between past, present, and future. Finally, however, I underline Boym's statement that nostalgia is paradoxical. It is inclusionary, since we empathise with other humans who also experience longing, but also exclusionary, since we disagree about the ideal home we long for, and whether and how we should realise it.[76] Solidarity is similarly shaped: it hinges on the desire to connect to other people, but also on the exclusion of those who disagree with the solidary group's intentions. This begs the question of how *Shoulder to Shoulder*'s solidarity may exclude certain groups, to which I turn in the final section of this chapter.

Stout-Hearted Men

Adopting Burroughs' concept of the 'information war', industrial musicians aimed to disrupt the stream of information disseminated by the authorities, in order to make their own message heard. Noise was their primary weapon.[77] Test Dept, too, have admitted to this tactic, at least retroactively: 'Test Dept are the parasites that create noise on the pure line of communication from sender to receiver. They are the static that seeks to disturb the governmental "truth machine".'[78] Around the same time as the first wave of industrial music touted this philosophy, Jacques Attali published his *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Attali argues noise is prophetic: it exposes the faults in the dominant mood and opens a road to a new social reality. Attali here defines 'noise' as music that is *perceived as* noise: changes in musical style are often first perceived as 'noise' before being accepted as conventions.[79] However, musicologist Eric Drott criticises Attali's book for not clarifying how these changes in musical style actually connect to changes in the social order. He points out that it is only clear in hindsight which noises were prophetic.[80] To this critique I add the question: for whom do certain noises have prophetic qualities that wage war on the authorities' stream

[76] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xv–xvi.
[77] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 243, 246.
[78] Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 5.
[79] Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).
[80] Eric Drott, 'Rereading Jacques Attali's Bruits', *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 4 (June 2015): 725, https://doi.org/10.1086/681784.

of information and expose societal issues, and for whom are these noises pests to be eliminated, nonsensical utterings to be ignored, or frightening repellents to be avoided? Whom does industrial music, and *Shoulder to Shoulder*, include or exclude?

In a sense, *Shoulder to Shoulder* relies on exclusion, in the form of opposition: supporting the miners, trade unions, and the working class more broadly means opposing itself to the British government (and its pseudo-solidarity) and the police (most clearly in Sutcliffe's speech). *Shoulder to Shoulder* affiliates itself with a particular class identity and political stance, and thereby excludes anyone who disdains working-class socialism. These kinds of oppositions and exclusions are not unusual in political solidarities. Many political solidarities arise *because of* this opposition to a shared enemy.

However, I argue that *Shoulder to Shoulder* also features less obvious exclusions, along gendered and racial lines. This critical perspective on industrial music is not new: Hanley notes that audiences and performers of first-wave industrial music were mostly white, educated middle-class men, while Reed dedicates two chapters to industrial music's ties to fascism and whiteness.[81] Reed poses three arguments for why industrial music presumes white performers and audiences. First, like punk and other reactionary genres, industrial music relies on shock – mainly, the shock of realisation that dominant society is oppressive. However, to experience this shock in the first place, someone has to have certain privileges – such as whiteness – that mean that 'how things really are' was invisible to them before. Second, industrial music plays with the tension between body and machine: it experiments with mechanically replacing the body. This presumes a body that is white: in the West, the white body is unmarked while non-white bodies are marked, and therefore the white body lends itself particularly to experiments with its replacement, erasure, or mechanisation. Third, industrial music is sometimes concerned with giving up autonomy and surrendering oneself to the music or the collective. This also becomes apparent in Test Dept's preference to define themselves collectively, and specifically Farquhar's powerful feeling of disappearing as an individual when the group played together. Reed argues that such a revolutionary feeling is only available to those for whom this submission is a possibility, a choice. To make this choice, one needs autonomy to give up in the first place – autonomy that white people are granted, but non-white people often are not.[82]

[81] Hanley, 'Metal Machine Music', 237; Reed, *Assimilate*, chap. 13 and chap. 14.
[82] Reed, *Assimilate*, 206–7, 223, 310–12.

I suggest that Reed's arguments are also applicable to gender: like black people, women and trans people are also often already aware of societal oppression, often have marked bodies, and are denied autonomy (over their own bodies). Therefore, I argue that *Shoulder to Shoulder*, and perhaps industrial music more broadly, is silently built on certain ideas about masculinity. In the case of *Shoulder to Shoulder*, as in Bragg's case, this is a particularly working-class masculinity.

Test Dept's music foregrounds heavy industrial labour, which is historically overwhelmingly performed by male employees. Their references to the Stakhanovite movement also skew masculine: most model workers, like Alexei Stakhanov himself, were men, especially in heavy industry jobs (women Stakhanovites often worked in agriculture).[83] Moreover, Bijsterveld demonstrates that these industries were also *sonically* masculine, as workers connected the capacity to endure loudness and noise to tough masculinity.[84] Test Dept thus developed their aesthetic in a society that historically associates the physicality and soundscapes of heavy industrial labour with masculinity.

Welsh choral music is also often gendered masculine. Barlow demonstrates that choral singing as a symbol of Welsh nationhood is connected mostly in relation to men's choirs, despite women's and mixed choirs developing alongside them. Men's choirs were linked to the coal industry, which was historically restricted to male employees (although by the 1980s these choirs consisted of members of all professions and societal classes). Choral singing was associated with belligerence, not only because of the topics of the songs, but also because choral competitions were a way to fight for local and national pride.[85] The SWSMC is no different. 'Comrades in Arms', 'Stout-Hearted Men', and 'Roman War Song' all have militaristic lyrics, as well as strident march sections, often with dotted rhythms, where the choir members sing forte or fortissimo. During the strike, the fictitious enemies in the songs stand in for the miners' opponents (the government and police); the metre, rhythms, and dynamics express the fighting spirit the striking miners deployed on the picket line. Like the pit, the battlefield was traditionally a male domain, so it is not surprising that Welsh male voice choirs would use this imagery to express a type of masculine nationhood.

I do not mean to imply that women and transfeminine people can never be and have never been loud or belligerent, or that they cannot perform and have never performed heavy

[83] Overy, *The Dictators*, 259–60; Lewis H. Siegelbaum and A. K. Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 19.
[84] Bijsterveld, 'Listening to Machines', 159, 162.
[85] Barlow, 'The "Land of Song"', 116, 145, 256, 272, 278–79; Cunnington, Farquhar, and Jamrozy, *Test Dept*, 56.

physical industrial labour – it is not my point to reinscribe these gender roles. However, I emphasise that the stories and aesthetics that Test Dept and the SWSMC build on historically centre *working-class men and masculinity*. Additionally, women are quite literally marginalised on the record: on the back cover, at the top, in a small font, it says, 'Stout Hearted Men [*sic*] is dedicated to the women whose strength and determination has sustained the strike.' I also do not mean to imply that Test Dept and the SWSMC are intentionally misogynist or racist, or that all of their experiences of masculinity are the same.[86]

What I instead want to demonstrate with this analysis is how ideas and expressions of solidarity are often built upon historically white masculine traditions that *silently and/or unintentionally* exclude minorities. Listeners of other genders and races may not associate solidarity with loud voices or militarism, for example, if for them those are actually signs of danger or oppression. Other scholars have hinted at, but not elaborated on, the fact that solidarity (Marxist or working-class solidarity in particular) is gendered masculine.[87] I already demonstrated in the second chapter how Billy Bragg's ideas about authentic political music were linked to an idea of working-class masculinity that eschewed too big a focus on (feminine) appearance, since that would detract from socialist politics and the attainment of solidarity. As my analysis of *Shoulder to Shoulder* contributes, expressions of working-class solidarity may also be gendered masculine because they mobilise white masculine traditions (historical movements, practices, and sounds) that intentionally or unintentionally excluded gendered and other minorities.

Conclusion

Even if Test Dept and the SWSMC do not use the word solidarity on every track or in relation to every part of their aesthetics, it is clear that *Shoulder to Shoulder* was made with solidarity in mind. This is not only because of the quotation on the back cover, which I dissected in the introduction of this chapter, but also because it was a benefit record: all

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[86] For a discussion on the plurality of masculinities in working-class and specifically mining communities, see: Daryl Leeworthy, 'For Our Common Cause: Sexuality and Left Politics in South Wales, 1967–1985', *Contemporary British History* 30, no. 2 (April 2016): 266, 274, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2015.1073591.

[87] Ashley Bohrer, *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality under Contemporary Capitalism* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020), 232; Jill Steans, 'Negotiating the Politics of Difference in the Project of Feminist Solidarity', *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 4 (October 2007): 731, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210507007759.

profits went to support the miners' strike. It is thus important to realise *how* Test Dept and the SWSMC construct their vision of solidarity on this record.

First of all, *Shoulder to Shoulder* invokes the notion of a solidary *collective*. This collective resists individualism, but paradoxically can only be perceived once small variations between the individuals that make up the collective become apparent. While the solidary collective thus needs the individual in order to exist, it *encapsulates* and *protects* the individual within the unified whole in return. Second, solidarity comes to be through labour. While Test Dept's music invokes and mimics industrial labour, in a time of strike, the work that goes into creating this music – artistic labour – can produce solidarity as well. Labour exists here as a *collective process* rather than a finished product; it is through this process that solidarity *forms* in the collective, rather than that solidarity as a pre-existing *concept is expressed* by a final product. Third, solidarity can be characterised as a nostalgic reaction to the crisis of modernity, as well as a reaction to the sense that something important is about to be lost. Solidarity thus contains intermundane tensions between the past, present, and future. These invocations of the past, how they are relevant for the present, and which futures may or may not lie ahead are a red thread on *Shoulder to Shoulder*. However, the album invokes the pasts and (lost) futures of industrial labour and noise, Welsh male voice choirs, and themes of war, all of which are white masculine traditions. Ideas of political, Marxist, or working-class solidarity may thus be rooted in such exclusionary histories.

Conclusion

When I interviewed Billy Bragg, I asked him what his goal was when playing benefits for the miners. He replied: ‘Using music to bring people together. [pause] In solidarity.’ I had not prompted him with the word had before that moment, so I was glad – but not surprised – he mentioned it spontaneously. I asked what ‘solidarity’ means to him, and had to control my excitement when he replied, ‘Good question there, I've never thought about that.’[1] Although, after a moment, he gave the elegant definition of ‘organised empathy’ discussed in Chapter Two, this exchange demonstrates a core motive of my research. ‘Solidarity’ is loaded with meaning, and often mobilised when talking about music and politics – here, Bragg uses it to strengthen his statement of ‘using music to bring people together’ – but this meaning is rarely interrogated.

This thesis aimed to discover how solidarity as a political concept intertwines with musical practices. I tackled this broad question by narrowing down my scope to four case studies that illustrate the range of musical support for the miners during the 1984–85 strike. I analysed musicians’ and activists’ conception of solidarity and mobilisation of the term when talking about music. Although each case study is unique, there are some striking commonalities that I highlight here, using the four-pronged model laid out in Chapter One.

Ontology

The variety of characterisations of solidarity in my case studies has demonstrated solidarity’s complex ontology. First, practice and feeling blend in Bragg’s emphasis on dialogue. The phrase ‘organised empathy’ betrays that Bragg conceives of solidarity as both active organisation – the practice of bringing people together in conversation – and fellow-feeling. In Chapter Two, I explained how the Council Collective emphasised the *visibility* of solidarity, implying that it requires concrete, visible actions. They felt compelled to utilise the pop musician’s valuable resource: a broad audience. Raising money and awareness was thus an essential solidary practice pop musicians had special access to. The next chapter, although focussed on an event meant to raise money, highlighted instead the *feeling* of solidarity. For Mark Ashton, the experience of presence at Pits and Perverts incited an elated feeling of

[1] Billy Bragg, interview by the author, 21 May 2022.

togetherness. However, physical presence is also a visible action: practices and feelings of solidarity are interconnected. Finally, my analysis of *Shoulder to Shoulder* demonstrates that solidarity is constituted and supported by labour processes as well as feelings of nostalgia. The social relation of collectivity also underlies the record's conception of solidarity. Collectivity involves both practices (such as developing and expressing a common vision and musical participation) and feelings (of safety or kinship). I suggest that, since music itself involves both practice and feeling, musicological investigation thus reveals the futility of strictly separating feelings of solidarity from practices of solidarity.

Sociality

Solidarity is always shaped by in- and exclusion. During the strike, musicians whose political commitment was perceived be lacking were excluded from solidarity. Frequent targets were the so-called New Romantics: Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Spandau Ballet, Duran Duran, and the Culture Club. By distinguishing themselves from the New Romantics, artists like Bragg and Weller attempted to legitimate their music and activism as political enough. They wanted to counteract the necessary evil of participating in the commercial, capitalist world of popular music. Using the word 'solidarity' also contributed to this legitimation process. However, this division between 'good' (authentic, political) and 'bad' (inauthentic, apolitical) musicians was biased and somewhat arbitrary, as groups like Spandau Ballet and Frankie Goes to Hollywood showed support for the same causes as Bragg and Weller. More research is needed to understand this division between British pop musicians in the 1980s; this research could focus particularly on differences in (perceived) musical skill, innovation, and style, and industry outlets such as magazines.

The rejection of the New Romantics was inflected with class, as artists like Weller described them as 'bourgeois' or 'aristocratic' (even though some New Romantics were from working-class backgrounds). All of my case studies involve musicians who position themselves and their music explicitly as working-class. Concomitantly, they emphasise working-class solidarity: solidarity within the working class, for the working class. This solidarity rests on sameness: shared class identity. However, this sameness is also a common denominator that facilitates unity *across differences*, race and sexuality in particular. Test Dept, LGSM and the Welsh miners, and the Council Collective show how collectivity allows individual differences to be acknowledged and protected.

However, class identity often involves exclusionary ideas about authenticity and masculinity, which also connect to music. Authentic working-class masculinity looks and

sounds a particular way, even if its standards (such as the rejection of the New Romantics' decadent fashion and the valuation of manual labour) are unspoken and shift from person to person (for instance, the Style Council's stylish working-class masculinity is different from Test Dept's Stakhanovite one). 'Solidarity' often implicitly valuates authentic working-class masculinity, and can therefore exclude anyone not deemed 'authentic', 'working-class', or 'masculine' enough.

Mobilisation

Intoning the word 'solidarity' adds rhetorical power to a statement. It reflects the intensity of the speaker's political beliefs and/or their feelings. For example, the Council Collective placed the word at the end of the chorus, allowing its impact to register before returning to the verse. In the quotation at the start of this conclusion, Bragg appends it for special emphasis. Crucially, solidarity is always accorded positive value in the case studies discussed. Additionally, it is perceived to be (nearly) lost and must therefore be recuperated. And so, while the word is mobilised to legitimate and enhance the political import of the music it accompanies, music is equally constructed as a medium that mobilises (preserves, encourages, restores) solidarity.

Music primarily does this by referencing historical moments of solidarity. The musicians supporting the strike all invoked and transformed historical music genres and the social movements clinging to them. Be it Bragg's combination of folk, punk, and blues, the Council Collective's involvement of black soul musicians, Bronski Beat's homage to disco's and synthpop's queer pleasures, or Test Dept's admiration for the Welsh choral tradition, artists combined and refurbished past genres for the musical and technological landscape of the 1980s. In this way, they connected to the strike multiple historical moments that had become icons of solidarity and social change: the American civil rights and labour movements, gay liberation, Rock Against Racism, the early Soviet Union, and of course the British history of trade union organising. Its long and multifarious history majorly contributes to solidarity's meaning and rhetorical impact. Popular music, which encourages the remixing and repurposing of its own sonic and political history, is thus well suited to constructing what solidarity entails.

Intentionality

'Solidarity' was primarily intended as 'support for the miners'. However, the strike was not seen as an issue of the miners alone, but as a struggle for the entire working-class. Working-

class solidarity, in Scholz's terms, is both social and political: it rests on a shared, pre-existing group identity *and* on combatting the oppression of that group. Solidarity during the strike aimed to maintain the livelihood of mining communities as well as oust the Conservative government.

However, the political intentions of solidarity during the strike stretched wider, across time, space, and social boundaries. Through my case studies, I have demonstrated that the word 'solidarity' referred at once to a concrete political position (supporting the miners) *and* to a desired all-encompassing political awareness. Different chapters capture this idea in different words, each with their own unique nuances and emphases: dialogue, collectivity and collaboration, (co-)presence, intermundanity. By playing benefit concerts and releasing benefit records for multiple causes, incorporating their messages in their lyrics, collaborating with other musicians, and referring to other struggles in their music and visuals, the British musical left indicated that they saw the strike as part of a long, international history of social movements, a broader set of issues that concerned the British left in the 1980s. These included anti-racism, feminism, gay liberation, and the campaign for nuclear disarmament.

This thesis was designed to uncover how solidarity as a political concept intertwines with musical practices. I am now equipped to provide some answers. First of all, musical practices can facilitate support. This support can be material: benefit concerts and benefit records raised funds to feed and clothe mining communities. Pop musicians used the resources available to them – primarily, money, connections, and their audience – to offer material support as a solidary practice. However, music and paratextual materials (album covers, B-sides, concert visuals, et cetera) were also intended to raise awareness. Although this provided a more immaterial support, the fact that misinformation and negative sentiments about the miners abounded in major news outlets – not just tabloids like *The Sun*, but also the BBC – meant that musicians felt compelled to offer alternative, corrective information, no matter how small their audience. Musicians were thus capable of providing material and immaterial support, which is a key part of solidarity as a relation between people that centres a sense of togetherness and support. A focus on solidarity thus highlights how music is a form of labour: first, substitute labour to support the miners who refused to work, and second, labour that worked to cultivate morale and good sentiments towards the strike.

However, in solidarity, practice and feeling always already coalesce. The same is true for music. Chapter Four demonstrated that music can highlight the joy and pleasure of experiencing solidarity, particularly in a concert setting where the audience is joined in a

positive feeling of togetherness. However, negative feelings are part of solidarity as well, and these can be expressed through music. Think of the indignation that shines through in the lyrics of ‘Soul Deep’, as the Council Collective asks where solidarity has gone; the anger and passion on *Shoulder to Shoulder*, particularly in the screamed vocals and Sutcliffe’s speech; or the despondency on a track like ‘Between the Wars’. Such negative emotions are particularly apt at inciting action, in order to fix the problems they stem from. Music can thus channel and illustrate feelings central to the experience of solidarity, be they positive or negative.

Finally, and most fundamentally, ideas about what solidarity should be like shape ideas about what music should be like, and vice versa. Essentially, invoking the word ‘solidarity’ almost always entails near-utopian visions: if only we all come together to support one cause, we can end oppression. Support and togetherness between people are seen as an antidote to many of society’s problems, primarily alienation and the ensuing polarisation between groups. A core unspoken idea about solidarity is that it is desirable because of this supposed omnipotence. However, it is also often conceived as fragile, always on the brink of being lost or becoming invisible. Music is seen as a locus where solidarity can still be revived: its ritual practices and sonic demonstrations of collectivity provide entry points for experiencing and recognising shared feelings and opinions.

At the core, the powerful concept of solidarity incites a *belief* that music should strive for it; that music has political agency in facilitating support and togetherness in the face of oppression. Musicians organised and played benefit concerts, released benefit records, raised awareness through the political content of their lyrics, music, and visual art, and collaborated and connected with each other and the miners, all in the name of solidarity. Solidarity’s rhetorical power is mobilised to legitimate the purported political power of musical practices.

Circularly, this depends on a particular understanding of popular music: one that acknowledges that popular music influences its audience, and can bring people from various backgrounds together because of its wide reach and appeal. Moreover, throughout this thesis, I have emphasised how the musicians of my case studies conceived of their popular music as music of (and for) the people, specifically the working class. If music is thus a locus of connection to other people, and has a special connection to the working class, that makes it a perfect medium for constructing working-class solidarity.

However, studying musical practices can also reveal hidden assumptions about the solidarity that is ascribed to them. As I have established, popular music is obsessed with its own history, particularly in the genre vacuum of the early 1980s. All of my case studies

invoke historical genres, past moments where music and solidarity converged. Music thus demonstrates how cultural practices give solidarity meaning by recalling, recontextualising, and repurposing the past. I have shown that this can take inclusive routes as well as exclusive ones. Solidarity is always based on processes of in- and exclusion, of recognising difference or sameness, but these can be obscured. Musicological investigation can be a tool to reveal these hidden processes.

This thesis has uncovered only a small segment of the intersection between music and solidarity. Further research is needed on other historical moments, social movements, and locations. In particular, my case studies primarily centred cisgender white men (with notable exceptions), so it would be illuminating to investigate the connection between music and solidarity among women, queer people, people of colour, and disabled people. Nonetheless, this thesis has provided a start on investigating such topics. I hold that the model described in Chapter One is flexible enough for use with different case studies.

On 7 May, well into this thesis journey, I attended a demonstration in Amsterdam to show international support for all those in the United States whose right to abortion was being challenged. One of the speakers proclaimed that 'the sound of solidarity will always be louder than that of hate and oppression.'[2] Although the imagery is powerful, I wondered, as I have been doing over the past months: what is meant by solidarity? What *is* its sound, and can this sound overpower that of injustice? I have argued in this thesis that scholars should pay closer attention to the meaning of the word 'solidarity' and the relationship between sound and solidarity. Sounds give shape to declarations of 'solidarity' and the ideal practices and feelings associated with it. Listening closely to these sounds is a crucial key to understanding solidarity movements of the past, present, and future.

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[2] In Dutch: '*Het geluid van solidariteit zal altijd luider klinken dan dat van haat en onderdrukking*.'

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Appendix

The lyrics to 'Soul Deep'

Cursive indicates ad-libs

Verse 1

(Paul Weller and Dee C. Lee)
Getcha mining soul-deep, with a lesson in history
There's people fighting for their communities
Don't say this struggle does not involve you
If you're from the working class this is your struggle too

(Dee C. Lee)
If they spent more on life as they do on death
We might find the money to make industry progress

Chorus

(Paul Weller and Dee C. Lee)
There's mud in the water, lies upon the page
There's blood on the hillside, but they're not getting paid
There's brother 'gainst brother, there's fathers against sons
But as for solidarity, I don't see none

Break

(Junior Giscombe)
Don't see none

(Jimmy Ruffin)
Soul deep
Lesson in history

Verse 2

(Junior Giscombe)
Going on 10 months now, will it take another 10?
Living on the breadline with what some people send

Just where is the backing from the TUC?
If we ain't united there can only be defeat

(Jimmy Ruffin)
Think of all those brave men, women and children alike
Who built up unions so others might survive
In better conditions than abject misery
Not supporting the miners is to betray that legacy

(Junior Giscombe)
Betrays that legacy

(All)
Let's change that – let's fight back!

<u>Bridge</u>

(Lines alternating between Dizzi Hites and Vaughn Toulouse)
Up north the temperature's rising
Down south she's wine and dining
We can't afford to let the government win
It means death to the trade unions
And the cash it costs to close 'em
Is better spent trying to keep 'em open
She makes a mockery of the unity
Got us puppets on the chains of inhumanity
Try to feel the pain in those seeds planted
Now are the things that we take for granted
Like the power to strike if we don't agree
With the bosses that make those policies
That keep us down and keep us dumb
So don't settle for less than the number one!

(All)
Strike back!
Fight back!
Let's change that!

(Jimmy Ruffin)
Everybody come together

(All)
No pit stops!
No closures!

We want the truth, we want exposure, now!

Verse 3

(Junior Giscombe)
I said everybody's gotta help out in struggle
You've gotta help out in this struggle, yeah
Let's all stand together
Everybody come on and be one
I said TUC ain't helping none
They're just out there having fun
Come on everybody let's shake a hand
And fight on for the miners' war

Chorus

(Junior Giscombe)
There's mud in the waters, there's lies upon the page
There's blood on the hillside, but they're not getting paid
There's brother 'gainst brother, there's fathers against sons
But as for solidarity, I don't see none

Break

(Junior Giscombe)
None, none, none, none
I don't see none
We gotta stick together as one

(Jimmy Ruffin)
Let's work in the fight
With the working man
So hard
Trying to stay alive

Verse 4

(Paul Weller and Dee C. Lee)
Getcha mining soul deep, with a lesson in history (Ruffin: *Tryin' to survive*)
There's people fighting for their communities

(Jimmy Ruffin)
United we stand, divided we fall
Everybody in the land, come together one and all

Support your brother in his struggle for his rights
Stand up tall, come on join the fight!

(Paul Weller and Dee C. Lee)
Getcha mining soul deep, with a lesson in history (Ruffin: *Everybody*)
There's people fighting for their communities

<u>Chorus</u>

(Jimmy Ruffin)
There's mud in the water, there's lies upon the page
There's blood on the hillside, but they're not getting paid
There's brother 'gainst brother, there's father 'gainst son
But as for solidarity, I don't see none

<u>Verse 5</u>

(Paul Weller and Dee C. Lee)
Getcha mining soul deep, with a lesson in history
There's people fighting for their communities
Don't say this struggle does not involve you
If you're from the working class this is your struggle too

[Fade-out]