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**'Hey you, standing there, what you got to stare at?'**  
**The post-punk female in British film: *Breaking Glass***  
(Brian Gibson, UK, 1980)

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**1 Introduction: British punk rock, punk films and *Breaking Glass***

The brief yet resonant eruption of British punk rock from late 1975 (when the first punk bands appeared in London) to 1979 – followed by its less confrontational musical successors loosely bracketed as 'post-punk' or 'new wave' – was captured raw in documentary footage shot by observers/participants, both British and non-British. From Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* (UK, 1978) onwards, it also provided aesthetic/political inspiration or subject-matter for a number of British feature films.

A peculiarity of the punk–film relationship is that, despite punk rock's substantial cultural and sensationalist media impact in the UK, it resulted in only a few films, still fewer of which were released (let alone widely seen) during the core 1976-9 punk period. By 1979, only three feature-length films inspired by British punk had been made and released. Two were rough-and-ready documentaries fully embodying the DIY ethos, mixing primary footage of early live performances with interviews – *Punk in London* (shot by 25-year-old Munich film student Wolfgang Büld on 16mm during a two-week visit to London in September 1977), and *The Punk Rock Movie* (filmed on Super 8 in 1977-8 at the Roxy Club, Covent Garden and on the Clash's White Riot tour by Don Letts, the Roxy's Rastafarian DJ). The third was Jarman's *Jubilee* – the only film of the three to receive more than fleeting, London-only, distribution, and *de facto* the first narrative British punk feature film. (The two feature-film 'vehicles' for Britain's higher-profile punk bands followed belatedly in 1980: the Clash drama-documentary *Rude Boy* (Jack Hazan and David Mingay) and the posthumous Sex Pistols feature *The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle* (Julien Temple) a considerably more hybrid bricolage of staged, animated and documentary elements.<sup>1</sup>

My central focus, however, is not on the above but on a film with a more questionable relationship to punk – and particularly to notions of punk 'authenticity' – *Breaking Glass* (Brian Gibson, 1980). *Breaking Glass* was filmed in 1979 and

released in London cinemas – between *Rude Boy* and *The Swindle* – for August Bank Holiday 1980. But, unlike these delayed punk films, it was unambiguously a product of the post-punk period, and unambivalently mainstream in its production impetus and origins. Accordingly, it has generally been dismissed as inauthentic – although it should be noted here that tensions are equally evident around the alternative/commercial/exploitation character of virtually all the ‘authentic’ British punk films of the late 1970s (see Monk, 2008, and Donnelly, 1998).

Critical accounts of British punk films – and retrospectives such as the ‘Never Mind the Jubilee’ season curated by Jon Savage for the National Film Theatre, London, in June 2002 – either ignore *Breaking Glass* or exclude it from the category, and it is not difficult to appreciate why. Its star, 24-year-old songwriter-performer Hazel O’Connor – ‘discovered’ for the film by music-industry consultants – was a strong personality with a colourful, marketable personal history,<sup>2</sup> but not a ‘real’ punk. It lacked the participation of real (extra-diegetically existent) bands onscreen or on the soundtrack; and it was made by figures with no affinity with the punk or post-punk scene. Indeed, the film’s production notes suggest some unease with the punk milieu, describing *Breaking Glass* as ‘a dramatic street-level look at modern youth’ ‘inspired by the current volatile and explosive trend in rock music’. Brian Gibson, its 35-year-old screenwriter-director, came from quality television (where his credits for the BBC’s Play for Today included Dennis Potter’s BAFTA-award-winning *Blue Remembered Hills* [1979]). The soundtrack and tie-in album (on the major label A&M records) were produced by the high-profile Brooklyn-born industry veteran Tony Visconti. Viewed from a film-critical and punk perspective alike, *Breaking Glass* operated within very well-worn narrative and genre conventions; while, stylistically, it aimed for a conventional realism rather than exploring how a punk or post-punk aesthetic might be expressed through film. For Kevin J. Donnelly, it was merely ‘a highly conventional backstage musical story ... dressed up ... in punk apparel’ (1998: 110).

*Breaking Glass* is nevertheless of interest and merits re-examination for (I want to suggest) three main reasons. First, as an ambitious, commercially intentioned youth-oriented production of late-1970s British cinema which was widely well received at the time, but which (in contrast with near-contemporaries such as the previous year’s mod-revival musical *Quadrophenia*, with which *Breaking Glass* shared a headline star, Phil Daniels, and some other cast members) posterity has forgotten or dismissed rather than elevated. Second, *Breaking Glass* remains one of

only two feature films – and the only *mainstream* film – inspired by 1970s British punk or post-punk culture to centre on a female protagonist (the other being *Jubilee*) and, in a further distinction from *Jubilee*, on a *sympathetic* female protagonist of a type more acceptable in a film targeting a youth audience than *Jubilee*'s overtly transgressive female gang. Third – and intriguingly in relation to questions of 'authenticity', female agency and authorship – for the internal split it exhibits between a stock genre narrative and the more emotionally powerful, political – and memorable – parallel discourse presented by O'Connor's songs (as lyrics and in performance).

*Jubilee*, made with an underground sensibility and strong grasp of punk aesthetics on an ultra-low budget of £50,000 (Jarman, 1984: 168)<sup>3</sup>, presented a darkly Swifitean vision of a near-future London, centred around a collective of post-sexual, nihilistically violent female protagonists whose actions were conceived by Jarman as a deliberate inversion of the gender norms of sexual violence (part-inspired by Valerie Solanas's notorious 1968 anti-patriarchal *SCUM Manifesto*,<sup>4</sup> 'SCUM' being an acronym for 'society for cutting up men'), interleaved with a parallel time-travel narrative in which Elizabeth I (Jenny Runacre: double-cast as the gang's queen-bee leader Bod) visits and tries to make sense of this future England. The Slits, the pre-eminent all-female 1970s punk band, were also featured as a parallel street gang, shown dispassionately wrapping a female captive (Jarman's artist friend Luciana Alvarez) in barbed wire like a human maypole while a pram burns in the derelict street.

*Breaking Glass*, by contrast, was an unapologetically mainstream backstage musical, tracing the rise, exploitation and crash of a spikily idealistic young female singer-songwriter, Kate – played by O'Connor, who also wrote the 12 songs at the core of the soundtrack, and enjoyed a period of significant stardom and chart success via the film's tie-in album (which spent 37 weeks in the charts, peaking at number 5) and spin-off hit singles ('Eighth Day', 'Will You', and the less successful 'Give Me An Inch', whose opening lines give this paper its title). In another contrast, *Breaking Glass* was also one of the biggest-budget British feature productions of 1979, filmed in widescreen Panavision, Technicolor and Dolby Stereo (Billow 1980) on a budget of £1-£1.5 million.<sup>5</sup> Most startlingly, a further £300,000 was pumped into its promotion two weeks into its release when it failed to make the expected impact in West End cinemas (Anon., *Evening News*, 1980).

*Breaking Glass* was further set apart from all the 'authentic' British punk features – and *Quadrophenia* – by being consciously conceived for a more innocent,

non-X-certificate audience. The ‘proper’ punk features were not only all X-certificate films, but were permeated in a range of (perhaps surprising) ways by the exploitation/porn connections endemic in the 1970s British film industry. Although Jarman’s game was dark satire and sexual subversion, the X Certificate was crucial to *Jubilee*’s marketing, and the explicit tendencies of *The Swindle* in particular were more a reflection of the ‘pornification’ of 1970s British culture (to borrow a term from Leon Hunt 1998) than a reaction against it.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast with such ‘adult’ excesses, *Breaking Glass* offered a tentative, sweetly chaste, romance between O’Connor and Phil Daniels as Danny, a young record plugger who volunteers himself as Kate’s manager and becomes her boyfriend (but is frozen out by her record company sharks when her career takes off), while its visual handling of topical issues (such as police violence and harassment of the young, and violent clashes between the National Front and Anti-Nazi League) showed a delicacy about detail, occasionally at the cost of narrative clarity.

## 2 Production context

*Breaking Glass* had been developed by producers Davina Belling and Clive Parsons with backing from Goldcrest’s Jake Eberts – initially for United Artists, but passing to Dodi Fayed’s newly formed company Allied Stars before shooting began (Hodges 1979 and Murphy 1985: 51). Belling and Parsons had been Don Boyd’s hands-on producers for Alan Clarke’s big-screen version of Roy Minton’s banned TV borstal drama *Scum*. This enabled the publicity generated during *Breaking Glass*’s Autumn 1979 shoot to trade on *Scum*’s concurrent UK box-office success, while positioning both films as part of a wider 1979 ‘revival of the “youth movie”’ (Hodges 1979) in the wake of the *Quadrophenia* and *That Summer!* (Harley Cokliss), the latter produced by Belling and Parsons and re-casting Ray Winstone from *Scum*.

Although *That Summer!* (an AA-certificate film with a romance angle, in which Winstone falls in with two northern girls working as summer chambermaids in Torquay) was not a success, aspects of its approach – its pre-release promotion via a punky soundtrack album (mostly cut from the film), and the attempted appeal to an audience of both genders – anticipate Belling and Parsons’ strategy on *Breaking Glass*. The latter strategy brought Belling and Parsons’ more significant success in their next effort as producers of Bill Forsyth’s 1981 hit Scottish school-age comedy *Gregory’s Girl* – which, like *Breaking Glass*, featured an unorthodox female (gifted, enigmatic footballer Dorothy, played by Dee Hepburn) making an impact in a male-

dominated milieu. Oddly, however, *Breaking Glass* had begun life rather differently, as ‘the movie of Howard Schuman’s *Rock Follies* television series’ (Hodges 1979). For reasons not recorded, it emerged from this false start as a film centred around a lone female protagonist, rather than the female-ensemble text with a more sophisticated adult address implied by its *Rock Follies* origins – with consequences to which I will return.

Despite its contradictory origins and perceived limitations, *Breaking Glass* nevertheless contributed to an important transitional moment in the move towards a younger, more realist, popular British cinema, and featured engaging performances from a new generation of young actors – including the feature début of Jonathan Pryce (half a decade before his starring role in Terry Gilliam’s 1985 fantasy *Brazil*) in a much-praised performance as a gentle deaf saxophonist who becomes addicted to heroin. And despite its chequered production history and box-office underperformance on its West End opening, *Breaking Glass* was not quite the big-budget (by 1970s British standards) flop it might sound. As Robert Murphy explains, ‘the package [it offered] was sufficiently commercial to attract enough pre-sales to cover its costs’ – and Goldcrest were satisfied enough with the return on their investment to collaborate again with Fayed on *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) (Murphy 1985: 51-2).

### **3 Women, punk, and punk films**

The liberating impact of punk rock for young women, their high visibility on the late-1970s British punk scene, and their powerful creative contributions across many areas of punk and post-punk culture have been widely acknowledged. As Michael O’Pray has noted, ‘the role of women in punk was more forceful and provocative than in any previous pop music movement’ (1996: 96). For Adam Ant (writing, of course, as a participant) ‘punk was the first youth movement in which women played as big a part as men. For the first time bands had female members who were not there solely as sex objects’ (2006: 99-100). Given the limited and often abject roles to which women had been consigned by the male-dominated rock industry over the preceding 20 years, however (as female singers of men’s lyrics, girl groups shaped and controlled by male managers and producers, groupies, female singers and even journalists treated as groupies, secretaries),<sup>7</sup> the particular factors – or consciousness – that enabled 1970s punk women to so boldly transcend, trash or ignore these precedents are of some interest.

In their book *Art Into Pop* (1987: 155), Simon Frith and Howard Horne argued that punk 'from the start raised questions about sexual codes', opening up an expressive space which women felt able to enter on their own terms, unconstrained by narrow norms of femininity or 'acceptable' sexuality, a trend which continued as punk segued into 'post-punk'/'new wave'. It is clear, however, that women's participation in punk in so many capacities was also facilitated by punk's DIY, anti-professional ethos (in reaction against the professionalisation and masculinism of late-1970s conventional rock) and the levelling effects of this in practice. As Paul Marko of the punk history website [www.punk77.co.uk](http://www.punk77.co.uk) explains it:

Punk did something very special ... One: You didn't have to pay your dues or even know how to play. Two: You had a ready-made audience who may hate you but would listen and Three: You could say what you wanted. The rules were the same for men and women. Neither of you knew how to play ... Check out the lyrics [by female punk performers]: they sure weren't about love. In fact a lot of them were about women's changing role in society and their view of that society and their place in it, i.e. more equal and more a force to be reckoned with. (Marko, no date)

The participation of women in 1970s British punk bands spanned all-female groups (the Slits being the best-known); lead vocalists/lyricists with a range of individual styles and concerns, notably Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex, Siouxsie Sioux of the Banshees and Pauline Murray of Penetration; and female instrumentalists, from bassist Gaye Advert (of the Adverts) to X-Ray Spex's teen saxophonist Lora Logic. But women were also involved in such diverse non-musical areas as the management of punk bands, as fanzine writers/publishers and journalists for the rock press, graphic design/art and fashion. Thus Sophie Richmond was a key figure in the Sex Pistols' management team; punk icon Jordan (real name Pamela Rooke) – initially an assistant at Vivienne Westwood's boutique Sex – briefly managed Adam and the Ants as well as starring (and brokering Adam Ant's role) in Jarman's *Jubilee* (Ant 2006: 102-3); and veteran rock journalist Caroline Coon briefly managed the Clash. Female writers on punk ranged from Coon to the *NME*'s confrontational teenage recruit Julie Burchill and feminist fanzine writer/publisher Lucy Toothpaste.

Definitive female contributors to punk and post-punk graphic art (and hence to a key aspect of the punk aesthetic: see Monk 2008: **page tbc**) included Helen Wellington Lloyd (AKA 'Helen of Troy', cast in *Jubilee* as Elizabeth I's dwarf lady-in-waiting) – originator, in her early Sex Pistols flyers, of the blackmail-note typography subsequently adopted by the better-known Jamie Reid – and the feminist

artist/performer/musician Linder (AKA Linder Sterling). The latter remains famed for her iconic artwork for the Buzzcocks' 1977 single *Orgasm Addict*: a primary blue-and-yellow collage of a female nude whose head has been displaced by a household iron and her nipples by smiling lips, recently declared 'the best single sleeve of all time' by punk musician-turned-commentator John Robb (2007). While posterity has crowned Vivienne Westwood the queen of punk fashion, she was, of course, far from its sole female innovator at the time. This list is far from exhaustive, and excludes figures such as Sex Pistols follower Soo Catwoman – or Jordan – celebrated centrally for their groundbreaking appearance.

By contrast, women were surprisingly marginal, or marginalised, in most of the key British punk-related films. Two useful distinctions can be drawn here: first, between the early punk documentaries (Büld's *Punk in London* and Letts' *The Punk Rock Movie*) and the narrative punk and post-punk feature films. Second, within the latter cluster, between the two feature vehicles for the best-known – and all-male – British punk bands, the Clash and the Sex Pistols – both of which addressed a broadly masculine audience – and the two wholly invented punk or post-punk features *Jubilee* and *Breaking Glass* – the only two British punk-related films to centre on female protagonists. The place afforded to (actual) punk women in the Pistols' film *The Swindle* teetered awkwardly between celebration and shock-value exploitation; and its non-punk female cast and types (porn-star Millington, 78-year-old comedy veteran Irene Handl and Carry On actress Liz Fraser) were drawn uncritically from the sitcom–sexploitation continuum within 1970s British popular culture. The Clash film *Rude Boy* was too politically earnest for such low sexism, but evaded the problem by keeping women out of the frame for most of its 2¼ hours.

The female-led bands – and female punk musicians and audiences – were more visible in the two early punk documentaries. Three of the 12 bands featured significantly in Letts' film are all-female (The Slits) or female-led (X-Ray Spex, Siouxsie and the Banshees). Büld, by contrast, featured only one female-led band (X-Ray Spex), plus two others featuring female musicians: the Adverts, and Birmingham band the Killjoys, who had a female bassist (Gil Weston) and backing singer (Heather Tonge) but were led by Kevin Rowland (later leader of the soul-influenced early-1980s band Dexy's Midnight Runners). However, the interviewees (and interviewers) in these documentaries rarely comment directly on the presence and participation of women, or on gender issues in relation to this. This is illustrated vividly in Büld's interview with the Killjoys. It immediately follows live footage in which

both Weston and Tong contribute notable to the band's stage presence and performance; yet in interview the two women remain silent, their presence unacknowledged, while Rowland and another male band member bemoan their disadvantages as a Birmingham band trying to crack the London-centred punk scene.

While in this particular example the silence and non-acknowledgement of the women is clearly a by-product of the egocentricity of the men, Bünd's non-interventionist approach also symptomatises and highlights what I will term punk's *gender-neutral* ethos. The 1970s punk scene conceived of itself as a milieu in which women could simply *be there*: ostensibly on the same terms as men, defined (however problematically) as (in Marko's words) *already* 'equal' and 'a force to be reckoned with'. This gender-neutral stance is equally evident – in a form more clearly inflected by feminism – in the way many of the women active as punk lyricists and performers articulated their *own* position. It therefore has important ramifications for understanding and interpreting the self-presentation and self-representation of punk women and – by extension – the representation of the 1970s-80s punk and post-punk female in film, and specifically in *Breaking Glass*.

A common theme in interviews with key punk women is an assertion of their own independence and resistance to misogyny and sexist manipulation, coupled with a self-distanciation from notions of collectivist feminist politics and female victimhood. As Siouxsie of the Banshees stated in a 1977 interview: 'I don't want to appear as some kind of women's libber 'cos I'm not, but neither am I someone who lets herself be pushed around and manipulated – I've got a mind of my own.'<sup>8</sup> Or, as Viv Albertine of the Slits explained to Caroline Coon: 'We're just not interested in questions about women's liberation ... You either think chauvinism is shit or you don't. We think it's shit ... Girls shouldn't hang around with people who give them aggro about what they want to' (Coon, 1977: 4<sup>9</sup>).

Curiously, the gender-neutral – yet still, logically, feminist – stance expressed here has dropped out of fashion in discourses and debate around feminism, gender and female identity today – perhaps because it is easily dismissed as outmoded from the perspective of feminisms, post-feminisms and femininities predicated on self-conscious sexual difference. The latter contrast sharply with the overtly androgynous self-presentation which characterised Albertine and most of the Slits, and key 1970s US punk figures such as Patti Smith; and equally, I would suggest, with the parallel confrontationally sexual strand in punk female self-presentation (represented by

Jordan or, in a different style, the Slits' famously unruly 15-year-old lead singer Ari Up) which, as both Coon's article and the comments of Adam Ant (2002: 92) make clear, took forms that were both threatening and repellent to conventional late-1970s male taste. Yet there was clearly both a practical logic and a Utopian potential in the gender-neutral stance which contributed to the sense of empowerment of so many punk women: if the hurdles of gender difference and acceptable femininity can be overcome by just ignoring them at will, women can do anything. On the other hand, the individualism of this strategy, while inspiring and liberating, also presents evident limitations. But in the mood of 1977, Caroline Coon was able to write that:

Arri Up [sic] and the Slits are highly defined examples of an ideal type that is becoming more attractive to women all the time. What they represent is a revolutionary and basic shift of female ego from one which is biologically defined to one which is made strong by an assertive, mainstream role in society. Thus they are far more 'threatening' than the male musicians they are touring with. (Coon, 1977: 3)

#### **4 Gender-neutrality, punk politics and the post-punk female in *Breaking Glass***

Punk's gender-neutral ethos and its contradictions can be seen in both the character and narrative positioning of Kate in *Breaking Glass*, but in a dilute form expunged of either threatening androgyny or any overt (let alone confrontational) sexuality. The script, O'Connor's forceful performance, and the concerns expressed in her songs all establish Kate as an independent-minded, socially aware and spirited character. However, the political dimension to her persona is centrally defined by sullen dissent against the repressive and conservative facets of late-1970s/early-Thatcherite Britain – police brutality, unemployment, racism, nuclear weapons, and an unfocused outrage at the Establishment and an oppressive state – rather than gender or sexual politics. While Kate projects a powerful presence – indignant onstage, sceptical off – the film constantly stresses her human vulnerability: revealed first through her necessary resilience as female frontwoman to a fledgling band performing in hostile situations, then later (and less credibly) through by her sudden emotional breakdown and volte-face into compliance once she starts to be manipulated and exploited by the big-label record business and her Svengali-esque new manager Woods (played without conviction by Jon Finch, the film's token 'major' star).

While O'Connor's dominating presence is crucial to the film's highly efficient manipulation of audience emotion, the character's vulnerability and gawky modesty

(‘I think they liked us’, she understates after one triumphant gig) render her sympathetic to young audiences, while undercutting the ‘unfeminine’ punk qualities that might alienate older male critics, notably what Peter Ackroyd (1980) called Kate’s ‘radiant uncouthness’ and her hard-edged appearance (the frizzed peroxide bob and hard, clown-like, almost monochrome make-up). As critic Tom Hutchinson (1980) noted in another contemporary review, ‘she dominates with an assurance and vitality [but] can communicate waif-like tenderness as well as bawling ferocity’.

However, the film’s treatment of Kate simultaneously reflects punk’s gender-neutral politics and places her in strange isolation at the centre of a narrative otherwise populated almost entirely by men, leaving unchallenged the clichés of both the backstage musical and the music business itself as milieux dominated by male cynics exploiting female victims. O’Connor is, almost literally, the only female cast member apart from a one-scene appearance by Janine Duvitski as Kate’s colleague, and seemingly friend, in a pre-success day-job as a petrol-pump attendant – never referred to again – and a non-speaking (and, by definition, female) record-company secretary.

Despite Kate’s centrality to her band and the film – as both female protagonist and female lyricist, composer and leader of an otherwise all-male band – none of the dialogue or characters ever refer to her gender, and the narrative account of her rise and fall only occasionally foregrounds the particular hazards of sexist harassment and condescension Kate must face as a female performer in the post-punk scene. (After one early gig, she fights off a male audience member who forces himself on her as her ‘groupie’.) If there is a gendered dimension to the larger music-industry structures that drive her exploitation, Gibson appears to accept this uncritically as natural – and so too do Kate and her band. While Kate (via O’Connor) demonstrates (at least for the film’s first hour) that she is ‘a force to be reckoned with’ on the same terms as men, she is shown to do so in an environment where there are effectively *no other women* (except among her audience) – nor, therefore, any prospect of female friendship and support or the possibility of bringing other women into the band.

Similarly, although O’Connor’s song lyrics express a catalogue of topical political and social concerns, they do not encompass gender issues, and mostly address the listener from a genderless position, as in the love song ‘Will You?’ (used narratively to signal Kate’s growing feelings for Danny). The oppressive state, Establishment and police railed against in the more politicised songs (such as ‘Big

Brother') are, however, decisively projected as male, while the film's striking opening song, 'Writing on the Wall' disdainfully addresses a conservative male commuter ('I say sir, get your nose out of the paper/Take a good look at what's going down') as a sullen Kate sings her way through a succession of London Underground carriages to the driver's cab, plastering stickers and graffiti along the way. In an intriguing nod to eco-feminism, the climactic set-piece 'Eighth Day' posits 'man' as the destroyer of the planet, lording it over his victim/slave 'machine'. But the costume design, narrative context and performance of this moment – a blockbuster light-and-smoke show for which Kate has been forced onstage drugged, and from which she escapes in (presumably) a final career walk-out in full costume down the Tube at Finsbury Park – also position Kate herself as the 'machine', controlled by the aptly named Overlord Records.

The film itself addresses (as it sought) a cross-gender audience defined mainly by youth. The hostility, spitting and heckling Kate endures from her early pub audiences is shown to come from men; but as her career builds, the duration and editing of audience reaction shots in the gig scenes show that she is acquiring both female and male fans, who are given equal weighting. By the film's close, Kate is shown to have attracted a distinct female following; but (in an unwitting analogy for the punk female's individualistic allergy to collectivist feminisms) they serve as expressionistic symptoms of her mental crisis and loss of identity. She becomes agitated during a radio phone-in when girl fans express disappointment at the changes in her music; and in her final (hallucinatory) escape down the Tube she recoils from the concerned, silent gaze of girls who have cloned her trademark look.

Kate's unconvincing, undermotivated slide downhill in the film's last 40 minutes highlights a final ambiguity around the question of female agency. While Kate, and O'Connor, indisputably provide the film with its core and impact, the over-familiar 'a star is born and falls' narrative which *Breaking Glass* foists on its post-punk female is advanced by the male figures around her – first Danny, with his insistence on securing Kate a record deal when she only wants 'decent gigs', then Overlord Records and Woods – not motivated by the desires of Kate herself. However, the permeation of punk politics into the film code this non-desire as positive, given the opprobrium attached to signing up and 'selling out' among committed punks.<sup>10</sup> As the *Morning Star's* critic Virginia Dignam pointed out: 'Kate, with her social awareness ... has no ambitions to become a recording star' anyway (Dignam 1980). She is driven

instead 'by her belief that society is wrong and she has the answers' (Hughes 1980), and by her desire for her voice (however naïve) on political issues to be heard.

It can thus be argued that the intrusion of punk (or post-punk) ideals transforms the film's generically 'tragic' ending, with its 'sheen of false piety' (as Hutchinson 1980 complained) – if accidentally – into something more ambiguous and potentially even optimistic. Peter Ackroyd, who found *Breaking Glass* 'absurdly compelling', argued that the too-familiar plot was its least important aspect: 'Something foreign has got into the works, and manufactured an original and strange celluloid object. The Hollywood formula has been infected ... as though it had touched something sticky and viscous and cannot now break free.' (1980) Ackroyd thought that the 'foreign' infectant was Englishness; but a strong case can be made that it was also the Utopian energy of punk and the post-punk female.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed overview of the British punk films, including their aesthetic and institutional differences, with a particular focus on *Jubilee*, see Monk 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Interviewed on set by Badger (1980: 19), O'Connor recounted: 'I ran away when I was 16 and went to Holland and became an au pair. The father of the child I was looking after was secretly a black-market gun-runner ... I fled in the end and went to Paris. After a while I went to Japan as a dancer and from there to Beirut ... [There] we kept dancing as the [Israeli] bombs fell, but ... the civil war was brewing, too'. She escaped overland across the Sahara, returned to England and became a singer. Since 1999, O'Connor has performed annually at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (and on tour) in a musical show, *Beyond Breaking Glass*, telling her life story.

<sup>3</sup> According to Jarman, *Jubilee* was funded by a £50,000 cheque from an unexplained source in Tehran, secured by his producer James Whaley 'one week before ... shooting' (1984: 168).

<sup>4</sup> Jarman, interviewed by Monk, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> The London *Evening News* (Anon. 1980) reported the film's budget to be £1million; the *Daily Mail* (Foster 1979) £1.5million.

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Monk 2008.

<sup>7</sup> For first-hand testimonies on such experiences, see Steward and Garratt (1984).

<sup>8</sup> Interview by Kris Needs, *Zigzag* magazine, October 1977; quoted at [www.punk77.co.uk/groups/womeninpunkintheirownwordspart2.htm](http://www.punk77.co.uk/groups/womeninpunkintheirownwordspart2.htm) [accessed 20 June 2008].

<sup>9</sup> 16 June 1977 interview, published in Coon, 1977; reprinted and accessed at [www.punk77.co.uk/groups/slitscaroline1.htm](http://www.punk77.co.uk/groups/slitscaroline1.htm) [20 June 2008]. Page numbers cited refer to the pagination given on [www.punk77.co.uk](http://www.punk77.co.uk); the pages of the original (as reproduced there) are un-numbered.

<sup>10</sup> *Jubilee*, by contrast, mocks this easily derailed idealism, reducing it to a stock line delivered with Brechtian *faux*-gaucheness by Adam Ant as punk wannabe Kid: 'I don't care about the money – I just don't wanna get ripped off'.

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