OF GODS AND GEEKS

GRUNGE: UNDERSTANDING THE POPULARITY OF PUNK IN THE 90's

FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF POSTMODERNISM AND AUTHENTICITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the varied textual expressions, discourses, and social practices of the 'Grunge' culture in relation to its potential for the formation or possession of uniquely defined yet socially significant moral values. Specifically, the aim of this paper was to explain how the seemingly new moral values of an increasingly popular contemporary North American youth culture, rooted in the values and styles of the Punk subculture, are reflected and understood in its artistic/aesthetic texts and how social agency and/or significance is or can be attained through participation in this culture.

Currently, it is widely believed among members of older generations in society (both academic and non-academic) that contemporary youth lack any moral values whatsoever and that their personal beliefs, actions, and cultures are socially and politically insignificant and bearing on the delinquent and anti-social. Three elements of contemporary culture which currently impede understanding from a completely modern perspective are:

1: individualistic and self-fulfilling behaviour are being misread as being egocentric, self-indulgent and hedonistic,

2: the commodifying and mass producing of cultural texts which is believed to deny the possibility of critical activity in opposition to dominant social and ideological institutions,

3: unstable identities that appear to have no commitment to moral values or concerns. Consequently, after introducing the idea that the ethical can be located in the aesthetic and cultural I incorporated the perspectives of postmodernity (as a socially positive disbelief in metanarratives) and authenticity (as a moral ideal) into the philosophical and theoretical

foundations of this study in order to reveal new and more appropriate forms and ways of interpreting and understanding contemporary cultural expressions.

My approach to the actual subject matter incorporated a reflexive hermeneutical sociological methodology, in conjunction with a philosophy influenced by a postmodern consciousness, that promotes the practice of interpretation for understanding and explaining how culturally constructed texts and discourses can provide for and consist of new moral values and socially significant activity. This avoided modern quantitative and supposedly objective methods and relied on the use of principles founded on rhetoric and argumentation to assess and defend my readings of and judgements on the text. A method for providing valid results from hermeneutical participant observation is also outlined but it was not used in the research portion of the study.

My understanding is that the Grunge culture, and quite probably other contemporary youth cultures, can be understood as postmodern and authentic and, therefore, can be considered socially significant. It's texts express a mood of postmodernism in the discourses of a disbelief in metanarratives and a concern with 'otherness' by effacing the metanarratives associated with mainstream or dominant culture through parody and pastiche, the presentation of the unpresentable, and an assault on nostalgia. The culture, as it becomes popular and mainstream, also becomes the target of its own effacement in keeping with the incredulity with universalisms. The moral ideal of authenticity, from which the culture also gets its social significance, is found in the implicit expressions of self-determination and a belief in freedom, equality, fairness, and dignity amongst human beings.

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"He was a feminist, he was an anti-racist, he hated homophobia,
he hated misogyny in all forms, but he had to have his guns," sobbed
[Courtney] Love, lead singer of Hole.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION
PUNK: FROM SUB(CULTURAL) TO POP(ULAR)

"I grew up thinking that everything had already happened... and then one night I went to see the Sex Pistols and from then on I knew that I'd been completely wrong... a great chasm of possibility immediately yawned open, a canyon of hope that simply hadn't been there before. And I leapt into its breach"

- Gina Arnold (1993: 3)

1.1 THE MALAISE OF CONTEMPORARY YOUTH CULTURE

The cultures to which an individual finds ascribed to them by birth and embraced by personal choice have the most significance among social structures in forming, reflecting, and reforming one's moral values and ideals. Since the Second World War, various youth cultures have held considerable importance and effect for the young individuals involved in them and the society's that often reluctantly gave them space. Most, if not all, of these cultures which attained a degree of social significance were driven by and centered around the mysterious force of music. This locus provides an important indicator for defining and differentiating the seemingly endless array of youth created and dominated social cultures. These music-centered cultures, many fuelled by the ferocity of youth discovery and rebellion, also have been possessed of relatively short shelf-lives; the waxing and waning of the popularity of a multiplicity of youth cultures has provided ample fodder for the bins of used record/cd stores. This perpetual momentariness could be simply understood as a reflection of the continual process of many generations of youth realizing the folly of their ways, finally accepting adult and social responsibility, and ending their period of infantile obstinance. However, there is actually something of more significance occurring here. Each of these changes in youth cultural styles can be seen as indicating changes or differences in social conditions, values

and ideals which leave their permanent marks on their participants.

The longevity and recurrence of the effect of these marks is apparent in their continual cultural existence and reverence. The most common examples of this cultural 'marking' can be seen in the persistent popularity of such texts as 50's rock n' roll music (such as those of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and other associated icons of the decade such as James Dean and Marilyn Monroe), the recurring tie-dye fashion, psychedelic music, and peaceful aura of the 60's hippy culture, and the currently popular fashion and music found in the dance clubs and city streets celebrating the disco culture of the 70's. Each of these cultural styles and images had important meaning in the formative years for large portions of different generations of North American youth and continue to hold memories as well as provide an ethos, consciously and subconsciously, for them as well as new generations which re-discover, re-fabricate, and assimilate them into their own current experience.

While I would not want to suggest that the contemporary youth wholly assuming these retrospective cultures were being forcibly misled to 'buying into' a previous generations' salad days, or that they are disingenuous or nongenuine for not creating a new culture reflective of their own unique experience and place in time, I would suggest that these simulations are not as significant to the formation of cultures expressive of contemporary conditions and situations. The power of the effect of the baby-boomer generation's infatuation with its youth cultures is obvious in its dominant and seemingly hegemonic presence across various commercial markets, such as music, film, television, publication, and fashion, and its success in influencing some of today's youth cultural styles. As a result, there is a definite lack of options and venues for contemporary youth to access and choose from for the purpose of

creating their own cultural style. Further, the absorption of the boomer cohort, with all its 'radical' ideals, into safe, adult, middle-class mainstream society has left the cultural artefacts that represented their culture, now devoid of support for the meanings for which they stood, as mere window dressing. This cultural domination, then, tends to relieve the new assimilatory and retrospective youth cultures of any responsibility or need for providing any new socially significant philosophical consciousness, morals, values, or ideas. Consequently, this assumption of cultural images without ideals and values makes me wonder what will happen to a large number of the youth from the mid to late 80's and early 90's who, upon reaching adulthood and social responsibility, will have nothing culturally of their own to help reflect on and locate themselves in relation to significant social questions and problems.

This is not to say that there are no other contemporary youth cultures which did not originate from previous generations' popular rock cultures. In the early 80's there was the New Wave culture which appeared obsessed with producing an alternately poppy and moody music based on the electronically synthesized, reproduced, simulated, and isolated sounds generated by such modern machinery as keyboards and computers. Images of futuristic apocalypse and thunderous terror tend to pervade all of the Heavy Metal culture's texts and is popular with headbanging youth who do not seem to mind a continual aural bombardment of double-kick drums, screaming guitars, and tormented vocals (Weinstein 1991). More recently the beats-per-minute and dub oriented techno-pop music of the Rave culture (Redhead 1990), a style infatuated with a recreational lifestyle or experience based on an endless throbbing beat, groovy dance parties, secret warehouses, illicit and illegal modern experimental drugs, has become popular amongst a portion of urban youth. One popular culture which definitely

is not retrospective of a previous generation's youth culture is rap and hip-hop. Originating in the ghettoes of America, black youth incorporated the basic back-beat street percussion sounds generated by the body and mouth over which a vocal 'rap' was done the lyrics of which incorporated the lived experiences of the black urban youth. As shown by record sales and fashion styles, this culture which is partially expressive of the anger and frustration resulting from one social group's experience with many forms of discrimination is one, if not the most, popular culture among North American youth today. Chapter two gives a more elaborate detailing on the history and characteristics of some popular youth cultures.

While the above mentioned cultures received varying degrees of mainstream popularity one youth culture which by the end of the 80's seemed doomed to permanent obscurity and minimum social significance was punk rock. The culture of punk rock, probably because of its extreme alternative and underground nature powered by and uncompromising rebellious, confrontational, and aggressive force, was in danger of being completely disregarded in the annals that record the consequence of popular youth cultures. It seemed that mainstream society could enter the 90's without giving punk its due respect in the cultural and social spectrum. Punk was in jeopardy of being a memory and reflective foundation for giving meaning and understanding to ideas, values, and beliefs for only a small portion of the population, thereby, having a minimum effect on the psyche of society as a whole.

1.2 THE ROOTS OF PUNK

Punk rock began circa 1976 in London, England, due to (1) a response by British "'disaffected' youth, from inner-city working-class backgrounds [who] had declared war on contemporary society, its institutions and its dominant cultural values" (Lamy & Levin 1985:

157) and (2) as a creative and commodifiable product by and for Malcolm McClaren, an entrepreneurial art student who performed the role of manager for the band which he devised, the Sex Pistols. These prototype punks were identified by their torn clothing that was randomly repaired with safety pins, spiked and coloured hair, and leather clothing with chains, razor blades, zippers, paper clips, and iron crosses as accoutrements. Their attitude toward traditions and society could be summed up by the Sex Pistols' song titles "Anarchy in the U.K." and "No Future". The relationship between punk musicians and their audience was different than the traditional rock idol-fan relationship. There was not supposed to be any separation or inequality between the two, no idolization: the bands often spat and urinated on the audience who would reciprocate the gesture. The music was simple, yet loud and aggressive. Fashion was ragged and utilitarian. Language was honest, offensive and dissenting. Rituals, on the surface, appeared violent, and the graphic design, or art, reflected all these characteristics.

Punk appeared in North America around the same time with the emergence of the Ramones and New York Dolls in New York and later in Los Angeles and San Francisco in 1977 with such bands as the Nuns, Crime, and the Avengers. In the U.S., inspired by the uniqueness of the open rebellion and fear against and being fed up with all things traditional, punk could be seen as a response to the decadence and glamour of the hippy and disco eras and the oncoming 80's Reaganite era of self-centered individualism. While initially imitating the styles of British punk, American punk eventually abandoned the European influenced flair of fashion and colour for a decidedly ominous and menacing black theme (Levine & Stumpf 1983: 423). American punks "came from primarily middle-class backgrounds and the average

age in the punk community was in the mid 20s" (Lamy & Levin 1985: 158) and, consequently, the "British punks [who were primarily teenagers and from the working class] never did reach the intellectual levels that the Americans did" (ibid: 158). The American youth were either individuals who had found themselves alienated from mainstream society as many are and/or they rejected the value-systems associated with their ascribed social positions.

> "Punk meant a lot of things to me - it meant freedom and violence and announcing your discontent with society as it was; it meant being able to recognize your utter alienation while simultaneously entering a whole new and more satisfying community of outcasts - a sort of 'Island of Misfit Toys' for human beings. But one thing it never seemed to promise was mainstream success" (Arnold 1993: 3).

In both countries, though, cultural expression took the form of reflective personal and social commentary offered in a way often offensive and infuriating to mainstream culture with the purpose of trying to instigate thought about and to illuminate central features of dominant society (Levine & Stumpf 1983).

In 1980, the London and New York scenes waned and San Francisco and the North American West Coast became the continual generator of punk and punk rock. It still remained an underground subculture yet with an ever increasing geographical range and musical diversity. The original urban L.A. apocalyptic punk bands and the Hollywood glam punk bands were incorporated with a abrupt flood of suburban teenage garage bands from the surrounding areas of the San Fernando Valley, Redondo Beach and Orange County. Independent and college radio gave a wider venue for the music being created and magazines

(or zines as they are known), such as <u>Maximum Rock n Roll</u>, <u>Slash</u>, <u>Search and Destroy</u>, and <u>Flipside</u>, produced by local members of the scenes, documented cultural activity as well as provided a form of inter-communication for concerned youth. Within the pages of these zines the live shows and the new, self-produced and promoted tape, ep, and lp recordings of such bands as Dead Kennedys, DOA, Youth Brigade, Black Flag, Circle Jerks, and Minor Threat were detailed and reviewed. However, even as the culture was burgeoning with new expressive and stimulating texts and ideas, mainstream youth and society were virtually unaware, except for the shopping mall and t.v. versions, of punk.

Through the 80's the punk community grew. The locus of punk activity spread to more centres around the States such as San Francisco (Dead Kennedys, Youth Brigade), Los Angeles (Circle Jerks, Black Flag), Austin (Butthole Surfers, Big Boys, Mullions of Dead Cops), Washington, D.C. (Minor Threat, Fugazi, Bad Brains), Minneapolis (Soul Asylum, Replacements, Husker Du), and Seattle (Soundgarden, Skin Yard, Nirvana). Canada is almost always disregarded in most surveys, studies, and books on punk but here, too, the culture was active. In Vancouver, bands such as DOA, the Subhumans, and the Enigmas were (and some still are) central forces of the music scene. In Victoria the infamous Dayglow Abortions and the amazing No Means No fashioned new music styles still popular today. Even in the interior of British Columbia there were small punk scenes in the towns of Prince George, Kelowna, and, where I grew up, Kamloops (Desperate Minds Stagnation, Inner Anger, Mild Guys, and Ghosts of Roadkill). Throughout the rest of the country were such bands as SNFU (Edmonton), the Stretch Marks (Winnipeg), the Asexuals and the Doughboys (Montreal), and Problem Children (Toronto). What this is indicative of is the thoroughness to which the punk

ideals and forms of expression were expanding across North America. Anywhere there were young people who were not satisfied with what mainstream society was providing them with in the forms of knowledge, culture, and leisure activities there were the foundations for the formation of a punk scene.

By the end of the 80's a few bands who had come from the various underground punk scenes and were getting signed to major record labels. This made it possible for the recent explosive emergence of punk bands into the mainstream. Jane's Addiction, a glam-punk band from LA, started to attract attention and do major concert touring with its Warner Bros. label albums <u>Nothing Shocking</u> (1987) and <u>Ritual De Lo Habitual</u> (1989). A heavy and funky Hollywood band called the Red Hot Chili Peppers were integral to the introducing of punk expression to mainstream society. Their EMI label albums <u>Uplift Mofo Party Plan</u> (1987), <u>Mother's Milk</u> (1989), and Warner Bros. <u>Blood Sugar Sex Magic</u> (1991) along with the associated videos and Nike commercials brought a version of punk attitude and art into the homes of North America. Sonic Youth, from New York, further helped the introductory process with their songs and videos for their Geffen label album <u>Dirty</u> (1990) which incorporated the punk elements of thrash and their unique brand of sound distortion and experimentation using electric guitars. It was the increasing mainstream familiarity with these bands that would allow for the success of one of the biggest efforts of punk music in opening the flood gates for punk expression in popular culture.

Perry Farrell, currently lead singer for Porno for Pyros and formerly of the now defunct Jane's Addiction, came up with an idea for a touring festival similar to the ones popular in Europe. He brought together a concert show made up of a group of alternative

bands that were not receiving mainstream airplay (this is a contentious issue because many of the bands were/are signed to major record label deals), a fairway of concessions and speakers platforms promoting various alternative lifestyles and ideas and called it Lollopalooza. In each of the three summers since 1991 there has been a Lollopalooza and each time there has been a different contingency of acts that display a range of music styles that have not found much popularity in mainstream society. As Gina Arnold, a recent if not the only chronicler of the current punk scene, reflected upon the festival: "I knew for a fact something momentous was occurring. It was the first whisper, a ghostly sigh of success, a rumor whistling across the plain, that the old guard was changing. Forget mainstream radio and the color-bound gridlock of the rest of the industry: the ecstatic reception of Ice T's new band (Body Count) by fifteen thousand unbriefed Arizona teenagers said that there might be room in the real world after all for challenging music. At least there was a place, now, for the population to hear it" (Arnold 1993: 142).

1.3 WHAT IS PUNK?

Punk is two things. First, and most apparent to mainstream society, it is a way for a group of young individuals to abruptly separate and isolate itself from dominant society in such a way that so doing comments on and criticizes the society it rejects. Punk, self-consciously, uses various elements of artistic expression (music, fashion, argot, ritual, and graphic design) to, reflectively, place itself outside of popular culture and society while illuminating central features which it thinks abhorrent. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, it is a way that young people have been able to wrestle the control over youth

culture away from older generations. It is from these two components that the importance of punk is determined.

1.3(a) The Expression of Punk

Hebdige (1979), of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, was one of the first academics to realize the importance of punk, to study it, and to try to understand how the culture's stylistic use of elements was important to its aims. He found that members were able to take objects like safety pins or symbols such as swastikas from mainstream society and alter their meaning according to their own purposes. Punks are able to incorporate images integral to their style that expressed their intention to simultaneously repel and challenge mainstream society. Levine and Stumpf (1983), based on the interpretation of punk band names, believe that it is through the 'negative' images of fear, disgust, rejection from society, anarchy, and death that punk is able to separate itself from and critically comment on mainstream society with the intentions of bringing about some 'positive' change. While this conclusion is fairly accurate, what it leaves out is the element of extreme anger and disbelief that is also core to the culture's style. The juxtaposition that youth witness between what they are told is 'right' and 'truth' and what they actually experience in the real world is a foundation of these feelings. Punk, in a storm of sound and fury, hyper-projects images of violence and atrocity for the world to see the results of hypocrisy in the actions of adults, governments, religions, etc. It is this 'functional role' of "exist(ing) outside the main culture, while illuminating central features of it" (ibid: 433) that makes punk a 'reflective' subculture, as opposed to the 'outlaw' subculture of motorcycle gangs which exists outside of the mainstream culture without appearing interested in

remaining a part of it and the 'alternative' subculture of the hippy movement which provided a lifestyle choice within the mainstream (ibid: 433).

This style, fuelled by the anger and intent to challenge, is most prominent in the punk musical performance. As Lomax (1968) explains, most cultures who find or put themselves in a position of resistance or rebellion use music as a primary source for their expression. "From the beginning of punk, the music seemed to partake of and contribute to the hostility and mayhem that became part of the punk image" (Levine & Stumpf 1983: 423). It is around music that punk is able to express its deepest sentiments and cultivate its community. Through the use of lyrics, sound, and presentation the essence of punk rock is crystallized.

"[The songs are] fast... cause that's the amount of energy we have, and they're short because that's how long our inspiration lasts".

- Ron Reyes in (Arnold 1993: 38)

1.3(a)i The Sound and Fury: Punk Lyrics, Sound, and Presentation

Lyrics are very important to punk as an expression of thought (in varying levels of intelligence, reflection, and eloquence) and concern about personal, local, and world problems, conditions, and experiences. Their importance is indicated by the fact that with most punk recordings, and even at some live shows, there will almost always be a lyric sheet of some form included in the package. There is a dual purpose for this: 1) it allows the listener to read and dwell on the poetic expressions and thoughts of the punk artist and compatriot, thereby, helping to instigate awareness and thought on the part of the listener, and 2), because

punk is fuelled by the afore-mentioned anger and energy, the vocalized lyrics are often brutally loud, heart-feltedly screamed, and can become lost or undecipherable in the din and a lyric sheet helps recover them. The words and language themselves come from the everyday life of musically and artistically untrained youth, and due to the conditions with which they are being expressed within they can be very 'colourful', coarse, obtuse, aggressive, and obnoxious but wholly cathartic. Accompanying the audible words and choruses, often sung anthem style by the audience (ie. "I don't care 'bout you, Fuck you!" (Fear) or "If we can rock together, why can't we walk together?" (7 Seconds)), there are howls, there are screams, and cacophonous roars; you may not always be able to decipher or pick-out the words but the connected listener knows the sound of the cry of the misfit, the sound of being chased all the way home from school by bullies, the wail of the abused and neglected, and the moan of dismay of a witness to pain and suffering. These sounds are the vocalizations made by the heart, though love songs are usually not evident in punk, and brain trying to make sense of cruelty, travesty, and tragedy.   Examples of this style of reflective lyrical creativity, aggressive yet forlorn, can be seen in the out-takes from the following punk songs:

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"It seems more and more
The future's filled with uncertainty
We seem to find ourselves
Living in an age of anxiety
I know, we go, on living fearfully
The leaders of the world
Won't realize their responsibility
I say, I say will we get blown away"
        from "Blown Away" by Youth Brigade(1983)
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"Maybe it was no one's fault
I know it wasn't mine
But now that you've moved along
I guess I'm next in line
I thought we had the same ideas
But you, you proved me wrong
I've been played the fool before
But never for quite so long
BETRAY"
 from "Betray" by Minor Threat(1983)
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"I went home, I was feeling so alone
I was late, it was my mistake
I went to my room and sat there in the gloom
I know I've been bad, I know he'll be mad
I hear him coming down the hall
And there's nowhere to go, nowhere at all
I've been bad, it was my mistake
He opens the door, his eyes full of hate
DAD NO! DAD, LEAVE ME ALONE! DAD NO! DAD LET ME GO!
DAD NO! DAD, LEAVE ME ALONE! OH, MY GOD, NO! NO!"
        from "DAD" by No Means No(1986)
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Another feature often found in punk lyrics is the way in which a brutal honesty is expressed in their intent. Fired by an 'no compromise' attitude there are no punches are pulled and no holds are barred in the open and upfront expression of meaning. As seen in the above lyrical excerpts one can see that subtlety and allegorical or metaphorical usage are not common to the style. Even by examining the titles of punk songs, which are usually not that far removed from the lyrical content of the song, one is able to get a sense of this characteristic. As an example, the titles of the Dead Kennedys songs "Too Drunk to Fuck", "Terminal Preppy", "California Uber Alles", "Stars and Stripes of Corruption", and "Holiday in Cambodia" are indicative of the brutal honesty and cynicism that pervades most of punk music. These titles and songs evoke the essence of punk in that they demonstrate an awareness of and concern about various local and international social problems in an overt and darkly humourous manner that expresses the anger and energy of its authors who have no desire to curtail their expression to the conventions of 'well-mannered' mainstream society or its record industry.

The sound of punk rock music is an equal and worthy counterpart to the aggressive and abrasive essence of punk lyrics. For an individual experiencing live punk rock for the first time I am sure it would sound like a massive wall of white noise. An undistinguishable barrage of all possible sound frequencies at once and not unlike the noise of a jet engine. One tune may be indiscernible from the next (like country music, Bryan Adams songs, and radio DJ voices are for a lot of people) and the pace may be intolerable (see previous bracket for parallel). My own first experience could be described as such but then again I was

listening to the opening of the Dead Kennedys' Plastic Surgery Disasters album which begins with a barrage of wailing guitar noise. While the content of the lyrics appealed to me first and hooked me in, I quickly began to enjoy the sound and presence of the music. The songs are fast and aggressive, much like the lyrics, and the sound is right out there front and centre, large and loud. The drums are pounded at an unheard of speed and, with the heavy bass guitar, provide a high speed driving rhythm on top of which the highly amplified and distorted guitars are attacked. The guitars, core to punk, are made to crush out their sounds as power chords are executed fast and often without a great deal of attentiveness to a mastery or artistry of playing (though this is not to say that punk guitarists are not good guitar players). And, pulling all the elements together, the vocals are shouted, snarled, and, otherwise, jammed through a tightly gripped microphone. There is a punch to punk music. The furious, 100 mph thrash, straight forward hard rock does not cascade over you or make you want to lightly tap your foot. It blasts your face off, makes it peel, and makes you want to race around and jump up and down. It gets your attention.

The presentation of punk music is the definitive experience of punk and is what all punk activity revolves around. It is aggressive, interactive, and is the promotion and preservation of the punk culture. The 'gig', 'show', or live concert performance of punk bands is the ritual that is integral to the continuity of punk, as it presents the various facets of the culture's ideology, inarticulate as it may be, through the ideas, involvement and interaction that occur through the event.

From my own experience and upon reading many 'zines from the culture, I understand

that the reasons and results behind the 'putting on' of a punk show are not similar to those behind the presentation of popular mainstream acts. Most mainstream acts, who play in large venues and are publicized by professional promotion teams and businesses with the assistance of radio, television, and newspapers, are themselves professionals who perform for the sole purpose of making money and increasing record sales. They treat creation and performance as a job. Punk shows and tours, on the other hand, are almost always organized either by small groups of interested youth living in the various communities or the bands themselves who do it because they feel inspired to. They are advertised through word of mouth and the infamous past-time of posting and distributing gig flyers and usually occur at some small, non-alcoholic venue often rented under false pretences. Ticket prices are routinely set to just cover costs, provide enough money to pay for the bands' gas, and possibly allow them to get paid a small amount. There are no guarantees, riders (requirements to supply special items ie. food, beverages, etc. for the bands), or contracts. The purpose, from the bands' point of view, is to travel, meet groups of similarly interested youth, and play the music that they feel is important to perform. From the organizers point of view, the goal is to provide an easily accessible and entertaining event for all ages within which they can interact among themselves and the members of the bands. The ideal result is a forging of a genuine experience from which a better awareness, understanding, and knowledge of each other and their community/society arises.

The bands' purpose at these events is, then, to provide the cultural text of music and performance around which a sense of community is formed. This sense of community among members of the band and audience is created and expressed in the understanding of equality

between members. In contrast to mainstream concerts where the band is separated from its audience by being placed on high stages, dressing in fashion costume, never venturing into the audience, and being protected by bouncers who would not think twice of beating senseless an excited audience member intent on touching their idol, punks break down these barriers of inequality and separation. Makeshift stages at punk gigs are usually low and put the performers faces just above the head level of the crowd. The performers' appearance resembles their audiences, as there is no change of clothing or preparation of hair for the sole purpose of going on-stage (unless there is a point to be made). While on stage punk band members often interact with their audience (the activity of reciprocal spitting and urination has generally been eliminated from this interaction), wether it be through physical contact or personal conversation, encouraging symbiotic response to their presence and performance. Audience members who find themselves onstage dancing, stage-diving, or assisting in singing are not hurriedly escorted off, they are welcomed.

> "Boys all body-swam in slow motion on top of the warm loving shoulders of the crowd; when Kurt and Chris (the bass player and guitar player for Nirvana) would continually thrust themselves into it, flesh on flesh: when no one mean or cruel or stupid was allowed into that magic circle. Back when there was a sense of community" (Arnold 1993: 163).

This personal interaction dissolves traditional band/audience barriers and promotes the philosophy that there is no difference between individuals, that no one should be in awe or afraid of the other. All that is really happening is some members of the community have gone on a stage to present some songs to the rest. At large mainstream rock concerts there is

the definite presence of two distinct 'worlds', the performers and the fans (who often leave concerts depressed because they realize that they were in close proximity to their idol(s) yet couldn't intimately interact or communicate with them), while at a small punk gig there is only one, the members.

In collaboration with the band audience participation obviously has an important role in the expression of the essence of punk ideology. Without the reverence imparted to mainstream pop idols, punks assume the stage as part of the space available to the community and respect the band only as individuals who are aesthetically expressing commonly-held beliefs and providers of text for the whole to entertain itself. In front of the stage occurs the phenomenon known as 'the pit'. It is here that audience members, propelled by the intensity of the music, thrash or 'mosh' about in a rapidly churning circle, bumping into each other. There is no proper dance move, only self-expression realized through the beat. Individuals enter and leave the pit when they feel that they have energy to spend or have spent it, those who fall down are picked up, and those who mis-interpret the activity as violent are either educated or avoided. It is from this turmoil that members may dart out onto the stage, sing a line or two of a song with the band, and return by jumping, or 'stage-diving', off of it. Band members, as noted above, pay respect to and indistinguish themselves from their audience by also flinging themselves into or on top of this mass of bodies, allowing for the current to consume and move them along.

Arnold captures the essence of the difference between the reverence of mainstream rock stars and the personal affinity between punk musician and punk audience member by describing the absorbed attention of audience members at a Seattle gig.

"Watching guys watch the Fluid's vocalist , John Robinson, or the (Afghan) Whigs'
Greg Dulli, slack-jawed and tense, willing the singers to sweat on their very brows, is
an enlightening experience: there's such an obvious difference between that and the
sight of, say, your usual guitar god or hammy singer, or even a more traditional
alternative guy singing love songs about girls or beer. The Sub Pop (a Seattle record
label) dude-fans don't want to *be* Robinson or Dulli: they want to be *with* him"

(Arnold 1993: 158).

She goes on to interpret this connection as a form of homoeroticism which I feel is a
mistaken reading. The desire to be onstage with the performers can be seen as coming from
the sense of equality and community between performer and audience. Because the feelings
and ideas of punk music are so intensely shared and the stage performance is experienced as
an eruptive and revelatory expression of an understanding of these, the desire to be an integral
part of the creative performance is invigorating. The 'slack-jawed and tense' appearance can
be seen as a result of the members conflicting desires to both enjoy the music from the
position of audience member and jump up onstage, interrupt the band, and complete the
reciprocal act of communication by saying "Yes, I feel it too"! I have felt this way at many
shows where I wanted to get up onstage, sing with the band, and tell them that I knew exactly
what they meant, I wish I could have said it, and can we please talk about it with each other
after the show? The audience wants to join, as a friend, in the performance. The feelings of
millions of fans towards Kurt Cobain, I believe, is also a result of this desire. The life he led,
the artwork he created, the sounds he made, and the words he wrote spoke to and for so many
kids that his removal from the community left a gaping hole because it meant the

disappearance of so much enjoyment and of someone that understood.

Together, the lyrics contained in punk songs, the elements of the sound behind the lyrics, and the punk performance formulate an implicit philosophy of the punk culture. Lyrics express an awareness, concern and anger over a multitude of social problems and abuses. The music is an aural bombardment against various barriers to artistic creativity and physical and reflective expression. The production and performance of a punk gig create a non-exclusive and self-supportive community and culture through involvement, interaction, and creativity. Through the expression of equality and non-differentiation, involvement and the destruction in the belief of the superiority and idolization of creative artists, and the reciprocal appreciation between performer and audience the culture speaks of such values as freedom and fairness, equality and individuality, and self-consciousness and self-determination.

1.3(b) Cultural Creation

"But punk rock was never just about buying leather jackets and singing about Ronald Reagan, it was anti-record industry".

(Arnold 1993: 38)

Considering the messages and images that constitute punk rock and being that it is a subculture intent on promoting a sense of its own community, it should not be expected that artefacts and texts of this culture would simply be symbols and objects produced and co-opted from or commonly found in mainstream society. Punk is very active in producing and promoting its own culture with an attitude that has no regard for mainstream methods or control, because it is intent on questioning these self-same methods and controls in its textual discourse. The expression of this attitude is no better illustrated than in the process by which punk artists/musicians form, promote, and distribute their creative product. It is in this

attitude and process by which punk asserts and preserves itself that the punk ideology/philosophy can also be located.

As with most industries in North America, there is a high degree of corporate concentration within the recording industry. A few companies have control over a large amount of the available funds and facilities, thereby, dictating what is produced and made available to the general public. The major record labels' only intent is to sell as many units possible for each dollar invested in an artist. In order to achieve this songs and acts must appeal to a wide audience. Regardless of the quality of the music produced this situation results in many acts, voices, styles, and ideas, ones which might be considered offensive or challenging, unheard. In response, punks and other youth cultures known as alternative (as in alternative to the styles promoted by major labels) found it necessary to support their own bands, tour extensively, and record, produce, advertise, and distribute their own material. As Bruce Pavitt, co-founder and co-owner of Sub Pop records, said, "I could always see that the real essence of the punk work was Dead Kennedys' putting stuff out themselves and the homegrown nature of (the magazine) Search and Destroy and people taking control of their own culture" (in Arnold 1993: 155). Kids started their own record labels, made their own artwork, took their own photographs, and put on their own shows. Youth were being active in the creation of their own culture rather than being force-fed or choosing by default the music that a '30-something' corporate weasel formulated in order to make some enormous amounts of money.

The result was an underground harvest of bands, record labels, and fanzines that informed and communicated between all the little towns and big cities that collectively

formed the punk community. The bands taped themselves, or had their friends do it, in garages or other strange places which often resulted in poor recordings that did not quite attain radio air-play quality. But these songs were not intended for radio anyways. The scratchy and muddy recordings, distributed and traded nation-wide by cassette tape, captured the energy, edge, and essence of the punk live performance and philosophy. Eventually, many young individuals, such as Ian Mackaye (the singer for such bands as Teen Idles, Minor Threat, and Fugazi), saw that they, too, could form a band and make a record. "We had ... recorded a tape and we knew no one would put it out, so we just went, 'Fuck it, we'll do it ourselves'", said Mackaye when identifying the impetus for the alternative and independent record industry (Arnold 1993: 48). This Do-It-Yourself (D.I.Y.) and Anyone-Can attitude is very important because it promotes, propels, and prolongs the punk scene as well as provides a feeling of community among individuals who have similar ideas about how they want to live and create their lives free from the confines of corporate cultural domination. This is evidenced in the pages of such culturally integral 'zines as <u>Maximum Rock n Roll</u> (M.R.R.) and <u>Flipside</u>, two of the many member created publications which specialize in making available easily accessible or affordable letter, editorial, review, interview, and advertising space for punk. Epitomizing the worth and intent of these 'zines is the advertisement for the Do-It-Yourself Resource Magazine that appeared on page 2 in the November 1993 issue of M.R.R. Titled <u>Book Your Own Fuckin' Life #2</u>, this publication provides 'a country by country/state by state listing of punk/hardcore/indie bands, 'zines, promoters, labels, radio, video, food, food, lodging, etc.'. The existence of such resources and the longevity of such 'zines as <u>M.R.R.</u> provide evidence to the continued vitality and diversity of the punk culture

and of the individuals who promote a discourse of unselfish cultural creativity without the intent of obscene personal financial gain. My own experience as a youth in Kamloops is an example of this. One person started his own band, his own local-scene 'zine, promoted local shows with touring and local bands, self-recorded his band and those of his friends, started his own record label for his own and friends bands, and toured across the continent in a beat-up old van all for the sake of punk. His activity and D.I.Y attitude gave me the opportunity and stimulation to become excited by and involved in punk. I started to draw pictures and write articles for his 'zine, formed a band and played at his shows, helped organize shows, went on tour as a roadie, recorded a tape with my band in an abandoned medical clinic, became a radio D.J. at university, and wrote a Master's thesis on punk.

Integrity, in conjunction with the D.I.Y. attitude, is also fundamental to the operation and appeal of the punk scene. A youthful and bright-eyed idealism against adult compromise and contradiction is part of the primary forces behind the punk cultural production and integrity is its single-most important convention and realization. Defined by the principles of decency and honesty this characteristic is found in no better form than that of the band Fugazi. With Ian Mackaye, former member of Minor Threat, the members of Fugazi insist on complete control over their creations, all-ages access to their shows (their shows do not occur in bars), cheap ticket prices (usually $6 and under), and cheap cd/record/tape prices from the Mackaye-owned Dischord record label (Arnold 1993: 51-52). "Probably the most positive aspect of punk rock - and one that was most ignored by the mainstream press - has always been its economy. Self-made records, homespun bands, cheap shows, good art: mental liberation for three dollars a pop" (ibid: 39). This is one of the reasons that I, and others like

me, am attracted to punk and that after nine years am still interested in punk and make it the centre of my academic work. The affordability, creativity, honesty, and thought provocation provided by punk culture is engaging in a time of mass-produced culture. It is these same principles that Kurt Cobain and Nirvana brought with them to the mainstream and resulted in them being described as difficult and rebellious.

This is why punk is important. For the past seventeen years, the philosophies, attitudes, and values of this underground, alternative, and reflective subculture has provided an avenue for creative criticism of mainstream society and culture and a means for contemporary youth to produce their own genuine cultural texts and write their own discourses. Coming from within themselves in new ways, it can be seen as an expression of another version of the 'good life'. This expression has not only incorporated the discourse of the white male guitar player, which mainstream rock music has tended to be the domain, but in punk there has been a large number of bands with females and blacks, for instance, some of which have gone on to be popular like the Go-Go's, Blondie, the Bangles, Fishbone, Bad Brains, and rap cross-overs Body Count and Hard Corp. This new element of popularity is important because during the last seventeen years very few punk bands and their ideas have become known to the mainstream audience and if they did it was either because of notoriety or as a pale shadow of their former punk selves. Is punk to forever remain an underground subculture, reflecting on a society out of range? Until 1991, with the breaking of a 'new' culture, it appeared so.

1.4 PUNK EMERGES WITH A VENGEANCE

Levine and Stumpf, talking about punk rock, asked in 1983 "What might its (punk rock) impact be on the wider mainstream culture"(Levine & Stumpf 1983: 432)? In the early 90's, during the era of the extremely unsure and unconfident 'twenty-nothing' age cohort (which also tends to incorporate teenagers), most recently dubbed the Generation X (Coupland 1991) and characterized as the Slacker generation (Linklater 1991), it has become possible to answer this question. Another music-centered youth culture has arisen and, because of its popularity, seems to reflect and express many of the social conditions and understandings of a growing amount of contemporary youth; a culture whose philosophical, ideological, and artistic understandings are fuelled by the reflective subcultural roots of North American punk rock which are now being commodified and marketed to and consumed by the wider mainstream culture.

The documentary film <u>1991: The Year Punk Broke</u>, featuring such bands as Sonic Youth and Nirvana, identifies the time when this (r)evolutionary moment occurred. Annals of the mainstream trend-spotting-happy media, among them the hippie-now-yuppy magazine <u>Rolling Stone</u> (Azerrad 1992a, 1992b), Canada's national conservative newspaper <u>The Globe & Mail</u> (Star 1993), and the former New York-fashion now pulse-of-alternative-youth <u>Details magazine</u> (Edward 1992a, 1993b) for example, conceitedly believe they have, in a moment of revelation, located the culture's origin in the Seattle area fuelled by the artistic expressions of such bands as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Mudhoney, Alice in Chains, Screaming

Trees, and Tad. This cultural phenomenon, popularly known as Grunge[1] (a label regrettably

given to the style by Mudhoney's vocalist/guitarist Mark Arm), has expanded from the West

Coast of the U.S.A. and Canada to the rest of North America and across the Atlantic. In its

wake has sprung many musical imitations, media bandwagon jumpers, mall and high fashion

profiteering, and slavering record industry weasels which has tended to denigrate the culture

and created a backlash.

An understanding of a culture such as Grunge requires more than a description of its

elements, because there are the values and ideals involved with participation in the culture

which give a deeper knowledge to the meaning of its expression (hence the following study).

However, as a preliminary introduction, I can describe the elements of Grunge found in its

textual narratives as containing a mix of an analytical and critical energy, sarcasm, cynicism,

humour, play, crushed idealism, confusion, hopelessness, anxiety, aggression, hysteria, anger,

and rage directed not only towards society-at-large but, uniquely, also to itself and its own

conditions and predicaments.

Taking its cue from the principles of punk, Grunge rejects many of the standards of

knowledge and processes associated with normal and safe middle-class life and questions

many of the inconsistencies found therein. Abandoning the more apocalyptic imagery of

punk fashion, standards of dress derive from actual conditions of youth poverty (eg. t-shirts,

plaid flannel shirts, simple cotton dresses, leather jackets, loose denim pants, sturdy footwear)

and still tend to be functional with a stress on comfort, durability and lack of commercial

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[1] 'Grunge' has become a despised term among members of the culture and I only use it here for the sake of brevity and as a way for non-initiates to orient themselves to the culture.

accoutrement and style while hairstyles consist of variations from no-nonsense buzz-cuts to long, unkempt, wavy lengths. The music, while still based on punk aggression and recorded with a 'daisy-cups and a string' lo-fidelity sound, is oriented towards amplified and distorted or dischordant electric guitar, tending to stay away from electronically reproduced or sampled sounds and keyboards, is now fused with more diverse variations of stampeding and grooving rhythms borrowed mostly from 70's rock, funk, blues, heavy metal, and power pop, and is often fused to noise distortion and experimentation. Lyric content accompanying songs have a diversity of topics and styles ranging from the very personal and individual concerns of child abuse, suicide, drug addiction, lust and self-worth to wider issues such as cruelty to animals, corrupt and self-righteous televangelism, environmental destruction, and misogyny. However, while punk was very forthright and straight to the point in its angry and anthemic voicing of concerns and criticism on similar topics in its lyrics, Grunge artists have often taken to obscuring, or at least not making obvious, the exact meaning of their message and leaving them open to immense opportunity for interpretation.

OVERVIEW

In the following chapters it is my aim to try to make understandable the increasing appeal and popularity of a contemporary youth culture that is based on the attitudes and ethics of a formerly alternative and underground sub/counterculture (punk) to a wider, mainstream oriented youth population and/or generation.

Chapter 2 is a brief outline and summary of a number of popular youth cultures, most being centered around rock music, that preceded Punk and Grunge and a variety of academic concepts and theories which have been used to try to understand youth cultures in the past.

The purpose of this is to form a background against which the punk and grunge cultures and the contemporary theories and methods which I introduce can be compared. The summary indicated that most youth cultures have always seemed to have elements of escape, resistance and rebellion, creativity and social consciousness but many have ended in hedonism, self-indulgence, commercialisation and alienation. And of the few theories concerning youth culture most either view or find them as deviant or delinquent or as a simple response to dominant/subordinate cultural relations. Consequently, the unique attitudes and perspectives of the punk and grunge cultures required that I develop my own theoretical and methodological frameworks for understanding the contemporary cultures.

The purpose of Chapter 3, then, is to create the theoretical framework around which appropriate understanding of contemporary youth cultures should occur. This is done by proposing that there are four basic elements (method, philosophy, context, and purpose) of these cultures which need to be realized in order to allow understanding to follow. The first is to recognize art as the primary vehicle through which cultural meaning and values are expressed; the second, authenticity, is the philosophy or moral ideal which informs the textual discourse (art) expressed; the third element, postmodernity, is the context which describes the influential mood or attitude within which and how expression occurs; and forth, social significance, is the purpose or implicit goal for which cultural expression occurs. I found that art, because of its inherent qualities, is a superior and inevitable method of expressing meaning and values for members of a culture who are influenced by a postmodern mood and a moral ideal of authenticity, therefore, if one is to understand some meaning of contemporary youth cultures it is necessary to look at the discourse in the cultural texts.

Social significance comes in the consequential yet undeterminable changes that occur in response to the discourse of the implicitly morally informed cultural texts.

The intent of Chapter 4 is to explain how a sociological methodology can be carried out or exist in social research that is influenced by a postmodern mood. The methodological procedures (principles, criteria and 'rules') for investigating, 'analyzing' and understanding the subject matter is directed by the philosophy of phenomenological hermeneutics which recognizes the unavoidable relationship the subjective observer has with the observed object and the valid form of understanding that occurs through the natural act of interpretation. Responsible and reliable hermeneutical method, articulated practice raised to the level of theory, can be attained and recognized as valid by being able to persuasively justify, argue or defend one's interpretations and results without having to rely on traditional objective and positivistic theory and method.

Chapter 5 a) provides a solid and practical example of social research carried out under the hermeneutical theory and method outlined in the previous two chapters and b) explains or reveals the postmodern and authentic elements present in the Grunge culture. It provides three instances of valid interpretations and understandings in relation to the meaning of the cultural expression in opposition to readings that interpret contemporary youth cultures as valueless or socially insignificant. The findings reveal that understanding aspects of postmodernism and authenticity help to reveal the presence of values that otherwise remain obscure to those readers unaware of these perspectives. A summary of the findings and conclusions of the research is located in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2: YOUTH CULTURES AND THEORIES ON YOUTH

Cultural studies, especially the study of youth cultures, is a relatively new field and this is mostly due to the fact that the proliferation of unique and diverse cultures has occurred only since the end of the second world war. However, there has been a substantial amount of theoretical work in this area to almost parallel the pace of the emergence of new youth cultures.

Punk rock is obviously not the first or only youth subculture to have ever existed within modern society. There have been, and will continue to be, numerous cultures of varying importance, style, and longevity in the urban environment as they react to and create other cultures. Additionally, there have been a variety of theoretical viewpoint generated for the purpose of explaining the meaning, functions, effects, and purposes of these cultures. Therefore, before beginning my presentation, explanation, understanding, and application of what I believe to be a more appropriate way to understand contemporary youth cultures I provide in this chapter: 1) a brief summary of a number of popular/youth musical cultures which proceeded 90's punk rock descendent (Grunge) and 2) a variety of academically generated concepts, theories, meanings, and uses revolving around the concepts of culture and subculture, youth culture, popular culture, and rock music. The purpose behind this is to form a background of youth culture and theory against which punk and contemporary theoretical methods can be understood.

2.1 HISTORY OF YOUTH (SUB)CULTURES

When the history of youth cultures and their associated relationship with pop and rock music is discussed a common starting point has always been the period of time following the second world war; a period and music "that [has become] associated with the post-war construction of notions like the teenager, generation gap, youth culture, and youth subculture" (Redhead 1990: 8). This ignores, though, the rich and diverse history of popular music prior to the war and the roots of what are known as pop and rock music. Of course what we are interested in is pop and rock music but, first of all, the roots of these musical styles have to be recognized.

Because of hard economic times and a relatively small teenager population prior to the second world war, an environment conducive to the formation of popular and/or youth cultures, as we currently conceive them, did not exist. However, "people in the 1920's and 1930's, as before then, were rebellious in certain ways - rebellious sexually and artistically... Their rebellion was evidenced in a greater infusion of jazz into popular music, and in the growing popularity of colored vocalists and instrumentalists" (Mooney 1972: 182). In order for a cultural style to flourish in the modern society a large market with a surplus of funds for leisure activities and goods is required. Therefore, "prevailing taste in popular music was shaped by a white [older] middle class, self-consciously hedonistic, relatively prosperous at a time when ... income was so narrowly distributed" (ibid: 182). The effect that this had was to temper or water-down the aggressiveness of the jazz music created by black artists with "'highbrow' innovations or just sweetly pretty styling" (ibid: 184) in the form of commercial big-band orchestration. And the ballads which these bands produced, with a raw blues

feelings underlying them, were rendered in a 'timid', 'respectable', 'sweet', and 'harmonious' manner or style. It is these same underlying styles and forms of music (jazz and blues) that eventually, with the formation of a large and affluent teenage population, influence the later forms of popular youth music.

2.1(a) Rock 'n' Roll

In addition to the upper-middle class popular cultures of the pre-war and war-time periods the popular youth cultures of the post-war era also owe a great deal to the artistic stylings of black jazz and blues musicians. The first of these cultures and the one from which all other future youth cultures either derive from or respond to is the rock and roll music culture.

"The impact of rhythm and blues (R & B) on youth music in the 1950's and 1960's was, in many respects, just another example of the continuing process through which white popular music has been invigorated by styles and values drawn from black culture - styles and values that lose their original force and meaning as they pass through the bland wringer of mass music but are rediscovered by each new generation of hip musicians and audiences" (Frith 1983: 16).

Elements of black music style, such as spontaneity, immediacy, melody and rhythm (as opposed to theme and harmony), improvisation, emotional feeling and impact, passion, sexuality, desire, aggressiveness, imagination and physical energy, became a means for a growing population of relatively affluent white teenagers to express, often within the context of rebellion, their previously suppressed thoughts and feelings.

Rock 'n' roll (a term which, rumour has it, is a euphemism for the rhythm of movement during sexual intercourse) is the first musical style that came to represent the "early recognition of teenage culture in which pop music and youth consciousness were integrated" (ibid: 203). There are other popular musical styles present in western culture such as folk and country (which later become fused with rock to form new styles), but this was the musical style that came to combine ideology and age cohort. Replacing the bland and inoffensive styling and crooning of such adult-created and authorized performers as Perry Como, Rosemary Clooney, Frank Sinatra, and Patti Page there was, finally, a music style by teenagers for teenagers. Rock introduced the use of the loud electric guitar, driving rhythm drum beat, jittering dance, and the crooning vocals. Musicians who came to prominence performing this early period style of rock were such acts as Bill Haley and the Comets, Buddy Holly, Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and, later, the Beatles. These performers were similar in personal background and interest to the teenage audiences which allowed for the formation of a strong and intimate bond and a minimized distance between the two; conditions that had not previously existed between artist and listener. It was through this combination of teen-performer and teen-audience that allowed for and promoted a new consciousness and a sense of belonging to a popular culture or generation; to a common appreciation and experience. This common experience surrounding rock music began to separate youth from the adult population, thereby, creating a generation gap within cultural understandings. "Youth used rock as a way of setting their own standards and disseminating them through peer interaction" (Martin and Segrave 1988: 14).

Whatever these standards may have been, it was clear that the adult population and the

music industry were not receptive or supportive. As Martin and Segrave completely illustrate in their book Anti-Rock: the Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll, the adult world opposed all the elements associated with rock music and resisted the forces of teen culture and especially the invigorating force emanating from music. Because rock music was written, played, and performed by teenagers, Martin and Segrave believe adults feared the loss of their authority achieved through production control. Up until the late 1950's pop music by and for whites was bland and inane in that any sense of creative enthusiasm and incitement had been removed in order for it to appeal and sell to all social groups and categories. When R & B became increasingly popular in the early 50's the white music industry, in order to capitalize on the opportunity and regain control over the youth music market, again exploited black musicians by having white artists do covers of their songs for which the former saw very little, if any, remuneration for. Naturally, the lyrics, double entendres which often dealt openly with sexual topics, had to be altered. The beginning of rock was the beginning of a series of social questionings, debates, and battles over taboos and values. "The hostility [to rock] was racial and some of it came from those who were uptight about anything remotely sexual. Most of it had to do with the opposing values between youth and adult, between children and parents, as teenagers developed their own set of values and morality" (ibid: 20-21)

The concept of youth became associated with a consciousness, a set of values, that opposed the established values of parents and authority. Previously, only 'delinquent' children had been seen as a separate group but "what the notion of the teenager did in the 1950's was blur (the) distinction between the ordinary and the violent kids - the suggestion was that all

teenagers lacked a moral code" (Frith 1983: 184). If this opposition was occurring, in the forming and separating of new social categories, what was the growing consciousness and new set of values and morality associated with the culture of rock that was taking hold of the younger generation? It can be seen to have started with the increasing wealth of working teenagers and the coinciding and related decrease of parental control. Youth became a desirable condition free of the narrow restrictiveness of maturity and teenage culture became a model of irregular, spontaneous, unpredictable, exhibitionistic behaviour. For young people, many of whom still enjoyed the luxury of living with their parents, the pursuit of leisure and pleasure had become a way of life and the choices in this life were, if not dictated, at least influenced by the growing social dominance of the modern mass media. Images and ideas transported through this modern form of communication created and spoke to a consciousness based on the freedom of the young individual from traditional authority figures and restrictions of social responsibility. An 'ethos' of modernity, of the new taking over the old, pervaded the desires and actions of these youth and the modern musical forms and styles found in rock n' roll were perfect complements to this sensibility. Rock had an active part to play in the promulgation of this consciousness: "rock is made in order to have emotional, social, physical, commercial results; it is not music made for 'its own sake'" (Frith 1983: 14), it is a means not an end (ibid). The only inevitable result during this period of new versus old, leisure and consumption oriented affluence, and rock n' roll was the continued association of rock music and youth cultural style. To think young is to be young and to act accordingly in a cultural style is to express these thoughts.

2.1(b) Decades of Rock Culture and New Values

The association of rock and pop music with the expression of new, modern consciousness is seen in the formation of a variety of youth cultures through the last few decades (pop music + youth consciousness = youth culture). The history of rock can be seen as the history of new emerging values in modern times and below are some generalizations and summaries of some of the more significant or important rock cultural styles from the 60's, 70's, and 80's that were significant for many members of the generations or age cohorts at those times and led the way for contemporary youth cultures.

2.1(b)i The 1960's: the Hippie Movement

One, if not the most, important youth culture that defined the 1960's was the hippie culture. While it would be erroneous to suggest that most of the kids in the 60's were part of this style and that everyone of that age cohort could be considered a hippie, the fact that the culture had a wide and far reaching effect geographically as well as chronologically cannot be denied. The hippie movement culture is recognized as the first rock 'n' roll culture that had political purpose as part of its discourse and "for the first time in the history of American popular music, music innovators were coming in significant numbers from middle-class WASP families" (Curtis 1987: 126). In the face of a horrific war and a variety of social contradictions there was a growing lack of respect for the society that produced them and found it difficult to respect other forms of authority. Seen as a counterculture which challenged traditional concepts of career, education, and morality the "hippies have been conceptualized in the literature as educational dropouts, seeking an escape from the

technocratic, materialistic society of modern industrialism, seeking a romantic revival of a pastoral innocence. Their lifestyle, especially their use of drugs and their sexual experimentation, has been discussed in great detail (Berger ,1967; Davis, 1967; Willis, 1978; Young, 1973)" (Brake 1985: 90).

The feelings and ideas were transcribed into youth cultures and a common narrative of the hippie culture was to be expressive and more in touch with one's and other's feelings as opposed to the more individualistic instrumentalism that they perceived of the modernizing industrial mainstream culture. Deriving from an ethos similar to that which influenced early nineteenth century European Romanticism the experimentation with drugs and sexual freedom, expression through flamboyant 'freak' clothing, growing one's hair long, and creating psychedelic artwork was a move, as Naisbitt phrased it, to a 'high touch culture, one which involves the human desire for an increased sensual awareness in response to the increase in 'high tech' which decreased human sensation (Naisbitt 1984: 34). In this cultural expression which can be thought of as a form of resistance or opposition to what mainstream society was becoming in its singleminded stance towards technological advancement, the hippie culture fulfilled Mannheim's (1952) requirement for a culture to be a counterculture; that members of an age group, with their alternative intellectual and organizational values and lifestyles be active in trying to influence social change. Laufer and Bengston (1974: 186-188) suggest that the cause of such a social movement was due to the subordination that the youth of the upper-middle and middle-class groups of the time were experiencing. Noted for its sense of idealism, the social values that this culture seemed to be advancing were seen in the cultural expressions that stressed "cooperation over competition, expression over individualism, being

over doing, making art over making money and autonomy over obedience" (Flacks 1971: 129). A familiar phrase from the period held that 'the personal is the political' and that the cultural expressions of the members reflected their political beliefs, that their folkiness was a romance of the political. The stress on expressiveness over instrumentalism resulted in a cultural gap due to the lack of ability by an adult world informed by rational, objective, modern way of thinking unable to comprehend the cultural meaning. However, the community's cultural idea of focussing on 'dropping out' and 'doing one's own thing' for the sake of self-improvement or self-discovery as resistance against social dictation of identity eventually led to an extreme, and philosophically contradictory, element of individualism which is an extension of the modern notion of being or finding oneself.

In becoming the first youth culture to use music as a form of social consciousness, the hippie culture embraced the power and authenticity of folk music to speak about its concerns with society. "In the 1960's, as young whites, particularly on college campuses, became politically active again, they found in folk music the only expressive form that could be made directly responsive to their political concerns" (Curtis 1987: 29). Folk music carried with it expressions of values that the youth were coming to embrace. Based on its associations with rural romanticism and political populism which opposed urban corruption, commerce, and mass music, it was a music of and for the people to voice protest against what they considered as subordination. Consequently, folk music became integral to culture, community, and ideology and helped to define the hippie community.

Originally, rock music was a form of music that modern youth used as a means to escape the teenage concerns of 'puberty, family, and school' and to express 'fun, excitement,

anxiety, and sexiness' (Curtis 1987: 50). But, when the hippie culture began to integrate it into their style, as it too was a music of the working class, rock became recognized as countercultural and the community grew. In its association with the hippie movement rock 'n' roll worked into the discourse of the counterculture accounts of loudness and rebellion that the middle-class kids were celebrating, thereby, "in the 60's rock music came to represent a self-conscious and politically assertive youth" (Brake 1985: 188). While the combination of folk and rock saw the creation of many 'classic' bands and memorable songs the expressive differences between the two styles eventually infected each other and redivided the culture. Part of rock 'n' roll's appeal as teenage music had been that anyone could do it but in the 1960's performance had been developed to such an individually creative and personal level that audience participation was not possible (Frith 1983: 30). Folk performers had become valued for their genius and as a result the general rock audience could not appreciate it. Similarly, folk songs became compromised in the mid-1960's as rock pushed folk from the political to the more personal and commercial. "Conventions in lyrics became increasingly literary and the artistic distance between singer and audience was confirmed musically by the shift from acoustic to electronic instruments, from the stage to the studio" (ibid: 31). Consequently, by the end of the 60's this division and shift in the hippie folk music had spawned two of the next decades youth/music cultural styles: heavy metal, or arena rock, and art rock.

2.1(b)ii The 70's: Art Rock, Disco, and Heavy Metal

The consequence of the 60's culture becoming oriented on the individual performer, on studio work, and on commercialism was that it led to the transition from rock as release to rock as art in the 70's. In fact, Frith states that "rock's best music was increasingly explained in terms not of community but of art" (Frith 1983: 52). It seemed that the discourse expressing community concerns were being replaced by those focussing on the individual. This change was expressed in the proliferation of album-oriented recordings, rock as a dance-oriented music, and the removal of passion from rock.

Art and Studio Rock

Rock that combined artistry and the studio formed a new notion of what some rock was about. "An increasing number of bands and performers aimed their music at an album-buying market of hip, mostly male music freaks... Rock music [now] meant lengthy studio workouts, rich and elaborate sounds; it was music made for expensive stereos and FM radios and campus concerts" (ibid: 213). With these notions of art and rock as a consumer product and the required accumulation of a musical expertise and equipment, art rock, or what is also know as 'progressive rock' with the likes of such bands (or super-groups) as Pink Floyd, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Jethro Tull and Yes, was a music not directed towards teenagers but perfect for the aging and affluent middle-class baby boomer who could hear and appreciate the musical experimentation done in the studio and the personal confession of the artist. The concerts that toured in support of the concept albums "evolved into grandiose spectacles that closed up the ambiguity between the performers and the audience"(Curtis 1987: 237). The huge arenas, stage sets, and massive amounts of technical equipment required to hold the

stage and enough people to make it financially worthy, evoke the imagery, and reproduce the album sounds finally severed the two. The equipment that made the prog-rock bands famous by giving them their sound also alienated them from their audiences as it was difficult to hear a connection between the performers and what they were playing due to the effects of their complex equipment. Pink Floyd even made an album, The Wall, about the alienation they experienced from the audience through the process of rock stardom. While this complex, symbolic, and personal music "(made) for great listening while stoned, either at home or in the concert hall" (ibid: 282), "it didn't meet the dancing needs of a working-class weekend; it sounded wrong on a cheap transistor radio; it offered few idols for the teeny-bopper's bedroom wall" (Frith 1983: 213). In this change of attitude towards music and the audience, from performance to composition and from consumer participation to consumer appreciation, "the professional rock musician had achieved a unique (and temporary) situation in which art and commerce were complementary and not contradictory" (ibid: 74).

Disco

> "Disco was about eroticism and ecstasy as material goods, produced not by spiritual
> or emotional work, God or love, but by technology, chemistry, wealth"
> (Frith 1983: 247)

On the other side of the musically artistic coin was the completely participant oriented music of disco which combined the elimination of the rock star system, an aesthetic element of gay and feminine expression, and the celebration of artificiality and consumption. While the studio art rock and its associated stage presentation overwhelmed and isolated the audience, disco was the audience, thereby, "decentraliz[ing] music by obsolescing the star

system" (Curtis 1987: 300). "Disco, in which no one had a sense of the presence of musicians and singers at all - the audience consisted of dancers who were themselves the show" (Curtis 1987: 237). Avoiding the 'jerk and grind and thrust of rock', disco was a sinuous, body music that could only be really enjoyed in the company of other people. This style of music brought the text of dance into popular culture as the audience/dancers became the show's performers and focus. In addition to the introduction of dance, disco is also considered as one of the first cultures that introduced a sexual and narcissistic aesthetic into mainstream pop culture; an aesthetic use and experience that reflected a gay consciousness and romanticism. Expressing the changing sexual mores of society in the 70's "disco was music for singles bars, sexual mobility, heterosexual cruising, weekend flings, and transitory fantasies" (Frith 247); an attitude that was artificial and transient in its regard of sexuality and its consumption. While the musically 'progressive' and album-oriented bands were appreciated for the creative expressions of their self-confessions, disco was completely concerned with a display of self-centredness and sexuality. It celebrated "the pleasures of consumption and the pleasures of sex [which] became... the same thing"(ibid: 247). Affluence and elegance were back in fashion. Curtis (1987) holds that disco was completely concerned with and accepted artificiality, a self- conscious, aggressive, 'deliberate artificiality', that expressed a narrative of narcissism that seemed to be pervasive in society at the time. Disco, as a style of the modern era, also relied on technology for its 'artificial' texts. The synthesizer became a vital element to disco recording with their metronomically regular rhythm tracks that allowed production engineers to technologically construct the dance song. Similarly, in the disco where the mood of the dancers ruled the new 'star' of music emerged. The DJ used

various forms of technical innovation to create new and unique mixes of beats and sounds that would satisfy the dancers/performers. As a culture, "disco (unlike bohemia) signifie(d) nothing, (made) no expressive claims - if bohemia suggest(ed) a different way of life, disco simply offer(ed) a different experience of it"(Frith 1983: 246). "Disco made no claims to folk status; there was no creative disco community. The music was, rather, the new international symbol of American consumer society" (ibid: 247). Consequently, disco with the "implied music audience [that] consisted of stoned, flashily dressed dancers of assorted sexual preferences in the urban, high-tech environment of a club" (Frith 1983: 301) can be considered as "the consumate modern style" (Jones 1980: 267).

Heavy Metal

Even though disco reflected the changing sexual mores of society it was, however, too physical and too sexual for some. It demanded listeners and participants who were more comfortable with their bodies than teenagers - it was a culture designed more for the egocentrical, becoming affluent and aging boomers. The style which not only removed the sensual from culture but removed passion from music and replaced it with aggression was heavy metal. This style was the other half of the art, studio, arena rock of the 70's.

Like the art rock bands heavy metal was oriented to the production of albums and presentation in concert. However, the importance of heavy metal came in the experience of the new, high level sounds the bands produced, rather than the expression of complex musical and literary compositions. "With heavy metal, the experience is everything - the pounding bass and drums, the screaming guitar, the prancing lead singer, and most of all, most

important of all, the volume turned up so high that you don't so much hear it as feel it" (Curtis 1987: 286). This style of music, made popular by the likes of Black Sabbath, Grand Funk Railroad, Led Zeppelin, and Blue Oyster Cult, became defined by the huge sound it produced and its capability to play to massive audiences, something which earlier styles couldn't achieve. Following the 70's trend of social enclosure, in balancing off the openness of the 60's, rock moved to the new enclosed stadiums and "not for nothing is heavy metal, probably the dominant style of the seventies, sometimes called 'arena rock,' for it's about the only kind of music you can play to crowds over 50,000 people"(ibid: 236). Metal bands could play to these larger audiences, the sizes of which meant more money per performance, because of the better and more technologically advanced equipment and sound systems available. Bigger, better, and louder speakers and amplifiers were used onstage and gave birth to a new style of rock band like Led Zeppelin who could not have been possible in the mid-60's (Grossman 1976: 124). Even though the heavy metal bands lyrically dealt with a variety of socially relevant and sometimes spiritually cleansing ideas and topics it still tended to be a 'body-feeling' music (now seen in the expression of headbanging and fist waving audiences) than 'mind-thinking' as it gave the listener "an experience which purifie(d) the mind: you can't think or say anything at a heavy metal concert" (Curtis ibid: 286) making it relatively anonymous and isolationist.

Even though heavy metal removed that 60's essence of community behind and from the creation and performance of music and often railed against the optimistic and joyful outlook that seemed to pervade the hippie style, the style was both a "working-class reaction against flower power [which] helped to form (it)" (ibid: 290) and an embracing of some of its

attitudes. "The lasting popularity of heavy metal throughout the seventies is symptomatic of the spread of sixties attitudes to high school kids and working class kids" (ibid: 290). Heavy metal, then, was one of the first forms of music that was not popularized by the baby boomer generation but by the 'dazed and confused' generation that had not been old enough to be a part of the sixties but had been aware enough to see 'their older brothers and friends go off to Vietnam while college kids burned American flags' which can be understood as a reason for the gradual seepage of "new values and a sense of personal entitlement... into the consciousness of all young people not just college youth" (Yankelovich 1974: 228). Reflecting a similar trend amongst college kids of a decline in the belief of the connection between hard work and success, studies at the time began to show that working-class kids, too, displayed a decline in the belief of 'traditional American values' such as hard work (ibid: 30-31). In reacting to and, in terms of numbers, surpassing the music styles of the sixties, Heavy metal helped fill or blast away the anxiety-causing void for a lot of North American teenagers who were finding themselves with a lot of leisure time and questions about their confusing modern society.

2.1(b)iii The 1980's?

Trying to do a brief summary of the 1980's youth cultures becomes a bit confusing, because during this decade there doesn't seem to be one culture that was popularly important or significant other than punk which I described in the previous chapter. I think that with the advent of music video and television networks completely directed towards playing and promoting them, such as MTV and Much Music, and the corporate concerns of profit

involved there had been little chance to create other substantial and meaningful youth cultures. With the modern need to continuously overturn the old and bring in the new, musical styles in the video-electronic age have little chance for longevity. Consequently, the multiple and fragmentary styles have low percentage popularity when related to previous culture's numbers and, therefore, have too small a foundation to support significant cultural communities. In this period only the photogenic and image-conscious band becomes known and pop music, the danceable but not intellectually substantial style, comes back into fashion. Bands like Culture Club, Duran Duran, Men at Work and individual chameleon-like artists such as Michael Jackson and Madonna become the quickly moving sterilized images on our tv's. I can only assume that after a decade of this substantialless, completely modern material that decreased the feeling of community and completely distanced the viewer from performer, punk and grunge, the discourse of the style that opposed such pop culture, was a viable and appealing culture for a popular mainstream youth audience to assume.

2.2 SOME THEORIES IN THE STUDY OF YOUTH CULTURE

Theories and studies about and of youth cultures occurred as youth began to strongly identify with itself as a social group or dominant society felt that youth was ganging together. As youth cultures did not really exist until after the second World War, there have been relatively few theories of them. Since then, however, both American and British sociologists have created what amounts to two traditions concerning youth subcultural research. While some "contemporary theories of youth culture, especially in Britain, has been influenced by Marxist thought"(Brake 1985: 3) others, mostly American, have been influenced by

structuralist thought. The structuralist tradition of thought suggests that in response to various changes in structures of society those effected by the changes will develop various delinquent social behaviour in order to adjust to these changes. Marxist thought holds that the mode of production also creates a social relation of production among the classes meaning that those who control the means of production also have control over the means of mental production, thereby, culture (Brake 1985: 30-57). Subcultures can form as an expression and extension of opposition by the class from which their members came in response to dominant culture and its maintaining of consent, or hegemony (ibid: 3-7). In this section I briefly summarize some of the more popular theories which use either one of these perspectives as foundations for their ideas.

2.2(a) Youth Subculture as Deviant or Delinquent

The roots of viewing youth subcultures as deviant or delinquent are found in the Chicago School of the 1920's and 30's. The work of Cooley, Mead, Thomas, Park, Thrasher, and White, for example, using a methodology of urban documentation, reformism, and empiricism based on the interview, created a"Chicago model [that] was based on plant ecology adapted to city life" (Brake 1985: 34). This was founded on the postulate that the 'mutually advantageous' equilibrium of the plant world was also present in urban life. It was proposed that human beings, like plants, symbiotically live together in 'natural areas' such as neighbourhoods. The concept of social disorganization was introduced to describe the situations of disequilibrium that occur when the biotic balance of competition and cooperation in urban neighbourhoods has been upset due to various social changes such as urban growth.

Social solidarity and social control begin to break down and delinquency rates become a constant in the areas. Study was done on the resulting gangs or social organizations that formed in the changing urban areas to understand "the delinquent's serious endeavour to make sense of his life, and, secondly, to distinguish the fantasy life of the gang from reality" (ibid: 36). The school strived to isolate those features of urban life which ecologically encouraged delinquency.

A second theory that considers youth subculture as delinquency is the anomie theory taken from the Durkheimian concept which argues for a condition of 'normlessness' that occurs when a disturbance of the social order occurs (Durkheim, 1951). "The source of anomie is found in the strain arising between the collective moral authority ('collective conscience') and individual interests. Anomie arises when the 'collective conscience' fails to control individual aspirations" (Brake 1985: 48). Schweitzer mentions in his description and assesment of Durkheim's concepts, structures and reform strategies related to anomie and disanomie that the program provides "normative-evaluative grounds for a diagnosis and critique of anomie and a practical humanistic solution"(Schweitzer 1991: 83) yet "his remedial prescriptions are fundamentally predisposed in a way that favors the needs and interests of management and capital over those of human labor"(ibid: 84). Merton's version of the anomie theory lies in the structural strain created by differential access to structures of opportunity. "The consequences of such structural inconsistency are psychopathology of personality, and/or anti-social conduct and/or revolutionary activities" (Merton 1938: 678). In response to the failure of society to provide both acceptable goals and means for its citizens various adaptations ('predominantly dysfunctional') are made which often lead to delinquency.

In reply, however, A.K. Cohen argued that Merton forgot to take into consideration 'non-utilitarian, malicious and negativistic behaviour' in working-class subcultures (Cohen, A.K., 1955). He felt that the delinquent subcultures (typified by either conflict and violence, drug addiction, or semi-professional thievery (Cohen and Short, 1958) were collective solutions resulting from adolescent working-class youth status problems with and exclusion by middle-class criteria.

Differing from the more deterministic orientation of the two previous theories, Matza introduced a phenomenological perspective to the study of delinquent subculture with an emphasis on a naturalism which he believed didn't distort what the deviants themselves would recognize as their reality. In arguing that "the subculture is a setting for the commission of delinquent acts commonly known to the group" (Brake 1985: 54), Matza suggests that the members are neither compelled nor committed to performing the delinquent deeds (Matza 1964: 49) and that "delinquent values, the seeking of excitement, toughness, disdain for work are in fact not so much deviant as typical of swashbuckling leisure values held by us all" (Matza and Sykes, 1961).

2.2(b) Subcultures of Dominant and Subordinate Cultural Relations

Brake suggests that American subcultural theory has been seen as inappropriate to the study of British cultures by many British subcultural theorists and that British approaches to such study could be summarized into four categories: 1) social ecology of the late 1950's and early 1960's, 2) studies related to the sociology of education which examine 'youth, leisure, and youth culture as an alternative to academic advancement', 3) studies looking at youth

groups in the context of social reaction and labelling, and 4) the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University (Brake 1985: 58). Of these, the forth school of approach has been predominantly significant in the study of contemporary youth cultures. Like Stan Cohen's (1972) unique study of folk devils and moral panics which related youth culture and deviancy to mass media and public (over)reaction, the CCCS which "has developed a sophisticated analysis using hegemony as a central concept" (Brake ibid: 67) "unlocked the complexities of aspects of popular culture, tending to pursue the relations between dominant and subordinate cultures" (ibid: 65).

Tending to focus on the social role of commercial youth cultures while being criticized for elements of romanticism, overlooking negative elements, too little empirical data, and too heavy on theory, the CCCS school developed two aspects of analysis based on differing emphasis given to structuralism and culturalism. The first was to uncover the relation of subcultures and class (signs) and the second was to unravel the meanings of style and fashion (signifiers) (ibid: 68). Representative of the former style is Phil Cohen's (1972) work on the interaction of the structures of the family, the neighbourhood and the local economy. In handling contradictory 'shifts' and deprivations in material, cultural, and economic forms, youth "subcultures try to retrieve the lost, socially cohesive elements in the parent culture; they attempt to relocate 'in an imaginary relation' the real relations which those in subcultures cannot transcend" (Brake ibid: 67). Culture in a class structured society is lived practices that characterize practical ideologies and permit members to make sense of their conditions at a particular moment in time. It is also involved in the struggle between dominant and subordinate classes for consent; consent to the legitimation of class relations. However, this

consent is continually changing, as domination is never total, and the use of subculture helps provide 'space' for that class (ibid: 68).

The latter form of analysis, such as Clarke's (1976) and Hebdige's (1976), uses Levi Strauss' concept of bricolage to look at youth cultures' styles, argot, and appearances to argue that objects and symbols become 'reordered and recontextualized' to communicate new and fresh meanings. Objects and their meanings constitute together a sign when assembled in a culture of society but when they are rearranged or put into a different context can convey a different meaning or message. "For Hall and Jefferson (1976) homology showed how appropriated objects were related to focal concerns, group structure, collective self-image; these appropriated objects were now where subcultural members could see their central values held and reflected" (Brake ibid: 69). In general, the CCCS argue that although "subcultures, because they remain in the area of leisure, are negotiated rather than oppositional forms" (ibid: 68), "it is in popular culture, that is working-class culture of which delinquency is a behavioural aspect sometimes, that resistance is located" (ibid: 71).

CONCLUSION

From the descriptions of earlier youth cultures it is obvious that though there are some similar elements, such as escape, resistance and rebellion, creativity and social consciousness, with that of punk and its contemporary descendent, grunge. However, these more recent cultures, because of their unique features, cannot, I suggest, be adequately understood using methods that view them as either deviant and delinquent or as a result of dominant and subordinate cultural relations. Consequently, in the following chapters I formulate a

interpretive framework based on a combination of a few theoretical and methodological perspectives which I feel allows for a more appropriate understanding of contemporary youth cultural expression and meaning.

CHAPTER 3: ART, POSTMODERNISM, AUTHENTICITY, AND SIGNIFICANCE:
LOCATING AND UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING AND VALUE OF
CONTEMPORARY YOUTH CULTURES

"There have been 19 civilizations in the world and all of them have risen and declined. The signs of decline are always the same, falling values, disintegrating family life and out of control children". (from a letter to the editor, Vancouver Sun, December 9, 1993, p. A12)

"Cultural signs instead are revealed to be the instruments of the creation of new grounds, new meanings and new institutions". (Ryan 1988: 561)

INTRODUCTION

The history of youth cultures shows that within Western society a category of social differentiation has arisen based on age and with it a continuous cycle of new and unique ideas, beliefs, meanings, and understandings. These components are expressed as cultural signs, texts, and discourses within the cultures themselves. Based on the information in the previous chapter, it is apparent that youth cultures have often been defined and separated through the creative and stylish expression of modern and leisurely affluent young people; idealistic expression which has often led to the formation of popular, yet rebellious and socially iconoclastic, counter-cultures that were misunderstood as being indicative of out of control youth. Consequently, these cultures have had profound consequence on generational market commodity interests, social institutions and personal philosophies, as well as become the centre for intergenerational confrontation.

What makes the new contemporary youth cultures so interesting, yet disturbing, for many people is their apparent lack of ideals, interests, morals, and beliefs and the threat which this poses of completely and indefinitely withdrawing contemporary youth from responsible society. In judging the writings of Daniel Bell (The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (1976)), Allan Bloom (The Closing of the American Mind (1987)), and

Christopher Lasch (The Culture of Narcissism (1979)), it seems that some social theorists, in addition to many members of the older generations within mainstream society, believe that these cultures are indicative of the modern emphasis on individualism and relativism. These conditions are felt to contribute to self- and socially-destructive behaviours such as egocentrism, hedonism, and self-indulgence which lead to social deviance and misconduct. However, as with most situations in which someone encounters a culture or language foreign to them, these readings could be mistaken based on the condition that the readers viewing from their own anthrocentric position are not properly equipped to grasp the meaning of others' cultural expression. What these ideas tend to encourage, then, is the belief that there might be new and/or better ways to try to understand contemporary cultures and society. Accordingly, the purpose of my study is to locate and apply more appropriate methods and theories to the elements of contemporary youth culture with the intention of providing a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of the positive and actual personal and social meaning of cultural participation and expression. In the next chapter I will outline what I believe to be a more suitable method for doing research on contemporary cultures while in this chapter I will explain my own combination of theoretical perspectives which I feel provide better frameworks for interpreting and understanding some contemporary youth cultures.

Fundamental to an informed and aware interpretation and understanding of contemporary youth cultures and their expressions there are four elements (method, philosophy, context, and purpose) which I feel the reader needs to be conscious of. The primary method or vehicle by which these cultures express themselves and impart meaning is

through art. The philosophy or moral ideal that informs and can be found in the narrative discourse of the artistic texts is defined as the ideal of authenticity. Third, the style of expression and discourse of the culture should be placed and understood within the proper social and historical context, descriptive of current moods, ethos, and attitudes, which for many contemporary youth cultures is postmodernism. Finally, the manner in which these cultures can be measured to determine if there is in fact a purpose for and outcome from cultural participation is found in their social significance. Being conscious of these elements will help the study of contemporary youth cultures 1) discover how, or if, members of these cultures use aesthetic texts as an expression of meaning, 2) understand the meaning and discourse of the cultures' expression, and 3) determine whether or not there is any social significance to the discourse and participation in these cultures.

3.1 ART IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Art and its place and function in society has always posed difficult questions, because of its inherent characteristic of being created by reflective and unique human beings. The degree and range of thought, inspiration, and experience put into a work of art can be infinite, thereby making consensual meaning and understanding difficult and problematic. Grana indicates that to experience art is to make visible 'certain ultimate meanings' within its form that other aspects of culture cannot; a statement of meaning which is 'endlessly renewed' (Grana 1989: 17-18). This is echoed in the belief that "the activity of art is based on the fact that a man, receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it"

(Tolstoy 1930: 171). While I believe that the importance of art is that it can reveal meanings and understanding and can do so on an ongoing and progressive basis, I do not think that there can be any 'ultimate' meanings that hold for every individual and/or in all cases. The truth to art is that it can be interpreted and understood in an infinite number of ways between and within people.

3.1(a) Understanding Art

If art can be interpreted in a number of different ways, how, then, is art ever to be understood? I think we can agree that when the spectator experiences the aesthetic of a work of art it either holds meaning for them or that it is just a meaningless object of curiosity. To know or try to discover the artist's intent is not neccessary since meanings are an affair of the consciousness of the text reader (Hirsch 1984) and if the reader is not conscious or receptive to any meanings in a text then it will continue to have no meaning. This is because the "aesthetic experience... is a mode of self-understanding. But all self-understanding takes place in relation to something else that is [previously] understood" (Gadamer 1975: 369). What this suggests is that in a Heideggerean-style hermeneutical circle of interpretation aesthetic texts gain their meaning and understanding, misunderstanding, or non-understanding through the fore-conceptions and fore-meanings held by the reader prior to interaction with the piece. "If a person fails to hear what the other person is really saying, he (has not been) able to place correctly what he has misunderstood within the range of his own various expectations of meaning" (ibid: 379). So, in the first place, the task of understanding art or aesthetical textual experiences, including contemporary culture, requires an openness by the reader "to the text's quality of newness [with] the conscious assimilation of ones's own fore-meanings and

prejudices" (ibid: 380). The reader must allow for the origination of their own personal meaning that occurs due to the interaction between an artistic text and their own previously held understandings.

A viewer, or reader, need not try to discover the artist's original intent because it may not even be there; the artist, possibly creating from an unqualifiable consciousness, may not have known the meaning themselves. The act of understanding art and aesthetic texts is a creative and ongoing process in itself, as it incorporates a whole range of dynamic and varied elements which can simultaneously impinge on a reader's textual interpretation, thereby, allowing for an almost infinite range of possible meanings. These possibilities can vary from the actual physical aspects of the work of art, the setting within which the piece is viewed, the reader's fore-conceptions and fore-meanings, the mood of the reader at the time of viewing, and to, quite possibly, what the viewer had for breakfast. It is this condition of almost infinite variation that leads to discussions, also known as arguments, about what is art and what is not, and what is 'good' art and what is not. People, because of the seemingly infinite number of possibile of experiences, will not always be able to completely agree on these matters. Some works 'speak' to some people and not to others, or at least they say different things. Agreement is more likely to occur in cases where readers share fore-conceptions and fore- meanings based on such things as shared or similar experience, culture, and environment. This is not to say that because people are of a different experience (eg. race, gender, religious) that they cannot understand art created from another perspective or, conversely, that people of similar experience will completely understand another's art based on that experience. However, as human beings with various capacities of fore-conceptions,

everyone has the ability to reflect on images presented to them by other human beings and glean even a small amount of meaning from any piece. It is the place of this study to impart of bit of fore-meaning to the reader for the purpose of approaching contemporary youth cultures and understanding them.

3.1(b) Social Role of Art

Art plays a socially relevant role by providing, in a variety of manners, instances of significant forms which evoke emotions and thoughts that humans react to. "We have no other measure of recognising a work of art than our feeling for it" (Bell, C. 1958: 417). This is an experience that is often not possible in a non-creative and non-aesthetic manner because "the work of art ..., unlike the machine, is not only the outcome of imagination, but operates imaginatively rather than in the realm of physical existencies" (Dewey 1934: 274). The creative and receptive process of art is a combination of imagination, revelation, and communication that plays upon subjective comprehension using objective material within the realm of reality. It is in this way, due to the interpretive and reflexive actions which art commands, that art helps or stimulates people to gather and locate meaning in something they may not have otherwise seen or understood. And, because there is a considerable and ongoing variation in possible perspectives and conditions, the result is a range of experiences and understandings which can lead to a myriad of consequential, yet indeterminable, personal and social changes.

What this concept invokes is a decidedly discursive and dialectical element in art. "It seems that art as art expresses a truth, an experience, a necessity which, although not in the

domain of radical praxis, are nevertheless essential components of revolution" (Marcuse 1978: 1). The work, produced with some idea, image, or feeling in mind by the artist, becomes a material object in reality allowing for an aesthetic experience for author and reader alike, and, while the 'revolution' may not be on a grand scale, change can occur on various personal and social levels. In an inter-textual weaving between the piece of art, the receptive reader, and their fore-understandings, the experience attains some new form of meaning and, referring back to Gadamer, allows or provokes some self-understanding within the reader in relation to fore-conceptions of self and/or society which themselves undergo consequential and undeterminable questioning, re-interpretation, and change (Gadamer 1984: 386). These momentary changes can vary on scale of consequence but change does happen and over a period, with repetitive and circular acts of reinterpretation and interaction, substantial change is possible yet indeterminable. Akin to the dialectical process where previously existing elements interact and conflict with each other resulting in the formation of something new and previously unforseen, horizons of personal and social significance are fused in the process of interpreting and understanding art resulting in a change, however slight, in perceptions of both. These unforseen yet definite changes in perception become the effect of art on the social.

3.2 AUTHENTICITY: THE CONTEMPORARY MORAL IDEAL

The basis for this concept of authenticity is found in Charles Taylor's book, Malaise of Modernity, wherein it is described how a new moral ideal exists in spite of the modern malaises or declines that contemporary society is experiencing. He proposes that with the

progression of the modern character of self-absorbed individualism many people feel that there has been a flattening and narrowing of our lives, that we have experienced a "loss of a heroic dimension to life"(Taylor 1991: 4), and "we suffer from a lack of passion"(ibid: 4). With the growth of self-absorbed individualism where nothing beyond or transcending the individual is important there has been a strengthening of reason based on efficiency and instrumentalism that tends to ignore the benefits of social cohesion and responsibility. This has produced a society without lasting, solid, substantial elements; everything (relationships, tradition, culture) is just another form of 'junk food' consumed for a quick, yet ephemeral, fix and satisfaction. The consequence of these malaises is a disease of apathy and political non-participation which allows for the loss of freedom due to the co-opting of individual political power by opportunistic bureaucrats (ibid: 2-9).

The opinions about cultures resulting from such conditions are divided. On the one hand, critics (such as Bloom 1987, Lasch 1979, and Bell, D. 1976) with recourse to metaphysical reason and scientific method describe the cultural feature of soft-relativism, within which the traits of self-fulfilment and non-interference are prominent, as being based on the socially destructive and morally vacant attitudes of narcissism and egocentrism, hedonism and self-indulgence. Taylor, on the other hand, believes, and I concur, that these critics, who tend to focus on the trivial and self-indulgent forms, have failed to recognize the existence of a powerful ideal at work in many of the contemporary cultures. He proposes that in some cases the contemporary understanding of self-fulfilment has resulted in a new moral ideal which he terms 'authenticity' (Taylor 1991: 15-16).

Authenticity in the contemporary period is not seen, or should not always be seen, to

be the image which the critics portray but a blend of (1) self-controlled and self-conscious individualism and (2) self-determined moral motivation based on the liberalism of self-determining freedom and its social recognition (ibid: 38-40). Cultures expressive of this ideal will be characterized by discourses supportive of individual self-fulfillment, self-defining choice, and identity self-determination, often discovered in dialougue within the intimate sphere, while being conscious of and socially recognizing a fairness for all to equally realize their potentials, choices, and identities. In the case of socially significant cultures, those cultures which recognize some sort of shared horizons of important social issues, authenticity is supported by opposition to, and criticism of, the tendency to individualistic deviancy as found in self-centered, disengaged, and instrumental rationality (ibid: 50-53).

As Taylor puts it: "briefly, we can say that authenticity (A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality. But it is also true, as we saw, that it (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue. That these demands may be in tension has to be allowed. But what must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other, of (A), say, at the expense of (B), or vice versa"(ibid: 66).

3.2(a) Authenticity, Art, & Contemporary Youth Culture

Authenticity, then, is the realization of a powerful contemporary moral ideal discovered through the methods of self-choice, self-fulfilment and being 'true to oneself', culminating in "recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves"(ibid: 27) while

simultaneously recognizing the importance of horizons of social significance and relationships. Taylor indicates that the experience entails being true to one's own originality achieved through discovery, potentiality, realization, and articulation which inevitably results in self-definition. Further, he states that such self-definition and "revelation come through expression..., [thereby], suggest(ing) right away a close analogy, even connection, between self-discovery and artistic creation" (ibid:61). That is, the process of creating art exemplifies and requires a range of attributes which are similarly substantive of the contemporary cultural expression of authenticity. Featherstone echoes this understanding by stating that "there are clearly strong linkages and cross-overs between the project of the aestheticization of everyday life on the part of such groups (young 'de-centered' subjects) and the romantic, bohemian art school tradition that has fed into rock music, particularly since the 1960's, which has sought in various ways to transgress the boundary between art and everyday life" (Featherstone 1988: 208). The "erosion of faith in traditional ethical theories left an ethical horror vacui which the ethics of taste naturally rushes in to fill" (Shusterman 1988: 338). I believe this is true because, as dominant moral values, religious beliefs, and standards of knowledge and truth start to show their inconsistencies and restrictions, become questioned, and break down, new ideals and ideas to believe in are required to take their place. This replacement of ideals can most easily occur in the process of active personal creativity and expression. This method is related to the same processes involved in artistic and aesthetic creation and a union of the two becomes an almost unavoidable result for cultures forming in a contemporary, media-saturated society.

The direction and result of artistic expression and the originality and discovery of

personal morals is not, however, completely unrestricted and self-determined, since the "genesis of the human mind is in [a] sense not 'monological', not something each accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical" (Taylor 1991: 33). The contemporary youth cultures expressing the ideal authenticity within their discourses will do so, then, by incorporating and/or addressing various horizons of significance within their cultural texts. The demands of these horizons, historically formed standards and moralities, interlocutive encounters, and social conditions external to the individual living in a society, act, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, to guide or deflect the voyage of self-discovery. The result expresses an originality as determined by the historical culminations of the action and reaction of a reflective individual within and against both the confines of a social sphere's conventions and inescapable horizons, both stifling and enabling (ibid: 31-41), and their own inwardly generated creative potentials (ibid: 47-49). The artistic works of an authentic contemporary youth culture caught in the flux of disintegrating or changing traditions and trying to make sense of their own identity will express and realize, to varying degrees, the interaction between the self-determining creative and moral side of the individual and the significant recognition of social norms, institutions, and relationships.

3.3 POSTMODERNITY: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPOARY CULTURES

Society's older generations express that they do not seem to understand today's youth nor their cultures and believe that there is a coinciding lack or decay in moral values and social concern. I also expressed that evoking the contemporary moral ideal of authenticity, as defined by Taylor, could help to understand the meaning of the new cultures and social

conditions. However, I do not agree with Taylor as to the context which this moral ideal is expressive of. While he indicates that "authenticity is a facet of modern individualism" (ibid: 44), I believe that, in response to the conditions that the ethos of modernity has created, the moral ideal is no longer expressive of the conditions of modernity but those of postmodernity.

3.3(a) Modernity and Postmodernity

Applying an understanding of postmodernity is more suited for the study of many contemporary youth cultures, I feel, because it explains a change in the mode of understanding for some groups of society. As Bernstein, summarizing Weber's overall arguments, and Foucault indicate, modernity is a discourse, 'ethos', consciousness, and attitude which has influenced for a long time many socially dominant ways of thinking and acting including epistemology, ideology, and science (Foucault 1984: 164); a "purposive-instrumental rationality... (which) affects and infects the entire range of social and cultural life encompassing economic structures, law, bureaucratic administration, and even the arts" (Bernstein 1985: 5). The shift to the postmodern defines, or is defined by, the change from this fundamental consciousness to another and its consequential manifestations.

Frequent descriptions of modernity or modernization are pervaded with such words as contradictory, fragmentary, multiplicity, and relativistic. Briefly, this condition arises from its roots in Enlightenment thought and purposes of progress based on ideas of rationality, efficiency, individualism, structure, development and progress, process, and invention directed towards finding or determining truth and the 'good life' which inevitably results in a continual sequence of the new quickly taking over and getting rid of the old. It is this continual process of turning-over and rejuvenation that led Berman (1982) to borrow Marx's phrase 'all

that is solid melts into air' in order describe the ephemerality of modernity. However,

underlying this fragmentation is an "epistemology for revealing what (modernism) still (takes)

to be the true nature of a unified, though complex, underlying reality" (Harvey 1989: 30); a

linear procession of rationalizing each new ideology or style as 'the' realization of 'the'

universal and eternal truth and good life.

The condition of fragmentation, ephemerality, contradiction, pluralism, confusion,

discontinuity, and chaotic change continues within the postmodern experience. But, whereas

modernism can be seen as the attempt to ignore or eliminate these irreconcilable conditions,

the postmodern consciousness can be described as the affirmative recognition and

embracement of these conditions which signifies a number of important consequences (ibid:

44). An example of the postmodern embrace of plurality and the 'play' in this plurality can be

found in the dynamic way many contemporary idividuals change their identity day-to-day,

hour-to-hour to suit their immediate purposes without, seemingly, creating themselves some

form of crisis about who they are. The central feature, or consequence, that distinguishes

postmodernism from modernism is the disappearance of the search for or insistence on a

universal or eternal truth in its underlying ethos. "Lyotard in fact defines the postmodern

simply as an 'incredulity towards metanarratives'" (ibid: 45); a "strong ... suspicion that there

really is no such thing (as intrinsic or essential nature)" (Shusterman 1988: 339). The modern

belief in metanarratives is replaced by the postmodern emphasis on the exploration, discovery,

and/or acceptance of 'otherness' and the pluralistic multitude of human discourse and

experience without having to stress one 'voice' over another. From this attitude, this disbelief,

arise the discourse and textual forms that develop the basis for contemporary cultures.

3.3(b)   Postmodernity, Art, and Culture

The next step is to see how this condition of postmodernism is expressed in the arts

and culture. Collins, in his book Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture & Post-Modernism,

explains that cultures today provide and use a variety of simultaneous options and

fragmentary assemblages in forming expressive cultural existence (Collins 1989: 27). The

postmodern takes place in the implosion of commercialized popular culture (via the

ascendency and influence of the media) and the construction of postmodern identities (also

see Baudrillard (1980, 1983), Lyotard (1986), Denzin (1988)).

"Amongst the central features associated with postmodernism in the arts are: the

effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life; the collapse of the hierarchical

distinction between high and mass/popular culture; a stylistic promiscuity favouring

eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration

of the surface 'depthlessness' of culture; the decline of the originality/genius of the artistic

producer and the assumption that art can only be repetitious" (Featherstone 1988: 203). These

features, which define the mischevious joy and dark cynicism of the individual who partakes

in the postmodern creative and artistic process, are expressive of the attitude which

disbelieves in metanarratives. Everyday life, then, becomes a work of art for the common

individual, incorporating all styles and images, conflicting and complementary, of traditional,

formal, kitsch, commercial, and commodified creation that are played out in a variety of

popular media forms. This is in opposition to the often bleek, utilitarian, and structured

expressions of modern art, "represented [by] the universal and eternal as found in the

ephemeral and chaotic" (Harvey 1989: 20), which is affected by unitary, centered and co-

ordinated 'Grand Hotel systems' of thought where every piece has its set part to play in the whole (Collins 1989: 27), and characterized by aesthetic self-consciousness, reflexivity, simultaneity and montage, paradox, ambiguity and uncertainness, and the destructured, dehumanized subject (Featherstone 1988: 202). Though many of these characteristics are shared by both styles, modernism can be thought of or symbolized as the intellectual artiste concerned with determining the place or purpose of the individual human subject in life while postmodernism could be described as the idiot savant who appears to be more interested in the thrill of unbridled and unrestricted play.

Based on this hyper-desire for play, postmodern identity and cultural choice, formation, and expression occurs in the easily accessed and enjoyable sphere of consumption and leisure as opposed to the modern realm of classical art forms and social positions. Consequently, "the identity becomes more and more unstable, more and more fragile (in postmodern culture)" (Kellner 1992: 143) because "the overwhelming variety of subject positions, of possibilities for identity, [which] in an affluent culture no doubt create highly unstable identities... constantly (provide) new openings to restructure one's identity"(ibid: 174). The postmodern condition, seen in the continually swirling, media-intensified combination of select, yet incoherently disconnected, images, graphics, and elements chosen from an array of chaotic and diverse commercialized cultures' texts, begins to express a vague and complex discourse or narrative that, for some reason, attracts and then becomes the basis for the readers consciousness resulting in a process of self-definition and identity construction from this unconnected plurality. However, in contemporary postmodern conditions where there is a multiple variety of incompatible intentions, views, and narratives which

simultaneously appeal to the individual "the resulting configurations do not form a planned or well-managed pluralism, but a discontinuous, conflicted pluralism, creating tension-filled environments that have enormous impact on the construction of both representations and the subjects that interact within them" (Collins 1989: 27). Eventually, the cultural and identity representations which are the result of postmodern conditions are themselves expressive of postmodern textual practices and moods. However, each postmodern representation also exists within a postmodern context by simultaneously co-existing alongside the presence of other popular styles both postmodern and modern. Postmodernism, in fact, defines the heterogeneous condition of coincidental exisence of many conflicting decentered popular styles, none which are touted as being the correct style. "One could describe precisely the co-existence of styles, this mixture of traditional, modern, and postmodern cultural forms as 'postmodern' (Kellner 1992: 171).

3.4 SIGNIFICANCE: SOCIAL AGENCY FROM CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

I do not believe it is neccessary for a culture to intentionally have some idea of social significance as part of its purpose for existing or expressing itself, however, the existence of a culture should be seen as an indication of some existence of significance. The simple fact that some individuals somehow arrived at a form of concerted effort of expression denotes social significance, no matter how small. This section recognizes and responds to some of the criticisms directed towards contemporary cultures and provides some perspective as to how, in fact, these cultures can be interpreted as socially significant. I also locate the components of the culture that contain and express the discourse which makes these cultures significant.

3.4(a) Commodification and Significance

As previously mentioned, commodification is central to the popularizing of

contemporary cultures and it is this element which has led many critics to reject any notion of

postmodern expression as being genuine or able to provide real social meaning, commentary,

or change. The intellectual rejection of popular culture is not new as Ross (1989a) indicates

and "the commodity status of both popular and Post-modernist texts appears to be their

'original sin'" (Collins 1989: 124). As Stauth and Turner relay, writers within the critical

theory perspective (such as those of the Frankfurt School) view commodity-oriented mass and

popular culture as "[incapable of posing any] significant possibility of resistance, change or

transformation in cultural systems" (Stauth & Turner 1988: 522) or in dominant society at

large because mainstream (ie. capitalist) ideologies are believed to be unavoidably

interconnected with the production of these 'manufactured' cultures. "Underlying this

rejection of a 'mass culture' is the belief that the commodification of cultural phenomena has

meant their subjugation to the dominant order, and therefore their invalidation as 'genuine'

expressions of anything other than that of multi-national corporations which produce them"

(Collins 1989: 124). Stauth and Turner argue that this response "tend(s) to be elitist in (its)

cultural and political assumptions" (Stauth & Turner 1988: 509), "since the critique of mass

society was grounded ultimately in a firm distinction between high and low culture" (ibid:

518), a distinction that postmodernism tries to erode, and is described as expressing a form of

nostalgia which is "a primary disease of 'melancholic scholars" (ibid: 509). Granted, the

ideological intention and function of capitalism, mass-production and mass consumption, is

behind postmodern cultural commodity formation and distribution, and "we may be constantly

encouraged to define ourselves through commodities, but the absence of coordination in such

a process results in our being asked to define ourselves in quite different ways, thereby

producing anything but a uniform subjectivity" (Collins 1989: 128). Many consumer-related

products, such as grocery shopping carts used by homeless people and chemistry glassware

used as bong-pipes by marijuana users, are used in ways not originally intended by the

producer. "The cultural producer merely creates raw materials (fragments and elements),

leaving it open to consumers to recombine those elements in any way they wish" (Harvey

1989: 51). It is around these recombinations in various ways and forms of consumer products

that cultures arise to provide social significance for their members. The cultural analyses

performed by Hall, Jefferson, and Hebdige at the Birmingham Centre for the Contemporary

Cultural Studies point to the importance and presence of resistance within popular and mass

culture, through, for example, the development of youth subcultures, to the dominance of the

central cultural tradition. In many of their examples cultural members were found to be able

to take simple articles from the dominant culture, such as the paper clip, razor blade, and iron

cross of the iconoclastic punk culture (Hebdige 1976), alter their meaning for their own

localized purposes and understanding, use them as signs and symbols of not only rebellion but

provokation, and, consequently, create social, thereby political, expression and commentary.

Significance comes from the indeterminable, yet definite and ongoing, effect that the injection

of new meanings, interpretations, and understandings of consumer products expressed by the

subcultures has on individuals and by extension society as a whole.

3.4(b) Instability of Identity and Significance

The rejection of the significance of postmodern cultures has also been based of the

assumed instability of identity, and subsequent moral values associated with identity, and the apparent trivialization or disappearance of social and political concerns and ethics; a condition which creates a theoretical problem within the realm of modern social philosophy and research (Taylor 1991:14-15). The "postmodern identity revolves around leisure, centred on looks, images, and consumption,... and tends to be more unstable and subject to change" (Kellner 1992: 153) which causes modernists great alarm and anxiety as they believe that "there is something amoral or morally threatening about postmodern selves which are fluid, multiple, and subject to rapid change" (ibid: 156). In these cases, however, postmodern contemporary cultures are being analyzed from modernistic mind-sets and, as a result, they are not being properly understood. An inappropriate perspective or outlook is being brought to the interpetation of these cultures. The "basic problem which pervades these and similar attempts to ground ethics in an account of man's intrinsic or essential nature is our strong postmodernist suspicion that there really is no such thing. We have an even greater suspicion that there is no ahistorical essence that is both universally found and timelessly (metaphysically and biologically) fixed in human kind and yet is also determinate and substantial enough to generate or justify, by mere logical derivation or elaboration, a definite ethical theory" (Shusterman 1988: 339). Subsequently, "the seemingly fragmented, chaotic, non-representable nature of the postmodern presents new challenges to social theory, art and radical politics" (Kellner 1988: 259). From this conclusion, the significance of the new cultures that reflect a postmodern mood can also be found in the production of new ways of expression that provoke new ways of thinking about identities, morals, and social concerns, both in academic work and in everyday life.

3.4(c) Significance in the Aesthetic

As I proposed above, some contemporary youth cultures' moral ideals can be understood using Taylor's concept of authenticity within the context of postmodernity. In order to grasp this connection and interpret the social significance of the new cultures it is necessary to, first, find a way to locate where in the cultural forms these moral ideals are. Modern cultures tend to locate and objectify their rationalized moral codes in the written form of language, such as in holy books, law books, rule books, and how-to books, which can become the matter of universal permanence. Because of their concrete and structured form, they often produce unquestionable metanarratives which can not only direct and counsel members of the cultures from whence they came but also restrict and segragate. On the other hand, postmodern cultures, because of a disbelief in such concretization, are not expected to be so definite in the expression of their moral ideals. Consequently, expressions of the moral ideal of authenticity and self-identity in postmodern cultures are found in the aesthetic. Aesthetical expression involved in creative and artistic works offers a suitable arena for realizing authenticity in postmodernity because the processes and terms of artistic creation are similar to those of self-discovery and making ones own morality (Taylor 1991: 62-63) and the resultant discourses are cryptic and numerous enough so as to not simply supplant one set of cultural metanarratives for another. "Aesthetic considerations are or should be crucial and ultimately perhaps paramount in determining how we choose to lead or shape our lives and how we assess what a good life is. It fleshes out Wittgenstein's cryptic dictum that 'ethics and aesthetics are one" (Shusterman 1988: 337). That is, in cultures that are being proposed as being expressive of the moral ideal of authenticity and of the ethos of postmodernism we

will find the articulation of discourses in the aesthetic texts. From this locus, then, we can interpret and understand the meaning of these personal and social expressions from which the overall culture's significance can be evaluated.

3.4(d) The Social Significance of the Moral Ideal of Authenticity

From the preceeding statements it seems that the significance of these contemporary cultures is found in their attachment to the moral ideal of authenticity, although the ongoing and dynamic process of self-discovery through cultural and lifestyle experimentation and choice in an environment of mass production and consumption would not seem to encourage the process of moral value generation. The stress on self-choice within these cultures would appear to imply a positive valuation or affirmation of just the act of choice alone; that all choices are equal and worthy merely because they were chosen freely (Taylor 1991: 37). However, the importance of the ideal of self-choice found within authenticity entails something greater. For self-choice to be an important ideal, some choices must be more significant than others or it would not matter what the choice was. "The ideal of self-choice supposes that there are other issues of significance beyond self-choice" (ibid: 39). There is, then, a variety of background horizons of important and significant moral and social issues and demands for the individual who implicitly understands and perpetuates the ideal of self-choice. For Taylor, authenticity is responsible individualism within society, it "is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands" (ibid: 41); "authenticity is a facet of modern individualism, and it is a feature of all forms of individualism that they don't just emphasize the freedom of the individual but also propose models of society" (ibid: 44). The significance of cultures expressing the ideal of authenticity

is found in the meaning of the choices in identity and self-fulfilment are made over other possibilities and the consequences that these choices involve for the individual and their society. From non-trivial and non-anthropocentric cultures of authenticity, some of the central significant ideals or ethics that these choices confer are freedom and fairness, a universal right, for the individual to be who they want to be, to be different, and for the reciprocal social recognition, defended by an idea of justice, of equality amongst and between different individuals. Contemporary youth cultures incorporate the 'facet of modern indvidualism' into the plurality of postmodern textual discourse and propose inexplicit models of society.

3.4(e) Finding the Social Significance of Contemporary Cultures

It is the proposed models of society, the frameworks of which are implicitly found in the contemporary popular cultures, that provide the cultures' social significance. However, because these postmodern 'models' are inexplicit, unclear, and nodictatorial the frameworks of these models are often very difficult to comprehend. But, judging by their popularity, these cultures still do make sense and have meaning to somebody. These cultures have required the reader, in a process which demands the existence of some sort of understanding on the reader's part prior to interaction, to interpret and attach meaning for themselves to the cultural text. Readers are able to do this, because "pop culture provides images and figures (texts) which its audiences can identify with and emulate. It thus possesses important socializing and enculturing effects via its role models, gender models, and variety of subject positions which valorize certain forms of behaviour and style while denigrating and villanizing other types" (Kellner 1992: 150). In popular cultures the significant socializing effects of morally and ideologically informed valorization and villanization occur because the images and discourses

present in the texts are also, initially, found in its members' consciousness' and/or identities.

Subsequently, the discovery of significant social meaning within cultural images is related to, first of all, the recognition of the existence of similar concepts within the character of the cultural producer and consumer themselves. To understand the social significance of a popular culture is to understand the cultural consumer and to understand the cultural producer. "The artist and intellectual must be understood in terms of their lifestyle which is socially recognizable and locatable in the social sphere. They also have a special interest in: 1) the wider acceptance of their perceptions on life..., and 2) the proclamation of the superiority of their lifestyle manifest in their subcultures" (Featherstone 1992: 280). The act of taking on and presenting oneself in a certain aesthetic lifestyle can be understood as a personal and visual display of certain ideological and philosophical beliefs and values, no matter how polymorphous, held by the individual.

The next problem posed naturally questions how a set of beliefs centered on the individual could make a substantial impact on change at the social level. Aesthetic presentation of self locates discussion "primarily to what might be called the private ethical realm, the questions of how the individual should shape his life to fulfil himself as a person. But it can be very naturally extended to the public realm, to questions of what a good society should be" (Shusterman 1988: 337). Because postmoderism questions the validity of such things as universal truths and metanarratives, it should not be expected that postmodern cultures would explicitly or actively promote or supplant a certain lifestyle or aesthetic as 'the' right one. What should, and does, occur is the presentation of an aesthetic, of another option, from which readers are to interpret and judge for themselves as to the validity and appeal, in

whole or in part, of its meaning. Shusterman concludes from Rorty that "(the good life) is questionable... because it is not definitely there to be discovered but instead open to be made and shaped, and should therefore be shaped aesthetically"(ibid: 341). Visions of the good society as a whole and the social significance of a contemporary postmodern culture's moral ideals can be found in the individual aesthetic representation; an "aesthetic [which] is neither a symbol of, means to, or surrogate for an ethic, but rather the constitutive substance of one" (ibid: 353). Therefore, "we should focus upon the actual cultural practices and changing power balances of those groups engaged in the production, classification, circulation, and consumption of postmodern goods" (Featherstone 1988: 200).

CONCLUSION

The critics of contemporary cultures have said that there are no morals in today's self-centered youth, however, in response I have outlined above how, through a new understanding, a definite set of socially significant contemporary morals can be located. I have shown that contemporary youth cultures are to be seen as expressive of the moral ideal of authenticity, an inarticulated ideal which focusses on a self-determined individualism and morality based on socially recognized liberal freedoms while simultaneously being mindful of its place within society. The expression of the elements of this moral ideal can be located in the textual discourse of the cultures' art and understood in the context of the postmodern disbelief in metanarratives and a promotion of identity exploration. These cultures show their social significance in the fact that they recognize various socially determined horizons of significance (personal, moral, poltiical) which are then expressed and possibly promoted

obscurly in the aesthetically derived identities and images of the cultural producers and consumers. Changes in the popularity of one youth culture over or beside another are understood as indicative of a change in the attitude, moral or otherwise, of contemporary youth.

CHAPTER 4
NOT MERE TECHNIQUE: POSTMODERN SOCIOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In the natural sciences, such as Chemistry, Biology, and Physics, the tools and methods used to measure their subjects/objects of interest are chosen by the physical properties belonging to those subjects and what is known and available in collecting the data related to those properties. After a number of repeated studies reach similar results, while taking 'random error' into consideration, research methods become unquestionable when examining objects and results are presented and seen to be objective, rational, and free from personal error, affection, or interest. The social sciences often claim that these conditions, by remaining purely objective and exercising proper and accurate methods of measurement to guarantee certainty, can also pertain to their areas of study. However, I believe that, because of the definite subjective nature of social study by the individual and the element of subject relationship with the object of concern, there has been and, possibly, should always be disagreement and debate concerning choice of subject, methods, results, and truth-claims. I feel that the social researcher and their subject of study are often, if not always, inextricably intertwined and differences in researcher personalities, philosophies, prejudices, and understandings can lead to numerous variations and choices in the specific object and characteristics examined, the approach taken, and how the results or conclusions are achieved and understood. For example, the components of a study on youth culture done by a Marxist influenced researcher in Berlin will probably not resemble that of a North American located researcher who is interested in the concept of deviancy. Similarly, a study on how the presented images and ideas of Barbie dolls affect the beliefs and behaviours of young female

children will be approached differently, if at all, by a middle-aged male who may have bought one for his daughter and an early-twenties female who may never have owned one. These examples are not to point out a condition of relativism and express the futility of trying to do social research that can be important to or understood by more than just the researcher, nor are they to suggest that only members should be or are eligible to do research on their own cultures. The existence of shared social histories and understandings and the omnipresent possibility of dialogue and communication between human beings and between text and reader allows for the realization of meaningful understanding beyond the individual researcher. However, it should be recognized that social research is often directed by subjective intentions, conscious and unconscious, and in cases where some philosophies may not be as apparent as others these 'biases' are often ignored as one of the factors affecting social and natural scientific research.

Subsequently, in my study of contemporary youth culture, I have tried to avoid this mistake and error of misleading the reader and myself into believing that I have no extraneous interest or affect on my object of study or results by practically and philosophically recognizing my part in this social study. By so doing, I (1) remove the possibility and concern of being accused of being too involved in the subject, which would thereby jeopardize the 'truth' of the results, and (2) provide a first-hand example of a social research methodology guided by a relatively 'new' theoretical and philosophical understanding. It is my hope that in recognizing this situation and promoting this 'method' I have provided a glimpse of a heretofore unforseen dimension into the understanding of social subjects and the process of their study. It may also reveal some unconscious ethos which explains why certain

research philosophies and methods appeal and seem more appropriate to contemporary social researchers such as myself and how this affects the direction and form social study takes.

I want to provide a methodology that does not detract from the theoretical 'mood' outlined in the last chapter, therefore, this chapter, wherein I present and describe the sample populations and texts that have been examined and the procedures which were followed in examining them, introduces a research philosophy with which I hope to explain my personal position and approach on how I came to choose my subject, population, philosophy, and methods. Initially, it may appear, based on the apparent disregard or disrespect for certain 'traditional' scientific methods, that I am avoiding the need to perform and provide any substantial sociological study and results. This is not the case, because I have not foregone intellectual explanation, rationality, and argumentation of my methods. It is only that I recognize, with what I suspect is my own postmodern (un)consciousness or awareness, the high degree of subjectivity and interpretation involved in the understanding of something like youth culture and the possibility that 'method does not exhaust or have a monopoly on truth'. I will avoid strictly objective, positivist, and statistical methods (which, I feel, tend to extract and discard the real essence and flavour of subjects such as culture leaving a pale account of what really exists) and, instead, try to explain the new expressions, meanings, and understandings based on a more appropriate interpretive process in dialogue with the text.

4.1 TRUTH IN METHOD?

In this study I wanted to examine and present an analysis of the discourse provided by the actual cultural texts created and produced by the members of a contemporary youth

culture. To gather 'data' for this research, it was my intention to collect a diverse range of narrative texts created by members of the culture and perform an interpretive analysis of their discourses which I understand to be present in the textual content. The philosophy encompassing this entire study led me to ignore any attempt at formulating or using objective and positivistic methods and, instead, encouraged a discussion of the meanings and understandings that grow out of my dialogue with the text. The implied principles or criteria of the philosophy, however, do provide a 'method', so to speak, by which these understandings can be defended and justified for the purpose of validating this form of study as good sociological inquiry.

Though not a necessary requirement of the philosophy which I advance, in order to accomplish a more colourful and dimensional reading I felt that by supplementing my interpretation with member interpretation of their own discourse a superior and worthy result could be provided. By incorporating the ethnographic methods of participant observation and non-formal interview, the conclusions or understandings reached during the discourse analysis portion would be cross-referenced for clarity and elaboration with the opinions, ideas and interpretations of a small group of members from the culture. However, even though a variety of techniques and strategies gathered from ethnographic convention are outlined in order to achieve an adequate and confident ethnographic study this endeavour was ommited due to a couple of decisions which I explain at the end of this chapter.

4.1(a) The Texts

The data to be understood in this study consists of the individuals who have associated themselves with the 'Grunge' culture (as determined by the culture itself and mainstream

culture to a lesser degree) and the texts they create through the various means of aesthetic expression. Individuals and groups which seem to have some sort of affinity to the Grunge style can now be found all over North America but for this study members and groups particularly located in three North American NorthWest coast cities, Vancouver, Victoria, and Seattle, have been chosen. The Seattle area was unavoidably chosen because it has been deemed and commercially marketed to be the origin of the culture. Most of the bands (Soundgarden, Nirvana, Tad, Mudhoney, Screaming Trees) at the forefront of the underground youth subculture that has become popularly known as Grunge originated in the Seattle vicinity, created a scene local to the area, and released many of their first recordings on the Seattle based Sub-Pop record label. Vancouver and Victoria, although without any popularly acknowledged association with the Grunge culture, have dominant backgrounds in the punk rock culture and other 'alternative' underground scenes that could possibly be on the verge of significantly contributing to the culture on a popular level.

4.1(b) A Philosophy in Understanding

In this study, the subject of interest and quite possibly the consciousness of the researcher determined the philosophy of and the form that the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the investigation took. This does not mean, however, that this study and these frameworks will be inherently are partisan towards the subject or entirely subjective and whimsical. Because I am looking at the meaning of the concept of moral ideals as found in the aesthetics of what I believe to be a postmodern cultural text and condition, it would be immensely irresponsible to commence an examination with a modern, metaphysical, objective, and traditionally 'scientific' methodology for the purpose of arriving at an absolute or

objective meaning of truth within the culture. Consequently, the dominant literary, artistic, phenomenological, historical, and philosophical elements present in the culture make a theory of interpretation seem more appropriate; that is, phenomenological hermeneutics necessarily directs the methodological procedure for investigating and understanding postmodern culture.

Vattimo, who has "given hermeneutics unquestionable currency among the long established Faculties of Aesthetics" (Carravetta 1988: 395), states that "hermeneutics is in the form in which, with the waning of the structuralist hegemony, a historicist exigency is once again demanding to be heard" (Vattimo 1988: 400). Taking into consideration the postmodernist element which does not believe in an innate essence, the 'weakening of Being' as Vattimo terms it, "the human person should now be able to articulate discourse without adhering to the grammar and demands of a 'strong' metaphysical tradition, that is, a metaphysic which insists on believing in 'foundation', in the 'identity principle'" (Carravetta 1988: 395). This introduction of a 'new' contemporary philosophy recognizes that current modern methods of textual and discourse examination with their presumed exact, objective, and depersonalized procedures that attempt to find certain and fixed truth may not adequately explain or understand social cultural phenomenon. What this allows, then, is for the recognition of the integral part that the researcher, the historically and socially located observer, plays in the direction and in the results of the sociological endeavour; the dialogical relation between the 'observer' and the 'observed' becomes accounted for.

Founded in Gadamer's extensive formulation of interpretation philosophy, Truth and Method (1960), "hermeneutic thinking emphasizes the fact that both observer and observed belong together within a common horizon, underscoring truth as an event which, in the

dialogue between the two interlocutors, 'realizes' or 'sets into play'... and modifies at the same time this horizon" (Vattimo 1988: 402). In 'playing' the game of dialogue and interpretation the researcher partakes in an activity that all humans do in the process of living in the social world. In order for the individual to 'get by' they must try to understand the meaning of that which surrounds them and to do so they must interpret the meaning of things. This understanding is always achieved in relation to themselves, but instead of creating a dichotomy of a dominant subject separate and imposing on a subordinate object, hermeneutics recognizes that both reader and text exist within a shared history of meaning and understanding. "Hermeneutic philosophy considers understanding not as subjective behaviour but as a response to effective-history" (Weinsheimer 1991: 35), that is, understanding is possible because both the subject and the object belong to a shared history which determines how understanding will occur and what is understood. "Methodological approaches to both natural and human phenomenon are rooted in history; they accept certain historical assumptions as to both what is to be studied and how it is to be approached. Understanding is therefore rooted in prejudice and the way in which we understand is thoroughly conditioned by the past" (Warnke 1987: 3). While the word 'prejudice' is often a warning sign for sociological discussion, here the term is to refer to the unavoidable prejudgments with which all individuals approach any object for the purpose of understanding. These prejudgments come from the fact that each subject and object has its own social and personal history both separate from and shared with the other and when brought to a moment of interpretation have their affect on the resultant understanding. Through an arguably dialectical and ongoing process of interaction, agreement, and conflict between observed objects and the

understandings and prejudices of the observer, changed understandings and modified prejudices, socially and politically negative and positive though definitely not pre-determined, can occur. "Our understanding stems from the ways in which the event or work has previously been understood and is thus rooted in the growth of a historical and interpretive tradition" (ibid: 78). The process of understanding always involves interpretation, reinterpretation, and many epiphanous moments but the meaning that arises out of this always involves the 'fusion of historical horizons' of both the interpreter and the interpreted object. In the situation of examining cultural text, where "works of art contain claims to truth" (ibid: 73), meaning and understanding is achieved through an interactive process involving cultural style, expression, and discourse with researcher style, expression, and discourse. Consequently, in the case of this study and all other social study, hermeneutical philosophy allows for the responsible and open recognition of both the common and individual consciousness (understandings and backgrounds) of the researcher and the culture and to acknowledge the subsequent change and creation in new understanding of both proceeding interaction.

Faring well for my responsibility as a reflective sociological researcher, this research philosophy allows for the upfront recognition of my close association and familiarity with the subject culture prior to my desire to study it. While this situation could prove problematic for supposedly objective social science, the postmodern method of hermeneutics recognizes, accepts, embraces, and finds valid this interconnectivity that undoubtably forms prejudicial opinions and positions. This is fortunate, since it is most likely that the 'what' which attracts me to the punk and Grunge cultures is also the 'what' that attracts me to the study of

Sociology. My interest in Grunge and youth cultures comes from my participation in sociological schooling and my interest in sociological schooling comes from my participation in the punk and Grunge cultures. Therefore, because of this interconnectedness, the expected 'fusion of horizons' or modification of common horizons from this current examination not only concludes in a better understanding of the culture but also in a better understanding of myself - a reasonable case, I would think, for the importance of Sociology.

4.1(c) The Data for Discourse Analysis: Interpretation of Texts

In trying to identify cultural discourses which may indicate cultural moral ideals, thereby social significance, I compiled and refamiliarized myself with a broad and detailed collection of creative texts that had been produced in the cultural locations. These texts largely consist of magazines and entertainment papers (ie. Maximum Rock and Roll, Alternative Press, the Rocket) and their associated elements such as articles, editorials, letters pages, and photographs; recorded music (the actual sound value and its lyrical accompaniment); artwork on album covers, t-shirts, and magazines; and fashion or personal appearance (clothing, hairstyles, etc.). I also included cultural leisure activities (such as skate and snow boarding, 'gig' or live show attendance, and hanging out) as a form of textual narrative data which was gained through the means of participant observation prior to (re: my personal background outlined in Chapter 1) and during the study. The list of texts examined in this study is found in Appendix A.

The texts' expressive elements were examined and interpreted, or read, for indications as to the nature of their meaning and if any common discourses were identifiable. Within the forms, I was watchful for elements which could be understood as expressive of discourses

reflective of the conditions and moral ideals of both the individuals who create the texts and those who use or consume them. The search for and recognition of these discourses was directed by the proposition or understanding that this contemporary culture could be described as expressive of the condition of postmodernity and that it's belief 'system' is reflective of the contemporary moral ideal of authenticity. In this action I tried to determine if the understanding or hypothesis was correct.

Therefore, the research process involved an interpretation of the cultural texts to see if the meanings and understandings present resulted in discourses that express such postmodern characteristics as, for example, pastiche, parody, the effacement of the boundaries between past and present and art and everyday life, a presentation of the unpresentable, and assault on nostalgia, threats to safe, middle-class life (Denzin 1988: 469), incredulity towards metanarratives (Lyotard 1984), and concern with 'otherness' and the pluralism of co-existing worlds (Harvey 1989: 47-48). In order to read and understand expressions of authenticity the texts were examined for discourses expressing the inner-self and individualism, liberalism (self-determination), diversity and difference, issues of significance beyond self-choice and proposed notions of a good society, notions of rights, relationships in the intimate sphere, and social recognition (Taylor 1991: 26-53). These two sets of interpretive tools, concepts, perspectives, or understandings helped to determine if the culture is locatable under the term postmodern and expressive of the contemporary moral ideal of authenticity.

4.1(d) A 'Method' for Understanding Discourse

As I mentioned above, the methods for approaching an understanding of contemporary cultural discourse were not be achieved by mere objective technique; there is no claim to an

absoluteness that the rules and procedures of positivistic science make. Hermeneutics, or interpretation theory, is, I feel, a more appropriate way to approach sociological study, because there is the recognition of the researcher's own subjectivity incorporated into the foundations of study itself. There is the argument from the positivistic traditions that this philosophical theory is open to whimsy and arbitrariness and cannot be considered serious or respectable as it appears to remove the need to supply proof for conclusive interpretation. However, I concur with Madison who suggests that "phenomenological hermeneutics, as represented by (Gadamer), can provide for norms or criteria for assessing interpretations" (Madison 1988: 26). The formalization of these criteria lead to the development of 'rules' and procedures that resemble method.

Central and primary to the methodological endeavour of understanding through interpretation is the subjectivity possessed by an interpreter. Objecting to the validity of trying to locate creative genius behind artistic works, claims of truth in the aesthetics of a piece for the subjective interpreter become the concern of Gadamerian hermeneutics (Warnke 1987: 73). Connecting a text to their own circumstances, the historically and socially situated individual/interpreter finds truth in or understands an aesthetic text because of a subjectivity based on their own point of view. In order to be responsible for these understandings, the interpreter must "be able to respond, i.e., to be able to make an attempt at defending or justifying one's own words and deeds; which is to say, at providing arguments for them" (Madison 1988: 27). In the process of being able to persuasively argue or defend one's statements and give reasons for one's interpretations and judgements it is necessary to "appeal to certain principles, the ensemble of which constitute a set of criteria" (ibid: 27). From these

criteria the formation of a method as a "norm-governed way of doing something (in distinction from arbitrary, whimsical behaviour)" (ibid: 29) is possible. This form of method, which is more a general guide of principles than strictly applied rules, then becomes an aid in making good, not necessarily correct, judgements and can be used to "defend one's judgements or interpretation by arguing that they embody or conform to certain generally accepted criteria, norms, or principles" (ibid: 28).

By grasping the validity of this definition and formation of method it is possible to see how a responsible and reliable hermeneutical method can, in fact, be attained. Madison explains that in order for the hermeneutic researcher to be responsible they must justify and evaluate, not test, their interpretations through making good, rational judgments and appealing to certain appropriate methodological principles (ibid: 27-29). These principles, articulated practice raised to the level of theory, are: coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, contextuality, agreement (in two forms), suggestiveness, and potential (ibid: 29-30). In order to produce a better reading of a text and persuasive argument to support it, these standards should be considered.

The first of the methodological principles appropriate to phenomenological hermeneutics which Madison introduces is coherence. This is recognized, simply, as need for the researcher to make a coherent interpretation of the author's text and present it in a unified and non-contradictory manner. Even in the case where the work of interest is contradictory within itself, "the interpreter must then attempt to make coherent sense of these contradictions" (ibid: 29). Postmodern and modern cultures, for instance, are expected to contain such contradictions and as a responsible social researcher I was able to respond to and

clarify my interpretations of these by explaining them in relation to the interpretive frameworks which I introduced.

Secondly, in order to provide a 'good' reading it is also necessary to provide a comprehensive reading of all the author's works which relate to the issue of interest. "In interpreting an author's thought, one must take account of his thought as a whole and not ignore works of his which bear on the issue" (ibid: 29). To achieve this I have collected a wide variety of texts by many individual artists and groups which allowed me to look at the collective thoughts of each group or band as a whole and, also, at the collective thoughts of the culture as a whole. I determined that I had an adequate amount of data sources when I began to recognize a fair amount of expressions reflecting similar discourses. The collection of artistic texts plus published interviews with the artists provides and extensive range of thought to analyze and interpret thereby creating a better reading of the culture.

Good interpretations must also involve a substantial probing rather than a superficial scratching of the text's most obvious signifying surfaces. This penetration should "[bring] out a guiding and underlying intention in the work" (ibid: 29), a raison d'etre or illuminating intent, rather than re-presenting immediately evident artistic elements. I believe that I satisfied this criteria, because in searching for an underlying moral ideal in the youth culture I bypass all the popular media accounts which seem to focus on superficial qualities using typical mainstream perspectives.

To achieve the thoroughness required of a hermeneutical understanding of a text "a good interpretation must attempt to answer or deal with all the questions it poses to the interpreted text, or which the text poses to one's understanding of it" (ibid: 29). While I think

it is almost impossible to answer all the questions posed by an artistic text due to the almost infinite nature of art, thoroughness in relation to a concentrated area of interest such as values or moral ideals is possible. I feel that almost all youth cultures implicitly pose questions about ideals and from being thorough enough new ideas and understandings relating to the immediate preoccupation with youth cultural ideals, ones which may not have been immediately apparent, can be revealed and addressed.

In order for an interpretation to render a good and valid reading of a text it must direct appropriate questions to the text. That is, instead of indiscriminately applying previously prepared and separately conceptualized questions to a text (as in most studies using an objective and positivistic method) "the questions the interpretation deals with must be ones which the text itself raises" (ibid: 30). There is no point in creating questions that the text does not address or raise because the response and conclusions will only be a fabrication of the researcher's own interest. Though I may only be able to defend myself with an semi-conscious belief, I feel that one of the central, though often obscure, concerns of youth culture has been that of values and moral ideals. My investigation into the values of contemporary youth cultures and how these values are expressed in their texts is, then, completely appropriate.

In a similar vein, "an author's work must not be read out of context, i.e., without due regard to its historical and cultural context" (ibid: 30). This criteria is particularly realized in this study because by proposing that the context or social condition of postmodernism does exist and that contemporary youth cultures like Grunge should be understood within this context is, I believe, a progressive step in doing better readings of youth cultures. Placing the

cultural texts within a context of certain circumstances, conditions, and ideas related to postmodernism allows for a more appropriate reading of the culture.

The first principle of agreement in the set of the criteria states that "an interpretation must agree with what the author actually says, that is, one must not, or normally not, say that the 'real' meaning of what an author says is something quite other than what he actually does and intends to say" (ibid:30). This does not mean that a reader should not try to examine for underlying and obscure meanings of a text, because this form of reading can produce some unique, original, and personal understandings, only that being overly suspicious of an author's work can lead to readings completely remote from the author's intention. This problem is avoided because the postmodern consciousness or understanding, which dominates this study, does not attempt to attach a grand narrative meaning to a text in such a way or say that an author's meaning was really and definitely something else other than what the text presents.

The second agreement principle relates to consensus with previous readings of an author's work. "A given interpretation should normally be in agreement with the traditional and accredited interpretations of an author. This principle must not be blindly adhered to, however, for good interpretation will be precisely one which breaks with traditional readings, in that it opens up new perspectives on the work. (In this case the interpretation must still take account of previous interpretations, by showing how they are deficient)" (ibid: 30). In the process of doing research for this study, I began by examining and reviewing various interpretive understandings of the cultural texts found within better informed magazines and books such as Alternative Press magazine and Gina Arnold's book Route 666: The Road to Nirvana. Through this I have been able to get a general idea of how others read the same

material and what meanings and ideals are present for them. By responding in the study to readings similar to mine, readings which I hadn't seen before and readings that I disagree with a better interpretation is achieved.

The value of a good reading and understanding is also found in its suggestiveness and originality. Found in the exponentially productive process of using the imagination in social scientific research, the ability to 'stimulate and further research and interpretation' becomes the goal for all hermeneutical endeavour. In trying to achieve my research goal of illuminating or revealing the misunderstood moral ideals of a popular contemporary youth culture through the application of certain understandings of postmodernism, authenticity, and phenomenological hermeneutics, I believe new and productive sociological ideas, questions, and methods have been created.

The final criteria, the principle of potential, involves the future learning possibilities generated by the research results and the research endeavour itself. "A given interpretation can be judged to be 'true' if, in addition to meeting the above requirements, it (like a good metaphor or model) is capable of being extended and if in the process the implications it contains unfold themselves harmoniously" (ibid: 30). This 'ultimate validation of a reading' is found in its ability to stand up in further repeat readings of the same text and other similar ones. It is my hope that my combination of theories, methods, and results from this study can be later applied to other cultural studies and, more specifically, other contemporary youth cultures so that a wider range of social phenomenon can be better understood.

By recognizing and trying to fulfil as many of these criteria as possible, without trying to restrict oneself, the phenomenological hermeneutic inspired researcher is able to provide a

sound methodology that does not sacrifice their disbelief in objectivity and objective methods, yet, can provide an adequate, sufficient, and defendable argument for their interpretations. This method, as opposed to the logical and supposed error-free reasoning of positivistic scientific method, is directed by the practice of practical reasoning and is derived as much from the practice of working out an interpretation as it is from evaluating and defending them. Both cases "involve methodological reasoning although in neither case is method reducible to mere technique"(ibid: 33). In response to positivistic based critics (ones that require set guidelines to direct and rationalize social study), the practice of "phenomenological hermeneutics... can allow for a logic of argumentation in the light of which rational decisions can be made. Interpretation should be viewed as a mode of practical reasoning and of persuasive argumentation. The model for interpretation should, therefore, be looked for in the theory of argumentation and not in what is called the logic of (scientific) explanation" (ibid: 35). By appealing to the use of rhetoric the hermeneutic researcher, while not being able to absolutely prove or be certain of anything, is able to provide valid reasons for regarding some understandings as evidently better than others.

Madison also indicates that for an interpretation to be taken as 'truth' it need not be eternally and universally valid only that it be generally accepted by those in argument. It is not reasonable to expect an interpretation to be static because the understanding of a text, and the text itself, is perpetually in a state of becoming. It is this property of text, in all its forms, that proves problematic for objective science which tries to fix understanding eternally and exposes its relative uselessness in social research. This is the case even more so when considering postmodern texts which are characteristically fluid in their meaning. The

principles above reveal their effectiveness by helping to evaluate and defend interpretations, arbitrate between conflicting interpretations at a point in time, and allow for flexibility and change. By appealing to or fulfilling more of these criteria, an interpreter is able to 'methodically' show the 'truth' or correctness of their interpretation. "To argue, for instance, that interpretation 2 is more coherent, more comprehensive, and so on, than interpretation 1 is ample and sufficient reason for deciding to accept it and to take it as 'true'"(ibid: 33) until, of course, someone presents a better argument. Arbitrariness is not really a factor in this process because "while the meaning of the text cannot be equated with 'what the author meant', the interpreter cannot, for all that, simply project his or her own meaning onto the text"(ibid: 34). A text provides certain creatively arranged discourses which demand that the interpreter creatively but specifically respond to them. The interpreter must try to understand textual meaning by using a combination of their own resources and powers such as common sense, shared knowledge (fore-conceptions, pre-judgements), cognitive reflexivity, unconscious feeling, and imagination. Subsequently, practical reasoning and argumentation provide the basis for recognizing the interpretation as a 'good' and 'true' one.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Upon further reflection, I realized and found that what I really wanted to do was to focus on and interpret the expressions of Kurt Cobain and his band Nirvana. It was their music in 1988 that completely pulled me to what is now known as Grunge and more and more Cobain's music and words began to mean so much to me on so many levels and for so many reasons. I had interviewed the band in 1989 but it ended in disappointment so, therefore, I directed all my energy into contacting them. I wrote to the independent Seattle

record label Sub-Pop but the bastards never wrote me back. I tried to contact Cobain through his mainstream corporate record label, MCA, but it involved sending a letter to their office here in Vancouver which they would send to the head-office in Toronto who would then decide wether or not to send it to Geffen records in the States who would finally give the request to his agents. I said "Forget it". Just as I was trying to contact Cobain through other channels he killed himself. I became despondent and after a time of numbness and dumbness all I could do is go to Seattle, drive around the city for half a day just to see where he offed himself, get gas, and come home. I thought that my research was over. I didn't want to finish it. However, I re-read Gina Arnold's book about punk rock and Nirvana and in it her statement to the effect that to interview musicians like Nirvana was kind of pointless since they were fairly inarticulate about their music and artistic intuitiveness and resistant to explaining themselves (Arnold 1993: 144) reached out to me. This statement said that one should interpret for themself the meaning of Grunge. From this I decided that maybe I didn't have to interview them or conduct a participant observation to get a good interpretive understanding of the culture. So I didn't do one. I did decide, though, to leave sections 4.1(e) and 4.1(f) on participant observation sample and method, which became unproductive for my specific case, in the thesis so that the ideas and methods therein could be used in the future as suggestions for similar cultural study. Upon the chance that I get to continue this research, I would like to implement this portion of the methodology and actually interview and participate with the cultural producers and get their interpretations on my interpretations.

4.1(e) The Data for Participant Observation

The purpose of the participant observation portion of the study is to get cultural members'

input in order to judge how good, not necessarily correct, my interpretations of the texts were

and to add detail, depth, and colour to them. Generally, the members chosen are to be

prominent producers and suppliers of popular cultural text, symbolic specialists, because: (1)

their aesthetic representations are the immediate texts of interest, (2) they play a large role in

what is available for the members who, though still participating in the production of

signification and meaning in their own way (Harvey 1989: 51), are largely consumers, and (3)

they are usually quite articulate in communicating their meanings and understandings in

relation to their art and lifestyles. I tried to make contact with members through personal

connections, contacting bands directly and indirectly through their record labels and/or

managers, and request some of their time and attention but, as I explained above, this attempt

failed. Even so, because academic study often implies objectification and misrepresentation,

members, at first, might be slightly apprehensive of or opposed to having some academic

perform what could appear to be a critical and objective analyzation of their lives.   But, I

believe they would have been be genuinely interested in and warm to the fact that their

culture was found to be the subject of intellectual and social interest and that a relatively

informed and aware person was doing the research.

Using a preparatory set of informal guideline questions, I would have questioned the

members on their own work and the work of other producers and consumers relating to the

interpretations and understandings I reached based on the discourse analysis portion of the

study. After getting comfortable with the members in casual conversation, I would have

directed them to my readings of authenticity and postmodernism in their works without

actually using or defining the terms. When discussing the artists' texts and their discourses,

using ordinary language, suggestions would have been made as to how I have interpreted

them and how I understand them. I foresaw the introduction of my interpretation, being an

original text in its own right, into the cognizance of the original artists as an impetus for

discussion to go on its own accord without the guide of many prepared questions. The

virtually undirected discussion involving the combination of artist's text and reader's

interpretation would, I believe, have allowed for the dynamic discovery and realization of

unforseen and/or mistaken interpretation.

4.1(f) A 'Method' for Participant Observation

By incorporating participant observation into a hermeneutic study of cultural text, of

which researcher interpretation usually contributes a large part, a new wrinkle is introduced

into this process of understanding. Instead of interpreting just textual discourse, the

researcher now interprets and tries to understand the meaning of actual verbal discourse

related to initial interpretation of the textual discourse. As the recognition of the dialogic

condition between text and reader indicates a form of progressive dynamism in the process of

understanding, the process of interview itself is also in a constant dynamic state. Entering

into a verbal dialogue with a text's producers adds another dimension to the creative work

and, in recognition of the hermeneutical theory, adhering to a battery of prepared questions

can create a restrictive force on the course of a probing discussion the direction of which

cannot be determined prior to the actual interlocutive encounter. However, like the methods

used for textual discourse analysis, the methods used to gather data from participant

observation and interview are neither created and performed in a arbitrary and whimsical manner nor or they completely and objectively predetermined technique. The method for understanding the interpretations that arise from this form of discourse is exactly the same as that outlined in section 4.1(d) above. Interpretations of what members do and say in relation to discussions of their art and the researcher's original interpretations are evaluated by the same criteria as the original interpretations. In addition, though, an interactive ethnographical approach, or method, must also give good reasons and arguments to justify and evaluate the approach taken from which the interpretations and eventual conclusions are made.

In order to maintain this study's validity as well as avoid various pitfalls in regards to the participant observation portion of the study, I will recognize and try to incorporate Stoddart's strategies or criteria for performing 'adequate ethnography' (Stoddart 1991). He explains that "in the most general of terms, those ethnographies are received as adequate

1. that display the domain of investigation as it exists independently of the dimension added to it by the ethnographer's presence as an investigator;

2. that display the features of a domain as received by its participants (i.e., that we do not have a version of ethnocentrism as a property);

3. that display the features of a domain as they exist independently of the techniques employed to assemble them (i.e., that do not have methodogenesis as a property); and

4. if their accomplishment of 1 through 3 is founded in data gathered from participants knowledgeable in the ways of their domain (i.e., if 1 through 3 are not based on the productions of unentitled informants)"(ibid: 3).

From these recommendations it is possible to reduce the abstract awareness of the ethnographers position in social study to something a little more concrete: 'rules'. "These rules - descriptive of what might be called the good ethnographer's work - can be codified as follows:

1. The good ethnographer regards his or her own presence in the domain as potentially tainting of its natural state.

2. The good ethnographer seeks not to enforce an organizing schema upon encountered data but to surface from that data a schema local to the domain of investigation.

3. The good ethnographer is attentive to the possibility that techniques of gathering data may create the data gathered.

4. For the good ethnographer, any domain has as a feature the differential distribution of competence among its members" (ibid: 3).

Consequently, the interaction with the members is to be advised by being cognizant of the concerns recognized in the criteria relating to the problems of presence, ethnocentrism, methodogenesis, and informant competence (ibid: 4-11).

The problem of presence is defined as being the 'tainting dimension' or alien element that is contributed to the domain of investigation simply by the ethnographer being present in it. This problem, which also troubles the natural sciences, questions wether the observed or measured object's traits are altered from what they would normally be unobserved. To reduce the problem of presence (to disattend myself from affecting the domain) as much as possible in my study, it is my intention to apply the strategies of:

(1) the erosion of visibility by display of no symbolic detachment: this is achieved by an open, though not gratuitous, display of acceptance of modes of dress, taste in music, argot used, knowledge and taste in cultural texts with which I hope to 'fit' in to the cultural domain;

(2) the erosion of visibility by display of symbolic attachment: in addition to fitting myself in by adhering to the above strategy, participating as much as possible in ordinary events such as hanging out, going to gigs, and creating my own texts should depict an active display of attachment to the domain;

(3) the erosion of visibility by personalizing the ethnographer-informant relationship: in the course of implementing the above two strategies, I should be able to create such a personal rapport with my informants that would remove any of their possible concerns with the research aspect of our relationship; and

(4) misrepresentation (masking real research interests): so as to not create any over-analysis of members' works by informants and to avoid the outright refusal on the part of the member to participate in any sort of analysis (two situations which might distort or alter true understandings of cultural influences, meanings, and values) general discussions, as opposed to specific and direct, of the culture and textual meanings, as seen in any interview with a musician, will be used as the means for gathering data.

I decided that the techniques of erosion of visibility by time and misrepresentation (masking identity as ethnographer) were not appropriate for this study. The former because of 1) time constraints, 2) that the participant observation portion is only a check on the textual analysis,

and 3) I believed that the other four strategies would reduce the amount of time needed to get adequate responses. The latter because 1) that form of 'deceit' or misrepresentation would not allow for the form and depth of interview which I expect 2) is not really necessary in this popularly accessible domain.

To control for ethnocentrism, a common result of more positivistic surveys, Stoddart's suggested strategies of using (1) the Native as research assistant (the member test of validity) and (2) the Native as talent judge seem suitable. Even though I basically consider myself a member of the domain (both as a member of the specific youth culture and more generally as a contemporary young person), as a academically occasioned interpreter there is the possibility of bringing concerns not native, thereby perhaps irrelevant, to the domain. After the first portion of the study, in which the culture's textual discourses are interpreted in order to understand their meaning, the process of informal interviewing and participant observation supplies the basis for satisfying these two strategies. Worked into the general conversation or interview, judgement and comments on my previous research conclusions is sought from the members in order to gauge the adequacy of my interpretations. In consideration of their comments and my own secondary interpretations based on these comments the textual discourses are re-examined from which final understandings and conclusions can be made.

To reduce the effects of methodogenesis, the process in which the researcher's procedures create rather than discover fact in a domain, I will minimally use the strategies of (1) neutralizing and (2) invisibilizing my techniques and mainly rely on (3) the use of redundant demonstrations. In order to effectively neutralize the possible spuriousness of my inquiry it is necessary to try to consciously make the effort to draw statements from the

members on the topic of interest of moral ideals as reflected in their work without having to use direct comments or questions and gather from their statements my own interpretations. However, while general questions are usually necessary to initiate discussion, the topic of interest in my case should have been of enough importance to members that enough data and material would have been generated and this concern would be minimally problematic. The invisibilization of techniques was not expected as a possible strategy for my study except for those periods during participant observation when I may have had the good fortune to overhear members make pertinent statements that I can incorporate into the research. In both segments of the research portion of this study I will significantly, almost to the point of completely, use redundancy to support the 'truth' of my results. In the textual analysis segment this method helps to illustrate the profusion or enormity of certain qualities and meanings within the culture. Constant, yet different and separate, textual expressions of similar elements is believed to be evidence of shared and qualitative 'fact' or meaning. During the interview portion of the study multiple and consistent comments indicating agreement by the members with my interpretations and understandings will be considered to be a sufficient indication of an adequately performed reading.

My choice of proposed informants, I believe, significantly reduces the effect of informant incompetence or inappropriateness. It is the discourses that these members have created which form a large part of the foundation of the youth culture as it moves from being the punk subculture to the popular Grunge culture and these individuals are more likely to provide 'knowledge foundational to membership' than anyone else. In my experience I have found that individuals who choose to associate themselves with a culture which can be

characterized as being subcultural or countercultural are usually more reflective, vocal, and aware of their decisions and reasons for doing so than a person who is more mainstream. By acquiring and/or experiencing 'artifacts' of the culture a consuming individual is able to inform and familiarize themselves with ideas and images which are part of that culture. From this, upon an act of reflection, interpretation and understanding, they, too, are able to subsequently partake, as a member, in the process of cultural discourse production. However, because of the unique position that original and prominent scene members have they benefit from the possession of a more informed and whole awareness of their own culture. These widely influential members are able to create their own popularly recognized text that forms the culture and also, because of their celebrated position, receive various forms of interpretive feedback from their audience. Therefore, while it is the case that ordinary members in being attracted to, consuming, and using text for their own conscious and unconscious purposes also create discourse in their own way, the popular creative members are, generally, more likely to be acute observers of their own culture. It is for the reason that my informants need to know enough and are well informed enough about their culture that they are chosen.

A CONCLUSIONARY ASIDE

I must mention that in taking these criteria into consideration it is not the case that I simply searched for a set of working rules for which to make my approach seem more 'academic' and for it to fit within a previously founded tradition. It is the case that, in their concretizing of what I take to be common sense in this form of study, there is an appeal to a certain level of my consciousness and/or what I hold as knowledge. It is the same level of

consciousness, I feel, that makes the concepts of postmodernism, authenticity, and hermeneutics more appealing and appropriate to the study of contemporary culture. For example, rule 2 from Stoddart's rules (the good ethnographer seeks not to enforce an organizing schema upon encountered data but to surface from that data a schema local to the domain of investigation) reflects, I believe, the postmodern characteristic of disbelief in universalisms; for a researcher to impose a predetermined set of research values and methods on another subject and to make the data 'fit' into this schema is inherently inaccurate and probably wrong. This is an example of what I have indicated above to be the social researcher's part in actual study and the connection between the researcher's consciousness and their choice and approach to subject study.

CHAPTER 5 ALIVE & DIRTY: WHAT I FOUND IN THE GRUNGE

"We live in a world in which the authority of previous guides has apparently crumbled" (Chambers 1990: 81)

If I had based this paper on a typical academic template, this chapter would reveal the true meaning of Grunge and what values, if any, are consequently held by youth who identify themselves with the culture. Further, I would be able to conclude as to whether or not this culture is definitely socially significant. However, by 'travelling' the route I have taken, in experiencing, researching, and understanding not only the culture itself but the theories, methodologies, and philosophies which I feel are appropriate to this research, I have been led to believe that attempting and producing such a result would be neither adequate nor authentic. I could 'hit all the marks', provide some statistics, and explain how the Grunge culture does or does not consistently display images of postmodernism and authenticity through the organized presentation of some excerpts and examples from the texts. The following summation would probably be presented as a method, as a 'how to' field guide similar to those books concerned with birds and plants, for older generations and members of other cultures intent on 'spotting' and classifying contemporary youth. But, as the content and spirit of the previous chapters should explain, to do so would be contrary to the 'mood' or 'ethos' advanced by myself up to this point. Phenomenological hermeneutics advises that I let the natural and intuitive interaction between myself and the text direct the course of my interpretation and the way it is presented not try to force some preconceived method or direction onto it.

Hence, I approached the actual analysis portion of this study with dread because without recourse to prior studies with a similar combination of philosophy, theory, and

method as mine I had no idea as to how to properly go about collecting and analyzing the appropriate textual discourse or make any enlightening conclusions. My first knee-jerk reaction, based on years of under-graduate instruction, was to simply take the procedures of a previously established hermeneutical study and carry them over to my own. However, I realized, that if I was to create or exemplify anything new in the way of approaching sociological study, as was my desire, and to do justice to the culture which I personally identify with then I could not conscientiously do this. All I would be doing is systemizing the practice of interpretation and understanding and allowing for the possibility that the essential 'flavour' of this specific culture could be eliminated. Eventually, I decided that since this study is directed towards examining a previously unexamined culture it is essential to create and encourage my own unique decisions and procedures while still being aware of the form that hermeneutical studies take in general. I allowed myself to take that precarious plunge and go with intuition and my own style.

Consequently, the textual result below comes to resemble, in a sense, something of a work of art in itself. The ideas and words of this chapter represent and demonstrate the circular hermeneutical process of an interpreter entering into a discourse with a text (the culture), incorporating that text with their own discourse or history and, sequentially, producing a new, synthesized text (personal identity and in this case a research paper) that is made available for others to enter into a dialogue with and for the interpreter to reinterpret. The hermeneutic interpretation here sifts through various pieces of the culture, drawing forth images and discourses which seem to reflect and let me understand the perspectives that I believe to be appropriate and the truth-claims which I feel are significant. The process of

"hermeneutics involves mediation or, in other words, a capacity to see the significance of a truth-claim for our own situation"(Warnke: 104). However, as I also possess a history of academic sociology, I should be able to create a text here, using my knowledge of what an acceptable research paper requires, that also allows those readers who are not members of the culture to understand the text. Therefore, the personalized hermeneutical analysis below of the Grunge culture extends and expands the dialogue and understanding around the contemporary youth culture for both myself as well as the uninformed reader and presents itself as one possible means that sense can be made of the culture.

5.1 INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF THE GRUNGE CULTURE

Interpretation of the Grunge culture in this chapter is presented in three instances and perspective 'systems'. The first is a literary, biographical style rendering of my, the researcher's, own encounter with the culture and how meaning and understanding of a cultural discourse was/is created at a personal and primary level. This first order of interpretation may appear as only a simple retelling of a story, however, within its narrative text is found the expression of how and why certain cultural textual discourse and significant features actually had meaning for an individual member. The second, more academic instance of interpretation is achieved within the framework of my own understanding of postmodernism as presented in the previous chapters. Awareness of this form of understanding allows for a certain mode of reflexivity and discursiveness not normally chosen by members of contemporary cultures who would typically not proceed past the first instance of interpretation. It is at this second level that the significant features and discourses of the

cultural text become the interpretive statement and gain meaning for sociology. The final instance, in turn, interprets the identified discourses and meanings from the two previous interpretations from the perspective of the moral ideal of authenticity. This shift to a third 'level' is done in order to locate meaning in the discourses in the form of cultural values and social significance and provide a further dimension to the understanding of contemporary youth culture within society. It is this level that incorporates the discourses of a postmodern and authentic (sub)culture with the concerns of morals, values, and ideals found in the larger mainstream modern society.

5.1(a) Punk Rock Saved My Life: Interpretation in the First Person

Note: I begin writing this portion in a weird state of mind, because today (April 8, 1994) it was discovered that Kurt Cobain, songwriter/singer/guitarist of Nirvana, has apparently killed himself with a shotgun in his home in Seattle. I am depressed and in a daze. There will be no more Teen Spirit's. The title of this section was chosen without thought of what happened today and in re-reading it seems ironic and tragic. My mind is with the other members of Nirvana who no doubt will be destroyed by this event. I also grieve for the loss of future creative possibilities that could potentially have been made, yet will be forever lost. Kurt would not want people to make him into some sort of worshipped idol, though it will be done in the media, so I hope to go on.

The difference between cultures often associated with social division and stratification and those associated with youth is that the former are usually ascribed while the latter are

usually chosen. How one teenager finds meaning in a culture and chooses to associate

themselves with it and another does not is, as should be apparent from discussions of

postmodernism, never determinable nor obvious. Nevertheless, any individual, reflecting on

their own experience, should be able to locate and present at least some of the primary

reasons, images, and meanings associated with how a culture is able to reflect their mood and

comes to signify some sort of claims to truth for them. Reference to a perspective or

interpretive system is not done in this section because what I purport to do is relate or create

a narrative based on my own experience within the punk and Grunge culture and how their

expressions and meanings came to have significance for myself (in effect, I was unknowingly

performing cultural ethnographic research for a study that was nonexistent at the time). In

this section I provide a text for the reader of this paper to independently interpret for

themselves using their own perspectives and understandings and in the following sections I

provide my own interpretation based on the perspectives outlined in the two previous

chapters.

My path to Grunge is found in the progression of the new music of the 80's. As were

many of the future punks, I was somewhat of an outcast or misfit and virtual loner because,

in my case, of my small stature and bespectacled appearance. Larger kids tend to constantly

pick on the small and appearance impaired (read: geeky). Living in a small town in the

Interior of British Columbia, where opinions (adult and youth) of what passes for proper style,

culture, and knowledge are fairly narrow and oppressive, can generate an inner anger built on

the frustration of dealing with ignorance and suppression and forge the desire to seek out an

outlet for mental resistance and rebellion. From a position of youth, cultural change is often the only response available. Within my group of high-school peers I noticed that a small group of apparently intelligent and congenial individuals began to show the external signs of what I considered individual and resistant behaviour. With a display of bizarre haircuts, clothing, antics, and music these kids were able to introduce new ideas and stylistic change into their local environment, thereby provoking mental and social reaction. Consequently, I became attracted to their New Wave music, such as that by Men Without Hats, Thomas Dolby, and New Order, because of their modern pop tunes, weird beats, introspective moods, and electronically produced aural sound (e)scapes (which helped with the boredom of doing my paper route). These tunes were also diametrically opposed to my brother's preferred musical choice, Led Zeppelin, whom I considered dated, old, and the favourite band of my headbanging tormentors at school. As most youth cultures have done, a part of what New Wave offered me was an outlet and environment for personal differentiation, creation, resistance, and individualization through the use of easily attained consumer goods, leisure activities, and appearance alterations.

New Wave may have been the initiator of cultural resistance in a small town, yet its ability to provide the intellectual, emotional, and physical stimulation I required began to fade. With the advent of rock videos in the mid-80's the New Wave bands became popularly oriented pop groups who seemed to place fashion, pouting, and other insubstantive criteria above textual content. The superficial Madonna appeared New Wave in her torn lingerie and fluorescent aerobic wear. Arising from the group of New Wavers at my school an even smaller group began to listen to and take upon themselves the cultural aspects of Punk rock.

At first I was surprised by the degree to which they went in separating themselves from the other cultures present in the school. Crew cuts was one thing amongst mid-length hair but mohawks and skinheads was quite another. Needless to say, the football team took great pleasure in beating up the obvious deviants in the stadium parking lot after a game. However, the challenge, thrill, and appeal of being voluntarily different in the face of extreme social pressure was inspiring. Experimenting with and being able to surpass the boundary from being one of the conforming crowd to what I believed to be an instigator of thought and change was a 'rush' experience. The goal wasn't just to be different or nonconformist but to demonstrate and present that difference was possible and prevalent in society.

More importantly, Punk rock also displayed to me a difference in a state of mind and presented certain possibilities not offered in the corporate dominated world of other youth cultures in the 80's. This culture was not necessarily caused by the cruelty of alienation from the 'cool' teenage cliques, but a desire to be part of something else, something different. By belonging to this culture I felt like I was part of a scene, a football team for outcasts, pioneering 'creative danger' and self-discovery in the form of art. Punk allowed people, such as myself, who may not have been formally trained in music or art to genuinely express themselves to the best of their ability. Anyone could scratch out a drawing or learn to hammer out a power chord on a cheap electric guitar and not have to be worried about critical analysis based on talent. Within weeks of associating myself with the small scene I had a drawing of mine printed on the front cover of a 'zine which contained pictures, articles, poems, and ideas of some of the local kids. This 'zine, ten pages of photocopied paper folded in half, was the result of one of the local kids motivating himself and offering an

unconditional outlet for anyone else inspired to also contribute. It contained the unadulterated and often threatening expression of anger, fear, frustration, and humour towards everything from nuclear war (e.g. a drawing of President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Brian Mulrooney seen in a compromising position with nuclear warheads taking the place of certain anatomical organs to indicate the close relationship between and positions of the two countries), racism, oppression, hypocrisy, violence, death, terrorism (corporate and political), sexism, local city councillors who had nothing better to do than try to have skateboard ramps torn down, to how to stop water from splashing up out of the toilet when using the facilities. Within these pages were the presentation of threatening and un-safe thoughts that I would not have earlier dared to express within my family, school, or neighbourhood.

As has been stated in an earlier chapter, music is central to the Punk culture and it is through this creative form that I, as most other punks, became increasingly involved. My first listen to Punk was not entirely positive. I had traded my army surplus jacket for a copy of the Dead Kennedies' 1982 release Plastic Surgery Disasters and after being use to the high-tech studio sounds of the New Wave bands was not ready for the aural assault. With the rampaging guitars and thundering beat all I remember is what seemed to be a wall of turbulent noise and that it upset my mother. However, upon further listening the beat of the music began to energize me physically and the lyrics intensified me mentally. The brutal honesty, biting sarcasm, and cynical criticism found in such songs as Government Flu, Terminal Preppie, and Winnebago Warrior cleverly and shamelessly made perfect sense and gave a loud voice to the tightly wound irritation I was increasingly feeling. Self-serving politicians and their military, self-indulgent prepatory school students with career oriented

single-mindedness, and the doddering middle-class with their souvenir consuming simple-mindedness all become prey to the skewering Punk song. I could not resist the opportunity to be creative, nasty, and obnoxious in the denouncing of what I considered wrong or idiotic.

The anti-corporation/industry, anti-parent, anti-tradition approach found in the do-it-yourself attitude ("Special thanks to... those of you who inspire us by getting off your ass and creating something of your own" - a quote from back cover of a Dead Kennedies album) was revealed to me one day in listening to a song on a beat up cassette tape. The band was Entirely Distorted from Edmonton and they had sent a tape to a friend of mine. I put on the Walkman headphones and hearing it for the first time made a negative comment to the effect that it sounded like it had been recorded in some guy's basement and that it was pretty rough. I was informed that that was the whole point. I came to realize that music, or art and ideas in general, should be made and recorded however possible by 'amateurs' and then spread around by whatever means to be enjoyed by many which in the same process creates a wider, yet tighter, punk community.

Later on that year I became involved in helping organize and set-up gigs for many independent and underground bands. I met and hung-out with members of bands whose music I listened to. There was no rock stardom and if there was it was our own unknown stars not MTV's. Some would stay over a night at my house before they crawled back into their beat-up vans the following morning to go to the next gig on their tour. This culture, created only by a feeling of and desire for comraderie amongst youth and not corporate gain, was new, aggressive, raw, real, within my own possibilities, and allowed for a chance of proactive involvement. Shortly, I, too, played on the same stage with the other bands. After a

quick stint of singing, I got a cheap electric guitar and amp and was shown a few simple

power chords. It became possible for me to 'rock' as many kids dream of but will never

realize because to them popular music is an almost impenetrable realm entered by only the

very talented or the very lucky. However, the realization that even I, for the purpose of

expressing myself, could be and was responsible for making my own magazines, forming my

own band, designing and printing my own t-shirts was invigorating and liberating.

Leaving the interior to go to school on the coast the first thing I did the day I arrived

in Vancouver, as I promised myself I would, was to join the student radio station at the

University. By belonging to the station I became exposed to a variety of music styles, got to

attend gigs for free (cool!), and met some of my favourite bands/musicians. So that their

bands get airplay, record labels send music to radio stations free of charge. The new music is

put into a listening room for all the disc jockeys to sample. One day, sometime in the Fall of

1988, a friend of mine with whom I was doing a weekly punk rock radio show hauled me

into the room and said, "Listen to this"! He played me TAD's Ritual Device/Daisy 7" single,

Swallow's Trapped/Guts 7" single, and Soundgarden's Screaming Life 12" EP, all of which

the station had received at the same time from Seattle's Sub Pop label. We had found our

new music. Though we knew that the same punk sentiment, ethics, and feelings were there,

the water of this music was somehow darker and deeper than punk. The guitar sounds were

not straight ahead rock but jangling experimentation with discordant sound. And they were

heavy. Oh, were they heavy. This was the dangerous combination sound of chainsaws and

motorbikes. And dirt. The sound was dirty, or Grungy, (fuzzy, out of tune/key/sync, ringing,

amateurish, muddy, rough, scratchy), as opposed to the clean and practiced sounds on most

recordings, and, because of the 'live' feel, it seemed like the band was right there in the room with you. The lyrics paralleled the guitars. The content was not as blunt as punk lyrics were. The idea and intent behind such punk tunes as "Nazi Punks Fuck Off!" (D.K.'s), "Let's Have a War" (Fear), and "Young 'Till I Die" (7 Seconds), for example, was obvious. However, the lyrical content of the Sub Pop bands was not as conspicuous, what with songs like "Hunted Down" (Soundgarden), "Sex God Missy" (Tad), and "No One Has" (Mudhoney). These songs also tended to be more introspective than the straight forward, assaulting, affronting, offensive, and angry punk song. The howled, screeched, moaned, and groaned words often sounded like the vocalist was releasing the personal demons which tormented their soul and mind from the dark depths of their belly, something other than just Punk anger. While Punk was very abrasive and often cold, the general image we gleaned from the music and the album covers was a very human warmth and openness as found in pictures of half-naked people writhing on the floor, long hair splayed in every direction, in their own sweat and dirt (see Soundgarden's Screaming Life ep cover for example).

Clinching the decision that this new music was what I wanted to hear and be a part of was the first live show I attended at which one of these Seattle bands was playing. Opening for Sonic Youth, my friends and I witnessed the fat, growling, yet trance-like and grooving music of the Screaming Trees. Though fired by a punk energy, these folks were not the typical punkers that we had become accustomed to. This band was akin to a quartet of hillbillies dangerously wired for deafening sonic sound. Wearing clothing similar to that of lumberjacks, the immediate visual images projected by the band were of reeling, sweaty, fat bodies and long flailing hair powered by a level exertion not normally attempted by people of

such girth. Bouncing and swinging her long hair back and forth, the female bass player, a rarity among rock acts, was here not as novelty or gimmick but because she was the sister of other members of the band. There was no pretence of them being abrasive musicians or rock stars; no anthemic, chanting verses but a real sense of soul-searching sincerity. A warm, groovy, body feel exuded from their music. Intimate yet aggressive. We hung around for Sonic Youth but were not really impressed at the time with the overly artsy and dehumanized experimentation sound their large assortment quiver of guitars creates (I later began to like some of their stuff, though). That night we decided to grow our hair long and I did not get another hair cut for two and a half years.

A month or two later after the show the station received another 7" single from Sub Pop. On the cover was a picture of three individuals with long hair shown in the fuzzy snapshot, photo-negative style of Charles Peterson who had taken most of the other album photos. It appeared no different than any of the other Sub-Pop releases. On the 'inside', however, were the first released songs by the band Nirvana. That first listen of their cover of Shocking Blue's song "Love Buzz" and their own song "Big Cheese" was another one of those exciting revelatory moments in my unconscious search for identity and culture. "Love Buzz" starts of with a geeky and whimsical bass lick, but then it goes into an agonized, comically drawled, thunderous rage. The heavy rendition of the song, originally a disco song (the 'eternal' antithesis of punk), incorporates fast punk energy and chaos, a pop music sense of beat and melody with garage-band style, improvisation, and desperation. "Big Cheese", and the rest of the tunes on the supplementary full-length album <u>Bleach,</u> is similar yet it involves a greater level of agony and rage. Some of the growls and howls the singer Kurt

Cobain achieves verge on the same sound tormented and injured animals make. Nirvana became a hot item amongst the punk and college radio scene in a short time with this musical style. They took large amounts of the punk ethos, wrapped it in a widely appealing pop music style recognizable to most youth, introduced previously unexamined topics and feelings, and twisted it with dark, cryptic, and indecipherable lyrics. Subsequently, in 1991, Nirvana released the album Nevermind on a major record label (Geffen Records), became popular worldwide, and was held responsible for the introduction of the term and culture known as 'Grunge' to the mainstream culture. Seeming to catch the (un)consciousness of a supposedly new, contemporary generation of youth, the band went on to take the previously ignored subculture of punk to the level of popular culture. Fears that popularity among mainstream society would homogenize and dilute Nirvana's music were unfounded with their second major label release, In Utero, in 1993. With a sigh of relief and a reassurance in the punk ethic it seemed that Nirvana were not going to let themselves become victims like so many cool bands before them to corporate destruction. On April 8, 1994 Kurt Cobain, within a month of recovering from a drug and booze induced coma, was found dead. He had killed himself three days earlier with the business end of a shotgun. Apparently depression, a malady being increasingly attached to the younger generation, about his lack of joy with his position as rock performer was the root of his actions. I now wonder what is my/our future...

5.1(b) Grunge: Postmodern and Authentic?

As the meaning of a text does not really exist until someone tries to read and give some sort of significance to it from a certain assortment of perspectives, these next two instances of interpretation represent an attempt to read significance in cultural text from the

perspectives of postmodernism and authenticity. This also acts as an example of the how the hermeneutical circle of understanding, which seems to allow for the act of understanding, can be incorporated into an understanding of cultural study. This section is an analysis of actual textual examples taken from the culture for the purpose of focussing on the reasonable cultural meanings of Grunge. The interpretation of discourses will be limited to one achieved by using only the two previously described 'frameworks' of meaning and understanding (postmodernism and authenticity), because I feel they are appropriate to this subject and style of study. In addition to transforming the cultural texts narratives into words and discourses which we can discuss, the purpose for having a dialogue/discussion with the cultural texts under the auspices that these two perspectives make some sort of sense is to help progress the understanding that these conditions or moods actually exist for at least some of society's members and, consequently, that there is a reason for such a culture to have meaning for so many contemporary youth. That is, if the reasons for the condition of postmodernism and authenticity are understood and believed to exist, then the reasons for the immense popularity of this culture should also be understood. Additionally, while in most cases of research a framework is placed on a subject to which it must eventually conform, I believe that the frameworks used here in understanding the subject have come from within the subject itself. Internally decided as opposed to externally. I have found that being a member of a contemporary culture has helped me to understand some of the meaning and truth-claims of postmodernism and authenticity and, in return, postmodernism and authenticity have helped me reflect on, find meaning in, and understand the truth-claims and values of my culture. From this dialogue the circle of interpretation, as described by philosophical hermeneutics,

can continue (though not here) again and again. These two perspectives will not lead to a complete understanding of the meanings of the culture. They do, however, act to form a better understanding and provide cause for further instances of study possibly using other perspectives which are, at this time, beyond the purpose and reach of this study. This reading of the Grunge culture should, however, help 1) provide a deeper, shared understanding of some of today's youth and their experiences in the historical period that could be described as late-postmodernism, 2) reveal the various cultural, aesthetic, and sociological meanings resulting from the ethos, mood, or state of mind defined by the terms postmodern and authentic in the early 1990's, and 3) further clarify the concepts and interpretive capabilities of postmodernism and authenticity.

5.1(b)i Interpreting the Grunge Culture/Experience as a Postmodern Text

Interpreting Grunge, or in fact any culture, from one or two perspectives is limiting and limited, however, my intent in this paper is only to open up the culture to dialogue which will create a deeper understanding of the culture and allow for future study from other perspectives. In this section, I hope to illustrate how I have interpreted and understood this culture as expressive of characteristics believed to connote postmodernism. The traits, gathered from previous literature, which seem to express postmodernism are the effacement of boundaries between past and present, between art and everyday life, the hierarchical distinction between high and mass/popular culture, and between safe and marginal society through the use of pastiche and parody, the presentation of the unpresentable, an assault on nostalgia (which, all three together, threaten the safe mainstream culture), an incredulity towards metanarratives, and a concern with otherness. Still, I have reformulated and

simplified the relation of these elements into a concept which I feel is more revealing of contemporary cultures. That is, the awareness by contemporary individuals of an 'otherness' among people creates a disbelief in metanarratives and universalisms which tend to conceal or ignore this otherness. The disbelief is expressed in cultural discourses that try to efface these narratives and, simultaneously, threaten safe mainstream society. The three primary elements of this effacement are 1) parody and pastiche, 2) the presentation of the unpresentable, and 3) an assault on nostalgia. These elements of postmodernism found in the artistic texts, the consumable goods, and the activities of leisure help to locate some of the discourses which contemporary cultures separate themselves on the level of meaning and understanding from modern ones. Before beginning this interpretation, it should be noted that I currently find myself preoccupied with the works of Kurt Cobain and Nirvana, therefore, this interpretation may tend to be skewed more towards one focussed on these works. I have a desire to base this interpretation entirely on their work which would still provide a satisfactory understanding of Grunge but that would omit an interpretation of a lot of good creative works by other people.

> "In 1991, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' proved a defining moment in rock history. A
> political song that never mentions politics, an anthem whose lyrics can't be
> understood, a hugely popular hit that denounces commercialism, a collective shout of
> alienation, it was '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' for a new time and a new tribe of
> disaffected youth. It was a giant fuck-you, an immensely satisfying statement about
> the inability to be satisfied" (DeCurtis 1994: 30).

A Disbelief in Metanarratives:

The foremost feature of the Grunge culture that excites and interests myself and, I believe, other young people the most is the immense possibilities it creates for mischievous

playfulness. It is in this play that members implicitly and indirectly express their incredulity and disbelief with meta-narratives and grandiose statements while not wanting to or believing that they have to, in return or in place of, form any of their own. Upon associating them with contemporary culture, it should be realized that all of the traits of postmodernism associated with art listed above appear to be directly concerned with forwarding this single discourse of disbelief.

A definite example of the expression of incredulity specifically with metanarratives can be seen in the common practice among bands to not print lyrics on their album sleeves (this practice, however, changes for many when they begin to produce albums with major record labels). Tad Doyle, of the band TAD, expresses a commonly held belief among members when he mentions in an interview with Closet Rock magazine that "we want people to interpret lyrics the way they would. I remember growing up and there's a lot of songs that didn't have lyrics and I interpreted their words a certain way. And they were wrong, but it means something. It meant something to me"(Issue 4: 37). This comment reflects perhaps an unconscious knowledge or feeling among members that language and art can be interpreted in many different ways and present different meanings for different people and, therefore, that it shouldn't be up to the artist to dictate how the words should be heard and interpreted. Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, in a rare moment, reiterates this sentiment when he explains that he "can't stand political lyrics - [because] they're so obvious. There should be a cryptic element to rock 'n' roll so you can't figure it out" (Rees 1992: 46). Cobain and Nirvana bassist Kris Novoselic broaden this feeling in an interview with Much Music, the self proclaimed 'Canada's music station', when they tell the interviewer that they are more interested instead in

hearing how their listeners interpret their art (in this case the cover to Nirvana's <u>Nevermind</u> release) than saying, thereby limiting, what their intended meaning was. In the same interview they get upset when the interviewer tries to pigeon-hole their style as part of the Grunge, Seattle, Sub-Pop sound or scene. Yes, they are associated with these terms or supposed styles but that does not mean they can be completely described, understood, and rendered forever invariable by and from these definitions. This expression is descendent from the punk ethic which holds that, as Novoselic stated at the vigil for Cobain, 'no band is special, no player royalty'. There is no consideration of or desire for a separation between artist as genius and audience as worshipping dopes incapable of creating or thinking on their own. A relationship which would effectively erode both the equality between cultural members and the disbelief in metanarratives. Postmodern artistic creation is found in the creation of a work and in its individual interpretation. The multitude of lives and interpretations become part of the progressive, multiple, and endless meaning of the work of art.

In many of the discourses found within the expressions of modern art meanings and metanarratives are also questioned, however, these discourses often seem to supplant these with replacement metanarratives of their own. This cannot be said for the discourses of the Grunge culture which appear to question without the promotion or suggestion of a replacement or superior narrative. This is apparent in and supported, as an example, by the way in which members present themselves in everyday life. While other cultures often have a set or standard way of dress (a uniform) and lifestyle which they assume, this new generation of punks never tries to sustain such a restriction. For a time, after the long

tradition of short crewcuts or shaved heads among punks (done as an textual assault of the hippy culture), long hair became the standard for members. This can be seen in many of the hairy and sweaty pictures on the covers and inserts of the Sub-Pop releases. Following the lead of Henry Rollins and the band Black Flag, the meaning of long hair on punks was a kick in the face or a shot to the mind of the non-questioning shaved punk who was against conformity yet was still, in a way, conforming. Long, wavy, unkempt hair also looked cool on stage as it was swung around to the heavy thunder of the new punk influenced music. However, this narrative is again being questioned as prominent players cut off their locks. The most drastic is seen in the change in SoundGarden's singer Chris Cornell. Famous for his 'gorgeous', long, and wavy mane which he flailed about and rolled around in (see the photos on SoundGarden's Screaming Life album cover and sleeve for example), Cornell recently shaved it all off to the shock of all his fans (see SoundGarden's Super Unknown photos and the associated videos of 'Spoonman' and 'Black Hole Sun'). SoundGarden and hair went together but here was the singer (and now most of the other members of the band) going against their own original narrative. Constant change and formation of cultural narrative is necessary for and is a significant feature of these contemporary cultures.

Another expression of this discourse of disbelief about their own metanarratives can be seen in some of the fashion elements of the culture. Again focussing on prominent players, Kurt Cobain's clothing choice (which is similar to those expressed by Billy Corgan and James Iha of Smashing Pumpkins) presents a curious narrative in a couple of social arena's. He tends/tended to wear an array of attire that comes from second-hand clothing stores such as old woolly cardigans, lowtop basketball shoes, worn out jeans, and, especially, bizarrely

coloured and designed shirts (remnants of the 60's and 70's cultures), pajamas, and summer dresses. While following the Punk ethic of spending as little as possible on attire, this clothing implicitly and simultaneously questions set images of Grunge rock and men in rock and contradicts Cobain's own aggressive musical expressions. The lumberjack, flannel shirt, Doc Marten boot look that has been associated with Grunge is definitely not expressed here as the whimsical shirts, meek sweaters, and flowery dresses are completely antithetical to the rough and ready outdoor wear and music commonly associated with the culture. At the same time, these expressions of whimsy and femininity acts to challenge both the mainstream and Grunge cultures' ideas about masculinity and machoism that have always been associated with rock music. It not only shows a disbelief in certain rock culture traditions but also indicates the constant effort of the producing members of the Grunge culture to create, provide, and investigate discourses that question their own thoughts, ideas, expressions, and traditions.

Some of the turmoil and confusion resulting from the simultaneous expression of challenge to mainstream culture's metanarratives and their own is expressed not only in works of the culture but can also be found in the 'private' activities of some of the cultural members. Drug use, and especially heroin use in the Seattle area, in addition to the copious amounts of alcohol that is consumed has seemingly become popular among some of the culture's population. This sort of activity is nothing new to the rock world or youth cultures, yet in the previous ones it was more or less promoted or celebrated as acceptable, whereas, now in the contemporary postmodern cultures it is still participated in but not suggested as the right thing to do. For instance, the much publicized addiction of Kurt Cobain and his wife, Courtney Love. While it was apparent they were both frequent users of the substance, one of the

reasons they did not want to admit or suggest that this is in fact what they did was the concern that it may appear they were supporting its use. This position is similar to Cobain's one on guns. In his music it is apparent that he is against the redneck mentality associated with firearms and puts in a negative context the belief that it is an American's God given right to bear them. However, in a <u>Request</u> magazine interview with him he admits to being drawn to the power and thrill of being able to use and properly control such a weapon and the need to have one (Nov. 1993: 34). After receiving one as a wedding present he purchased a few guns (and purportedly had many a disagreement over them with Courtney) and eventually ended his own existence with one.

Collectively, these cultural examples which express a discourse that disbelieves in all forms of metanarratives and do not seem to suggest alternate ones are representative of the chaos that fills contemporary cultures and provide one of the reasons that traditional and modern ways of interpreting have difficulty understanding them. The varied discourses indicate a realization and contemplation of the multiple possibilities and choices with which humans are faced in their day to day lives and a lack of desire or will to propose which of these possibilities, separately and in combination, are appropriate. The incredulity towards meta-narratives provides cause for discourse and expression but it also provides a source of confusion and anxiety in the necessary attempt to not provide any new meta-narratives as substitute.

Concern With Otherness:

One of the most important factors which contributes to the disbelief in metanarratives is the awareness of and concern with 'otherness'. That is, individuals are aware of a variety

of differences between and among social groups on the level of social condition, experience, meaning, and understanding and concerned that the domination of one metanarrative over other less dominant ones acts to eliminate or suppress equally valid and important identities. Some of the traditionally dominant metanarratives in North American culture are those related to family, wealth, beauty, power, heterosexuality, masculinity, religion, science, and anglo-saxonism and it is the oppression that arises from the continual adherence to these ideas which contemporary postmodern youth cultures textually express their disbelief towards and against. The discourse arising from this concern is expressed in the various artistic forms/texts and acts to implicitly question, experience, and inform on the variety of possibilities that go disregarded, ridiculed, or suppressed.

Most youth cultures, and especially those related to rock 'n' roll, seem to have been created from an androcentric viewpoint and tend to valorize entertainment and lifestyles that are traditionally masculine. Some of the expressions that usually evolve from this association of rock and masculinity are seen in the macho posturing on stage and in video of strong and tightly denim and leather clad male musicians, the frequent topic of getting-losing-getting back girl in rock lyrics, and the singleminded objectification of women (especially physically endowed women) in video and artwork by similarly beautiful but misogynist men. With a semi-conscious and unarticulated understanding of the negative effect of these narratives, Grunge culture submits discourse on the condition and experience of women and femaleness, the vulnerable, innocent, and complex existence of children and childhood, the existing reality of homosexuality, and of individuals who don't reflect dominant ideals of beauty and prestige.

With the advent of punk, female participation in music centred youth culture increased.

Leaving behind the days where females were seen only as screaming and fainting hordes of teenage fans idolizing male bands, as decoration for these bands, or as a group of singers singing pretty songs, Punk and Grunge bands are now formed either partially or completely by females which audiences understand as serious rather than gimmick acts. The females in these bands (such as Hole, L7, Bikini Kill, the Breeders, and Babes in Toyland) express and experience themselves, dispensing with pretty, soft, quiet and clean and replacing with dirty, loud, nasty and aggressive, in a traditionally male cultural textual style. On the other hand, while much of the texts in the Grunge culture express concerns without any gender specificity, there are many instances that show an attempt by male artists to understand and experience some of the female condition and to present it as being neither inferior or superior, just 'other' than theirs. Kurt Cobain, who was to my knowledge probably the most active member in the pursuit of this concern, has often been photographed or described in the various stages of his investigation of femininity. In addition to his songs "About a Girl", "Been a Son", "Polly", and "Rape Me" (which primarily and in a progressive degree of blatancy deal with the oppression, torment, torture and other forms of misogynist treatment that many females endure at the hands of males) and his artistic works which depict a reflexivity on the female reproductive role and power, he can often be found wandering around wearing dresses, eyeliner, and nail polish. I understand this not necessarily as a pretentious or contrived posturing but as a sincere attempt to discover a small portion of the stereotypical female world and to express that the culturally formed narratives and experiences associated with these forms of decoration do not have to necessarily belong to one specific gender. To many of the kids who have come to the Grunge culture with the rise in its

popularity and are not used to this form of iconoclasm a certain cathartic confusion and appeal can occur due to the freedom and equality that this discourse expresses.

This form of cross-gender expression inevitably results in a discussion about homosexuality. Partly in response to the kisses that members of Nirvana sometimes give each other on stage and the fact that Kurt sometimes wears dresses and once mentioned that "(he) definitely feel(s) closer to the feminine side of the human being than (he) do(es) the male - or the American idea of what a male is supposed to be" (Azerrad 1992: 41), it is reported that Courtney Love has said that she had a number of lesbian experiences and that Kurt had kissed all the cute boys in town. While it does not matter if this statement is true or not, the expression which achieved one of its Punk goals as being inflammatory is made to support the case that individuals should be able to live a 'normal' sexual existence but can also experience other 'deviant' behaviour and that it doesn't matter. In response to a lot of the criticism that they received about such comments, due in most part to the place they hold in popular cultural consciousness, Kurt flatly responded, 'If you've got a problem with our gay friends, stay the fuck away from us and don't buy our records'. These comments simultaneously express the case that the otherness of homosexuality does not necessarily have to be some deviant, rare, or queer behaviour and, more implicitly, that people should open up the minds to differences among people.

Since most of the individuals drawn to the expressions of Grunge and the meanings that they find there are mostly in their teens and early twenties, the majority of the cultural members are not that far removed from their days of early childhood. However, one of the recurring images in the culture shows a nostalgia and concern for childhood and its related

conditions and memories. Apart from the case that almost all of the cultural activities, from making music and art, going to shows and hanging out, to choosing one's attire, seem to reflect a desire to play or for playfulness much of the culture's textual discourse seems to indicate a desire to return to earlier times to either maintain an innocence, understand why theirs and other's childhoods were painful, or to find a way to start again and avoid the pain found in growing up. The discourse of Smashing Pumpkins' album <u>Siamese Dream</u>, for example, is loaded with expressions of innocent youth and fantasy functional families. The album cover is a picture of two little cherub-like girls with smiles on their faces and angel wings attached to their white Sunday-best dresses. In the liner notes booklet the lyrics are written on top of 1940's-50's style photographs which depict traditional and enjoyable parent-child relationships and emanate images of a pureness and goodness. Pearl Jam's songs "Jeremy", "Alive", and "Why Go" all seem to be concerned with a tormented existence resulting from such things as neglective and untruthful parents or other bad home situations that can be and has been childhood for some or what now appears to be many young people. The portrayal of the killing of oneself, as implicitly depicted at the end of the video for "Jeremy", or the numbing of oneself with drug use expresses a concern for the tragic, drastic, and, increasingly, common methods that the kids in these situations take or consider to save or release themselves from these horrible conditions. Kurt Cobain, one of the many who found suicide as the appropriate way to help himself, takes the concern with childhood to an extreme with his fascination for and fixation on what I interpret as a return to the very beginnings of childhood with his seemingly endless references to families, babies, birth, and female reproduction. The images can be found in most of the textual forms on Nirvana's

album covers such as the baby on the cover of <u>Nevermind</u>, the sonogram of Frances Bean

(Courtney and Kurt's baby daughter) on the <u>Lithium</u> ep inner cover, the collage of fetuses

both in and out of the womb on the back of <u>In Utero</u> (the latin term for 'in the uterus') and in

the lyrics to many of Nirvana's songs. In contrast to the saddening first line of 'In Bloom'

("Sell the kids for food"), the lyrics and titles to other songs such as 'Been a Son', 'Serve the

Servants' ("I've tried hard to have a father but instead I had a Dad"), 'School' ("Wouldn't you

believe it, just my luck, no recess"), 'Drain You' ("One baby to another said, I'm lucky to

have met you"), 'Scentless Apprentice' ("Like most babies smell like butter"), and 'Heart-

Shaped Box' ("Throw down your umbilical cord so I can climb right back") may have other

darker meanings when taken in context of their respective songs but, as a whole, their

continual reoccurrences create a feeling that there is a fondness for early, simple, relationships

and experiences between young children and their parents, society, and other kids. Cobain, in

talking with Gina Arnold about how Calvin Johnson and his K record label influenced him,

states that "it was just a reminder of how much I really value innocence and children and my

youth. Beat Happening (Calvin's band) had a lot to do with reminding me of how precious

that whole childlike world is. I have great memories of what it was like to be a little kid. It

was a really good time, and I see a lot of beauty in it. I was happiest then. I didn't have to

worry about anything"(Arnold 1993: 143-144). This strongly shared sentiment of the culture

which can be seen in part by the current popularity of Japan's Shonen Knife and Vancouver's

Cub, two bands comprised of females which project images of childlike innocence, cuteness,

and simplicity in their music style, fashion, and graphic art but with dark underlying

narratives in their lyrics, expresses a definite concern with an attempt to regain or at least

view the innocent otherness that was known or supposed to have been known in youth but has since been infected with modern adult existence.

The concern with otherness is also implicitly expressed in the varied images associated with physical appearance. In a media intensified society where image is everything certain ideas about appearance and beauty form an very strict and oppressive narrative and people who do not or cannot fit into these images face extreme prejudice and/or ridicule. Non-beautiful, non-rich, non-thin, non-fit, non-fashionable, and untidy people often become ostracized from mainstream society and become the 'others'. The Grunge culture displays a variety of images which implicitly express a lack of concern with the social prejudices surrounding appearance and erode the boundaries that form the otherness. The 'celebration' of the girth of a few members of the Screaming Trees and the tremendous size of Tad Doyle of TAD can be seen as an acceptance of or a lack of interest about the image of overweight people in popular culture or society in general. As is popularly recognized in the second-hand, rough, ragged, functional, and affordable clothing style of associated with Grunge, concerns about stylish fashion are tossed out the window completely which expresses both a disbelief in the social metanarratives that dictate what style of attire is cool and what is not and a concern that the ideas about proper attire are determined by the affluent. Similarly, ideas about beauty are also effaced with displays of the tragic use of make-up by female (and sometimes male) members of the culture and the toting of awkward haircuts. Other cultural images of frailty, ugliness, and poverty all act to question some of the negative pluralisms that mainstream culture creates and dominate with.

Expressions of Postmodernity:

As contemporary postmodern cultures seem to have a strong disbelief in metanarratives and a concern with otherness, a dominant discourse becomes the vaguely defined effacement or erosion of metanarratives and an implicit presentation or display of otherness. This discourse is achieved through the use of three common expressions: a) parody and pastiche, b) presentation of the unpresentable, and c) an assault on nostalgia.

(a) Expressions of Parody and Pastiche

One of the most popular ways in which punk and Grunge can be found to efface the boundaries with which metanarratives are erected and protected is through the use of pastiche and parody. In the often subtle piecing or placing together of a variety of imitated and simulated cultural styles or works, certain peculiarities of mainstream culture are projected, heightened, and/or exaggerated. It is here that cynicism, sarcasm, and humour are playfully combined in an imaginative and intuitive way with an implicit intent of questioning and ridiculing such things as universalisms and traditions. Not only are modernisms and other phenomena associated with mainstream culture, the targets of these harassments but the predicaments and conditions of the members' very own lives are self-parodied. Since contemporary youth cultures seem to be almost entirely concerned with the constant mixing and forming of codes and expressions at a level of cultural consumption and leisure, as opposed to the philosophical or political, the result is that the objects most parodied are those which exist at the level of consumption and leisure. The cultures that are the target of most parody in Grunge texts are those that are closest to many of the members' experience. Originating from the Northwest region of Washington state and centring in Seattle, it is easy

to understand why the cultural discourses of parody gravitate to a focus on 1) small town culture and 2) many aspects of the baby boomer culture.

Many of the leading cultural producers of Grunge text come from the logging and fishing towns of the West Coast of Washington State where, like other small towns, cultural expression and understanding is quite limited and confining. In these small towns, partially due to their small populations, dominant narratives are strict and do not permit any kid with more than half a brain or less than an athletic ability much leeway in the freedom of expression. Much of the musical stylings that Grunge is founded on is typical of bands popular in small towns, such as Black Sabbath, Blue Oyster Cult, Led Zeppelin, and Cheap Trick, yet the lyrical overtones dealing with the anger and frustration over the ignorance that often prevails in these areas turns these recognizable sounds back on the unknowing listeners. Nirvana's 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' is a case in point. On the surface the song and its related video appear to be celebrating the popular narratives of high school, pep rally, party time kids. With the immense popularity of this song even the 'jock assholes' who thought that Kurt Cobain was a 'faggot' joyfully thumped along to the tune. However, the lyrics (first line: "load up on guns and bring your friends") that sarcastically ridicule the tyrannical small-town highschool mentality and the images of an outcast uprising in the gymnasium when all the 'cool' kids have left and no one except the sympathizing janitor is around to watch the reverie subversively undermines the hick cultural domination.

The band TAD (and Screaming Trees to an extent) incorporate parodied images of smalltown culture into their creative texts which act to both threaten the fragile sensibilities of urban, mainstream culture and ridicule the ignorance that festers in small town environments.

Confronted with the humorous and disturbing graphic images of monster trucks and inbred

hillbillies and dogs on the band'sr album covers, song titles such as 'Satan's Chainsaw', 'High

on the Hog', and 'Axe to Grind', and personas depicting big, fat, hairy, sweaty, plaid-flannel

shirted, and hobnail booted rednecks jacked up on booze and drugs with ample access to

chainsaws and firearms what else could the cosmopolitan city dweller be but scared? Just

imagine the disturbing sight when these large individuals begin to roll around a confined

stage in the throes of musical ecstasy. Look out! The ironic contradictions here are that in

real life the band members are actually quite friendly and gentle but use the narratives to

collide commonly held understandings of the two worlds (urban and rural) together resulting

in a confusing array of questions without promoting one world over the other. The use of

these twisted images associated with the small town experience is both a celebration of the

charm of members' rural upbringing and a simultaneous parody denigrating the ignorance of

the people who close-mindedly support and propagate the horror and oppression of this same

culture. On the other hand, an enthusiastic terrorization of the safe dominant urban society

with exaggerated images of rural barbarism is performed from within the intellectual safety

and openness of the city.

Punk rock was always against the hypocrisy that it perceived the baby boomer

generation was guilty of with the evolution of the dropped-out hippy to the money-grubbing

yuppie and the lack of resolve or result that tuning out had for them. Grunge is not so

forthcoming or political with condemnations or slogans but uses the elements of parody and

pastiche to ridicule some of the cultural narratives that the previous youth generations hold as

sacred. The musical styles borrow from and combine the garage rock of the 50's and 60's, the

psychedelic rock of the 60's and 70's, the heavy metal of the 70's, and the glam pop-rock of

the 70's and 80's, however, by damaging these styles with punk aggression and anger, heard

in the tortured chords and distorted sounds, there is an underlying attempt to wrench these

styles from the previous generations and tear them to dischordant pieces. The band

Mudhoney, for example, takes and accelerates a 60's garage guitar sound (classic rock) but

torments the associated clean-cut, vocal harmonizing tradition with out-of-tune, nasally

whining and a collage of tragic cultural fashions borrowed from a variety of styles which

results in them looking like a bunch of spastic nerds. The confused reassembling of the

pieces acts to simultaneously render a sarcastic slur against the tender memories of another

youth culture while revelling in the delirium of playfully reassembling and enjoying the parts

of that culture.

> "Hate
> Haight
> I've got a new complaint
> Forever in debt to your priceless advice"
> > - chorus from 'Heart-Shaped Box' by Nirvana railing against the 60's hippy
> > Haight street generation

A representative 'act' of resistance against the boomer's culturally hegemonic narratives

through mockery is found on the April 16, 1992 issue of Rolling Stone (featuring Nirvana)

which promises to go inside the heart and mind of Kurt Cobain. This magazine, originating

as one of the most politically critical and aware and socially iconoclastic publications of its

time, is now one of the largest institutional remnants of the hippy era remaining in North

American cultural consciousness. The magazine has pretended to maintain a hip awareness of

contemporary youth cultures while it increasingly becomes a corporate entity with more interest in procuring advertisements for products to be consumed by the 30-something generation. In its present form the magazine is completely antithetical to punk. With the advent of Grunge into popular culture it was inevitable that the magazine would prey on and commodify this new culture/trend. Nirvana, trying to deal with the conflict between their punk ethic which purports to 'kill all rock stars' and becoming just that, rock stars, found themselves in a very difficult and ironic position when it was their turn to appear on the cover of the Rolling Stone (all together now, sing: Rolling Stone, Rolling Stone). The result was that Nirvana struck a typical band photo pose for the camera but, for the purpose of sending a definite and direct message to both his peers and the boomer generation, Kurt Cobain had scrawled on the front of his t-shirt the cynical message 'Corporate Magazines Still Suck', playing off the tongue-in-cheek message seen in their 'Sliver' video 'Indie. (Independent) Punx (sic) Still Suck'. In this picture the band manages to parody the rock star image and tradition that R.S. has had great pleasure in creating by simultaneously appearing on its glossy cover yet denigrating the entire magazine industry. The article inside almost becomes insignificant as the cover already projects what actually is inside Cobain's heart and mind. The cover creates an essence of confusion that is characteristic of contemporary culture because the band validates and invalidates the magazine at the same time, thereby, leaving questions and decisions about wether the magazine is legitimate or not up to the reader.

'Everybody loves us
Everybody loves this town
Everythings getting kind of old
So I'm leaving it now'
                          - from 'Overblown' by Mudhoney
'Teenage angst has paid off well
Now I'm bored and old'
                          - from 'Serve the Servants' by Nirvana

In the instance of becoming a popular culture, if a contemporary culture is insistent on expressing a disbelief in metanarratives created by other cultures through the use of parody, it, too, must eventually become the target or object of its own expression. This internal demolition is done to undermine any attempt or tendency that comes with popularity to create some form of metanarrative from the cultural texts, expression, discourses, and narratives. This self-denigration creates problems for modernist thinkers who can't understand the condition of disbelief in metanarratives.

Within Punk there is the ethic of anti-corporatism which contests cultural commercialisation, that is, cultural production and self-promotion done only for the sake of monetary and personal gain, and the resulting cultural domination as seen in the formation of idols, rock stars, fads, trends, and 'scenes'. Grunge, as a descendent of Punk, shares this ethic, yet with its transition to popularity finds itself becoming that which it loathes, commercialized. Consequently, many cultural texts express a discourse of self-parody to efface their own popular narrative. In addition to Nirvana's Rolling Stone cover comment, where Cobain's t-shirt message simultaneously mocks both the magazine that he appears on and himself for appearing on and in it, t-shirt messages, magazine covers, songs, and videos are used as means by the more commercialized Grunge bands to parody themselves and their culture. Mark Arm, the singer of Mudhoney, who is rumoured to have termed the word

'Grunge' and now seems to be one of its (the label) most vocal opponents, has been seen to appear in a shirt with the phrase 'Nobody Knows That I'm New Wave' (Rolling Stone April 16/92: 48) on it referring to the cheesy and presently uncool youth culture which was also spawned from Punk, thereby, mocking his own creative texts. In visual and musical form, Arm and his band, Mudhoney, parody the media- created Grunge culture with the song and video for "Suck You Dry". The song title refers to the way in which outsiders (popular media, record industry weasels, and out-of-town bands which have relocated/jumped on the Seattle bandwagon for the exposure) have come to the Grunge scene with the sole intent of trying to get as much money as they can out of the it. The video portrays a Grunge reunion party at which nobody shows up because there really never was a scene only superficial commodities. Mudhoney's song "Overblown" is another one of their tunes which, with the lyrics "Everybody loves us/Everybody loves our town/That's why I'm thinking of leaving it/Don't believe in it now.../It's so overblown", criticizes and mocks their 'scene' that has become ruined by the corporatism which many of the members courted themselves. Before Nirvana became popular they offered a t-shirt with the humorously self-deprecative list 'Fudge-packin' Crack Smokin' Satan Worshippin' Mother Fuckers' printed on it which, after becoming famous and part of the major record industry, changed to the diametrically oppositional yet still self-mocking list 'Flower-sniffin' Kitty-pettin' Baby- kissin' Corporate Rock Whores'. For an independent, alternative punk band, the initial t-shirt was a humorous way of playing up and caricaturing the part of the evil rock musicians while the latter is a self-parodying, self-chastising, and self-depreciating comment on the despicable position they more recently found themselves in as a popular, major label pop-rock band. The chorus to

Nirvana's song 'In Bloom' ("He's the one who likes all our pretty songs, and he likes to sing along, and he likes to shoot his gun, but he knows not what it means") points out the self-realization that the band no longer speaks just for the misfits but now entertains a mainstream audience. The naked baby floating in water and reaching for a dollar bill impaled on a large fish hook on the cover of Nevermind (Nirvana's first major release) also expresses these same sentiments of cynicism towards their despised place in popular culture. The image can be understood as meaning that the small amount of money used as bait by the big record labels has lured the innocent and defenceless band members to a nasty and painful end in a world of commodification/corruption. Similarly, the subtitle below a picture of the band Smashing Pumpkins, whose song "Cherub Rock" expresses some biting remarks on the 'selling out', compromising, and subsequent oppression by the once alternative rock scene, on the August '93 Alternative Press cover more explicitly expresses the same feeling. "Sleeping With the Enemy" can be understood as a comment on the conflict ridden and confusing relationship between formerly independent alternative rock bands and their new major label, profit oriented handlers. The self-parody of the Grunge bands own popular images is an expression of disbelief in these images. What else can be done but go against the corporate idea of a male rock star than to appear on the cover of a publication in a ugly summer dress, poorly done make-up, and chipped nail polish as Kurt Cobain did on Request's November 1993 issue?

(b) Expressions of Presentations of the Unpresentable

Punk rock has always been the presentation of the unpresentable by punk youth to mainstream society. Initially, the frequent images formed by artistically arranged symbols of

safety pins, swastikas, leather jackets with metal studs, highly contrasting makeup, and coloured spiky hair shocked unsuspecting parents and people on the street but eventually became part of a media stereotype and lost their value. However, what mainstream society didn't see were the related cultural texts such as record covers and sleeves, punk shows (though they have been simulated and mocked on television), and 'zine articles which expressed a range of ideas that weren't intended to just shock mainstream society but question it also. With the popularity of Grunge these and other subcultural discourses are now being brought into the open and pose new threats for the metanarratives that hold mainstream society together. They often present a challenge to the boundaries that have ordinarily separated modern private life from public life. With modernity there seems to be an attempt to make mainstream dominant society clean, safe, sleek, and healthy (physically, psychologically, and economically) which the upper-middle class oriented 1980's with the profusion of images promoting normal, healthy, strong, rich, beautiful people were indicative of. However, when comparing the conspicuous facts of mental and physical illness, dysfunctional family life, environmental pollution, economic greed, social violence, and extreme levels of poverty with the sterile images that the seemingly omnipresent media relay it should be obvious that the reality of modern society is not this way. In response, cultures with a postmodern 'state of mind' playfully and superficially form textual discourses using images depicting rot or decay, disease and death, violence and brutality, insanity, homosexuality, the degradation of women, sado-masochistic rituals, sexual 'deviance', and firearm, drug, and alcohol use and abuse. The immediate face-value of these textual expression is shock and horror but underlying meaning arises from a show of concern for an

'otherness' or the varied social conditions of others by effacing the social metanarratives that disregard or depreciate these conditions.

Until very recently, the aggressive, nasty, and noisy music of Punk and Grunge, upon which the rest of the culture is buoyed, was itself unpresentable for the delicately q-tipped ears of mainstream society accustomed to the soft sounds of mainstream pop music. The purposefully rough recordings present a heavy, abrasive, scary, aggressive, and 'live' sound such that it often feels like the band is right in the listener's personal space, thereby, making it impossible to ignore. This live sound is both a consequence of artistic intent and economics. Independent bands do not have a lot of money and as a result the final product is not as smooth or technically clean as are major label recordings. This difference and separation can be heard by comparing Nirvana's first independent lp, Bleach, with their second, major label cd, Nevermind. The former is one of the recordings rendered by producer Jack Endino who has recorded most of the Sub Pop and other Seattle area bands and is held responsible for creating the 'Seattle sound'. This 'sound' is actually the lack of, or limited use of, expensive and costly hi-tech digital studio equipment which tends to soften and smooth out rock music. One of the things that attracted me to punk in the first place was the fact that all or most of the songs on a punk record were good and were almost aurally identical to the live show. This is in contrast to the disappointment delivered by major acts which usually have one or two good songs on a release, the rest being filler, and can rarely duplicate the sound of the record while in concert. After years of studio/technology formed music the Punk/Grunge sound proved that good music did not have to be homogenized and it did not have to be done at a great cost by professionals. For their third album, In Utero, Nirvana reverted back to a

live sound achieved through the use of multiple microphones and only a limited amount of post-production in order to re-capture that 'gritty' feel or essence which forces the music and its images into the consciousness of the listener. Growing with the surgence of Punk into the mainstream the style of capturing a live sound through lo-tech and minimal economic means has begun to change people's ideas of what types of music are suitable for popular radio and television play. It effaces and changes attitudes about what passes for popular music and recovers for the average and unique creative individual the ability to perform and distribute music and other cultural texts.

Ironically, this music of intrusion is the music of introverts and passive-aggressives; decent individuals who usually keep to themselves and a small circle of friends in day to day life but explode the recesses of their troubled minds into their art and onto the stage. Expressions of unmentionable social ills and sicknesses give a gritty and dirty account of real life experiences; experiences which are either avoided, hidden, or softened in mainstream culture. The purpose of bringing them into the open is not only to ease the pain by temporarily releasing the demons that eat at the (over)sensitive individual, crazed by the pressure, inconsistencies, and oddities they perceive in and between dominant social narratives and their own personal ones, but to bombastically stimulate those who choose to ignore them and console those who cannot. The presentation of certain social phenomena that have been exiled from the modern mainstream society as unclean is seen in many of the textual forms. Lyrics, at least the ones that can be deciphered, often seem to deal with something being dirty, decayed, and confused. Others deal with the topic of torment (such as the sexual torture of Polly in Nirvana's song of the same name), the cruelty of children and parents and

the drastic responsive/declarative measures taken against them (as shown in Pearl Jam's song 'Jeremy'), and the questioning of one's self image and worth (like in Soundgarden's song 'Drawing Flies' ("I share a cigarette with negativity, Sitting here like wet ashes, With X's in my eyes and drawing flies")). The visual images accompanying these songs on the cd covers and videos reflect these readings of 'unpresentable' feelings and lives. The video for Soundgarden's song "Jesus Christ Pose" appears heretical and blasphemous by depicting crucified figures in various forms and states (among them being a male, a female, a Terminator type robot, and a decaying corpse). The video for "Jeremy" figuratively shows the mental torment of a boy who, troubled by the alienation created by and from his parents and other kids, 'spoke in class today' by killing himself with a gun in front of his shocked, appalled, and, accordingly, blood spattered classmates. Kurt Cobain seemed to enjoy expressing himself on the covers of his albums with depictions the diametrically opposed images of monkeys with electrodes in their heads and colourful butterflies (Nevermind cd), vegetable-like humanoids and decayed corpses among blooming flowers and butterflies (Lithium ep), fetuses among orchids (In Utero), and medical style renditions of the female body and its revealed internal organs and angel wings (ibid). The band Skin Yard is able to simultaneously depict three 'unpresentable' images of women on their Hallowed Ground cover. This picture shows a woman who, wearing an Islamic style balaclava to conceal her identity, is (1) naked, (2) has hairy armpits, and (3) is pointing the barrel of a large gun at the viewer. The ways in which these images are presented, both in lyrical and pictorial form, are not exploitative of the viewer or their subjects nor are they dictative of meaning. They are only meant to present and pose brief, fragmented, and sometimes contradictory particles of

disturbing and humorous images amongst the multitude of sterilized and dominant images encountered in day to day mainstream life in order to stir a sense of unease. This unease that they create is done in an unarticulated hope that ideas about what is right, normal, or proper are questioned and changed.

> "'Wearing a dress shows I can be as feminine as I want,' [Kurt Cobain] says, in a jab at the macho undercurrents that he detests in rock. 'I'm a heterosexual... big deal. But if I was a homosexual, it wouldn't matter either'" (Hilburn 1993: C1)

Often, the live shows can also be displays of the unpresentable. The lack of fashion concern popularly associated with Grunge style, as seen in the 'hairy', 'grubby', 'unkempt', and 'unhealthy' appearances of members day-to-day and on stage, can not only be understood to be a display of a lack of concern with what individuals who judge on external appearances think but a display of other possible human physical styles and lifestyles. It is if the buskers and beggars, who by day assault the delicate senses of the suburban dwellers shopping or going to work in the malls downtown with their lack of fashion sense and good manners, have taken to the stage and airwaves and are beginning to steal and corrupt the youth of today. Equally horrible is if at these same shows the children were also made to question their own sexuality or at least question what is accepted as normal sexuality and displays of affection. The members of Nirvana have often been reported to have kissed each other while onstage (homoerotica?) in various degrees from a kiss on the lips to 'full-on' french kissing (ie. with tongues). This 'performance' serves as a challenge to the rules which dictate how male friends should display affection for each other, has been used to purposefully piss off crowds which the band interpreted as being ignorant (prejudice, homophobic, or misogynist), and presents a sexual relationship possibility that mainstream culture tends to, or prefers to,

hide. It is done as one example of another way of life, not a better or preferred way. The reaction by the mainstream media, of course, was to miss the point and broadcast the possibility that Kurt Cobain, the supposed spokesman for a new generation, was, 'gasp!', a homosexual. This same media is also shocked by the destruction, apparently a bad or inappropriate display by popular idols of young people, that often happens onstage at a Punk or Grunge concert. What can happen is that at the end of a gig the members of the band might destroy their musical instruments and equipment on stage and then leave amid the assaulting sound of feedback. The members of Nirvana told me in an interview I had with them in 1989, and author Gina Arnold confirms this, that they usually do it either because they are a) pissed off at something in the world that day and like to express their anger or frustration in this way or b) that their 'equipment is shitty' and they just felt like wrecking it. These loud, 'violent', and destructive stage expressions move to another area of being unpresentable when bands comprised of females, such as L7, Hole, Seven Year Bitch, Bikini Kill, and Calamity Jane which are often separately labelled as or making up part of the Riot Grrl culture, perform the most 'unladylike' displays. While these bands are not that different from the others, because they are composed either completely or partially by females their noisy, obnoxious, and ugly expressions of aggression and confrontation take on a whole new meaning for individuals who believe females have to be or behave in proper ways. Consequently, Grunge shows are not only events for entertainment but a medium to express a narrative of a display of otherness and a disbelief in certain social norms that suppress this otherness.

Images of drug and alcohol use and abuse in youth cultures are definitely not unique

to Grunge. However, instead of being part of the recreational and celebrated persona of the band members, in this culture it can be seen as an unintentional expression of part of the unpresentable decay of the mental and physical state of contemporary youth or artist. The aspect of drugs as a party facilitator typical of rock 'n' roll is withdrawn while the association to dull or numb boredom, pain, and depression becomes prominent. Conflict and confusion surrounding the use is apparent because on one hand there are expressions of trying to deny the use of drugs and statements that drugs are not worth it while on the other there is the obvious effect of drug use on performances, creations, and lives. Use does occur and while the use is not condoned or promoted it does fly unsympathetically in the face of the 'just say no' campaigns (both Nancy Reagan's and the Straight Edge Punk faction) of the 80's. For anyone who has taken drugs, alcohol, or participated in any other method of recreational release it should be apparent that there is often more than one reason for doing it and that stopping is more complicated than just saying 'no'.

Leaving aside the social issues of drug use, with the growing popularity of Grunge both as a culture for youth and as a trend for the media to highlight the unpresentable images and expressions related to the activity of drug use within the culture begin to take shape as artistic texts. As with other texts within contemporary youth cultures, the expression of drug use can be seen to reflect the cultural discourse of confusion, conflict, and ambiguity without resolution surrounding the disbelief in metanarratives. After the heightened popularity of drug use in the 60's and 70's and the backlash against drug use in the 'return to values' 80's the 'position' within the new cultures of the 90's is to neither condone nor condemn drug use. Kurt Cobain was not the first nor the last person to use drugs but, because of his situation as

big new rock star, his use became well publicized. Nirvana bass player Novoselic repeatedly makes statements in interviews to the effect that they are pothead philosophers. He and Cobain appear in a photo on the inside cover of In Utero smoking a joint, giving the two-finger peace sign, and wearing Santa hats. After making numerous denials of using drugs while simultaneously making "veiled references [to drug use] in numerous articles on the band, Cobain admitted using heroin... After dabbling with the drug for several years, he said he developed a serious habit during the chaotic days of Nevermind's success... but his position on drugs is clear. He's nonjudgemental, but says he learned the hard way that they're stupid. 'I tried to deny it for so long simply because I didn't want to influence anyone. There was just no point in bleeding my heart in front of the world, it's really no one's business'" (DeRogatis 1993: 33). Not only is it no one's business it is also impossible to glean what his position on drugs is. When considering the statement with the future events of his and Courtney's repetitive series' of drug use denial and acknowledgement, detox and relapse, and reprimanding retorts against a prying media plus his last month of drug induced coma, attempted suicide, detox, relapse, and suicide creates nothing but an inconclusive reality. As with other expressions of the cultural narrative, in the mass of contradictions there is the total removal of black and white opinions or statements about what is considered wrong or right. Drug use is hidden and it is open, it is good and it is bad, it is stupid and it is reasonable. There is a disinterest with the mainstream views on drugs; they try to hide it and display it, they deny using it and do not deny it, they say they have stopped and they continue. What this considerable stupor then creates is the necessity for the individual 'reader' to accept the contradictions of others narratives and decide for themselves wether or not drugs, or any other

thing, is 'right' or 'wrong', that is, if something is for them or not. Individual members of the culture only create the texts which others can read as they will and refuse to be responsible for other's choices and decisions, as they feel they have no right in saying how things should be understood.

(c) The Assault on Nostalgia

Nostalgia for the past has often been a way for various cultures and societies to maintain or show a desire to maintain values and to express a preference for the 'good old days'. In North American mainstream culture the 1950-60 high school years, the 1960-70 college years, and the 1980 adult/parent years have been displayed in golden aura with a seemingly endless parade of films, television shows, and classic rock radio stations that promote these 'wonder years' as the best years. I do not think that it is with any coincidence that these periods are the same periods which the baby boomers dominated. In this domination a form of cultural metanarrative has grown and secured itself a status which tends to dictate a preference for certain stylistic expressions, meanings, and understandings. For a new generation of youth who share the same experiences only through the media, then, there can be a feeling of discontent and resentment towards the stifling effect this overshadowing puts on the creation of new, more meaningful youth cultures. Punks took direct offence against this and with a profusion of derisive expressions targeting such things as high school sport hero worship, hippy culture, and yuppie 80's greed made their feelings known in no indirect terms. The Grunge assault on nostalgia again takes its cue from Punk but the cultural traits of vagueness and implicity in its expressions makes it possible to avoid making obvious and 'embarrassing' statements.

Indication that a dominant expressions of nostalgia are being assailed can be found in a variety of textual forms that have been connected to the Grunge culture. In listening to Sub Pop 200 for example, an early compilation of bands on the Sub Pop record label, it is apparent that the sound of early rock and roll music influences the culture's musical style. However, Grunge bands take this style and ravage it by distorting the traditional elements. When listening to such bands as Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, Soundgarden, and Mudhoney the music often sounds poppy, has reflections of memorable rhythms, incorporates common rock chord changes, and projects simple sounding vocals stylings but over it all a real gut and mind wrenching feeling is placed; rhythm can become thunderous and spastic, harmony and melody quickly fall apart, vocalization includes screaming and caterwauling, and the musical notes and chords are bent and tormented to create a dischordance. Grunge musicians are the new angelic children of rock but they are troubled and cannot be sweet like their predecessors so the music reflects this. The musical forms that are held dear to the first kids of rock, wrested from the traditional expressions and meanings, become incomprehensible and unapproachable for the kids of brought up on modern youth culture.

Other assaults on the nostalgia of early rock can be seen in the new relation between audience and performer. The phenomenon of rock star worship and glorification by audiences which arose from the rock cultures of previous generations is an issue of contempt amongst the Punk and Grunge cultures. As the band members come from within the culture itself, they are only seen as expressing feelings and emotions that are held by most if not all members of the culture. Remember the punk ethic: no band is special, no player royalty. While mainstream rock groups tend to erect a protective and 'bouncer' formed barrier between

themselves and their fans, it is common to see Grunge band members anonymously and modestly mingling with the crowd before, after, and during a performance. Textual examples of this are seen in Pearl Jam's video for 'Alive', in which singer Eddie Vedder intimately 'body surfs' on the crowd, and Nirvana's video for 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. At the start of the Nirvana video the three members of the band, singing about youth cultural conformity, and the anarchist cheerleaders are performing for a school gym full of kids who are, traditionally, sitting quietly watching the band from the bleachers. After a few verses and choruses railing against conformity the audience eventually ends up slam dancing and interacting with the band, destroying the equipment, destroying the nostalgic image of the pep rally, and destroying the barrier that separates artist from audience. It is only with the popularization of Grunge and the archaic demand by the mainstream media machine to create, promote, and worship pop stars that the separation between performer and audience occurs. Kurt Cobain mentions the dismay he felt in the growing separation between himself and his audience as he became popular in his suicide note left to his wife and fans.

At first glance there does not seem to be much difference between fashion of the 60's hippy/70's psychedelic and Grunge but with a couple of subtle differences contemporary youth attire and decoration can be seen as a designed manipulation and abrasion of the previous generation's style. Long hair and second-hand and fashionless clothing (as opposed to the new, expensive, and chic clothing of mainstream culture) still exist as a stylistic base in Grunge but the characteristics are blended with elements of aggression, roughness, toughness, despondency, and fearlessness which appear to mock the whimsical, airy, and cheerful sense of the predecessor's fashion style. While earlier fashions reflected the generations aspirations,

contemporary fashions reflect the members lives.

T-shirts, for example, a mainstay in the wardrobe now tend to come in black or other dark and earthy colours with cynical statements and graphic images printed on them, rather than the bright and multi-coloured tie-dyed ones with lighthearted words and symbols of hope, 'Love', and 'Peace'. Over these shirts can be worn heavy leather jackets and/or plaid lumber jackets. Feet are no longer bare or shod with sandles but protected by court shoes suitable for skateboarding or threateningly heavy soled work or hiking boots that can withstand the abuse of dancing in the mosh pit. New, however, to the texts of youth cultures and quite possibly serving as an indication of a lack of concern for the future and/or mainstream social norms, because the results are almost impossible to shed or escape, is the act or art of body piercing and tattooing (stylistic elements which I encompassed in my own identity while researching this paper). In what can be considered a mild form of sado-masochism or self-mutilation by contemporary youth, extensive self-decoration or using the body as a piece of art has become extensive in contemporary youth culture. This cultural style, which partly resembles that of the outlaw motorcycle gang culture the members of which were antagonistic towards the hippies (see Thompson 1967 for example), is one of the most apparent ways that postmodern cultures can efface the boundaries between art and everyday life. In the assault on the nostalgic images of youth culture which previous generations hold, the clear, safe, and protective boundaries found in modern art between what is art and what is real become vague and precarious. Postmodern cultures, in the simultaneous expression and mimickery of the conflicting notions of peacefulness, aggression, levity, gloominess, past, present, and future, display a disbelief in that separation and a desire

for the discovery of new and 'other' identities found in the mix or play between life and art.

The leisure activity of snowboarding can also be seen as an expression of the Grunge assault on modern nostalgia. In the mid to late 80's skateboarding, originating in the 60's, found a resurgence in popularity amongst youth. This popularity began with the punk culture using the activity as a cheap form of transportation and as another expression of their urban guerilla persona. The sidewalk surfing of the Jan and Dean era seized to exist and the bombastic assault on the cement and metal composites of the urban and suburban landscape, fuelled by the music of skate bands like J.F.A. (Jodie Foster's Army), began. Skateboarding, in the act of expressing and physically exerting ones aggression, creativity, and energy on the city streets, became a form of semi-conscious terrorism by kids on adults. It was cool, of course, and eventually skateboards found their way back into mall department stores. Snowboarding is winter time derivative of this popular urban 'sport'. Based on many of the same principles and ethics, or lack thereof, as skateboarding and Punk, this activity brought the terrorism of the urban guerilla youth to the pristine ski hills. The sport of skiing holds on to traditional images of good, clean, and shared family activity, beautiful panoramas, affluence, technological advancement, and smooth, side-to-side downhill movement all within the comfort of powdery white snow environment. Yet, with the ever increasing price of lift tickets skiing has declined as an affordable family-oriented activity and become one dominated by the affluent generations. Now showing up on the exclusive ski hills and resorts, however, are the ragged, scraggly, rough, and obnoxious Punk youth in their over-sized, fashionless, and functional clothing who hold no recognition for traditional means of going downhill. Anything with a vertical edge (bump, jump, or lip) is fair game and if an

unfortunate balding and fattening yuppie meandering down a slope gets in the way 'who gives

a fuck'? The attitude that this connotes reflects a blatant disregard for certain traditional

modes and rules of conduct which modern and traditional thinking individuals can't

understand. Even though the dark and unnerving presence on the hill of these contemporary

youth, these legions of boarders, acts to threaten the safety and peace of one of the last

bastions of modern leisure activity the display should not be completely understood as

hooliganism and wild abandon but a reflection of the disbelief in social rules of etiquette and

deportment.

The last example of the assault on nostalgia is seen in the resistance by contemporary

youth to the attempts by others to place them in categories, models, molds, or groups. Trying

to fit new styles into old models or retrospective conceptions which have previously

determined meanings, so that these new things can more easily be understood, can be seen as

a form of nostalgia. The mainstream music industry is guilty of this as it is always trying to

create new versions of old ideas and styles rather than trying to create new ones. There have

been countless renditions of industry formed Elvis', Jimi Hendrixs', Jim Morrisons, Beatles',

and Led Zeppelins that heavily borrow from the musical styles of the originals while trying to

deny the unimaginative theft. So, when new acts or styles occur without corporate prodding

it seems that it becomes necessary for the mainstream media to describe and label them with

familiar descriptions and definitions in order to both understand and pigeon-hole them. While

it is obvious, as I have described earlier, that Grunge bands do borrow from a variety of rock

styles, the purpose behind their sound is not to rip-off the styles for monetary gain but use

them because they a) enjoy them and b) can mock them. However, in the fusion of styles

and the discordant treatment given them the members have made a style of music all their own that is not like the previous ones. Also, their lives are not thought of being like any other generation of people before them. Consequently, members of the culture are angered when mainstream media try to label them or parallel or compare them to other people; predecessors or contemporaries. As seen in many interviews with Nirvana, Mudhoney, TAD, and Hole, comments, suggestions, or questions about the terms 'Grunge' or 'Seattle Scene' often result in snide or rude comments. There is such a diversity within the culture that attempts to lump them together under one term are seen as ignorant because these are at best outlining commonalities. Similarly, the popular media have often tried to parallel Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love's relationship and lifestyle to other rock couples' such as John Lennon and Yoko Ono's or Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungeon's. Kurt's response, reflecting the typical disbelief in the nostalgia and worship of artists and the practice of labelling which restricts real understanding, was that he and Courtney were nothing like the other couples and asked "why can't there be a Kurt and Courtney model?" (DeRogatis 1994: 33).

Grunge as Postmodern

The discourse of this contemporary youth culture, found in many of its texts and images, seems to reflect a postmodern disbelief in the metanarratives that modern society has created and a concern for an 'otherness' in people that modern society in the promotion of its metanarratives tends to disregard or denigrate. In expressing this discourse the culture finds it necessary to efface or erode those boundaries which protect and uphold the dominant metanarratives of mainstream society apart from those of marginal society by threatening their cultural and psychological 'safety'. Consequently, the images tend to be ones projecting a

terror and brutality of and within member's and society's lives and cultures, the various

conflicting states of the body and mind (clean, dirty, energetic, decaying, beautiful, ugly),

sexuality and gender, and other traits mainstream cultures seems to fear in others and

themselves. "Kurt Cobain pushed the brutality agenda from the margins to the mainstream,

disseminating it through mass culture like rapid fire" (Gaines 1994: 60), and created a

discourse that exposed the discrepancies and misfortunes of contemporary life. In expressing

one aspect of a postmodern discourse, the culture acts to "expose and bring to the centre of

safe society the margins of the social. These violent margins (dope fiends, sexual perverts),

are now placed... next door to middle- and lower-class Americans who are attempting to live

safe, respectable lives. These late postmodern [youth cultures] locate violence and the

simulacrum, not just in Disneyland, MTV or in television commercials. They locate these

phenomenon within the everyday and give to the simulacrum a violent turn that it never had

before" (Denzin 1988: 463).

5.1(b)ii Interpreting the Grunge Culture/Experience as an Authentic Text

Considering some of the discourse and expressions that I have detailed above, there is

no doubt that the critics of contemporary youth culture mentioned in Chapter 3 would

describe the Grunge culture as one based on self-relativism and characterized as narcissistic,

egocentric, hedonistic, and self-indulgent. There definitely is an atmosphere of individualism

and deciding for oneself what is right and wrong or suitable. Artistic works, live shows,

leisure activities, and expressed opinions all contain elements of self-centredness that could be

considered as representative of the modern malaises of atomic individualism, 'instrumental

reason', and socio-political apathy. The problem with these portrayals is that they have been

conceived by individuals who are probably not in the possession of or do not understand the meaning of the postmodern mood, ethos, or (sub)conscious. What should be recognized is that, as I have outlined from Taylor above, some of these contemporary postmodern cultures can be understood as reflecting a new moral ideal known as authenticity. In recollection, this ideal is actually a blend of 1) self-controlled and self-conscious individualism and 2) a self-determined moral motivation based on the liberalism of self-determining freedom and its social recognition. These cultures of individualism are also socially significant cultures which a) recognize or share some social horizons with dominant/mainstream culture and b) have an opposition to, and criticism of, the tendency to individualistic deviancy as found in self-centred, disengaged, and instrumental rationality.

The way that this moral ideal is realized is not found in any objective manner such as documented regulation, legislation, and jurisprudence or organizational and religious ordering. Authenticity involves creation, construction, discovery, originality, and even opposition to traditional social rules and morality, yet self-defines itself dialogically by allowing for a degree of openness to wider 'horizons of significance'. Members realize and create a self-determined freedom by deciding for themselves what concerns them rather than having outside forces determine for them what should concern them without impinging on other's freedom do so likewise. By being 'true to oneself' and not having to imitate others, they find a point to their life, their own 'model' to live by within themself. In this 'recovering of an authentic moral contact' with themselves, contemporary youth cultures find and recognize a 'source of joy and contentment'.

But all these 'recoverings' are implicit, unarticulated, and without method. They are

not recognized and agreed upon by members in discussion or conference. Without the process of spoken language and since there is the indication that "there is a close analogy, even a connection, between self-discovery and artistic creation" (Taylor 1991: 61), visions and expressions of the moral ideal of authenticity are found in the discourses in the texts of the cultures. Therefore, in trying to understand wether or not a culture is either expressive of the moral ideal of authenticity or just self-indulgent and socially insignificant the cultural texts are examined. What is looked for are indications of the general features and conditions which would allow for and lead to a realization or fulfilment of this ideal human existence. We look for expressive demonstrations within the textual discourse as to what this condition would be like. Based on Taylor's descriptions of authenticity some of the discourses realized in the work should depict the worth of difference, diversity, choice, nature (ecological), and other human beings. These are related to notions of the universal right and capacity for people to be themselves while safeguarding everyone's equal chance of this fulfilment, the dignity of human beings as seen in the equal status of genders, cultures, and sexual preferences, the equal recognition of different identities (as opposed to hierarchical honour) in both the universal and intimate spheres, and principles of fairness.

To try to understand the Grunge culture in view of this perspective of authenticity it is not really necessary to provide specific examples and details from the texts as I did in the previous section. By examining the postmodern discourses and ideas that the culture seems to relate to and advance (a disbelief in metanarratives and a concern with otherness) through the use of three specific styles of expression (parody and pastiche of other cultures, presentation of the unpresentable, and an assault on nostalgia) from an understanding of authenticity we

can still determine wether or not socially significant values are present in the culture. In this process that integrates of the perspectives of postmodernism and authenticity, by determining if postmodern cultures fulfil the requirements of the moral ideal of authenticity, I will try to find support for my proposition that authenticity is a moral ideal not just of modern cultures, as Taylor suggests, but postmodern ones too.

Authenticity and the Disbelief in Metanarratives

I feel I have established that, as one of their distinguishing features, postmodern cultures and Grunge in particular express an incredulity towards metanarratives; contemporary cultural works seem to express the belief that dominant social narratives, traditions, moralities and claims to truth do not necessarily reflect or have meaning for all experiences and understandings. Also, because explanation of a text objectifies and dictates meaning, thereby creating an alternate metanarrative, the postmodern artist has no desire to provide one, so the ideas behind these expressions remain at the artistic level and interpretation is left up to individual. Taylor believes that popular postmodern cultures are not authentic because they tend to emphasize the creative and oppositional component of authenticity over the openness to horizons of significance component and, anthrocentrically, slide into the pit of subjectivity and insignificance (ibid: 66-69). This may be true of some contemporary cultures but not, I believe, of Grunge. Authenticity is, I feel, expressed in the discourse of disbelief by the lack of an attempt to produce and formulate static meanings and positions in its original and creative works. While the continual process of unconnected and eclectic cultural movement and change could be interpreted by some as reflective of a whimsical or facile relativism the dynamism of change in fact allows for an authentic self-determining freedom on a grand

scale.

By being apolitical, or abstaining from an outright expression and imposition of ones own belief or thoughts, the artist not only prevents himself from taking an 'embarrassing' and immovable position but allows for others, using the text as a catalyst, to be free to create, construct, discover, hold, and follow their own beliefs, interpretations, meanings, and understandings be they similar or different. The same can be said about the decision to not provide lyrics with songs, the lack of desire to volunteer meanings for songs or artwork at the request of interviewers, the constant changing of appearance, and the use of drugs and guns. The piece or act, as a text in its own right, has meaning (which may change) for the writer/artist/individual and can also have a different meaning for other people. By not imposing a definitive meaning on a text, or a definitive text for that matter, the elements of difference and diversity in choice, identity, and experience are allowed to operate, thereby, giving each 'reader' an equal opportunity to participate to their own capacity and the self-determining freedom to locate their own meaning in and create their own text by bringing whatever they consider significant to it. This style, which allows every reader equal chance of fulfilling their interpretive and creative potential, simultaneously recognizes multiple social horizons of significance (such as freedom and equality) and becomes self-defined in dialogue with these horizons. Consequently, both requirements of the moral ideal of authenticity are fulfilled within the discourse of disbelief in metanarratives.

Authenticity and the Concern for Otherness

The frequent concern for otherness in the Grunge culture is a discourse expressing the second component of authenticity, supposedly void in postmodern cultures, in that it displays

an incredible worth for and belief in the dignity of human beings as seen in the support for the equal status of different genders, races, ethnicities, sexual preferences, and lifestyles. Aside from the fact that the self-determination and individualism found through creation and discovery are central to these expressions, the concern with and respect for otherness is a recognition of and openness to horizons of significance. These horizons of concern and respect may or may not necessarily be significant ones for mainstream society as a whole but they are definitely significant for the 'other' person or persons that the creative individual and culture considers when defining themselves in relation to or in dialogue with.

The concern for otherness found in the creative exploration of gender differences plays a prominent role in the expressions of members of the Grunge culture. The statements and images which go against male macho posturing and play down the elements of a machismo typically attached to being male that seem to be entrenched in rock n roll are expressions of an understanding that youth cultures, and cultures in general, are not and should not be the strict domain of male voices and attitudes. The dressing up by males in a typically female fashion, the display of emotions in traditionally female ways by males, and males showing a genuine concern for the caring, nurturing, and condition of children are one set of instances developing this discourse. This discourse can be read as an indication that being feminine, that is, experiencing, being in touch with, and portraying that part of humanity which has historically been ascribed to only half the population, has an importance as a significant horizon which is often socially placed outside the male range of horizons in fully defining oneself. Similarly, the flipside of these expressions is seen in the case of female members who find themselves open to express and define themselves within a rock 'n' roll oriented

culture. While images and expressions of and by females in other youth cultures tend to reflect or maintain images of femininity commonly found in mainstream society, in the Grunge culture, like punk before it, females express themselves in masculine ways without reproach or criticism. Loud and conspicuous displays of aggressiveness, assertiveness, rage, torment, resistance, and other traditionally male traits and forms by females about their own situations and conditions allows them the freedom for self-definition and self-discovery. The recognition, experience, and acceptance of both socially significant horizons which define of being male or masculine and female or feminine allows both genders to further create, develop, and define themselves in ways previously denied due to social disdain/prejudice. As a result, male and female positions and lifestyles become blurred yet evolved due to the complimentary and reciprocal recognition of the equal worth and significance of the others' traits and capabilities.

These same images that demonstrate a belief in the worth of and concern for the differences and diversity in gender experiences and qualities also create an opportunity for a discussion of another area of concern for otherness. Because some of the images deal with the often confusing activity of cross-gender experimentation, mainstream society, often regarded as being homophobic, can mistakenly understand and react to these as indicating the encouragement of or participation in homosexual activity or tendencies. Both males who dress in clothing designated for females and females who project stereotypicaly male personality traits can experience negative social reaction (homophobia, misogyny) and have their sexuality questioned. The original intentions of the culture's creative members may not necessarily be directed towards the concerns of homosexuality but in dialogue with the larger

society the topic becomes activated. The inflammatory remarks made in response to social harassment about homosexuality are not essentially a promotion of a certain way of life or identity just because of its difference or in defiance to mainstream life and morality but as support for others to live their life as they feel fit. That is, the value of the 'other' is not recognized in its being 'different' but in its being part of an identity that is genuine and freely chosen for those people. The culture can be seen as expressing a concern for homosexuality or the mistreatment of homosexuals within mainstream society but the textual images can more generally be understood as another form of support for other human beings who are different from mainstream society's ideas of normal, right, and proper and the right to be themselves. It can also be seen as support for people who find themselves constantly in danger of social rebuke and derision for being themselves and different; an expression of the support for the free and equal social recognition of an individuals' right to self-fulfilment. This expression of freedom and equality can also be seen as a self-serving result of the dialogue that the outwardly creative and different youth culture such as Punk and Grunge has with mainstream. Members of these cultures experience social torment (such as getting beat up in a parking lot by football players) because of their physical differences and can relate to the similar treatment that others who also don't fit the profile of other social norms receive.

Expressions of Authenticity in the Postmodern Culture

The three styles of narrative expression that contemporary postmodern cultures use to efface the boundaries and threaten the safety of mainstream society can be seen as possessing both of the required elements of authenticity that make it both self-realizing while cognizant of social horizons. By parodying items of everyday life, presenting the unpresentable, and

assaulting cultural nostalgia the contemporary youth cultures are able to advance elements of self-discovery while simultaneously implying an affirmation of certain significant human historical and social backgrounds. At first glance, because of the sarcastic and cynical iconoclasm associated with Grunge, the art works expressive of these elements seem to involve only the self-centred concerns of creation, discovery, and opposition to many of the rules and morals of society. But, in their seemingly random, yet creative manipulation of fragmented and unconnected images and texts there is an underlying implicit and unarticulated ethos of regard for and recognition of certain social notions that the subculture shares with the mainstream culture.

Parodying small town culture, 60's culture, yuppie culture, and their own culture (as it becomes popular and commodified) can appear as a discourse of vindictive, self-destructive, and anti-social discoursive expression by the Grunge culture but by understanding the elements of authenticity present in the images meaning can be realized. The power of parody comes from its roots in creative humour and the ability to make a personal, social, or political comment without having to be direct, obtuse, or obvious about it. It makes a covert and sometimes cryptic portrayal which the reader must make an interpretation of and allows the artist to make a statement without taking an 'embarrassing' position. The hyper-real images of redneck life in small-town America coursing through the varied texts of Grunge simultaneously provide competing notions of community, oppression, home/roots, alienation, comfort, violence, peace/calm, nature, ignorance, earthiness, vulgarity, and genuineness. The construction and mixing of these terrifying and comforting images of rural life in an urban

setting, or on the urban canvas, allows for the discovery and development of an authentic identity. They pose an opposition and freedom to both the violent herd mentality of the rural setting and the disengaged/teflon/preying persona required of the urban individual and identity. However, on the flipside is the defining, or redefining, of a significant model of social interaction that promotes the worth of good nurturing and intimate relationships with friends, family, and nature and the notion of fairness "which demands equal chances for everyone to develop their own identity" (Taylor 1991: 50).

These same ideas or notions are reflected in the expressions parodying the 60's/yuppie cultures and the popularization of Grunge. I do not think the Grunge culture in general believes that the hippy culture was completely void of any redeeming features. The sense of the worth of cultural community and the style of free and liberated artistic and identity exploration associated with the preceding culture is similar to that notion held by the contemporary youth cultures. However, the irresponsible, disengaged, and atomistic element of 'dropping out' via the celebration of drug use and the appearance that a large proportion of the 60's cultural population went on to hypocritically renege on their social ideals makes them a target of contemporary culture's satirical bite. Dropping out of mainstream society is no big deal to individuals who feel that they were never part of it but dropping out or withdrawing from the responsibility to the subculture itself, which can occur through an overindulgence in drug use (Kurt Cobain for example), is considered selfish, wasteful, and stupid. Also, relieving oneself of the youthful ideals that fuelled ones identity and culture and replacing them with ones that one was formerly against is also considered culturally irresponsible. The Rolling Stone cover with Nirvana, as described above, is a pointed and critical remark on this

departure of the magazines editors/owners from being anti-establishment to being the corporate establishment. The appearance by a Punk band on the cover of a previous generation's corrupt cultural edifice is similarly seen as a sell-out but the quickly scrawled message "Corporate magazines still suck" on Cobain's t-shirt is an creatively authentic message in that the band expresses an opposition to the magazine and reassures their subcultural members that in doing so they still have the freedom and fortitude to voice their beliefs even though they have been co-opted into popular culture.

Even though the message is authentic the elements of parody and pastiche in the R.S. cover still express self-parodic notions by the culture ridiculing the inauthenticity of their own popular images created by the mainstream media. As the bands find themselves and their culture becoming commodities they have found that the spirit and intimacy of their community has become frail and disintegrated. When bands move to Seattle just to get a record contract based on an assimilation of the 'Seattle Sound' and scene location music isn't made just for the sake of making music anymore. The Grunge identity, as with any cultural identity, becomes farcical, transparent, and embarrassing as it becomes a commodity. People can buy into the 'Grunge' image, which has become stereotyped, without also taking on the philosophies that originally fuelled the culture. In a self-parody the members take or recreate images of themselves which are no longer themselves (uni-dimensional, static, cardboard cut-out, comic book images of themselves which the popular media have decided on) and 'pose' or play with them to show the juxtaposition of the authentic and the popular. The latter, in being commodified, appears to lack complete truth or reality and real meaning. By making themselves and their culture look idiotic or repellent, in displaying an opposition to the

tendency to create popular cultural metanarratives, there is the hope that mainstream culture will lose interest in their culture and allow for the retrieval of an element of originality, social intimacy, and authenticity.

The presentation of the unpresentable, as a common discourse in the contemporary youth cultures, is often thought of as only a childish display of opposition to the rules and morality of society. The images thrown about by youth which tend to shock and upset older mainstream audiences are considered as part of a rebellious 'phase' which they will grow out of when they mature and find their place in society. The images which, as I have indicated above, are partially a result of an attempt to reveal some of the other darker forms of life experiences, the not so clean and respectable ones, and are also an element of the expression of authenticity and a regaining of a social attachment that has often been lost in modern society. The music, fashion, on-stage antics and presentation, and personal activities all express some aspects and ideas about creativity and individuality, opposition to some standards of society, and the retrieval of other social values.

The creative-discovery aspect of these texts is apparent. Dark, dirty, and sometimes terrifying elements pervade a lot of the cultural presentations which can be considered part of the outwardly generated identity that the individual Grunge-related artist is seen to reflect. In the process of this playful self-discovery where the darker, troubled parts of the individuality fuel the desire to produce texts that soothe the artist's internal demons there are also ideas about preferred forms of society that give cause for the expression of the 'unpresentable' creative works. The quality of the mistake-ridden, experimental, gritty, live, and loud sound

of the culture's music and it's eclectic borrowing of styles from past rock cultures allows for a variety of alternatives in self-determined cultural creation. It is in this diversity that notions of fairness and equal opportunity for everyone to form and have ones identity socially recognized occur. By not posing any demands of mastery or professionalism on the music made (ie. that it be radio-friendly to sensitive ears or sell lots of units), there is an emphasis on a form of social equality, a freedom from the modern demands of technology and money, and a freedom for the artist to make music, cheaply, and have it heard and appreciated by others. This reciprocal need for others in the culture to find enjoyment in one's creations helps to form a cohesive and intimate community.

When considering these and other forms of unpresentable presentations (the unclean and untidy anti-fashions, on-stage destruction and aggression by males and females, gender role confusion and experimentation, and conspicuous firearm, drug and alcohol use) in conjunction with a non-judgemental attitude there is an implicit recognition of the freedom for individual creativity and opposition to rules and norms of decency and tradition without rebuke. However, there is a concurrent implication that in this process of creativity the artist must be aware of and recognize the same freedoms for others at the same time. There is no condemnation of lifestyle, only condemnation of people who do not allow people to realize themselves as they see fit.

By bringing another culture's texts and styles from the past and into the present, as seen in the assault on the nostalgia, contemporary cultures which arrange these texts in a creative and sometimes fragmentary composition are able to locate or create a terror in those

signs. In the constructive destruction which can through the appropriation of borrowed forms pose various forms of opposition to dominant rules and moralities there is, however, an insinuated suggestion of a recognition in or worth of some significant social background or social attachment; there is both a terror and a safety located in nostalgia for the past. The expressions of this assault on social standards, similar to the ones in the presentation of the unpresentable, are seen in the postmodern cultures' intent to shatter the 'comfortable illusions of the adult middle-class life' (Denzin 1988: 462-463) by bringing a heightened sense of the past into the present.

As Grunge is a rock culture itself, the nostalgia for other past rock cultures is often the target of the assault. Showing a belief in the essences of innocence, youthfulness, and rebelliousness which were primary in rock at its inception, the early pop-rock sounds and rock cultural traditions that become ravaged and ruined by the contemporary expressions of teenage angst is a display of disbelief in the structures that traditional rock has become and a renewal of the terror that rock 'n' roll was. The sense of amateurism that the creative mangling and maligning of traditional rock styles creates helps to corrode barriers that have been erected since rock became popular, commodified, classic, and ineffective. The authenticity of Grunge music comes from its lack of respect for and opposition to the conventions and pretentiousness that most mainstream music has in the rock world. The raison d'etre for the Grunge and Punk cultures is an attempt to allow and compel anyone the free and equal opportunity to express themselves through the liberating medium of rock 'n' roll. By removing such qualifications of professionalism, monetary support, and mass appeal anybody with a penchant to create or belong to the culture can. Elimination of such barriers as

recording production refinement or quality, performer (rock star/idol) and audience (worshipper) separation, rock as strictly a male domain of expression, elaborate stage presentation, and stylistic models all allow a personal, creative, and cultural freedom that is missing from mainstream popular culture. The aggressive and anti-fashion style of snowboarding which tends to threaten or destroy the nostalgic images of the ski resort can also be seen as an expression of this discourse of freedom and equality. The baggy, formless clothing, ruthless attitude, and the anarchic descension of the ski run on a board are signs of destruction that emphasize the notion of the freedom of the individual from have to fit into or recognize certain models or social standards. While all boarders may not recognize this, in destroying ideas of social etiquette there is a regaining of ideas about individual and social freedom and equality.

Grunge as Authentic

To say that the contemporary or postmodern individual and culture is self-centred to a point of atomistic, self-indulgent, narcissistic egoism is to entirely miss the discourse of authenticity that some of these cultures and their members have created for themselves. In being postmodern, Grunge offered a textual discourse which expressed a disbelief in and an effacement of metanarratives and a concern for 'otherness' through the use of pastiche and parody, the presentation of the unpresentable, and an assault on nostalgia. The various components of this discourse can be understood as fulfilling Taylor's conditions for a culture to be an authentic one because not only do they thoroughly embrace the practice of creativity, discovery, and construction as primary in their texts but they also, when generalized, show a concern or proposal for certain social horizons of significance such as the universal

recognition of fairness, freedom, plurality, and equality for all people. The elements of self-discovery and self-definition of personal and social identity and ideals through creativity that result from the incredulity with metanarratives and the incumbent concern with otherness more or less commands that a postmodern culture also be an authentic one.

CHAPTER 6 WHAT HAVE I DONE?: DAZED AND CONFUSED, TOO

"Though thousands of youth styles walk the street today in a highly individualistic extravaganza, they are frequently read, or interpreted, as lacking in any radical political potential. While once there was perceived to be a subversive, rebellious edge to such youth styles, since the early 1980's the dominant reading has been reversed"

(Redhead 1990, 32)

"Hate, hate your enemies
 Save, save your friends
 Find, find your place
 Speak, speak the truth"

from the song 'Radio Friendly Unit Shifter' by Nirvana (1993)

Throughout this paper I have tried to suggest new theoretical and methodological means of understanding contemporary youth cultures. The purpose behind this was that I felt some of these cultures were being cast out of hand by critics and members of senior age cohorts (read: adults) simply because they could not see meaning or social significance in them. While the critics tend to believe that many of today's youth are generally delinquent and, like Redhead mentions in the quote above, lack any sort of moral ideals or values, I suggested that because these critics are not properly equipped with a more suitable set of perspectives or frameworks of understanding they cannot adequately interpret the experiences and meanings of these cultures. I believe that some contemporary youth cultures can and do have social significance. Though not necessarily compelled to, as a member of one of these youth cultures I felt that I could provide important and unique insight into the expression and meaning of the moral values which I knew existed and the foundations of what I believed was a more appropriate perspective with which to try and understand contemporary youth and locate some matter of social significance or moral values in their cultures. The body of this work acts to try to provide this insight and promote these foundations.

Day to day, I am not really concerned wether or not older generations properly understand the younger ones (though I have spent many the dinner time arguing with members of more senior generations the benefits and appeal of punk and grunge) or if contemporary youth lack any moral values. However, when both my cultural and academic identities collide I find it useful to reflect on such social conditions and concerns and use my privileged scholarly and cultural position to create and provide something positive and valuable for both my friends, my peers, my elders, and myself. Hence, the importance of using 'Grunge' as an example of a contemporary youth culture that holds moral ideals is because it is the culture of which I feel a part (long before it became popular), that it currently holds a high degree of popularity amongst a growing number of the youth population as seen in record sales and commercial media rip-offs, and that it provides a fresh locus for sociological study.

What is most exciting is that the essence of Grunge is informed by the attitude and ethic of punk, a culture which is subversive towards and critical of mainstream society. Punk is abrasive and aggressive, values honesty and integrity, and believes in self-reliance, community, equality and freedom. The artistic and expressive texts and discourses found in the lyrics, sounds, graphic images and presentations of this reflective culture appear to both separate itself from and criticize mainstream society, as well as develop a community based on an independent system of cultural production, distribution, and organization. That this attitude is now finding a way to appeal to mainstream youth poses significant questions and problems for society-at-large. What can it mean? What will happen? Is society, as we know, doomed? How will a generation of "fuckin' lazy" Slackers keep society rolling on its

safe path?

What should be realized, however, is that these cultures cannot be strictly described as deviant and delinquent or considered a result of dominant/subordinate cultural relations. These cultures actually provide a criticism of society, albeit in a contemporary form, hidden behind a cryptic obscurity, an implicitness based on insecurity and an inarticulate yet intuitive form of expression. Traditional objective and quantifiable methods cannot be expected to be operational in these conditions because they are not properly equipped to handle new expressions and meanings. Consequently, new theories and methods have to be uncovered. Ones that relate more closely, in the same language, to what is being said by today's youth. It is necessary to introduce or suggest new methods if we are going to properly retrieve and read elements of the culture that its members would consider as close to being significant and true. Not only should this method provide new insight into the culture it should also be able to recognize and validate the relationship (in my case, close relationship) with and effect that the researcher has on the subject culture; it should realize that all social study is affected by the researcher's personal situations and conditions and that purely objective and disconnected work is almost impossible. Accordingly, I established that the philosophy of hermeneutics, the theory and practice of interpretation, is best suited for a sociological investigation with the purpose of understanding cultural texts that are of a literary, phenomenological, historical, and philosophical nature as it recognizes the 'effective history', the dialogic relationship, between the researcher and their subject and the dynamic interpretive capabilities of the researcher.

Understanding conceptions of postmodernism, such as the disbelief in metanarratives, allows the reader to realize that today's youth will not be explicitly proclaiming their values

and ideas about society in a political forum. They will use chaotic aesthetic renderings and expressions achieved through the qualities of creative artistry to project their concerns and beliefs. It is up to everyone else to read them and form their own meanings. This process results in the simultaneous expression of self-fulfilment and individual creation in non-determinate ways yet, at the same time, there are implicit but definite indications of socially located moral ideals that value certain significant social ideas such as the recognition of fairness, freedom, plurality, and equality for all people. 1980's youth, as a conscious age cohort, did not seem to have a culture that widely held or represented them together as a community or expressed notions of opposition to socially dominant culture as others had in the past. But, in the 90's, Grunge, as a representative of youth cultures, seems to have this quality of possessing moral values. These values, which are reflective of the ideal of authenticity, indicate the significance of these contemporary youth cultures within the social sphere.

I'll be the first to admit that there is a lot more to Grunge and other contemporary cultures than I have presented here (I would never want or be able to completely reveal the essence of what it is to belong to these cultures to an 'outsider'). I would also not want to suggest that Grunge was the ultimate youth culture (as that would go against the mood or philosophy of the culture) only that through being a member, as a pseudo-academic, I have been able to be authentic in my own way; in this study I have self-fulfilled myself academically, have been (to a degree) academically creative and I also recognized significant social horizons that may benefit from the discussion of contemporary social values within contemporary youth culture. I cannot speak for other members of the culture who may view

the meaning of the culture completely different from me, but I feel that this thesis has been able to construct and define one appropriate 'strategy' to locate, interpret and understand the meaning of contemporary youth cultural expression such that they can be understood as being reflective of values and/or moral ideals that are socially significant or positive.

Therefore, the Grunge culture and other contemporary youth cultures that can be considered as being postmodern and authentic will and do have conceptions of moral values and ideals that are socially significant. But, because they are imbedded in the forms of creative cultural text, text that is influenced by a postmodern mood which refrains from objective and concrete delineation of meaning, they are often unarticulated and implied which, thereby, requires the individual reader to pose their own interpretations in order to find their meaning and understand them while remaining open to new ideas. How these discourses and cultures will be socially significant is only determined by how the individual members themselves interpret, understand, and put them into action. This is one of the reasons that Kurt Cobain refused to be so bold or self-righteous in allowing himself to be labelled as the voice of a generation.

"What else should I write? I don't have the right"

from the song 'All Apologies' by Nirvana (1993)

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APPENDIX A
LIST (DISCOGRAPHY) OF TEXTS USED/LISTENED TO WHILE DOING THIS STUDY

COMPACT DISCS
1. Alice in Chains - "Facelift" (1990)
2. Alice in Chains - "Dirt" (1992)
3. Jane's Addiction - "Nothing's Shocking" (1988)
4. Nirvana - "Bleach" (1989)
5. Nirvana - "Nevermind" (1991)
6. Nirvana - "In Utero" (1993)
7. Nirvana - "Incesticide" (1992)
8. Compilation - "Sub-Pop 200" (1988)
9. Tad - "Salt Lick" (1990)
10. Hole - "Live Through This" (1994)
11. Beck - "Mellow Gold" (1994)
12. Soundgarden - "Screaming Life" (1987)
13. Soundgarden - "Loud Love" (1989)
14. Soundgarden - "SuperUnknown" (1994)
15. Soundgarden - "Badmotorfinger" (1991)
15. Smashing Pumpkins - "Siamese Dream" (1993)
16. Pearl Jam - "ten" (1991)
17. Temple of the Dog - "Temple of the Dog" (1991)
18. Skin Yard - "Hallowed Ground" (1989)
19. Naked Raygun - "All Rise" (1985)
20. Minor Threat - "Complete Discography" (1989)
21. Mudnoney - "Superfuzz Bigmuff" (198
22. Green River - "Dry as a Bone" (1986)
21. The Cranberries - "Everyone else is doing it, so why can't we?" (1993)
22. The Pixies - "Bossanova" (1990)
23. The Pixies - "Surfer Rosa" (1988)
24. Youth Brigade - "Sound and Fury" (1983)
25. No Means No - "Sex Mad" (1986)
26. Minor Threat - "Out of Step" (1983)
27. Minor Threat - "Complete Discography" (1989)
Among others...

PUBLICATIONS:
1. REQUEST: THE NEW MUSIC MAGAZINE - November 1992
2. Rolling Stone - Issue 628, April 16th, 1992
3. Rolling Stone - Issue 683, June 2, 1994
4. ALTERNATIVE PRESS: NEW MUSIC NOW - Issue 44, Jan/Feb 1992
5. ALTERNATIVE PRESS: NEW MUSIC NOW - Issue 61, Aug. 1993
6. ALTERNATIVE PRESS: NEW MUSIC NOW - Issue 71, June 1994

Appendix A (cont.)

7. Details - Feb. 1992
8. Details - Nov. 1993
9. Closet Rock - Issue 4
10. Route 666: The Road to NIRVANA, Gina Arnold (Author), 1993
11. Come As You Are: The Story of Nirvana, Michael Azerrad (Author), 1993

VIDEO

MUCH MUSIC (CANADA'S MUSIC STATION): provided various interviews of and videos by the band Nirvana. Also provided brain candy when I didn't feel like being strapped to the computer.