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British and American Punk Subculture in the 1980s

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Zásady pro vypracování

Bakalářská práce se bude zabývat vývojem punkové subkultury v Americe a v Anglii v 80. letech 20. století. V teoretické části autorka představí významné historicko-společensko-politické události na obou březích Atlantiku, praktickou část pak bude tvořit vyvážená (paritní) komparativní analýza vybraných kapitol britské a americké punkové scény daného období se zaměřením na alba Joy Division – Closer (1980), Dead Kennedys – Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables (1980), Black Flag – Damaged (1981), Descendents – Milo Goes To College (1982), The Misfits – Walk Among Us (1982), The Clash – Combat Rock (1982), Violent Femmes – Violent Femmes

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TITLE

British and American Punk Subculture in the 1980s

ANNOTATION

The aim of the thesis is to capture the state of the American and British society in the 1980s from the perspective of punk influence on it. After the initial popularity of punk subculture in 1970s, although having similar origins, its further development took different routes in countries in question. The paper further explores the subgenera of punk music formed in the 1980s and reasoning behind their diversity. The analytical part of the thesis analyses selected lyrics in terms of social context and their iconicity in punk culture.

KEYWORDS

punk, subculture, counterculture, the eighties, punk music, new wave, hardcore punk

NÁZEV PRÁCE

Britská a americká punková scéna 80. let 20. století

ANOTACE

Cílem této práce je popsaní americké a britské společnosti v osmdesátých letech 20. století z pohledu punkové subkultury. Přestože punková subkultura má stejný počátek v obou zemích, vliv její popularity byl rozdílný a díky tomu vznikly nové hudební směry a myšlení. Tato práce je zaměřena na popis různých žánrových odvětví punkové hudby, které vznikly po roce 1980 a zároveň zdůvodňuje příčiny jejich vzniku. Praktická část bakalářské práce analyzuje vybrané skladby z kontextu jejich vlivu na společnost a relevanci v punkové kultuře.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

punk, subkultura, kontrakultura, osmdesátá léta, punková hudba, hardcore punk, nová vlna

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Introduction

The phenomenon of punk subculture, being most prominent in the 1970s Britain and USA, came to evolve in the 1980s, taking different direction and maintaining the stereotypical punk attributes, or on the contrary, deepening the roots of punk ideology with a slightly more modern twist to them in order to adapt to the ever-changing society better. While British 1980s punk was considered mainstream at that time and became more lyrically and sonically complex, causing a wider range of sub-genres to emerge, the American punk scene took an opposite direction of oftentimes aggressive music full of bitter and sarcastic critique of vices of society and authorities, strengthening the classic punk nature.

Although the punk movement, also known as the punk subculture, was born in both countries in question relatively simultaneously; the social reaction to it and the political climate became some of many reasons for this subculture to take slightly different forms on different sides of the globe. For analysis of these patterns the most prominent punk songs lyrics were chosen in this thesis. Songs that caused the most social dissonance and got the most critical response, influenced other fields of art and shaped punk the way it is known today are used as an example of the typical elements of punk alongside with the newly introduced features that made the bands in question pioneers and most prominent representatives of their genre.

The aim of the thesis is to analyze the spreading of punk movement, also including its origins and changes that later led to birth of new sub-genres and interpretations of punk values.

The thesis is divided into three major parts, with the first part providing the definition of punk necessary for understanding of further discourse on it and its cultural relevance. The opening chapter also explores terms ‘subculture’ and ‘counterculture’, answering the question if punk can fall under either of these categories and to what extent. Second chapter deals with the origins of punk in the UK and the USA separately, as well as describing various punk influenced forms of art and culture. It is important to examine the predecessors of 1980s punk in order to trace changes in attitude and opinions on punk movement that led to its natural progression and division into further sub-genres. Final part contains several chapters of song analysis, reflecting the differences in particular sub-genres of music that emerged in the 1980s and their relations to social events and changes, as well as showing how the most prominent ideas and mindsets were implemented into music and spread amongst punk enthusiasts.

1. What is Punk?

A concept of punk has been present in our culture for over forty years, with the first mentions of it in America dated back to the middle of 1960s¹, although it still cannot be precisely defined due to its variety of expression, fluidity, and elusiveness in regional and political context. In his compilation book, Roger Sabin elaborates on how punk essentially started “being part youth rebellion, part artistic statement.”² Primarily expressed through music, the phenomenon of punk was and still is intertwined with various aspects of social and cultural life, such as rebelling against mainstream music, using it as an instrument to prove political statements and criticize authority, and project this ideology on other forms of art. Although not being limited to strictly describing a certain style of music, fashion choices, literary genres or political beliefs, punk influence and attitude can be traced back to all of the above.

Looking into the etymology of the term, “borrowed from prison slang, the word *punk* was first used in a musical context during the early 1970s.”³ Initially used to describe heavily politicized, energetic, minimalistic noisy rock music, the word “punk” eventually became almost nominal to all manifestations of the movement and, when used as an adjective, acquired both positive and negative connotations depending on a given social group using it.

1.1. Defining Elements of Punk

One of the most prominent features of punk is criticism of the system, social norms and standards, and outdated cultural traditions. Punk is essentially a response to social events resonating with people who associate themselves with this subculture. However, this critique does not necessarily provide a planned strategy of dealing with social discomfort; at the beginnings of punk explosion some bands’ ideas lacked constructivism in their critique. One of the most notable example of such attitude were the Sex Pistols, who didn’t particularly have an ideology to project on masses. The band that is considered to be among punk pioneers, followed and contributed to the principle of destroying everything [the system] before establishing something new and improved, concentrating mostly on the demolition part of the process. Although even in the course of the Sex Pistols rise to popularity, and more

¹ Legs McNeill, Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (Grove Press, 2006), 98.

² Roger Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy Of Punk* (London: Routledge, 1999), 2.

³ “Punk”, Britannica, last modified February 19, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/art/punk>.

eminently later by the end of 1970s, other artists already started developing counter statement to this attitude, adding constructivism to their critical art and suggesting alternatives to complete destruction and mayhem. Although also well known for the feel of community and belonging, punk was not as united at its beginnings in 1970s England. Lead singer and lyricist of Siouxsie and the Banshees, who were active in London at that time as well, commented on being related to other bands of that time period: “The whole idea that it was some camaraderie of a movement really appals me. I really didn’t like a lot of bands around at the time.”⁴

When describing punk values, non-conformity, anti-corporate and anti-capitalism attitudes are mentioned with the most frequency. As was mentioned, the political beliefs may vary in punk community, although left-leaning anti-authoritarian tendencies prevail and often times even considered essential for this subculture⁵. Another crucial part of the punk movement is the complete freedom of expression: “It was about doing your own thing and making something out of nothing”⁶.

1.2. Punk: Subculture and Counterculture

As the previous chapter dealt with various definitions of punk, the question of punk being a subculture was raised. This is a relevant topic of concern in cultural studies with essential fluidity and variety of punk. From some points of view it can indeed be considered a subculture. The Cambridge Dictionary provides the following definition of this term: “Subculture: the way of life, customs, and ideas of a particular group of people within a society that are different from the rest of that society.”⁷

According to Sabin’s description, “subcultures are normally a fluid phenomenon, very loosely tied together and made up of people who disagree quite violently with each other.”⁸ However, the term “counterculture” should also be considered in the punk discourse. While counterculture is a larger phenomenon, often with a specific agenda to cause major social

⁴ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 97.

⁵ Britannica, “Punk.”

⁶ Iain R. Webb, “The Filth and the Fury: How Punk Changed Everything”, *Independent*, April 28, 2013, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/filth-and-fury-how-punk-changed-everything-8591618.html>.

⁷ *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “subculture”, accessed February 27, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/subculture>.

⁸ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 97.

changes, subculture can exist within mainstream culture and not be at odds with the dominant culture; while members of the same subculture can share beliefs and customs that are different from what the rest of the society considers normal and acceptable, they remain a minority in the frame of general culture. Both subculture and counterculture share views juxtaposed to dominant culture, however the latter is defiant with its opposition to it and being a larger movement.⁹ A crucial point that should be considered while categorizing punk as either of the described movements of deviant variation of the prevailing culture is that in some contexts punk essentially became the mainstream for some period of time (e.g. 1974-1977 London), which makes it a clear representation of a subculture. However, reaching the point of vast popularity while still remaining opposed to the dominant culture, punk remained a smaller fraction of it.

Punk also shouldn't be considered as something that happened out of social context and attracted millions of people to a new ideology. Taking into consideration the British example of punk, it is seen from the chronology of events that punk came naturally after 1960s sexual liberation and the popular culture explosion. Following the escalation of newly emerged bands such as the Beatles, people were generally eager for new controversial trends in attempts to oppose the heavily controlled by the authorities media for the sake of self expression and fight for their rights, with the latter especially applied to the minorities. "Punk was 'liberating' politically, and created a space for disenfranchised voices to be heard—notably women, gays and lesbians, and anti-racists,"¹⁰ states Sabin. Meanwhile in the US, punk subculture escalated from the local music scene, only later adopting a political and ideological aspects to it, therefore obtaining the narrower sense of a subculture.

A prominent feature of a subculture is its non-heredity, therefore an individual has a choice to become a part of one: "people have more freedom to pick and choose what subcultural identity they want to embody, whether that be through their style, mannerisms, or music taste."¹¹ An example of British punk youth in the 1970s can be a take on this argument since being a punk was generally considered by older generations as just being a rebel against

⁹ "What is a Subculture?", Subcultures and Sociology, Grinnell College, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://haenfler.sites.grinnell.edu/subcultural-theory-and-theorists/what-is-a-subculture/>.

¹⁰ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 4.

¹¹ Subcultures and Sociology, "What is a Subculture?".

conformity and disrespecting authority solely for the sake of being different. Since this "rebellion for the sake of rebellion" was appealing primarily to younger people, their parents were the aforementioned authority in the situation and typically did not approve such behavior; "parents, for example, might be horrified by the same *Daily Mirror* articles which might inspire their children to attend a punk rock night at a local club."¹² Therefore, these values and attitudes could not be inherited within the family; for some time punk was considered a trend amongst a particular group of people that invaded the consciousness of teenagers and young adults, rather than family customs, which strengthened its non-hereditary attribute.

A common denominator in more or less every display of punk subculture is inclusivity and a feel of belonging. Due to its beliefs and attitudes, punk movement attracted various minorities who did not "fit in" with the rest of society, be it due to social status (especially prominent with the class culture in the UK), sexual identity or even such simple matters as not enjoying and supporting the popular culture. This aspect of uniting a certain group of people being marginalized by mainstream society is another crucial argument for punk being considered a subculture.

1.3. Key Features of Punk Music

As previously mentioned, the primary tool for self-expression in punk subculture is music. Generally, this genre falls under the umbrella term "alternative music". Alternative music includes any music outside of the musical mainstream, regardless of its genre, although most commonly associated with the rock genre¹³.

While punk music is classified as such mainly based on its lyrical content, including strong attitude, political statements and often ideology, the musical outlet varies in different genres, often coexisting simultaneously, nevertheless keeping its "aesthetic production and performance."¹⁴ Even though the majority of these genres had typical punk features such as loud and often careless playing, distorted guitar sounds and vocal lines lacking intricacy, the

¹² Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 174.

¹³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "alternative music", accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alternative%20music>.

¹⁴ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 52.

punk community tends not to gate keep the artistic expression to certain attributes. One of the best examples of punk musical variety is the development of subgenera gaining public popularity in the 1980s after initial punk personnel meeting with an artistic and ideological crisis due to becoming rather mainstream. An excerpt from George McKay's essay on cyberpunk further elaborates on this phenomenon using the presence of not-traditionally punk instruments in aforementioned post genres as an example:

...rather than guitars, electronic synthesisers are *the* punk instrument above all others, because almost no musical ability is needed to produce a convincing and reasonable tone or sound: you don't even need three chords, just one finger. Maybe in this punk argument about basic music production we can see a shift: from Mark P.'s rejection of the received wisdom of musical accomplishment in favour of a guitar-based primitivism, to the Human League's celebration and embracing of (an initially minimalistic) technological possibility as a means of sidestepping accomplishment, *could be* the shift from punk to cyberpunk.¹⁵

Generally, non-mainstream, also known as alternative, music with "street origins"¹⁶ can be considered punk, regardless of its sonic qualities. Although this definition fairly provides an answer to "what is punk music" question, there is a paradox to it. It should be considered that by the late 1970s punk rock gained enough popularity in London in particular to essentially become new mainstream (bands appearing on TV and signing contracts with major labels). Punk became more accessible to various social groups who were not involved into the scene and community before. Oftentimes this led to the audience adopting punk style without supporting what it stands for but solely because of it being a trend.

One of the most important pillars punk culture stands on in all its forms, including music, is the "do it yourself" attitude.¹⁷ Beside the obvious customization of clothes and overall visual appearance for the lack of punk attributes on the market and refusal to support corporations, the attitude can be clearly seen in such aspects of punk shows as small venues, their locality and frequent featuring of smaller bands.

¹⁵ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 53.

¹⁶ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 96.

¹⁷ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 3.

Another crucial term regarding the music industry in relation to punk that is worth mentioning is “sell out”. Oxford Dictionary provides a definition “to change or give up your beliefs or principles.”¹⁸ In the context of early punk, to sell out is practically equal to the artistic death for a band. Signing to a major music label presumably ‘kills’ the spirit of punk in a musical sense and is seen as a direct support of corporate, which contradicts primary punk beliefs. This frame of mind played a cruel role in the establishment of local independent music labels, which in its turn affected music diversity and gave more musicians the stage to express themselves, eliminating the sense of competition intrinsic to the mainstream scene. However, in the later years, selling out became to be viewed from a different perspective with much less categorical attitude, occasionally accepting cooperation with bigger figures in the industry as an opportunity to get access to more artistic and commercial instruments for creative expression. Therefore, to properly define punk music it is important to consider it from the point of view that any music containing these mentioned features can be punk, rather than a certain genre strictly defined by these aspects.

2. Beginnings of Punk and Its Influence

Although punk existed simultaneously in multiple cultures across the world, the origins of it are generally considered to be in Britain and the USA. Due to individual differences in punk’s development, it is impossible to objectively evaluate the first ever punk band and where it comes from, first mentions of punk as a typically marginalized layer of the society or the exact moment of it becoming a subculture. Considering the issue from a timeline perspective, in the introduction to his compilation book, Roger Sabin suggests the following idea of punk origins:

First of all, there is the issue of where and when, exactly, punk begins and ends. The generally accepted view is that it originated in America, due to the existence there pre-1976 of bands such as Television and the Ramones and antecedents going back to the garage bands of the 1960s. Specifically, the start-point is usually given to be around 1973–74, and the place of origin New York (primarily due to the existence there of the club CBGB’s). The look, the music, the *idea*, is then said to have been

¹⁸ Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, s.v. “sell out”, accessed on May 16, 2021, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/sell-out.

imported into Britain—with help from Malcolm McLaren. This has been the line taken by a number of high-profile histories (in book and TV form) in recent years.¹⁹

From the excerpt it is seen that the author clearly states the point of punk “being imported” to Britain after initially starting in the USA, evolving from typical punk “do it yourself” attitude and being popularized by the local music scene. A supporting opinion to this origin theory can be found in Jon Savage’s *England Dreaming*, the opening lines of which place British punk after American on the timeline: “It is the early seventies. All the participants of what will be called Punk are alive, but few of them know each other. They will come together during 1976 and 1977...”²⁰

Although studying the questions from the perspective of an ideological movement rather than a historical event that put the start of punk as a strictly limited period of time, many witnesses of punk, including Sabin consider Britain the origin place of the cultural phenomenon of punk.

Yet, if we accept that one of the key defining elements of punk was an emphasis on class politics, then it could only have begun at one time and in one place—Britain in the late 1970s. For example, if we think of punk as an explosion caused by the bringing together of various unstable elements, then the UK’s economic recession during this period can be seen as the catalyst. ... the ‘quality’ of the experience in America was different, and much less politicized. It is self-evident, for example, that the New York bands, in contrast to their British counterparts, generally dealt in outrage for art’s sake.²¹

Therefore, it is evident that the question of the beginnings of punk should be viewed separately in both the USA and the UK since both viewpoints contain interchangeable features although placed in a different context.

¹⁹ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 3.

²⁰ Jon Savage, *England’s Dreaming: The Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 3.

²¹ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 3.

2.1. Origins of Punk in the USA

In the introduction to *Give Me Something Better*, the author recalls that “punk in the Bay Area started around 1976 or 1977.”²² However, prior to this an underground style of rock music was forming on the other side of the country, circulating in New York’s nightclubs in 1965-1975. Part of this scene were such bands as the New York Dolls, the Ramones and the Velvet Underground, with the latter being considered one of the most influential to what was going to soon become punk.²³ Distancing itself from the mainstream popular music this proto-punk scene popularized by the infamous club and live music venue CBGB in 1974, it was known also for reconsidering the typical routine of the concerts:

Everything about the shows, from the bizarre lighting to the jarring music to the in-your-face, often blatantly sexual questions asked of the audience while their reactions were taped, was designed to have the largest possible shock value. This new standard of breaking down barriers between performer and audience while at the same time shocking mainstream sensibilities would become a staple of the punk rock concert.²⁴

In regards to lyrical content, this music featured darker themes that could not be found in popular music at that time, as well as being extremely cynical, pessimistic and simple. The distinct feel of camaraderie and being a community implicit to that scene was present once again in New York underground, which connects it with other early punk outlets.

An important band to the development of punk in the US were the New York Dolls. The band was a vivid example of the statement “was this cultural exchange between the US and the UK over the middle of the 1970s that led to the formation of punk rock as we know it.”²⁵ In the excerpt from *The Birth of American Punk Rock*, Heylin describes the influence as following:

The New York Dolls was no art-rock combo. The Dolls had far more in common with the Stooges than with their fellow New Yorkers the Velvets. Other primary influences included the Brit-Invasion bands - notably the Stones, the Who, the Kinks and the

²² Jack Boulware, Silke Tudor, *Gimme Something Better: The Profound, Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk from Dead Kennedys to Green Day* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 1.

²³ “No Future: The Conception and Evolution Punk Music and Culture in the United States and Great Britain from 1965 to Present”, Marquette University, History Department, accessed on march 1, 2021, <https://academic.mu.edu/meissnerd/punk.html>.

²⁴ Marquette University, “No Future”.

²⁵ Marquette University, “No Future”.

Yardbirds - black r&b artists like Bo Diddley, Sonny Boy Williamson, James Brown, Chuck Berry and Otis Redding, and doo-wop bands like Archie Bell & the Drells and Dion & the Belmonts. Theirs was a simple drive - to play good 01' rock & roll in an era of prog-rock and FM mush. The Dolls were reactionaries, in sound if not in image.²⁶

The band known for their androgynous shocking appearance often broke gender and sexual stereotypes in their music and performances, implementing elements of critique of social norms and authorities, that resemble a now typical punk nature. With their career being short and bright, pretty much limited to a New York Area, it caused major influence not only on the American scene, but also inspired an important to the birth of punk in the UK figure Malcolm McLaren; being the New York Dolls manager at that time, McLaren was the one to bring the escalating punk subculture overseas in form of fashion, which once again emphasizes the connection between both sides of the world in terms of punk influence.

By the late 1970s, the diversification of the US punk scene started. The New York phenomenon escalated from being a local scene to spreading across the country, inspiring thousands to create similar music. The “garage sound” was inherent to the majority of bands, the “do it yourself” attitude mentioned as a key feature of punk, played a big role in the development of such sound. With new bands forming locally, their inspirations and influences varied from region; often the lyrical concern and message in music of bands from two counties of the same state would drastically differ. The reason for such variety could be underlying regional differences in policies and overall attitudes of the audience. Another reason for this diversity can be found in the fact that punk became generally more popular in the States and attracted large numbers of people, which led to people with various music and cultural influences becoming interested in punk subculture. The unique contributions, started in the late 1970s gained recognition and social relevance by the beginning of 1980s, essentially setting the escalation of more narrow punk sub-genres.

²⁶ Clinton Heylin, *From the Velvets to the Voidoids: The Birth of American Punk Rock* (Chicago Review Press, 2005), 74.

2.2. Origins of Punk in Britain

To look at the origins of punk in the UK, it is important to consider that although British punk technically stems from American implementation of the term to simplified guitar music also known as “garage-rock”, the conditions for escalation of punk in Britain were drastically different and heavily politicized.

According to Matthew Worley’s article, “British punk emerged in 1976, ... spreading – virus-like – into the suburbs, provinces and cities of the UK. ... punk was born from SEX (the shop established by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood on London’s Kings Road that earned its reputation of selling controversial fashion items and chasing past trends, reviving forgotten styles) and disseminated first by Sex Pistols and then by the countless groups they inspired.”²⁷ The boutique’s clothing defined the punk fashion as well as took part in popularizing it amongst different layers of the society.

As McLaren and Westwood were constantly reinventing the identity of their shop, around 1971 the boutique applied to the style of Teddy Boys - a primarily British subculture with a strong combination of rock’n’roll enthusiasm and distinctive fashion style that “represent a symptom and a critique of postwar capitalism”. (Radcliffe, 1991?) Savage recalls it as follows: “McLaren and Westwood were greatly impressed by the Teds’ foppish brutality and their hard style, which seemed like a subversion of the status quo.”²⁸ In constant looking for the successful, shocking and sophisticated image the shop went through such names as *Let It Rock*, *Too Fast To Live*, *Too Young To Die*, until eventually becoming *SEX*.

In *England’s Dreaming*, Savage describes the idea of London’s fashion and music trends being heavily influenced by the rock stars such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones as early as in the 1960s. People were seeking inspiration for their visual appearance in music and pop culture and its most prominent representatives at that time, making it easier for new trends to spread among the public.²⁹ Westwood recalls the shifts in London fashion towards more liberating attire as “provocative”:

²⁷ Matthew Worley, “Punk into Post-punk”, *Museum of Youth Culture*, accessed on may 29, 2021, <https://museumofyouthculture.com/punk/>.

²⁸ Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 11.

²⁹ Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 5.

At the time, anyone daring to step outside the norm was deemed confrontational and a threat to the society as, sadly, the revolution in the Sixties had simply swapped the grey uniform of besuited businessmen for a sea of denim. As Westwood suggests, it is hard to imagine now that simply wearing a pair of straight (not even skinny) jeans provoked hostile attention. But it was this stifling atmosphere that prompted punks to push beyond the boundaries³⁰.

The influence of the boutique eventually continues with the original members of what will become the Sex Pistols in 1975, with McLaren and Westwood essentially hiring the band to promote the newly named SEX boutique by supporting their rehearsals and helping with shows organization; hence the band name practically derived from the shop promotion campaign. From there the band quickly escalated to popularity with heavily stylized appearance, controversial behavior, such as profanity on the television and anti-governmental songs, and reputation of “public enemies number one”.³¹ “By 1978 or 1979, the words ‘punk rock’ had become taboo with the media,”³² agrees Gavin Gritton.

The audience interest in commercial success of the Sex Pistols made punk enthusiasts turn to smaller bands of similar origin and eventually local scene, when talking about punk movement outside of London. Already heated up from dissatisfaction with the regime, British youth was eager to further discover and participate: “England wasn't free and easy: it was repressed and horrible.”³³ Another important point that needs to be mentioned in discourse of the rise of punk is its commercial success; the corporations couldn't miss out on a chance to monetize the increasing popularity of punk, be it fashion or music records, which ironically contradict punk values described in the previous chapter.

There are many cultural reasons as well for punk escalating so quickly in London and gaining popularity all over the country. The aspect of London being a city with a dense population, in the 1970s consisting mostly of young people of working and lower-middle class, played a big role in people turn to the punk movement to express their dissatisfaction with authority and

³⁰ Webb, “The Filth and the Fury”.

³¹ “The Sex Pistols”, Britannica, last modified on June 4, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/the-Sex-Pistols>.

³² Ian Glasper, *Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980-1984* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014).

³³ Savage, *England's Dreaming*, 9.

life conditions. Another important circumstance is the mentality of British people: being generally loud and outspoken, it only makes sense for punk being a widely popular outlet of opinions and emotions.

However, while the UK was being engulfed in punk movement, due to internal conflicts within the band, inability to perform at live shows because of governmental bans, and in a sense artistic and ideological crisis, the Sex Pistols existence has come to an end. Although short lived, their career caused immense influence on the music scene and punk movement. In his *The Washington Post* writing, the music critic Richard Harrington expressed the following thought talking about the American porto-punk band: “Their records sold poorly, but the band had a disproportionately strong influence, the common wisdom being that everyone who bought a Velvet Underground album went out and started a band.”³⁴ This statement can also be applied to British punk scene as it perfectly depicts the spread of punk in the UK as well - not many people attended the first gigs, but everyone present there found an artistic outlet of their own afterwards. The band became an inspiration not only to those who wanted to imitate them, but also to those who were criticizing Pistols’ approach to punk and were willing to differ. The initial popularity of pioneer punk bands died out almost as rapidly as it started by the late 1970s, leading to the scene morphing into something different, although reminiscent of the original understanding of punk rock it stems from.

2.3. Punk Influence on Art and Culture

Although the primary manifestation of punk is music, as any subculture it is not strictly limited to expression through one form of artistic outlet and is especially noted for its acceptance of anyone regardless of their creative views. Along various ways of artistic self-expression young punks made their impact through wide genres of literature (zines), fashion (do it yourself), fine art, movies (*The Great Rock’n’Roll Swindle*, *Rude Boy*, *Police State*), television, performance and comics.

One of the most widely known elements the punk subculture brought are zines, short for magazine or fanzine. Miriam Rivett credits zine culture as a major influence on punk literature in general: “zine or zine culture which was crucial to the initial circulation of much

³⁴ “Everyone Who Bought One of Those 30,000 Copies Started a Band”, accessed on June 2, 2021, <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2016/03/01/velvet/#note-13138-4>.

of the writing represented here.”³⁵ Zines, or popularizing in particular, are distinctive for their casual and sometimes careless production due to DIY (do it yourself) nature. The most common content is new music and local scene bands reviews, punk articles, news and commentary; an important aspect to this form of art is its complete non-commercial intent. Fanzines essentially became new alternative media. The interchangeable inspiration between local punk bands and zines should also be considered: many zines were specifically dedicated to certain aspects of the scene and served as an outlet for fans to show their support for the bands, at the same time popularizing related bands and expanding the fanbase. Later in the 1990s the US feminist zines will give the start and take a major part in popularizing the Riot Grrrl punk movement.

An effective way to measure the influence of punk on culture is to consider both positive and negative responses to it. Punk heavily influenced the overall state of the music scene regardless of genre and music industry in general. Being more straightforward and open about their opinions, punk subculture showed how music can be political in regards to content and an instrument of protest. Punk shows tended to be more liberating in general, rejecting gender stereotypes and class system, as well reconsidering the expression of one’s sexuality. Not only it influenced those who supported what punk stands for, but also caused a prominent social response from sides that criticize it and disagree. The movement also drew attention to the problems of the second half of the 20th century that were not as prominent before popularization of punk, such as the efficiency of anarchism and the issue of neo-nazism. Matthew Worley considers the phenomenon of punk culture as integral to British culture in that regards:

Punk is generally regarded as a defining moment in British cultural history. In its rhetoric and style, punk appeared to encapsulate the socio-economic and political climate of the late 1970s. It seemed to form a distinct youth culture that in turn provoked a media-driven moral panic and prompted notable cultural change. Most significantly, punk appeared to politicise cultural practice at a significant juncture in British history. Its lyrics and iconography commented on society and politics; its approach challenged the prevailing orthodoxies of the music industry; it spawned a samizdat culture that served as an alternative media source of information and

³⁵ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 31.

exchange; it questioned social and political hierarchies and notions of personal identity³⁶.

With its social and political relevance in the aforementioned UK, the example of punk inspired and motivated numerous other cultures to adopt this subculture, spawning more versions of punk movement around the world with their unique features and context.

3. Punk in 1980s

The beginnings of punk subculture went by rapidly becoming “a parody of itself”³⁷. Many revolutionary pioneers of punk such as the Sex Pistols, The Clash and the Ramones, either passed away or moved on from punk in its initial sense both musically and ideologically. The following excerpt from Glasper demonstrates the common experience of being around punk scene in that time in Britain:

By the end of the Seventies, the initial thrill of punk rock began to dissipate as quickly as it had amassed. Johnny Rotten had left the Pistols, Sid Vicious was dead, and The Clash were about to reveal their ‘Sandinista!’ triple album that sounded very different to the manic energy of ‘White Riot’. Major labels had already picked over the carcass, salvaging what they thought was still marketable, and the sensationalist media frenzy had subsided to a contemptuous whimper. What began as a glorious shakedown of traditional values and industry bullshit was eventually turned on its head, and its essence leeches away by greed, boredom and excess – the very things that inspired it in the first place.³⁸

Many consider commercialism and excessive attention from popular media the threat that contradicted punk at the border of two decades. Although it was “not the same” anymore, those who experienced the feel of belonging and believed in punk stands for, dealt with the crisis and came out with new forms, understanding of punk and its approach.

³⁶ Matthew Worley, “Punk, Politics and Youth Culture, 1976-1984”, *Reading History*, September 4, 2013, <https://unireadinghistory.com/2013/09/04/punk-politics-and-youth-culture-1976-84/>.

³⁷ Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984* (Penguin Books, 2006).

³⁸ Glasper, *Burning Britain*.

3.1. Punk is dead?

In the context of the music scene generally shifting from classical punk sound and practically opposing it in some cases, the statement “punk is dead” became to gain popularity among the masses. Many were convinced that the initial recognition is got and the punk spirit died together with Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols, and later with Ian Curtis of Joy Division.

By the beginning of 1980s heavily commercialized “radio-friendly” rock bands escalated to popularity. Promoted through media, bands like Mötley Crüe, Poison and Guns N’ Roses overshadowed smaller local music scenes and planted numerous rock cliches in the culture (that would soon be what new wave bands opposed). X’s John Doe commented on the shift in mainstream media: “It felt like we got passed over. It felt like someone didn’t invite us to the party. You just keep doing what you’re doing, but once the stoplight has moved away from you, you feel like, ‘Wait a minute, I didn’t do anything wrong. I just got older, or things changed.’ It was a little bitter.”³⁹ Looking further into the example of Los Angeles area punk in particular, Tom DeSavia recalls the change:

The metal bands, I’m not sure they were singing anything that was life-changing or inspirational, or even super thoughtful,” the Go-Gos’ Jane Wiedlin recalls. “Whereas I think part of the punk ethic, especially with bands like X, they really had something to say. Something deep. Something profound. Something beautifully stated. And that’s why I will always be proud to be in the punk side, because we brought an art form to music, which is already an art form. We doubled down.”⁴⁰

From the commentary of witnesses of the mainstream overtaking the punk scene, it is evident that the tense and frustrated atmosphere or the music industry turning to more commercially successful bands was spreading in the punk community. Although, the issue should also be viewed from a different perspective; the feel of small, almost secret community, was still present, picked up by younger audiences who were not so strongly affected by media fights over spots in music charts. “People such as skateboarder Tony Hawk and artist Shepard Fairey, not to mention the kids who had grown up in the punk scene, weren’t ready to let it

³⁹ Jeff Slate, “Is Punk Rock Dead? Not by a Long Shot”, *NBC News*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/punk-rock-dead-not-long-shot-ncna1029041>.

⁴⁰ Slate, “Is Punk Rock Dead?”.

die. Indeed, the punk aesthetic remains prevalent today in pop culture.”⁴¹ The reason for such strong belief in punk subculture among younger people is the prevalent nostalgia marketing, when it comes to advertising punk-related media. It simply does not work on the younger generation of punks who were not present at its beginning due to their age or inaccessibility. The appeal for so-called “second wave” of punk subculture was the classic spirit of punk, protest and DIY culture. Growing up with punk figures that met their artistic and ideological crisis, they were focusing on how these people became role models for them, rather than their commercial success.

In this discourse it is also important to note that although the typical punk sound might be gone, the message of protesting, questioning authorities, standing for one self’s beliefs and rejecting the corporations is far from being dead and in fact still exists in modern [1980s] music and culture, however in different forms. The movement lost a significant part of its members after the initial popularity of punk in England, for instance, died out, but it did not necessarily mean that everyone gave up the trend. The decline in media representation did not properly indicate the state of the sub-culture, which came back to its origins of being more underground and DIY oriented.

The mentioned earlier division of punk into sub-genres illustrates the change of sound and further reimagining of the subculture.

3.2. Post-punk, New Wave, No Wave

What is now known for being called post-punk is essentially, as the name suggests, the natural evolution of punk music emerged in late 1970s England and became the dominant sub-genre in the 1980s. Reynolds describes this period of time as the division of punk into two groups:

It was at this point that the fragile unity that punk had forged between working-class kids and arty middle-class bohemians began to fracture. On one side were the populist “real punks” (later to evolve into the Oi! and hardcore movements) who believed that the music needed to stay accessible and unpretentious, to continue to fill its role as the angry voice of the streets. On the other side was the vanguard that came to be known

⁴¹ Slate, “Is Punk Rock Dead?”.

as postpunk, who saw 1977 not as a return to raw rock 'n' roll but as a chance to make a break with tradition.⁴²

The crucial characteristic of post-punk was its experimentally and much less aggressive nature. With punk beliefs in its nature, the new sub-genre took a more sophisticated direction from what is now considered “classic punk” with experimental jazz-inspired instrumentals and constructive lyrics, that were often concentrating on one’s feelings, and deep and abstract topics. “Postpunk was concerned as much with the politics of music itself as with anything in the ‘real world’.”⁴³

A groundbreaking example of early pop-punk was a Manchester based band Joy Division. Their lyrics were described by Reynolds as “coldness, pressure, darkness, crisis, failure, collapse, loss of control”⁴⁴. Bush comments on their unique feature that made the Joy Division one of the most influential band of their time, stating that they became “the first band in the post-punk movement by later emphasizing not anger and energy but mood and expression, pointing ahead to the rise of melancholy alternative music in the '80s.”⁴⁵

In “Transmission”, a song from their sophomore record *Closer* (1980), Ian Curtis [lyrics, vocals] touches on a reoccurring theme in preceding punk - blind following of the masses and mainstream.

Listen to the silence, let it ring on

...

And we would go on as though nothing was wrong

...

Staying in the same place, just staying out the time⁴⁶

While conveying the same message as 1970s punk, the lyrics of post-punk became visibly more poetic and artistic. Sometimes being fairly vague, Curtis implies that listening to the

⁴² Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁴³ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁴⁴ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁴⁵ “Joy Division Biography”, AllMusic, accessed on May 18, 2021, <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/joy-division-mn0000290812/biography>.

⁴⁶ “Transmission”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Joy-division-isolation-lyrics>.

[radio] transmissions and not having own wishes and decisions hurts the person and makes them live someone else's life.

Dance, dance, dance, dance, dance, to the radio⁴⁷

Here, the metaphor of dancing is used to portray how people consume endless mainstream media and adjust their lives to its trends and whims, instead of concentrating on their own lives.

Similar message of being practically controlled by oversaturate media can be traced back to another significant post-punk/new wave band Siouxsie and the Banshees in their 1981 release *Monitor*:

Monitor outside

For the people inside

A prevention of crime

A passing of time⁴⁸

The song lyrics narrate an almost prophetic scenario of how the CCTV [video surveillance] projects people on monitors in order to prevent the crimes raising the problem of authorities excessive control over masses.⁴⁹

Sit back and enjoy

...

Our new air of authority⁵⁰

This excerpt shows how what is supposed to be an instrument intended to deal with criminal activity become an entertainment for those behind the monitors and start sowing paranoia in masses' minds.

His face was full of intent

And we shook excitement

⁴⁷ "Transmission", *Genius*.

⁴⁸ "Monitor", *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Siouxsie-and-the-banshees-monitor-lyrics>.

⁴⁹ Dave Simpson, "Siouxsie and the Banshees: 10 of the Best", *The Guardian*, October 29, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/oct/29/siouxsie-and-the-banshees-10-of-the-best>.

⁵⁰ "Monitor", *Genius*.

Then the victim stared up
Looked strangely at the screen
As if her pain was our fault
But that's entertainment
What we crave for inside⁵¹

In the closing verses the song takes a darker turn and shows how the surveillants don't have any interest in real crime prevention anymore, but get carried away by their feel of power and authority and anticipate people breaking the law. Retribution becomes an entertainment to those behind the monitors; not only the last lines imply how violence is in human nature and can be set into motion with the right trigger, but also how the authority in the lyrics scenario of the song does not take any responsibility in protecting people.

The lyrical examples distinctly differ in their darker subject matter and use of more intricate in comparison to 1970s punk literary conceits, such as elements of fiction and narration, rather than straightforward statements.

An important aspect of post-punk in regards to its cultural meaning and legacy is its part in the escalation of goth subculture in 1980s England. Correspondingly with the music this subculture directly derives from, it circulated around dark themes and horror aesthetics. Heavily relying on visual representation, the goth movement was almost synonymous with post-punk scene.

The Genealogy of the word "Gothic" encompasses medieval churches, Gothic literature and art, with their themes of death and the uncanny, and the original Goths, those Germanic barbarians who swarmed over the dying Roman Empire. When applied to postpunk, however, "Gothic" initially described a certain doomy atmosphere in music.⁵²

This is how the defining to the subculture band Siouxsie and the Banshees is being described by Reynolds:

⁵¹ "Monitor", *Genius*.

⁵² Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

Banshees' singer Siouxsie Sioux crystallized the emerging Goth movement's spirit when she declared her desire to be "a thorn in the side of mediocrity." In the very beginning, though, the Banshees were exemplary postpunk vanguardists, spouting the rock-is-dead rhetoric of the time.⁵³

Another prominent post-punk band of 1980s Britain is Bauhaus, formed in 1978. Bauhaus is considered one of the first and most notable goth-rock bands.⁵⁴ Taking the gloom subject of matter even further, they incorporate elements of horror into their lyrics, concentrating on the aesthetic aspect of the subculture:

Stigmata bleed continuously
Holes in head, hands, feet and weep for me⁵⁵

Including religious themes accompanied by haunting tunes and the sense of eeriness, the song is a classical example of most prominent goth aesthetic features.

In nomine patri et filii et spiriti sanctum⁵⁶

The song climax features a repeated phrase in Latin, featuring religious topics, and is once again followed by haunting sounds not typically present in predeceasing music genres, magnifying the experimental characteristic of post-punk.

The term post-punk itself is closely tied with another sub-genre that emerged in that period of time - new wave. "During the late '70s and early '80s, New Wave was a catch-all term for the music that directly followed punk rock; often, the term encompassed punk itself, as well."⁵⁷ Both post-punk and new wave emerge as what comes after punk, with the latter visibly more commercialized and keeping overall more pop-leaning tendencies. While post-punk was a continuation of "classic" Pistols and the Clash punk with a more up-to-date approach, new wave was "defined in opposition to punk (which was generally more raw, rough edged, and

⁵³ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁵⁴ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁵⁵ "Stigmata Martyr", *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Bauhaus-stigmata-martyr-lyrics>.

⁵⁶ "Stigmata Martyr", *Genius*.

⁵⁷ "New Wave", All Music, accessed on June 5, 2021, <https://www.allmusic.com/style/new-wave-ma0000002750>.

political) and to mainstream “corporate” rock (which many new wave upstarts considered complacent and creatively stagnant).”⁵⁸

While post-punk and new wave coexisted in the UK, occasionally intertwining and even using to categorize the same band into box terms, the genre in the US took its own direction.

American bands “had begun expanding on the vocabulary of punk music.”⁵⁹ According to Reynolds, such bands as the Talking Heads and Devo were combining punk elements with various unconventional artistic elements of music, such as conical variety of sounds, shift in the topics of lyrics to problems of environmentalism; the band is vastly being referred to as a new wave band. Their unique style was described as following:

Byrne, Frantz, and Weymouth used the ironic sensibilities of modern art and literature to subvert rock and then embraced dance rhythms to alter it even more. After adding Harrison (formerly of the Modern Lovers) in 1976, Talking Heads spent a decade moving from spare intimacy to rich pan-cultural fluency—and then back again. The enormous popularity of the quartet’s records paved the way for other rock adventurers; their videos and film were also influential.⁶⁰

An important role in popularity of such bands as the Talking Heads, Devo, Television, and Sonic Youth in the US played their combination of alternative elements outside of musical mainstream, occasionally implementing components of world music, raising public’s curiosity and being a much more accessible gateway to these genres for people generally unfamiliar with distant genres. The aforementioned bands appealed to those who were tired of being oversaturated with disco and commercialized rock media but did not fully emerge in more niche genres. The crucial punk element of DIY was present in the creative process of these bands as well; an example of this can be found, for instance, in the collaborative spirit of record production. Such figures as Brian Eno and David Byrne were important to the scene and casted long living influence on further generations of music and culture, who were drawing their inspiration from post-punk and 1980s American alternative.

⁵⁸ “New wave”, Britannica, last modified March 4, 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/art/new-wave-music>.

⁵⁹ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁶⁰ “The Talking Heads”, Britannica, last modified May 21, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Talking-Heads-American-rock-group>.

With the Talking Heads being one of the most imitated and influential bands of that scene, their sound was drastically unique and different: “When Talking Heads began to play CBGB and Max’s Kansas City, they stood out from the punk pack immediately with their clean-cut, non-rock ’n’ roll image and anorexic sound. Byrne preferred a “thin, clean, and clanky” guitar sound rather the fuzztone-thickened chords of most punk.”⁶¹

The Talking Heads guitarist comments on it for *Melody Maker*: “I wanted it to sound like a little well-oiled machine where everything was transparent, all the working parts visible,’ says Byrne. ‘Nothing hidden in the murk of a big sound. Somehow that seemed more honest. And probably more arty as well.”⁶²

Another music scene emerged as a product of punk that should be mentioned in this chapter is no wave. Although closely tied to the previously described sub-genres, this scene was drastically different from the others of that time. Appearing earlier than its peers, no wave was sufficiently limited to the New York City underground avant-garde music scene. Sonically experimenting with dissonance and noise, no wave bands were reflecting primarily on nihilistic standpoint. Another significant feature of this phenomenon was its lack of limits in regard to fields of expression, making it not strictly defined by music scene and fashion, but also films and visual arts.⁶³ The term "no wave" itself was created as a pun to the much more commercialized branch of post-punk at that time which was the new wave.⁶⁴ “The No Wave groups, in contrast, defined radicalism not as a return to roots but as deracination. They were united less by a common sound than by this shared determination to sever all connections with the past.”⁶⁵

In conclusion, it is important to note that the aforementioned sub-genres and music movements were majorly concentrated on music, rather than the sub-cultural aspect. In a way, post-punk, new wave and no wave were sub-divisions of a bigger punk subculture and response to the 1970s punk at the same time; differing in their expressions and approaches to

⁶¹ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁶² Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁶³ Marc Masters, “NO!: The Origins of No Wave”, *Pitchfork*, January 15, 2008, <https://pitchfork.com/features/article/6764-no-the-origins-of-no-wave/>.

⁶⁴ Alison Pearlman, *Unpackaging art of the 1980s* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 188.

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

certain ideologies, all the newly emerged scenes in 1980s in both the UK and the US technically remained a part of punk movement, although preserving such aspects as artistic expression in relation to the corporate and attitude to mainstream. This openness to experimental blend with the mainstream and simultaneous rejection of 1970s punk clichés was what created the appeal to the audience who were not entirely associating themselves with punk in its initial meaning. With it being partially limited to heavier, more aggressive sound and even intimidating to some, lighter sound and wider artistic creativity of sub-genres born out of punk seemed like a reasonable creative choice for alternative punk subculture enthusiasts.

3.3. Hardcore Punk: Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, Bad Brains

The general characteristic of hardcore punk is “the genre that arose in California in the early 1980s in response to the punk movement of the 1970s.”⁶⁶ Ambrosch characterized it as “hardcore is a variety of punk that started as an attempt of re-capture the essence of the punk idea when it seemed in danger of being watered down.”⁶⁷ Unlike earlier mentioned sub-genres emerged in 1980s, hardcore punk is notable for also having a strong association with being an independent subculture. Not only people identified as being a part of punk subculture, but specifically hardcore punk subdivision of it. “Hardcore punk, based more in the suburbs, began to dominate.”⁶⁸

Another distinctive trade of hardcore punk is its ethnical diversion in comparison to how classical punk used to be. “Despite its overwhelmingly White demographic and stark racial politics, Hardcore received important infusions from a few Black kids — most notably the Bad Brains (who were to Hardcore what Hendrix was to Rock), DKs drummer D.H. Peligro, Skeeter Thompson of Scream, Whipping Boy’s Eugene Robinson, pro skater Chuck Treece of McRad, Neil “Jackal” Perry of YDI and Sam McAfee of Impact Unit. Their input speaks to some of Hardcore’s better attributes.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Black Flag”, Britannica, last modified October 21, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Flag#ref667018>.

⁶⁷ Gerfried Ambrosch, “American Punk: Relations between Punk Rock, Hardcore and American Culture”, *Amerikastudien/American Studies* Vol. 60, no. 2/3 (2015): 224.

⁶⁸ Reynolds, *Rip It Up*.

⁶⁹ Steven Blush, *American Hardcore: A Tribal History* (Feral House, 2010).

Musically, it is essentially a faster and more aggressive version of punk rock that was born from heavy metal music with punk influence. Hardcore punk is remarkable for even more open and straightforward critique of politics and mainstream music industry. The focus of song lyrics is on social injustice, problems of capitalism and consumerism, which were especially prominent in 1980s California with the change in political situation. Essentially, hardcore punk values evolved from early punk values, although the message was typically delivered in more straightforward and aggressive manner by means of acute words and heavy instrumental.

The Dead Kennedys' vocalist and primary lyricist recalls the outburst of hardcore popularity in early 1980's in California as following: "The hardcore explosion had connected with a much younger audience, both through the music and through skateboard networks. So all of a sudden there were a lot more bands and a lot more people starting bands. Things were just exploding here."⁷⁰ This excerpt from the first-hand witness of birth of hardcore punk vividly portrays the atmosphere of new trend spreading in a densely populated area among young people. Eagerness and resources of the audience to start a band of their own to be closer involved with the scene is one of the reasons hardcore gained so much popularity and recognition in a rather short period of time.

Among other reasons for the sub-genre to escalate was the political tension: "Ronald Reagan's victory in the presidential election of 1980 was certainly a catalyst for the aesthetic hardening of punk in America that that led to the inception of hardcore."⁷¹ The society needed and relied on punk's unequivocal strength of opinion. Hundreds of bands emerged all over the country, with most influential areas being California and Washington, D.C.. Numerous of these bands are still relevant to this day and being referenced and imitated in the modern punk scene, as well as credited as influential to an endless number of musicians and social activists. The reason for such success and strong legacy varies from being remembered for eccentric stage presence and sharp commentary, still being an active band, implementing innovative tools to punk expression or simply being in the right time in the right place.

One of the most notable examples of such innovative implementation of elements not typical for early punk music are pioneers of Californian hardcore punk the Dead Kennedys. In the

⁷⁰ Boulware, Tudor, *Gimme Something Better*.

⁷¹ Ambrosch, "American Punk", 224.

opening song from their debut album *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables* (1980), Jello Biafra uses irony to portray the joy and celebration of right-winged authority over killing the poor by the means of nuclear bombs.

Efficiency and progress is our once more

Now that we have Neutron bomb

It's nice and quick and clean and gets things done⁷²

The theme of technological advancement in the field of nuclear weapons is a recurring motif in art of that time, especially in punk music, since it is closely tied with the concept of corrupted authority having control over something that can affect millions of people in both positive and negative ways. In the following verse Biafra also mentions the topic of unemployment:

Jobless million whisked away

At last we have more room to play⁷³

Maintaining the sarcastic attitude to the issue by means of hyperbolic descriptive language such as “whisked away” in the meaning of removing a significant part of the population from the earth, Biafra implies the simple equation of *no unemployed people = no unemployment problems*. Such a scenario is obviously an exaggeration in 1980s reality, nevertheless used boldly to make an impact with shock and enlighten the public on the direction the political ideology might take turn to.

A similar message, although with notably different delivery and approach can be found in Black Flag's “Rise Above”:

Society's arms of control

Rise above! We're gonna rise above!⁷⁴

This lyrics is a classical illustration of the typical punk attitude “against the masses”. Punk music is often considered a protest, an artistic way to carry the message, hence the use of

⁷² “Kill The Poor”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Dead-kennedys-kill-the-poor-lyrics>.

⁷³ “Kill The Poor”, *Genius*.

⁷⁴ “Rise Above”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Black-flag-rise-above-lyrics>.

short imperative sentences as illustrated in the example above. Musical and lyrical complexity is not typically prioritized in hardcore punk, while brevity and laconicism prevail:

We are tired of your abuse

Try to stop us, it's no use⁷⁵

Another effective instrument for making hardcore punk music heard is a direct address to the subject of the lyrical content, be it the oppressor in case of a riot-song inspired by dissatisfaction with authority or a direct message to act in the song is aimed at fellow punks, encouraging them to support or, on the opposite, go against certain beliefs. This approach can seem dangerous if getting out of control and gaining ambiguity, nevertheless the most common message in punk lyrics passed to the audience is to question authority and analyze one's own beliefs and actions, rather than propagating a specific ideology.

We're born with a chance

Rise above! We're gonna rise above!

I am gonna have my chance

Rise above! We're gonna rise above!

We're born with a chance

Rise above! We're gonna rise above!

And I am gonna have my chance

Rise above! We're gonna rise above!⁷⁶

Repetitiveness is also another feature that plays a major role in the lyrics simplicity and efficiency, making them easily understood.

Another phenomenon that is inherent particularly in hardcore punk subculture is straight edge (sXe) lifestyle. The singer of Minor Threat was an eager proponent of this ethic and took a major part in popularizing it first in Washington, D.C. and eventual among hardcore punks around the country. "As an adjective, the term 'straight edge' was originally used to refer to punks who did not drink, take drugs, smoke, or engage in the kind of sexual behavior that

⁷⁵ "Rise Above", *Genius*.

⁷⁶ "Rise Above", *Genius*.

MacKaye criticizes as ‘abusive, quest-oriented, manipulative,’ but it soon became associated with a movement, first in the U.S., then worldwide.”⁷⁷ Often confused by the word ‘hard’, hardcore punk was generally intimidating for the outsiders of the subculture and on the opposite, associated with destructive behavior and “live fast die young” attitude. “Despite its seeming anti-rebellious rebellion, straight edge punk persists as a vibrant element of many music scenes and as an important culture in its own right. [...] Some punks were drawn to the punk scene’s innovative music and art, anti-authoritarian politics, and DIY ethos but were skeptical of the prevalent substance use/abuse, seeing drugs and alcohol as self-destructive and pacifying.”⁷⁸ A song by Minor Threat of the same name as the straight edge movement practically served as introduction to sXe and a list of rules to some extent for the followers and enthusiasts.

I’m a person just like you

But I’ve got better songs to do

...

I don’t even think about speed

It’s just something I don’t need⁷⁹

With the composition being only 0:46 minutes long, the first verse approaches the subject of matter right away. In regard to this Ian MacKaye said “I want to say exactly what’s on my mind, and I want to do it in 30 seconds.”⁸⁰ With that being said, the opening lines accentuate the listeners’ attention to the straight-edgers belief of them being different from others, i.e. those who are not part of the movement.

I’ve got thing to do

Than sit around and smoke dope

...

Always gonna keep in touch

⁷⁷ Ambrosch, “American Punk”, 225.

⁷⁸ “Straight Edge”, Subcultures and Sociology, Grinnell College, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://haenfler.sites.grinnell.edu/subcultures-and-scenes/straight-edge/>.

⁷⁹ “Straight Edge”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Minor-threat-straight-edge-lyrics>.

⁸⁰ Ambrosch, “American Punk”, 225.

Never want to use a crutch⁸¹

Second verse deepens the disapproval of an “unhealthy” lifestyle openly criticizing drug abuse. The last line also implies that the narrator does not take straight-edging as a temporary trend, but is concerned about their foreseeable future.

Both choruses consist simply of a single line, repeated the second time around:

I’ve got the straight edge⁸²

Once again, displaying the essential hardcore punk attributes: brevity, simplicity and repetitiveness. The chorus line itself does not contain any imperative expression, nor obvious critique go other way to life one’s life: it is simply an affirmation of a fact that doesn’t not affect anyone directly, although holds power in the context of the entire song and its delivery.

The live shows of straight edge bands and their followers are being described fairly chaotic and violent:

The live performance is where straight edge hardcore truly shines. The frenetic chaos of the punk circle pit reached new levels as hardcore kids incorporated kung-fu kicks, maniacal stomping, and acrobatic stage dives into their moshing repertoire. During the most transcendent hardcore shows the band and audience are virtually indistinguishable, as kids literally crawl over one another to sing into the mic, and divers burst onto the stage before catapulting into the melee below.⁸³

The movement, however, eventually ran into a crisis and quickly escalated to something radically different and divided itself from punk subculture in general. The misunderstanding of lyrics led to the audience not interested in punk values calling themselves straight-edgers, contradicting primary punk beliefs. “The reluctant ‘father’ of straight edge addressed the issue as “Straight Edge’ was really written about an individual's right to live however they wanted to”⁸⁴ Craig O’Hara notes that the straight edge demographic has “become increasingly reactionary, conformist and macho in the last few years ... Straight edge became a sea of middle class young white men with little interest in rebellion or radical politics” and now

⁸¹ “Straight Edge”, *Genius*.

⁸² “Straight Edge”, *Genius*.

⁸³ Subcultures and Sociology, “Straight Edge”.

⁸⁴ Ambrosch, “American Punk”, 226.

many straight-edgers “have their own subculture within the counterculture.”⁸⁵ Although initial participants remained dedicated to this lifestyle, the term “straight edging” attained negative connotation in certain circles.

MacKaye's inadvertent movement, with 'rules' and its 'righteous' agenda, started to attract people who seemed more about exclusivity than they did about community. The aggressive the violent dancing at shows attracted jock-type adolescents who confused hardcore with being 'hard' and felt that they needed to prove their m by acting tough in the 'pit.' Hardcore became synonymous with tough hyper-masculine bravado.⁸⁶

On the contrast with the marginalization and ideological conflicts of hardcore punk on the east coast, another important to the subculture band the Descendents formed in southern California causing a break through for hardcore subculture. Zach Furness comments on it:

Hundreds of bands routinely cite their angsty, love-scorned, caffeine-fueled melodies as part of the bedrock upon which 'pop punk' was built. [...] [Milo] Aukerman's clever wit and catchy vocals helped the band carve out a niche that lay somewhere between the aggressive hardcore musicianship of Black Flag, the toilet humor of a moody 15-year old Ramones fan, and the pop sensibility of 60s rock bands that long permeated the Southern California beach town culture from which the band emerged.⁸⁷

Several key factors of the Descendents' success can be taken out from this excerpt: a blend between styles and trends of that time punk scene that naturally appeals to a wider range of audience, joined by becoming pioneers in a very specific niche. The drummer for the Descendents (and later Black Flag) describes their style as follows: “Our music had a real blue-collar element, which is what I like about it — music made by people that aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. And that's not very Hollywood.”⁸⁸ Musically, the mix of melodies with a classic hardcore punk sound was unusual to the audience and drew attention to the band, later majorly influencing a sub-genre melodic hardcore.⁸⁹ In regards of lyrical content, Ned Raggett describes the Descendents' debut album as “collection of blink-and-you'll-miss-it

⁸⁵ Ambrosch, “American Punk”, 226–227.

⁸⁶ Ambrosch, “American Punk”, 226.

⁸⁷ Ambrosch, “American Punk”, 227.

⁸⁸ Blush, *American Hardcore*.

⁸⁹ Blush, *American Hardcore*.

songs about life, love, girls, losers, and, of course, food”⁹⁰, also noting moments where the band members’ young age is showing through immature lyrics and view on some problems including homophobia and ‘fitting in’ the social groups. Nevertheless, the impact of the band’s long play cannot be measured as it had influence on dozens of other musicians

“I’m Not a Punk” is widely considered one of their greatest songs in music critics circles.

I’m not punk, how can I be?

Show me the way to conformity

Try to be different, but it’s always the same

End up playin’ someone else’s game⁹¹

The very first verse goes straight to Aukerman’s [vocalist and lyricist] point that punk nonconformity essentially became “a new conformity” and opposing the punk standards formed in the past decade is also punk in nature. Mostly regarding physical appearance, he suggests that trying to differ and adopt the attributes of punk subculture solely to fit in does the same harm to a person as trying to fit in any other crowd. The idea of being punk is not necessarily limited to dressing a certain way, but most importantly being one’s true self.

I’m just a square goin’ nowhere⁹²

The use of rather visual language accentuates how even the most unremarkable person should stay true to themselves and be proud of who they are (square - an old-fashioned, conventional, or conservative person⁹³).

Another significant song from the groundbreaking *Milo Goes To College* is “Suburban Home”. Implying similar ideas as the rest of the album, “Suburban Home” also touches on the problem of generations and differences between them.

⁹⁰ “All Music Review by Ned Raggett”, AllMusic, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.allmusic.com/album/milo-goes-to-college-mw0000118064>.

⁹¹ “I’m Not a Punk”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Descendents-im-not-a-punk-lyrics>.

⁹² “I’m Not a Punk”, *Genius*.

⁹³ Dictionary.com s.v. “square”, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/square>.

The spoken opening lines the song strike with a strong statement, later being commonly referenced and quoted in various forms by other musicians⁹⁴:

I want to be stereotyped

I want to be classified⁹⁵

The opening statement written by the band bassist Tony Lombardo depicts a slightly more mature attitude to the topic due to his age, which is shown through use of more complex rhetorical devices such as sarcasm in this particular example.

I wanna be a clone

I want a suburban home⁹⁶

Further elaborating on a wish to blend with all the masses, the listener is being introduced to the object mentioned in the song title - a house in American suburbs. In the song, the suburban home serves as a symbol of the “American dream”. Similar to the previous example, the narrator criticizes one’s will to follow someone else’s pattern of life instead making their own decisions. Whereas in “I’m Not a Punk” the object of the critique is the punk movement itself, here the typical conformist lifestyle is being exposed to the bitter mocking appraising common to punks.

While various prosperous west coast hardcore bands briefly met with governmental restrictions and excessive police control due to increasing aggressiveness of the shows and their reputation, their east coast peers Bad Brains met with the problem of being banned in most major venues in Washington, D.C., where they originate from. Nevertheless, in the best traditions of punk the band managed to find an artistic outlet for this issue and released a song candidly titled “Banned in D.C”.

Tim Kerr of Big Boys recalls the issue of hardcore scene being prosecuted by the police very common: “When the Bad Brains visited us in Austin, the neighbors called the cops a few times; there was Reggae playing outside. One time when the cops came, they asked me when

⁹⁴ “Bands on ‘What the Descendents mean to me’”, Punk News, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.punknews.org/article/69575/interviews-bands-on-what-the-descendents-mean-to-me>.

⁹⁵ “Suburban Home”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Descendents-suburban-home-lyrics>.

⁹⁶ “Suburban Home”, *Genius*.

we were playing next, so I told them. That's when I realized they were keeping tabs on this shit, trying to make sure it didn't turn into a huge youth movement."⁹⁷

Nevertheless, turning the misfortune and unfair authorities attitude into another bold statement, the Bad Brains open the song with energetic chords and straightforward admittance of their position:

Banned in D.C. with a thousand more places to go

Gonna swim across the Atlantic, cause that's the only place I can go⁹⁸

Eager to be vocal, Bad Brains state that nothing will stop them, be it exclusion from show venues or distance they would have to reach for other performing options. Not only is the phrase used in its literal meaning, drawing attention to the local problem of governmental intrusion to punk shows, but also metaphorically, implying escapism in search of freedom of speech and better conditions as a solution.

You, you can't hurt me

Why? I'm banned in D.C.⁹⁹

Here H.R. [vocals, lyrics] accentuates the togetherness and strength of hardcore punk community; even though the band is banned from performing, there are still thousands of supporters who stand for their opinions and ready to continue the common agenda.

And if you ban us from your clubs

It's the right time, the right mind

And if you think we really care, you won't find in my mind

No! You can't afford, to close your doors, so soon no more¹⁰⁰

In this excerpt the singer implies that the only side suffering from being banned from performing is the venue, since it loses money, reputation and relevancy. The hardcore punk community in the 1980s US was distinctive with its togetherness and protectiveness over itself; it provided a feeling of belonging for many, especially appealing to younger audience. This unique characteristic is hinted in the lyric, implying that the music and the message that

⁹⁷ Blush, *American Hardcore*.

⁹⁸ "Banned In D.C.", *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Bad-brains-banned-in-dc-lyrics>.

⁹⁹ "Banned In D.C.", *Genius*.

¹⁰⁰ "Banned In D.C.", *Genius*.

is supposed to be heard will be heard despite restrictions with help of others within the community.

To sum up, hardcore punk is a more straightforward, aggressive and agitated version of punk rock, popularized in the USA in 1980s. Although hardcore endures the primary characteristics of punk such as simplicity, and “do it yourself” and “no selling out” attitude, it is not strictly restricted to those components and often times relies on and implements more artistically intricate linguistic instruments such as irony, metaphorical language and complex setting of the song plot line. Concerning the subcultural aspect of hardcore punk, it is notable for its strikingly uncommon position of being a subculture within counterculture; distinguished with its aspect of strong bond community, as well as its unique issues such as misconception and ambiguity of statements circulating among punks, that led to outsiders being drawn to hardcore punk and causing harm to aforementioned community. Despite stereotyped as being extremely violent and intense and label “hardcore” receiving negative connotation, hardcore punk left its undeniable impact on punk scene and community, giving beginning to further development of future music sub-genres.

3.4. Horror Punk

Horror punk is a combination of gothic rock and punk rock, making it a sub-genre featuring dark sound with prevailing grim themes in lyrics and “generally less concerned with political matters that are most typically featured in punk music.”¹⁰¹ References to iconic fictional monsters and characters of local folklore such as vampires, the living dead and ghosts are commonly used in horror punk songs. Sonically, the music varies from ballads with gothic overtones to classical garage punk sound with darker chords that have an occasional theatrical component implemented by means of instruments typically not associated with punk rock, such as ambient piano, strings and choir singing.

An important figure to horror punk that should be considered in this chapter is Glenn Allen Anzalone, better known by his stage name Glenn Danzig. Widely recognized in the community for his numerous bands, for the sake of demonstrating importance and typical

¹⁰¹ Emily Brightman, “For Scary Kids Only: A Brief History of Horror Punk”, *Daily Collegian*, October 31, 2013, <https://dailycollegian.com/2013/10/for-scary-kids-only-a-brief-history-of-horror-punk/>.

characteristics of the horror punk sub-genre this chapter will further concentrate on such projects of his as the Misfits and Samhain.

The Misfits, formed in New Jersey in late 1970s, gained their recognition and popularity with the release of their debut long play in 1981; the band quickly became the defining sound of horror punk, becoming one of its most prominent representatives. Among various circumstances that affected the Misfits formation and music style, James Greene Jr. in his book considers the musical heritage of New Jersey and neighboring New York State as one of the key factors. Another significant aspect of the local scene is growing up with mafia stories from the Prohibition era and local hometown ghost legends being passed on for generations.¹⁰²

These cultural circumstances together with the twist pop culture took at the timeframe in question can be considered almost a predisposition to formation of such distinct music sub-genre.

An important part that contributed to the authenticity of such bands as the Misfits, for instance, is that “the principal band members belonged to one of the earliest American generations to mature in the warming glow of television.”¹⁰³ Starting the 1950s, various horror movies became more accessible and were broadcasted on prime time television, gaining popularity in pop culture. Essentially, the generation of that time was brought up with monster movies, beasts and supernatural creatures that can be traced back to some of the Misfits song titles (*Vampira*, *Astro Zombies*, *Ghoul’s Night Out*) and contributed to the nostalgic feel of their music.

Other essential attributes of horror punk can be found directly in song lyrics, such as the Misfits’ “Skulls”:

And the blood drains down like the devil's rain

We'll bathe tonight¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² James Greene Jr., *This Music Leaves Stains: The Complete Story of the Misfits* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013).

¹⁰³ Greene Jr., *This Music Leaves Stains*.

¹⁰⁴ “Skulls”, *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Misfits-skulls-lyrics>.

The song describes a gory scene, as well as metaphorically comparing the sight to the devil - a supernatural creature of legends.

Gotta have you on my wall

...

Collect the heads of little girls and

Put 'em on my wall¹⁰⁵

Accompanied by fast paced and distorted instrumental, the song builds the impression of a hometown ghost story with its typical traits such as dramatic atmosphere and a distanced mystical creature hunting for little children.

Besides majorly referring to classic horror mythical creatures, the sub-genre occasionally turns to science fiction elements as well; a vivid example is a song "I Turned into a Martian".

Possession of the mind is a terrible thing

It's a transformation with an urge to kill

...

Well, I turned into a martian¹⁰⁶

Here the lyrics are describing a process of turning into someone - or rather something - different with thinking and urges the lyrical character never had before. Being focused on the scientific side of this process, Danzig concentrates on the mind aspect of the transformation rather than soul and feelings.

I walk down the city streets

On an unsuspecting human world

Inhuman in your midst¹⁰⁷

Raising the question of humanity and being of a human kind in the lyrics, Danzig depicts typical to science fiction reflections on the differences between extraterrestrial creatures and our kind, inhabiting the Earth. Another mention of the lyrical character's feeling of not being

¹⁰⁵ "Skulls", *Genius*.

¹⁰⁶ "I Turned Into a Martian", *Genius*, <https://genius.com/Misfits-i-turned-into-a-martian-lyrics>.

¹⁰⁷ "I Turned Into a Martian", *Genius*.

in his own skin brings the listener further into the atmosphere of mind control, in a sense depicting the possession from the scientific point of view.

Although not typically politicized, the bands lyrics would occasionally mention such events as the assassination of John F. Kennedy (can be seen on the 1978 song “Bullet”). This lack of topics belonging to the “real life” allowed the sub-genre to be treated more artistically and not being limited to a certain social group, at the same time appealing to a wider age range.

Another notable representative of horror punk is Samhain. The band’s name itself comes from a Celtic holiday that heavily influenced modern Halloween - another essential to horror punk enthusiasts aspect and object of many references and song topics.

With the punk super group on hold, Danzig began working on material for a darker horror band he intended to call Samhain with various friends around New Jersey and New York, including Al Pike from celebrated Queens peace punks Reagan Youth, Eric Stellmann, and Stellmann’s guitar-playing band mate from Rosemary’s Babies, Craig Richardson.¹⁰⁸

Essentially being a super band (musical band consisting of already known from other projects musicians), Samhain quickly recorded and released their debut record in 1984, being described as following:

The album took a more ethereal, obtuse approach, giving the instrumentation room to breathe with slower tempos while employing various atmospheric techniques such as heavy reverb, chimes, and simulated moments of paranormal activity (the title track opens *Initium* with a simulated maelstrom of ghostly winds that almost seem to be speaking; atop the din Danzig angrily intones that he is “the end” and “now is the pain”). The band would later comment that this style reflected a “darker, blacker understanding of the world, why it works the way it does . . . and has for endless centuries.¹⁰⁹

As an excerpt from Greene provides, both musical and lyrical content became much darker and more ethereal, essentially taking a new direction from original horror punk, implementing more intricate sonic features as well as becoming more sophisticated and artistic, however

¹⁰⁸ Greene Jr., *This Music Leaves Stains*.

¹⁰⁹ Greene Jr., *This Music Leaves Stains*.

remaining the spirit of punk. Such shifts allowed to broaden the frames of what horror punk could be, giving more creative space for this sub-genre.

Similar to hardcore, horror punk spread rapidly among younger generation. Technically originated on the east coast, this sub-genre had several advantages that contributed to its popularity. The tristate area (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) is distinctive for its “do it yourself” attitude typical for punk counter culture. Due to live shows being organized in smaller venues by locals, the majority of venues were not restricted to 21+ entrance rule, making the shows available for teenagers. Being a densely populated state, New Jersey in particular is predisposed in a sense to quickly adopting new trends and actively participating in them, which is exactly what happened with the escalation of punk sub-genres.

Meanwhile, in neighboring New York the Cramps were gaining popularity. Similar to Samhain, the punk duo has taken their sound and lyrical content to a more sophisticated, blues inspired level, heavily influenced by other music genres and created a unique combination, accompanied by distinctive personalities and theatrical aspect to their performances. “Combining equal parts rockabilly with the essential elements of ‘70s punk and a tongue-in-cheek attitude towards creepy themes and gore, The Cramps rose to cult hero status as founders of what lead singer Lux Interior called ‘sleaze rock.’”¹¹⁰

However, the phenomenon of horror punk was not strictly limited to a certain area and was in fact developing simultaneously and separately in multiple states. Thus in her 2013 article, Emily Brightman explores the instance of this subgenera on the West Coast of the US:

Even though the Misfits receive all the accolades as progenitors of horror punk, in 1981, a year before the first Misfits album was released, a band from Long Beach, California called T.S.O.L. (“True Sons of Liberty) released an album called “Dance with Me” that paid tribute to a slew of gothic and horror-themed extensions. “Code Blue,” perhaps the most well-known song off “Dance with Me,” deals explicitly in necrophilia but from a perspective that is somehow matter-of-fact in its cheerfulness.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Brightman, “For Scary Kids Only”.

¹¹¹ Brightman, “For Scary Kids Only”.

In conclusion, horror punk can be classified as a niche subgenre of punk rock. Its most common characteristics are references to monsters and supernatural creatures, as well as themes of death and mortality in general; although varied in its expression, horror punk is often associated with more theatrical and sophisticated performances, usage of alter-egos and scenic personalities. Locally popularized by teenagers and young adults with the same background, the sub-genre united all things horror enthusiasts and essentially serves as a fairly specific community of people with shared interests in gory movies and punk music.

4. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to analyze the phenomenon of punk subculture in the 1980s UK and USA from the perspective of its cultural relevance. The main focus of the analysis was on punk rock division into further subgenera, its social preconditions and influence.

The focus of the theoretical part was to introduce the punk subculture and punk rock music, defining its common features, beliefs and ways of expression. The first chapter dealt with the definition of the word punk itself and what it stands for, including its ideological direction, most prominent visual attributes and music qualities associated with the subculture. Such aspects as the feel of community, protest through music primarily and other various forms of art and punk's rejection of conformity, non-commercialism and authority, and 'do it yourself' nature. Another important part of the opening chapter is dedicated to the explanation of terms subculture and counterculture with their relation to the dominant culture, as well as classifying punk as either of these categories.

The following chapter gives a brief overview on the rise of the subculture in general, and in the UK and the US separately. The origins chapters give a closer look at how different the initial conditions for punk development were in both countries, although the constant exchange of cultural elements made punk what it became in the late 1970s. This part of the thesis gives a crucial explanation to further understanding of punk development, social and cultural context and their differences between the two countries. A chapter analyzing the cultural influence and relevance of punk subculture is also included in this part, with the mention of literature and zine culture in particular, film industry and the general social response to punk, both supporting and strictly rejecting.

The analytical part mainly consisted of song lyrics of the most prominent representers analysis with the focus on typical features of given sub-genre and how they reflect the social climate in a particular timeframe and area. The analysis included in the third chapter takes a closer look at sub-genres emerged from and/or after punk in the 1980s such as new wave, post punk, hardcore punk, and horror punk, including lyrics from such American bands as the Talking Heads, Black Flag, the Misfits, the Dead Kennedys, the Descendents and their British peers Joy Division and Siouxsie and the Banshees. The chapter heavily focuses on such prominent punk scenes as New York City and California, and its relevance in regards of the punk rock development. The final analytical part of the thesis draws attention to the reasons of division of punk rock into further sub-genres and occasionally strong sub-cultures with punk, as well as the differences between the directions it took depending on the area in question.

Another goal of the thesis was to analyze the relation between song lyrics in terms of their similarities and differences. The analysis showed how even with polar opposite music sub-genre of punk rock it is possible to trace similarities that stem from what has become 'classic' punk, regardless of the lyrical complexity and artistic values. The chapter also gives an insight on certain revolutionary to punk sonic qualities and aspects of performance that were created by combining not typical to punk rock scene genres and incorporating elements of shock and straightforwardness.

5. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývala analýzou punkové scény 80. let 20 století ve Spojených státech amerických a Velké Británii. Poté co punk ztratil svoji původní popularitu na konci 70. let, nový podžánr vznikl v obou těchto zemích. I když tyto dva vývoje vznikly samostatně, britská a americká společnost se navzájem ovlivňovaly díky čemuž existuje punk jak ho známe dnes. Práce je rozdělena na tři velké části.

První část této práce se věnuje pojmu "punk" a zabývá se jejími typickými rysy a nezbytnými součástmi jako je například hudební směr, móda, životní styl a mnoho dalších. Velká část této kapitoly se věnuje vzniku punku ve Velké Británii a Spojených státech amerických. Přestože punk subkultura a hudební směr vznikly na jiných koncích světa pod různými podmínkami, jejich spolupráce porodila punk jak ji známe dnes. I přes jejich

podobnosti, je třeba tyto dvě odvětví studovat odděleně poněvadž jsou ovlivňovány jinými zdroji.

Tato úvodní část bakalářské práce ukázala, že zatím co ve Spojených státech punková subkultura vznikla ze nezvyklého stylu hudby, který nepatřil k tehdy populární kultuře, a až později se vyvinula v hudbu, která více reagovala na politické a sociální události, v Británii punk subkultura začala jako protest skrz provokativní styl oblékání a hudební scénu. Další oblast výzkumu této části obsahuje stavební kameny punku, mezi něž patří například svoboda kreativního projevu, odmítání tradičních hodnot a “udělej si to sám” princip. Hlavním cílem této práce bylo dokázat, že texty a společenské jevy se ovlivňovaly navzájem. Jedním z klíčových pojmů je, že punk je reakcí subkultury na situaci jejich doby.

Další podkapitola je analytická a je zaměřena na popis typických rysů punkové hudby, jelikož je hlavním projevem punkových ideologií a názorů. Jedním cílem této práce bylo kontemplančně o zařazení punku do subkultury a kontrakultury. Důležitou otázkou při výzkumu punkové subkultury je její místo v kontrakultuře. Analýza pojmů “kontrakultura” a “subkultura” nachází společné znaky jako je například boj mezi menšinami a většinami. Druhá kapitola se věnuje rozvoji subkultury v osmdesátých letech 20. století, kdy důležitou otázkou byla fráze “je punk mrtvý?”. Tato část porovnává problémy, se kterými se potýkal punk na konci 70. let a jejich vliv na rozvoj podžánrů, jako je například hardcore punk, new wave, post-punk a horror punk z různých úhlů pohledů.

Jedním z cílů bylo kulturně-historicky analyzovat tvorbu písňových textů Dead Kennedys a dalších punkových skupin jako byly Misfits a Descendents, a jejich post-punkových následníků Job Division a Siouxsie and the Banshees. Praktická část této závěrečné práce analyzuje skladby výše zmíněných nových žánrů. Pro tuto analýzu byly použity skladby skupin, které byly označovány jako nejvýznamnější a nejdůležitější v historii punkové scény. Další otázkou hudební scény osmdesátých let byl její vztah k tehdejšímu velkým společnostem. Střetnutím mainstream kultury a klasického punku vznikly žánry jako je například new wave a no wave. Britská post-punk scéna je též významná, protože díky ní vznikla goth subkultura. Analytická část zmiňuje významné umělce, kteří ovlivnili vznik a rozvoj punku v mnoha jeho podobách, jako Ian Curtis, Malcolm McLaren a Siouxsie Sioux v Británii a Jello Biafra, Glenn Danzig a Ian MacKaye v Spojených státech amerických. Tyto

radikální osobnosti se inspirovaly již existujícími žánry, skrz které pojednávaly o věcech, které nejsou pro punk typické.

Nějaké post-punk žánry, jako je new wave, se objevovaly v obou zemích současně. Přestože se britská a americká post-punk scéna shodly na experimentálním přístupu k změně starších hudebních odvětví, tento samý jev se lišil reprezentací a popularitou.

Je důležité zmínit, že výše popsané new wave, no wave a post punk byly více zaměřeny na hudbu než na subkulturní aspekt. I přes americké a britské rozdíly v projevu a přístupu k některým ideologiím, všechny nově vytvořené scény 80. let zůstaly součástí subkultury ze 70. let 20. století, jelikož následovali postoj ke společnosti a vyzdvihovali vyjadřování skrz umění. Aspekt který přitáhl nejvíce nových fanoušků byla otevřenost vůči vstoupení do mainstream kultury a zároveň odmítáním cliché punkové scény v sedmdesátých letech. Tento experimentální přístup oslovil i lidi, kteří se původně s punkem neztotožňovali. Vedle původní agresivní scény se vyvinula alternativní hudba, která otevřela dveře lidem, kteří byli touto klasickou punkovou hudbou zastrašeni. Písně jako je *Transmission* a *Monitor* zdůrazňují, jak autorita v současnosti kontroluje jejich svobodný a kreativní projev skrz média, což je něco s čímž se jejich předchůdci nemuseli potýkat. Další britská post-punk skupina Bauhaus, která ovlivnila goth subkulturu se naopak vrátila k ezoterickým tématům jako je náboženství.

Mezitím co v Británii se nové podžánry zaměřovaly na hudbu, v Americe byla samostatná hardcore subkultura. Tato americká subkultura byla více agresivní než hudba v Británii, především jelikož kritizovala politiku radikálněji. Nezbytnou součástí této subkultury byl fenomén straight edge. Praktická část této práce vyznačuje principy straight edge, jako je například odpor k cigaretám, alkoholu a drogám, v hardcore písních.

I přesto, že hardcore skupiny měly spoustu společných znaků, poté co v této kapitole byly písně několika skupin porovnány z hlediska melodie a obsahu, se ukázalo, že každá z kapel má jiný přístup a interpretace společenských jevů. Nejvíce viditelné rozdíly se projevovaly v použitém jazyce a komplexitě. Mezitímco některé skupiny zakládaly na jednoduchosti, jiné zpracovaly komplexní myšlenky a komplikované hudební schopnosti.

Analýza ukázala, že skupina Dead Kennedys je významná svým sarkastickým stylem obsahu písní a jejich podáním veřejnosti. Mezitím co další hardcore skupiny na východě Spojených států amerických Minor Threat a Bad Brains byly odlišné svou nadměrnou

agresivitou při živých vystoupení. Skladba *Banned in D.C.* se zejména věnuje problému a boji s autoritou (především s policií), čímž jejich popularita pouze stoupla. Našli tak způsob, jak veřejně projevit konflikty, které byly před veřejností tajeny.

Závěrečná podkapitola popisuje horror punk, který se dá chápat jako podžánr punk rocku. Nejčastější charakteristikou je zmínka příšer a jiných nadpřirozených bytostí, stejně jako smrt a nesmrtelnost jako taková. Až na výjimky, horror punk skupiny jsou spojovány s dramatickými představeními, které zahrnují vymyšlené postavy a příběhy. Horror punk byl oblíbený především v oblastech New Jersey a New York, poněvadž mladiství z těchto míst pocházely ze stejných životních podmínek. Tento styl hudby sjednotil všechny fanoušky hororu, kteří obdivovali punk hudbu a filmy plné krve a strachu.

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