DANCE, CULTURE, TELEVISION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE CULTURE AND ITS TELEVISUAL REPRESENTATIONS.

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Abstract

This research is concerned with the role that contemporary dance culture (also known as 'rave culture') plays in British society. Drawing on a range of research methodologies, it provides a critique of those common-sense, academic and televisual discourses that suggest that contemporary dance culture is an apolitical culture, containing cultural texts of little aesthetic worth.

Drawing on interview material and original research I suggest that contemporary dance culture, through its resistance to state regulation, has become oppositional to the dominant order within society. I also show how, irrespective of state interference, contemporary dance culture contains elements and dynamics that could be considered to be radical and progressive, and is therefore inherently political.

Academic discourses also view contemporary dance culture as apolitical and containing texts of little aesthetic worth. This thesis examines why this is the case through an examination of the history of contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth culture.

This thesis then looks at televisual discourse concerning contemporary dance culture, highlighting connections between televisual discourse, academic discourse and common-sense discourse. In particular I show how the discourses of 'post-Reithian public service' and 'free-market liberalism' came to govern the production of a specific television programme entitled <u>BPM</u>, broadcast by the ITV network early on Sunday mornings between 1992 and 1995, and aimed at contemporary dance culture.

Once common-sense, academic and televisual discourses concerning contemporary dance culture have been critically examined, this thesis then proposes a set of working theoretical models for the examination of the relationship between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations. Adapting Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the

carnival and the carnivalesque, Lucien Goldmann's analysis of structural homologies, and Theodor Adorno's analysis of 'the culture industry', I show how the relationships between young people, contemporary dance music, and televisual representations of contemporary dance music are more complicated than common-sense, journalistic and academic discourses suggest.

This work continues with an in-depth examination of ethnographic methodology, showing how an examination of anthropological principles can highlight issues in the study of the relationship between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations. The thesis concludes with an analysis of a series of "viewers' workshops" where participants in contemporary dance culture air their views concerning the relationship between contemporary dance culture and television.

The conclusion to this thesis makes the point that common-sense, academic, televisual and journalistic discourses concerning contemporary dance culture have much in common in their simplistic attempts to understand what is a complex set of cultural forms.

Acknowledgements

"Dedicated to sufferers of Saturday Night Fever everywhere.

May we never be cured"

(Dedication listed on the credits of the short film <u>Weekender</u>, directed by

Wiz, soundtrack recorded by Flowered Up, and remixed by Andy Weatherall).

Introduction: Aims and Objectives

This thesis has four primary aims:-

1. To counter common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture.

2. To counter contemporary cultural studies' discourse on contemporary dance culture.

3. To critically examine televisual discourse on contemporary dance culture.

4. To counter common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television.

These four aims will be achieved through an examination of the relationships between the state, the British youth culture that I term 'contemporary dance culture' (previously known in the late 1980s as 'acid house' and in the early 1990s as 'rave'), and the television sub-genre of 'British youth television'.

Aim One

Common-sense discourse[1] characterises dance culture as an apolitical youth culture of little aesthetic worth, dominated by little more than hedonistic drug consumption and 'mindless' repetitive music. In chapter 1 I counter the first part of this suggestion, showing how dance culture's resistance to state repression demonstrates that the politics of contemporary dance culture are far more sophisticated than common-sense discourse suggests. In chapter 4 a shift in emphasis towards musical form counters the second element of common-sense discourse; the suggestion that contemporary dance music is of little aesthetic worth.

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[1] Extended definitions of "common sense" and "discourse" are provided in Appendix 6.

Aim Two

Much of contemporary cultural studies ignores contemporary dance culture, or analyses it in terms that suggest that it is merely another facet of capitalist consumerism. Through an examination of both dance culture's resistance to state repression, and dance culture's utopian impulse, chapter 1 implicitly addresses those few writers within contemporary cultural studies who have maintained an interest in contemporary dance culture, and who characterise contemporary dance culture as non-rebellious.

My critique of contemporary cultural studies' discourse on contemporary dance culture becomes more explicit in chapter 2 where I show how the collapse of the dominant paradigms of youth cultural study left contemporary cultural studies disinclined to study contemporary dance culture. Chapter 4 continues this work, showing how the application of theoretical positions offered by, amongst others, Mikhail Bakhtin, Lucien Goldmann and Theodor Adorno, demonstrates that dance culture is more complex than common-sense and contemporary cultural studies' discourses suggest, and is eminently worthy of study.

Aim Three

Televisual discourse on contemporary dance culture is similar to both common-sense and academic discourses in that it views contemporary dance culture as a culture of little aesthetic worth, and, like contemporary cultural studies' discourse, has a tendency to shy away from representing it. Chapter 1 and the introduction to chapter 2 lay the foundation for my critique in that they show that contemporary dance culture is a sizeable and significant social development. Chapter 3 critically examines the commissioning and production of a specific British youth television programme entitled <u>BPM</u>, a show that took contemporary dance culture as its textual referent. In particular chapter 3 shows how the independent production company that made <u>BPM</u>

attempted to negotiate a path between two conflicting discourses within television production.

Having completed this analysis, chapter 4 introduces the reader to theoretical positions offered by, amongst others, Mikhail Bakhtin, Lucien Goldmann and Theodor Adorno. In applying these theoretical positions to the study of the relationship between contemporary dance culture and television, this chapter shows how, in their avoidance of contemporary dance culture, common-sense discourse, academic discourse and televisual discourse do dance culture a disservice. Chapters 5 and 6 also directly address this aim through an examination of contemporary dance culture's own critique of televisual discourse, showing how young people's involvement in dance culture is more sophisticated than televisual discourse suggests.

Aim Four

Common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television suggests that young people 'mindlessly' consume televisual texts of little complexity and of little worth. In chapter 4 I formulate a model of the relationship between dance music and dance culture that suggests that the relationship between young people and television is far more sophisticated than common-sense discourse suggests.

Chapters 5 and 6 continue in the pursuit of this aim through the use of audience research techniques inspired by 20th century ethnography. These final two chapters suggest that young people's television viewing is far more sophisticated and discriminating than journalistic discourse suggests.

It is intended that this thesis draw upon a variety of scholars and writers from a wide range of academic disciplines. In doing so this thesis is intended to address a secondary aim of showing how an interdisciplinary approach can reveal more about dance culture and its televisual representations than an approach that merely relies upon one field of

reference. Chapter 2 shows how contemporary cultural studies developed into an orthodoxy, limiting the possible forms of analysis that could be applied to youth culture. This thesis shows how the development of this orthodoxy was misguided, and how the study of contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations requires the use of analytical tools drawn from cultural studies, sociology, musicology, anthropology, literary studies, and economics (to name five key academic disciplines). Running across these disciplines are discourses and metanarratives such as positivism, Marxism, structuralism, poststructuralism and conventionalism (all of which have had a major influence upon disciplines such as those mentioned above).

Throughout all six chapters I offer readings of dance culture through an application of the works of specific theorists, some of who are less than fashionable within the field of contemporary cultural studies. It somehow seems appropriate that neglected and forgotten theorists and approaches should be revived to examine a topic the study of which was once at the height of academic fashion, but is now all but shunned. This is all the more ironic when considering contemporary cultural studies' previous willingness to defend earlier youth cultures from those official, social and media discourses that characterised youth culture as either mindlessly consumerist, or dangerously deviant.

It also seems appropriate that Western Marxists previously ignored should form the backbone of my approach. The irony is that, whilst the broadly Marxist approach of contemporary cultural studies in the 1970s has collapsed, the work of marginalised Marxists should prove so useful to this thesis. Where more 'fashionable' names are applied to the study of dance culture (such as Adorno and Gramsci) I have attempted to maintain a particularly critical approach in order to show that currently *in-vogue* theorists are often as flawed as those who have been sidelined in past.

For an examination of work already published in the field, and an examination of the relationship between this thesis and published research, please consult the Literature Review in Appendix 1.

Chapter 1: The Politics of Contemporary Dance Culture

> THE PARTY'S OVER! New Laws, March 9th. Without your support we will have to return to the ancient 2am licensing laws and have the government decide our form of entertainment. We have come this far together so do not be defeated at the last hurdle. The new laws mean that you can be imprisoned for attending a party as well as organising one. It is up to every one of us to continue this stance against the oppression of dance. THIS REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED. Hard Core Uproar (anonymous flyer quoted in Brown, 1997, pp.98-9).

The aim of this chapter is to show how common-sense discourse and contemporary cultural studies' discourse are simplistic in their suggestion that contemporary dance culture is a purely apolitical 'leisure' culture. This will be achieved initially through two specific examples of direct opposition to state regulatory apparatuses. Firstly, I will examine one aspect of the nationwide campaign against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, showing how the aborted illegal rave known as 'Mother' directly opposed state interference in the workings of contemporary dance culture. I will then move on to examine an organisation based in Bedfordshire called 'Exodus', a 'rave collective' that oppose police and local authority actions on a regular basis.

Having shown that there are organisations and collectives whose actions are inherently political, I will show how more commercial organisations such as 'Cream' in Liverpool have a working ethos that is different from most other British corporations. Whilst many aspects of contemporary dance culture can be categorised as being entirely commercial in origin, and initially appear to be exactly the same as other elements of consumer culture, the example of Cream shows qualitative differences between what contemporary dance culture terms 'the underground' and 'the mainstream'.

Having dealt with these three specific examples I will then go on to examine how drug usage in contemporary dance culture positions its participants as a 'deviant other', and how, in reacting against the criminalisation of drug use, dance culture participants come into conflict with policing authorities. This leads many dance culture participants to describe their actions and experiences in political terms. At the end of this section I will discuss the likely results of the recent intensive concentration of governmental and police attention on drug use in contemporary dance clubs. Here I will suggest that certain sections of contemporary dance culture will attempt to 'disappear' from the gaze of policing authorities, and, in refusing to submit to the will of the state, these sections of dance culture will continue to be politicised.

Towards the end of this chapter we see a shift of analysis away from specific *actions* towards two *discourses* of political opposition within dance culture, a discourse of 'disappearance', and a discourse of 'refusal of language'.

Having introduced the notion of deviancy in the section on drug usage, I will look at 'deviancy theory', showing how an examination of deviancy theories can further help to explain why dance culture 'reacts' against governmental interference, and how it is consequently politicised. In this section I will show how Howard Becker's classic study of early-1960s' jazz musicians can be used to show the similarities and differences between previously 'deviant' music cultures and contemporary dance culture. Having examined how these discourses influence the relationship between contemporary dance culture and the state, I then move on to a comparative examination of Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of celibacy in the Pyrenées. Comparing Bourdieu's analysis with contemporary dance culture shows how we have arrived at the situation whereby contemporary dance culture finds itself in an almost impossible situation, attacked by common-sense discourse, and attacked by the state.

As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, common-sense discourse characterises contemporary dance culture as apolitical. However, campaigns against the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990 and, in particular, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 have shown us that dance culture can be a politically resistive force. The earlier piece of legislation was known in its formative stages as the 'acid house' bill and increased the penalties for organising unlicensed parties for profit. The latter Act is the first and only piece of legislation to use the term "rave" (it does so twice), defining rave music as composed of "sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats" (Section 63, sub-section 1[b])[1]. For the first time in British legal history a musical form has been legally proscribed, albeit in a particular context. Sadly, the only logical recent comparison to make is with legislation in Nazi Germany during the Second World War that outlawed various forms of jazz.

Not only does the Act criminalise any two or more persons 'preparing' a site for a rave, but also, crucially, criminalises those on their way to a rave, those waiting to attend,

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[1] Interestingly, the phrasing of the 1994 Act appears to let the musical sub-genre of jungle off the hook, since it is, to paraphrase the Act, characterised by a *lack* of repetitive beats (see chapter 3). An interestingly resistive approach was taken by the band Autechre whose <u>Anti</u> e.p. contained the track 'Flutter', described by the band's Sean Booth as having "a repetitive melody but, as far as the beats go, to take the clause literally, you should be able to play this all night without the party being stopped. At the moment we're working on some tracks that would take two days before the beats repeat" (quoted in Lay, 1994, p.64). However I fear that, without the aid of a defence barrister who is also a musicologist, such an argument would receive short shrift from the police and the courts. Perhaps Hillegonda Rietveld is correct in her suggestion that the notion of "repetitive beats", along with

> the concepts of 'night' and 'dance', are ill-defined in both existing and proposed British laws and seem to be motivated by an attempt to curb particular lifestyles and cultural expressions which do not belong to the 'dominant' classes, who make desperate attempts to hold on to their dispersing power (Rietveld, 1998a, p.60).

and those at the event (the official definition of a rave being a gathering of 100 or more people on land in the open air at night, irrespective of whether they have permission to use that land). In theory therefore, a large birthday party in someone's back garden with music playing in the background could lead to the imprisonment of all concerned.

During the period before Royal Assent to the Act, many artists and dance culture participants were active in resisting this legislation. An example of this resistance was the release of the 'Repetitive Beats' e.p. by a musical collective entitled Retribution (a track from this e.p., produced by On U Sound, and entitled Mind & Movement Control, can be found on the compact disc bound within the cover of this thesis). To promote the record a video was shot which featured a demonstration in Trafalgar Square opposing the Bill. This demonstration was the largest in a series of protests that occurred throughout the country. Another example of creative protest[2] was the 300 protesters who 'invaded' the garden of the Conservative Home Secretary (see The Times, 21 November 1994, p.1). Whilst many such protests were peaceful (or "fluffy" in the argot of the committed protester), other demonstrations were more confrontational (or "spiky") in nature[3]. For example a protest march through central London ended with a full scale battle between police and protesters, with, according to an interviewee who had attended the protest, police in riot gear repeatedly charging protesters who were desperately trying to leave the area (also see Johnstone and Milton, 1994, p.11).

In direct contrast to common-sense discourse, Jonathan Margolis, writing in The Sunday Times on 17 July 1994, suggests that, in the wake of demonstrations and campaigns, there has been a widespread politicisation of youth culture;

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[2] For a closer examination of the 'creative' elements of these protests see Jordan, 1998.

[3] For a critical examination of the connected terms "fluffy" and "spiky" in 'counter-cultural' movements see McKay, 1998b, pp.15-17, Aufheben, 1998, pp.111-17, pp.121-3, and Rietveld, 1998b, pp.247-266.

the young, derided for being politically apathetic since the Vietnam protests and student grant demos of the 1960s and early 1970s, are boiling with rage at the bill... Yet anyone over the age of 25 is likely to be unaware that such a mass politicisation is going on. Demonstrations against the bill go unreported, and while the Lords' throwing out of some clauses made the news last week, the fact that the parts upsetting the young were happily passed caused no public comment (Margolis, 1994, p.4).

The politicisation of dance culture has continued despite the passing of the Bill by a large parliamentary majority. For instance July 1995 saw 'Rave Against The Machine', a protest by the Reclaim The Streets group, which brought a four-lane road in Islington, North London to a standstill[4]. Despite the friendly nature of this protest (which

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[4] John Jordan describes the scene;

> Imagine: it's a hot summer's day, four lanes of traffic move sluggishly through the grey stinking city haze, an airhorn pierces the drone of cars. Suddenly several groups of people appear running out of side streets carrying 20-foot-long scaffolding poles. In a perfectly choreographed acrobatic drill, the scaffolding poles are erected bang in the middle of the road in the form of tripods and people climb to the top, balancing gracefully 20 feet above the tarmac. The road is now blocked to traffic but open to pedestrians. Then that spine-tingling peak experience occurs. Drifting accross [sic] this extraordinary scene is Louis Armstrong's voice singing 'What a Wonderful World' - this wondrous sound is coming from an armoured personnel carrier which is now standing in the car-free street. Within minutes thousands of people have filled the road. Huge colourful banners are stretched from lampposts; some are in support of the striking London Underground workers, others just say "BREATHE" or "STREET NOW OPEN"; one that simple says "CAR FREE" is made of numerous strips which stretch down to the tarmac, like tendrils, creating a soft fabric curtain across the road. During the party these tendrils are tied together to create huge bouncing swings for people to play on. Soon the street is a riot of colour; a band turns a bus stop into a stage and plays folk music; people dance; a choir sings; and a ton of sand is poured on to the tarmac, turning it into an instant beach for children (Jordan, 1998, p.142).

featured a makeshift sandpit for children) police 'Territorial Support Groups' arrived, charged a group of demonstrators, and made seventeen arrests.

Contemporary dance culture has been deeply affected by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. An example of this is police action against the aborted 'Mother' rave of July 1995. A combined intelligence operation mounted by Devon, Cornwall and Northamptonshire police forces discovered that a rave was to take place in Corby, Northamptonshire on Friday, 7 July. Details about the rave were to be given out on a specific telephone number immediately before the event.

When sound systems, potential participants, and organisers arrived at the site in the early hours of the 7th they were followed by one police van. At 2 a.m. a police helicopter was seen above the site. Come dawn, although the rave had yet to start, two people were arrested and charged with 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance'. At 11 a.m. police roadblocks were set up around the site, with police using their new-found powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act to turn away potential participants. An hour later more organisers were arrested. Those potential participants that rang the telephone information line were surprised to find not a recorded message, but a person asking them for their names, their telephone numbers and the names of the people that they were travelling with. The police had taken over the telephone line and were busily preparing for more arrests. Some potential participants tried to obtain information on the rave by telephoning organisers' mobile phones. However the police had managed to deactivate all mobile telephones in the surrounding area.

During the course of the evening the police escorted all the remaining organisers and potential participants out of the county of Northamptonshire and into Cambridgeshire. Another rave, believed to have been set up on a 'fall-back site' in Smeatharpe, Devon, was raided by 200 police officers. Police road blocks were set up on all surrounding roads, and nine people were arrested. The homes of Debbie Staunton, a member of United Systems (a sound system collective) and Michelle Poole, a member of the

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anti-Criminal Justice Act organisation Advance Party, were raided by the police, and they were both arrested and charged with conspiracy to cause a public nuisance.

It should be noted that both raves were to occur on unused open ground, and sound systems would not have been heard from any residential properties. However, police action to prevent the rave caused a 1.5 mile tail back on a Cambridgeshire dual carriageway. Perhaps therefore it could be suggested that police actions to prevent the Mother rave were *ideological* rather than practical (for more information on the Mother rave see Petridis, 1995a, pp.38-40, and Penman, 1995, pp.2-3).

In the pre-Act 1980s the first wave of acid house[5] led to a widespread flouting of laws concerning the occupation of private properties, and most of the early British raves were held in squatted private property. Such events are infrequent now, due to the heavy penalties inscribed in the above legislation, yet the occasional illegal warehouse party still occurs. There are still some micro-cultures devoted to using unused properties, for example the Goa Trance scene based around illegal parties in South London.

Before the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act, 1990 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 dance micro-cultures were often as politically resistant as members of the contemporary scene. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Conservative government must have felt that raves were politically resistive, otherwise they would not have felt the need for legislation such as the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.

Whilst I wish to suggest that dance culture contains a 'discourse of resistance', it is worth noting that this discourse frequently breaks out into overt active political

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[5] It could be suggested that the term 'acid house' itself signals a political resistance; "the very word 'acid' sounded hard and dangerous, a corrosive element in society" (Shapiro, 1988, p.146).

resistance on an everyday level. In London resistance to police interference often takes the form of club promoters and dance culture participants opposing the actions of the colloquially termed 'Club Squad', officially known as the 8 Area Clubs and Vice Unit of the Metropolitan Police, who deal with offences committed on the premises of nightclubs, and whose headquarters are based at Scotland Yard. In particular the Club Squad deals with those premises that are open later than 1 a.m., premises that, according to Inspector John Piddington (head of licensing), "need more intensive policing" (in Headon, 1995b, p.40). Why this should be the case is open to interpretation, but is a confirmation that nightclubs are more heavily policed than other licensed premises. Dance culture participants have reacted against this; an example being anecdotal evidence from interviewees who have suggested that when Club UK, one of London's most commercially successful techno clubs of recent years, was visited by the Metropolitan Police in the wake of a well-publicised death in the club at the start of 1996, individual policemen were verbally abused and obstructed by the dance floor crowd.

Exodus

The above analysis of opposition to parliamentary legislation has given us an example of how common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture is erroneous in its suggestion that dance culture is apolitical. Opposition to parliamentary legislation has politicised dance culture. However there are elements of dance culture whose politics stem not only from an opposition to state interference, but also from an allegiance to a form of anarcho-libertarianism previously witnessed in the marginalised cultures of travelling communities and the 'festival' circuit of the 1970s and 1980s[6]. The 'rave collective' Exodus is a good example of such an organisation, and this

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[6] For detailed and sympathetic accounts of this crucial set of travelling micro-cultures, and their connections to contemporary dance culture, see Stone, 1996, and McKay, 1996.

section shows how there are elements of contemporary dance culture with deeply held political beliefs.

Taking over a deserted farm in 1992, Exodus began as a housing co-operative and party organisation. The deserted farm is the property of the Department of Transport and is due to be flattened for an extension to the M1 motorway in 1998. The farm has now been fully renovated and contains a working forge, a herd of Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs, and facilities for visits from local schools[7]. The raves themselves are held on a variety of sites in and around Luton.

Exodus are a non-profit-making organisation, and they see their roles as explicitly political. Statements by the collective suggest that they see their role as beyond merely providing free parties for members of the local community, preferring to move towards a position whereby they are responsible for the radicalisation of a whole generation of young people, drawing them away from profit-making principles towards an entirely self-sufficient community built along anarcho-libertarian principles. An anonymous source quoted in The Guardian sees this occurring throughout the country; "party culture is equivalent to the old fairs that provided an economy for survival to the dispossessed part of society" (in Campbell, 1995, p.13). At events organised by Exodus any profits made from the sale of soft drinks (attendance is free), and any donations received from party goers, is spent on the maintenance of sound and lighting equipment, and on renovating local derelict buildings and converting them into homes. All members of the collective subscribe to the non-profit-making 'anti-commercial' ethos;

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[7] The case of Exodus provides us with a good example of how the predominantly urban emphases of early subcultural analyses of youth are now inappropriate, in particular those analyses that draw theoretical sustenance from Robert E. Park's 1915 text The City (Park, 1997) and Milton Gordon's 1947 essay 'The concept of the sub-culture and its application' (Gordon, 1997). Exodus combine an almost Arcadian 'green' lifestyle with a commitment to freeing up urban spaces, and a specific pledge to provide musical entertainment in 'green' surroundings for urban and suburban youth.

we've set an example of a different form of betterment, a different form of self-help. We all get better together. It's a community fund that is open to all of us... It's not that we don't recognize the need for money. We recognize that people will need to better themselves (Glenn Jenkins, Exodus spokesperson, quoted in Lamb, 1995, p.187).

With the profit motive removed, Exodus found that there was a noticeable improvement in the atmosphere at their events compared to commercial raves. The non-profit making motive also enabled Exodus to provide better facilities than local clubs. This runs counter to governmental discourse that suggests that illegal parties are death traps (a suggestion that is the stated reason behind much anti-rave legislation). All Exodus events are well stewarded and held in safe and secure venues. Free drinking water is provided (to prevent dehydration caused by excessive dancing), and nurses and first-aid practitioners are always in attendance. The collective have also stated that they hope to purchase a fire engine in case of emergencies. Tim Malyon, writing for the New Statesman and Society, suggests that the collective are "more aware of safety considerations than most commercial outfits" (Malyon, 1994, p.12). Glenn Jenkins explains further;

> Because of the CJA [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act] we are even more determined to have better parties, so we have to make them tightly organised. It's a lie that only licensed venues are safe. We don't turn the water off, it's always cheap and freely available. We make sure the venue is spacious, airy and well lit and that there is a chill-out area. People are free to walk in and out if they want to sit down, or take a breath of fresh air. It may appear like it's disorganised but we have our own form of stewarding, we have nurses attending, we have fire extinguishers. We make sure that there are always people who can cope if anything bad happened (in Wright, 1997, n.p.).

The semi-legal nature of Exodus's activities soon led to police interest in their activities, and over a four year period over 30 charges were brought against collective members, although only one conviction has been secured by the police. In particular a charge of murder against Exodus member Paul 'Biggs' Taylor was dropped by the police before the case came to court, and Taylor was acquitted of a lesser charge of causing grievous bodily harm. In 1992 the Exodus base was raided on numerous occasions by the police, with sound equipment, lighting and electricity generators seized amidst police allegations that the equipment was stolen.

In late 1992 the police's attitude to Exodus appeared to change with Chief Inspector Mick Brown from Dunstable advertising in local papers for information on unused spaces that could be used by Exodus for their parties. Chief Inspector Brown is quoted as saying

> the people who were running these unlicensed raves were trying to avoid any opportunities for violence, so I adopted a dual approach: on the one hand risk management for those attending; on the other hand actively looking for a way for Exodus to hold their events legally (in Malyon, 1998, p.194).

Local feelings about the parties were mixed, with some objecting to increased traffic, and others supporting the parties. Mr.R. Lellicot, a 56-year-old local shop keeper who made a healthy profit when an event was held near his premises, is quoted as saying "I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Most of the customers seemed like nice people" (in Campbell, 1993).

Whilst local police wished to continue with their more pragmatic approach, orders from above put an end to this. Chief Inspector Brown is on record as stating that

I was rather put on the spot. I heard that a number of Members of Parliament said this [the raves] should stop and that the police ought to get on the case. At about that time the decision was made to pull the plug on negotiations, there were some Members of Parliament advocating drastic measures (in White, 1996a, p.68).

Brown has also suggested that he was given only one hour's notice of the change in police policy towards Exodus.

Once the liberal policing policy had been reversed the farm was raided by dozens of police, and 36 people were arrested. Detective Superintendent Alan Marlow has denied that this particular raid was heavy handed, although he is on record as stating that there may have been some "clumsiness" (in Campbell, 1993). On hearing the news, 4,000 local ravers made their way to the police station where the Exodus members were being held. Riot police were mobilised, but the tense situation was defused by Debbie Taylor, one of the few members of the collective not arrested (presumably she had not been at the farm) who persuaded protesters to disperse, despite the alleged presence of a police 'agent provocateur' who was, according to some reports, actually arrested for inciting violence (see Malyon, 1998, p.197). All Exodus members were released without charge.

Police interest in Exodus continued, and February 1993 saw more arrests and more confrontations between ravers supporting Exodus and riot police. Charges of causing a public nuisance and possession of controlled drugs were brought against Exodus members. This latter charge was thrown out of court by the presiding judge, amidst suggestions of procedural irregularities and police corruption (the alleged drugs find was completed by a single Police Constable in the dark, on his first day with the drugs squad, after a two minute search).

These allegations of police corruption led to local cross-party support for an independent public inquiry into the behaviour of the local police force. The Policy and Resources Committee of Bedfordshire County Council voted 10-8 for a public inquiry, to be chaired by Michael Mansfield QC. Committee minutes state that "this inquiry should examine the defence's claims that were believed by an Appeal Court judge, stipendiary magistrate and juries, of allegations of malpractice by the Bedfordshire police in the investigation and prosecution of these cases" (in Campbell, 1994, p.8). As Malyon suggests "this remains the first and only example of a local council voting to investigate its own police force itself, rather than trust the Police Complaints Authority" (Malyon, 1998, p.198).

By mid 1993 many Exodus members were also occupying the derelict Oakmore Hotel in central Luton, and had begun to decorate and repair the building. However, eviction notices led to police arrests for criminal damage and the hotel was raided. Malyon explains further;

> On 15 January police raided and severely damaged the Oakmore Hotel in response to an alleged complaint that the occupier was causing criminal damage by shaving the front door. Two people were charged with affray. When their cases came to court, despite six months' warning, police were unable to produce notebooks belonging to thirteen officers involved in the operation. Exodus suspected the notebooks would have shown the raid to have been pre-planned, rather than a response to the alleged 'criminal damage', for which nobody was ever charged. Luton police admitted that a surveillance operation of the Oakmore had been set up. Following non-disclosure of the notebooks the trial judge dismissed both affray charges (Malyon, 1998, p.194).

Those living at the hotel began to occupy a deserted hospice in Streatley, outside Luton, and over the past five years this property has been fully renovated. The council,

who own the property, have allowed Exodus to continue, and the property is now known as HAZ (Housing Action Zone) Manor. The scale of the work completed on this property has led to a great deal of positive publicity and support for the Exodus collective. Approximately 30 people now live in the Manor.

Whilst Polly Toynbee, writing in The Independent newspaper, falls in with common-sense discourse in her characterisation of the attitudes of the youth of Luton as "nihilism with a dash of hedonism" (Toynbee, 1995, p.2), those who support Exodus suggest that their role in the local community has led to a more political, and less hedonistic, youth culture. There have been claims, by group members themselves and by outsiders, that Exodus were instrumental in the ending of a riot in Luton in 1995. For three summer nights Luton saw numerous arson attacks, the stabbing of a policeman, the ambushing of a police car, looting, and widespread car burning. Exodus issued a statement stating "it is better to dance than burn your own community". An impromptu rave was attended by many of the tenants on the Marsh Farm estate, which was the focal point for the rioting. The violence promptly stopped (Campbell, 1995, p.13, see also Malyon, 1998, p.198-9).

Despite police intimidation, the Exodus collective continue to put on free parties in and around the Luton area. The results of the police operations Anagram, Ashanti, Anatomy and Anchovy mean that, at the time of writing, four Exodus members are currently banned from organising or attending raves, and nearly every single member of the collective has been arrested, including one 18-year-old Exodus member who was chased by 30 police officers and a police helicopter after allegedly stealing a sandwich. Local newspapers remain implacably opposed to the organisation's activities.

Exodus' non-profit making ethos has led them to uphold an interesting rule concerning Ecstasy use. Drug dealing is banned at Exodus parties, and Exodus have their own 'drug squad' who search out dealers and remove them. This means that, in the case of

Exodus, another major governmental objection to raves is unfounded. David Taylor, an ex-policeman who attended an Exodus event in 1994, confirms this:

> I didn't feel at any time intimidated or frightened. It was very orderly - they even had a post with a red cross in it. There was no menace, no idiots running about causing aggravation. And I didn't see any dealing. There were some very young girls wandering about, but I think they were safe. I got the feeling that the people at the gate could deal with any situation that arose. They were running it very professionally (in Malyon, 1994, pp.12-3).

However, Exodus are not entirely anti-drugs. Glenn Jenkins suggests that the effects of Ecstasy are radicalising, in that it can put

> machismo, ego, pride, good looks, good clothes all into perspective. You get to realise the hollowness of all that and it rattles you. It's dangerous for a society that draws its kids into materialism, it's threatening... It is a vision of a trouble-free yob-free society (in Saunders, 1995, p.175).

One unproven suggestion is that the use of Ecstasy at Exodus parties led to a significant drop in trade at local licensed venues, and pressure from brewers and publicans has been instrumental in the various police investigations. This is interesting when considering that the town of Luton, previously dominated by car production, is now heavily reliant on the brewers Whitbread for employment. Exodus also claim that financial links between local newspapers, local brewers and publicans have led to negative local newspaper reports on their activities. Mary Anna Wright quotes an off-the-record conversation with a retired police inspector to back up this theory; "licensed premises were experiencing a fair amount of loss of trade, loss of customers.

Some licensees were starting to get into real financial trouble" (in Wright, 1997, n.p.)[8].

Allegations have also been made that what connects the police and these organisations

is freemasonry; Sir Maurice Drake, the original judge in the trial of Paul 'Biggs' Taylor

for grievous bodily harm, agreed to step down after Taylor's lawyers argued that his

links with freemasonry could lead to "possible bias" (see Pemberton, 1996, p.18).

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[8] A fear of contemporary dance culture by the alcohol industry is not confined to Bedfordshire. The arrival of 'alcopops' (alcoholic fruit-flavoured drinks, commonly 4-6% alcohol by volume), and their aggressive marketing strategies, can be seen as a direct result of a drop in alcohol consumption by young people in the 1990s, itself at least partially determined by the rise in recreational drug use that has accompanied contemporary dance culture. Andrew Barr, writing in The Times, explains:

> Although it might appear that the bright colours and child-like imagery of alcopops are intended to appeal to children, they reflect, in fact, the drug-influenced symbols and culture of young people who have attained legal drinking age. There is even a brand of alcopop called Ravers. The drinks industry has, for some years, been concerned by the popularity of drugs and the rave culture, because young people who spend their weekends in a trance have neither the time nor money to spend on alcoholic drinks.

> Drinks producers may deny they are targeting alcopops at drug users, but club owners have their own views. When an "alcoholic spring water" was launched earlier this summer, the distributor was publicly accused of trying to sell "laced" water to clubbers who simply wanted to rehydrate themselves after taking Ecstasy.

> The big brewers have also invested a lot of money this year in marketing brands of "alcoholic soda" to nightclubs. These look more grown-up than ordinary alcopops, as they come in clear glass bottles with minimalist labels and names such as Vault and Sub Zero. Nor do they have a sweet, fruity taste. In fact, they taste of very little. Only someone who is already under the influence of another substance could take much pleasure in them (Barr, 1996).

There is also a connection between the marketing of soft drinks and Ecstasy, with soft drink manufacturers employing visual images drawn from contemporary dance culture. In a viewing session completed for this thesis (chapter 6, viewing session 2) "Catherine" commented on the marked similarity between the video for Mary Kiani's When I Call Your Name and an advertisement that she had recently seen for the soft drink 'Fruitopia'. Indeed, even its name bears an implicit connection to the creation of a brief utopia on the dance floor, aided and abetted by Ecstasy consumption.

Whilst the economic prospects for Luton appear to be improving, Exodus are also going from strength to strength, with their largest party attracting approximately 10,000 people. To date, the independent inquiry into police malpractice has yet to occur. Andrew Cowper, a contributor to the internet discussion group UK-Dance (uk-dance@uk-dance.org), posted an email describing how he came to attend an Exodus party in the summer of 1996. This email goes a little way to capturing the spirit of adventure in finding an Exodus party, and the satisfaction received when the search is successful (for more information on Exodus see Saunders, pp.176-7, Campbell, 1993, Toynbee, 1995, White, 1996a, and Malyon, 1998).

Here[']s an account of my exciting experiences this weekend at my third Exodus party. We head over to the meeting point in Dunstable at midnight and once again I am astonished at the number of cars and people all milling about in the middle of the road in an industrial estate. The police surely know its happening, yet I didn't see a single one of them all night. Anyway, the convoy heads off at about 1 o'clock, heading north towards Milton Keynes. Eventually it grinds to a halt, and we know that the front of it has arrived, and we must just wait for all the cars in front to get it. Luc[k]ily there was a little entertainment during the long (about 2 hours) wait. One of the cars in the convoy caught fire! People were hanging back from it cos it looked like it was about to explode, and then one brave soul decided to drive past it at high speed down the wrong side of the dual carriageway, so everyone follows him, praying 'don't explode now, please don't explode now' (or I was anyway). Luckily it doesn[']t and the queue goes on for a little while, turning off into country lanes until finally we arrive!

There[']s hundreds of cars parked in a field, next to a forest. We park, and follow the people down into the forest, where there is the maddest

scene ever. Huge pumping sound system, lights bouncing all off the trees and loads of people all dancing and wandering and smiling and grooving and WOW what an am[a]zing sight. I thought nothing could be as cool as the party in the bottom of a valley near Ivinghoe could be that they had last time I went, but a party in a forest glade with UV drapes hanging off the trees... Crikey! (Cowper, 1996)

'Radical Consumerism' and Cream

The above section has shown that there are dance cultural organisations such as Exodus whose actions are based upon specific political beliefs, beliefs that position them in opposition to common-sense politics. In putting forward this example I am not suggesting that all elements of contemporary dance culture are as politically aware and as politically active as Exodus. There are other organisations within dance culture that are far less 'oppositional' than Exodus. One example of such an organisation is Cream in Liverpool, a large limited company with a multi-million pound turnover. However, despite being a commercial organisation, I intend to show how there is still a *discourse* of opposition to certain 'mainstream' values within the actions of the Cream organisation. Cream are capitalistic in origin and action. However theirs is a benevolent capitalism, a capitalism far removed from the nightclubs owned and run by national corporations whose *sole aim* is the creation of profit. In this section I intend to show that, whilst it makes a profit, Cream does so in a manner different from other profit-making enterprises. The consumerism of Cream is a consumerism that is different from the consumerism of 'mainstream' Britain. In exploring this analysis I intend to show how there is an implicitly political motive of avoiding excessively exploitative commercial decisions, showing how the Cream ethos is derived from a political opposition to 'naked' capitalism.

The genesis of Cream was the aptly named club The Underground in Liverpool in 1989. The Underground was prized for its communal atmosphere, said to be the best in

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the country. In particular the club became the focal point for a large community of Liverpudlians who met up at 2 a.m. outside the club and travelled to illegal raves in the old mill towns of Lancashire and Cheshire[9].

1990 saw continual police harassment of the club, with the police persuading local magistrates to revoke the club's entertainment license amidst allegations of drug misuse in the club. Charges were brought against those involved in running the club, although no convictions were secured. Determined to continue to provide a quality club for Liverpudlian dance culture participants despite police opposition, the two leading DJs from The Underground, James Barton and John Kelly, moved to the Quadrant Park club, north of the city of Liverpool in Bootle. This club became legendary within contemporary dance culture for the quality of its music and for a continuation of the community initially built at The Underground. But the 'underground' nature of the club was soon spoilt by a managerial greed that continually pushed up entrance fees[10]. Soon the club was half empty on a Saturday night. Opposed to the naked profiteering of the management of the Quadrant Park, Barton and Kelly, along with fellow DJ Andy Carroll, began the search for an environment whereby they could earn a living whilst also providing Liverpool with the best music, the best sound system, and the best dancing environment, at a reasonable price.

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[9] For a somewhat idealistic analysis of these raves see Hemment, 1998.

[10] At this stage in dance culture's development, the running of individual nights was split between promoters and club owners. The former hired a club from the latter, booking DJs, publicising the night's entertainment, decorating the venue, dictating the music policy of the club, and often organising the provision of extra lighting and sound equipment. The vast majority of these promoters, such as James Barton and John Kelly, had a dedication to dance culture and were enthusiastic consumers before they became involved in production and distribution. Nightclub owners however, retained control of, for instance, door pricing policy and entrance policy, and, as a consequence, many promoters found themselves undermined in their attempts to provide a quality service for their guests (some of who may well have been unable to gain entry due to dress restrictions imposed by the club owners).

The story continued as Barton, Kelly and Carroll moved to Liverpool's city centre club The 051. The opening night saw a partial reuniting of The Underground community. With door prices fixed at £4 for students and members and £5 for non-members, and a music policy firmly geared towards 'underground' house, Friday and Saturday nights looked set to become one of Britain's premier underground dance events. However managerial greed meant that door prices doubled in a matter of weeks to £10, and aggressive door staff, controlled by the club manager rather than the promoters themselves, turned away many committed dance music fans. Here there is a further connection to common-sense discourse on contemporary dance culture, with the management of the 051 believing that the naïveté and stupidity of dance culture participants would mean that, no matter how high the entrance price, and no matter how poor the standards, dance culture participants would continue to flock to the club. Such a view proved misguided, and within a matter of months, the communal atmosphere in the club had degenerated, with unemployed and low-paid members of Liverpool's dance culture unable to attend.

Once the atmosphere at The 051 had become stale, Barton and Carroll left, starting a new night entitled Cream at the nearby Merseyside Academy venue. Catering for approximately 400 dancers, Cream was initially praised for the expense the promoters had gone to in renovating the building, and for the consistent quality of the music on offer. Again Cream showed themselves willing at this stage to sacrifice potentially very high profits.

Despite resistance from police and magistrates, Cream's popularity increased, as did its capacity. It now holds approximately 3,000 dancers, and is invariably full each and every Saturday. The Cream name is franchised to other clubs around the country where Cream DJs hold 'Cream nights'. In 1996 the Cream organisation sold over one million albums, and employed 46 people on a turnover of several million pounds a year.

1996 saw allegations that what had become known as the 'superclub' phenomenon as epitomised by the rise of Cream had gone too far, with many regulars no longer visiting Cream due to what they perceived to be its overly commercial nature. Cream had appeared to desert 'the underground', and had appeared to renege on its unwritten contract with Liverpudlian dance culture. Cream reacted against these criticisms, and publicly stated that they would no longer be booking those over-priced DJs who they perceived to be "unprofessional", and whom they blamed for increased door entrance prices (White, 1996b). Whilst not denying that they are a money-making enterprise, James Barton and Darren Hughes (another founding member of the Cream organisation) still subscribe to the *discourse* of 'underground' culture. Adherence to this discourse also led Barton and Hughes to speak out against drug-dealing in their club, claiming that criminal gangs with purely profit-making motives are unwelcome within the Cream 'community'. Cream have also been the only club to date to bear the expense of employing a fully qualified doctor to deal with emergencies (see Alderson, 1996), and were also instrumental in organising a conference on 'club health' held at Cream's Liverpool venue (see Kilfoyle and Bellis, 1997).

The summer of 1996 saw the addition of a jungle room to Cream. Whilst it is possible to view this move as an attempt to commercialise a then fiercely independent and 'underground' micro-culture, to turn, in George Melly's immortal phrase, "revolt into style" (see Melly, 1970), the fact is that in the summer of 1996 jungle was still a very much London-based phenomenon, and Liverpool jungle nights were poorly attended. The addition of a jungle room at Cream was a sign of a musical and financial reinvestment within Liverpool dance culture; style turned back into revolt, and a musical genre that contained an outright political opposition to 'mainstream' values was incorporated into the Cream ethos. As a result of moves such as this Cream still *feels* 'underground' despite its multi-million pound turnover. It is still a part of a 'deviant' culture that emphasises its resistance to the values of 'mainstream' society. The financial success of Cream also means that it is now able to dictate a policy of booking avant-garde American DJs without fear of loss of custom. Musical

experimentation is one of the primary facets of contemporary dance culture, and Cream has reasserted its allegiance to 'the underground'.

Politics and Ecstasy

The first two sections of this chapter have shown how there are elements of contemporary dance culture that are in direct political opposition to the state. The previous section on Cream has shown how there are other elements of contemporary dance culture that, whilst not directly oppositional to the state, are nevertheless in opposition to the unfettered workings of the free market, and therefore in opposition to dominant social discourses concerning how society functions. The free-market ethos has fully penetrated many areas of British society, such as the hitherto strictly Reithian BBC and the National Health Service. The above section on Cream is intended to show how matters of profit are less important in what may be the most financially successful dance club in the country than in many other areas of British society.

As stated above, Cream still 'feels underground', for the participants it still feels that they are part of a politically deviant culture, a culture viewed by common-sense discourse as purely hedonistic and entirely apolitical. Part of the reason for this is that the majority of clubbers that attend Cream consume the drug Ecstasy (3,4 Methylenedioxymethamphetamine, or MDMA for short), and in doing so they are criminalised and politicisied. The illegal nature of Ecstasy, and the experiences that it offers, make contemporary dance culture politically resistive. This is not to posit a form of pharmacological determinism. I am not suggesting that Ecstasy somehow chemically causes political resistance, merely that the Ecstasy users that I have interviewed cast their usage in political terms. In particular they often describe their experiences as offering up a vision of a possible future utopia based upon co-operation rather than competition, based upon community rather than the individual. Douglas Rushkoff offers a similar analysis;

psychedelics can provide a shamanic experience for any adventurous consumer. This experience leads users to treat the accepted reality as an arbitrary one, and to envision the possibilities of a world unfettered by obsolete thought systems, institutions, and neuroses (Rushkoff, 1994, p.16).

On a more basic level, Ecstasy is classified as a Class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1971. Offences concerning Ecstasy therefore carry the full weight of British drug legislation. Whilst the maximum penalty for possession of Ecstasy is seven years' imprisonment, possession of the drug in small quantities "for personal use" will usually lead to an official 'Police Caution', stored on the Police National Computer. Charges such as supply of Ecstasy, and possession with intent to supply, are usually punishable by a prison sentence, and carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and confiscation of assets.

A more recent addition to British drugs legislation is the Public Entertainments Licences (Drug Misuse) Act of 1997. This legislation is similar to both the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 in that it directly targets contemporary dance culture. In criminalising dancers in the most commercial of contemporary dance clubs, policing authorities position all dance culture participants as criminals, as a 'deviant other', and, once criminalised, dance culture participants are politicised. Introduced to the House by the Conservative MP Barry Legg (who lost his seat in the 1997 General Election a matter of weeks after introducing the Bill to the House) the Act enables licensing authorities, acting on the advice of the police, to revoke immediately the licenses of those clubs, bars and public houses at which drugs are dealt or consumed. In particular the Act amends two previous pieces of legislation, and allows for the first time the immediate closure of a club where there is "a serious problem relating to the supply or use of controlled drugs at the place or at any place nearby which is controlled by the

holder of the license". Jo Chipchase and Kevin Buckle expand upon the whole process of revocation of licenses;

> in the first stage of the refusal/revocation process, the chief officer of police submits a report to the licensing authority, stating there is a "serious problem" relating to drugs at the licensed venue, and giving the reasons for this view. The licensing authority can then refuse, revoke or impose terms upon the license - "on the ground that they are satisfied that to do so will significantly assist in dealing with the problem". Both these actions are at the discretion of the parties concerned (Chipchase and Buckle, 1997, n.p.).

Whilst the terms of the Act might seem reasonable, there is now a widespread belief within contemporary dance culture that this legislation is used to shut down clubs that the police morally disapprove of, with club owners having no right of appeal. There is also some confusion as to what is considered a "serious problem" relating to drugs. The phrasing of the Act has inevitably led to discrepancies between how specific situations are dealt with by different County police forces. There is also an unresolved tension between two separate elements of the Act. The first deals with guidance notes concerning security, door policy, and the confiscation, storage and disposal of drugs. The second deals with crowd control, temperature control, and the free availability of drinking water. In particular the Act recommends that clubs provide 'chill out' areas where dancers can rest. However some licensing authorities, such as Glasgow's, have in the past interpreted the provision of chill out areas as directly promoting the use of drugs.

In statements quoted by Chipchase and Buckle the police, and club owners and promoters who have been in contact with the police, cite owners' 'co-operativeness' as a major factor in whether they are allowed to continue to trade (see Chipchase and Buckle, 1997) . There is plenty of scope for a Police Inspector to say, for example, that

the type of music played in a club is encouraging drug use. In the years before the Act, the police have managed to persuade many Scottish club owners to enforce a "no hardcore" policy in their clubs due to the dance music micro-genre of Scottish hardcore becoming linked with the consumption of ecstasy and amphetamine sulphate. It is this link that often politicises members of contemporary dance culture; they see a piece of legislation aimed at preventing drug use being used to enforce specific music policies.

Whilst the Act gives greater powers to the police, the end result has been the tighter 'self-policing' of clubs. Let us also not forget that it is contemporary dance clubs that are the focus of this legislation. Those private clubs of London, frequented by city high-flyers and top journalists, where rest rooms are awash with cocaine, have remained untouched. Door policies, searches and surveillance in dance clubs have been stepped up. The searches completed at many clubs now border on the obsessive, where burly and aggressive bouncers search the contents of potential entrants' shoes, socks, hairstyles and, on occasion, underwear. I have personally been searched in manner that veered towards assault, with a club doorman running his hand underneath my trouser waist band, with his fingers protruding inside my trousers about two inches below the bottom of my belt. However, in order to obtain entry to the club, I had 'consented' to the search and there was therefore little that I could do. Any complaint would in all probability have led to my being suspected of being a drug dealer, and would have therefore led to either permanent exclusion from the club, or detainment until the arrival of the police. I remember thinking "now is not the time to argue my case as an academic researcher taking part in field research". Many clubs now employ sniffer dogs to enable door personnel to detect those who have recently been in contact with drugs, thereby enabling them to prevent such people from gaining access to the club (see Glaser, 1997). I have personally spoken to both men and women who have been searched in a manner that, conducted anywhere else other than a nightclub, would have led to charges of indecent assault. However because such searches are 'voluntary', invasive practices continue. Some dance culture participants that I have spoken to have been strip searched by club bouncers in private rooms in nightclubs after they have

been found in possession of drugs, or in one case when they were *suspected* of being in possession of cannabis.

The reactions of dance culture participants to such controls are twofold. Firstly, they devise new methods for storing and consuming their illegal drugs. Secondly, they become even more aware that dance culture is a culture of the outlaw, a culture of resistance. When dance culture participants are treated to such stringent searches it is not surprising that they consider themselves to be politically opposed to the state that sanctions such behaviour.

The long-term result of this latest piece of legislation is now in the balance. It seems likely that, under informal pressure from the police, club owners will be at least partially successful in reducing the amount of drug consumption on their premises through the further introduction of sniffer dogs, closed-circuit television camera systems, stringent searches on entry, and random searches whilst in the club. Club owners may also put pressure on club promoters and DJs to move away from music that has a 'homologous' relationship with illegal drugs towards more 'mainstream' 'alcohol-oriented' genres (the notion of homologous relationships between drugs and music will be dealt with in chapter 4). On the one hand a decrease in the use of drugs will lead to a decrease in the 'use' of music, and on the other hand a decrease in 'drug-oriented' music such as the aforementioned Scottish hardcore (or tartan techno as it is affectionately known) will lead to a further decrease in drug use. Dave Fowler cites one London club that was forced to alter its musical policy after an anti-drugs push by the Metropolitan Police's 8 Area Clubs and Vice Unit. The explanation, according to Fowler; "fewer pills meant fewer people could get into the harder music on the main floor" (Fowler, 1997, p.62).

Further down the line, and with all the above occurring, dance culture will, in its own parlance, 'go underground', attempting to evade the gaze of the authorities through an increase in illegal and unregulated one-off parties. Matthew Collin, author of the much

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respected historical account of dance culture entitled <u>Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House</u> agrees;

> To avoid being seen as rogue operators, club owners will become heavier-handed with patrons. The atmosphere in clubs will become more oppressive, which is not ideal for having a good time... This will lend weight to the underground scene, as party organisers will seek to create freer, more liberalised environments. It will harden their resolve and bolster political consciousness in club culture (in Chipchase and Buckle, 1997, n.p.)

Dance culture, after coming out of the dark in the late 1980s, after being forced into regulated and legal premises by the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990, will once more 'disappear' into a twilight world, and the dance floor will continue to be filled by a politics of dissent.

Disappearance

The above section has showed how the intensification of the 'war on drugs' by policing authorities has led to the situation whereby dance culture participants characterise their drug consumption in explicitly political terms. The section finished with the suggestion that to avoid criminalisation some dance cultures could attempt to 'disappear' from the gaze of policing authorities in order to avoid a direct conflict with the state. Some dance cultures already choose to hide away completely from the gaze of official regulations and authorities, and are therefore resistant in the sense that they are invisible to the regulatory gazes of legal and moral authorities. This method has been successful in the face of new police tactics in the policing of clubs. Whereas in the late 1980s, when dance culture was smaller than the contemporary scene, police opposition to drug use in a club would take the form of an all-out raid and the searching of all participants, nowadays the use of undercover police surveillance operations to target

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those clubs at which drugs are consumed means that club owners and dance culture participants are not necessarily aware that they are being observed by the police. There is also a great deal of behind-the-scenes surveillance, with, for example, the police examining club promotional material for likely leads, or in the words of Inspector Piddington of the Club Squad, looking for clubs that are "getting into doing things that we don't consider right" (in Headon, 1995b, p.40). It is interesting that Piddington should speak in terms of morality rather than criminality.

Having made this point there are still high profile campaigns against specific clubs with, for example, the Gardening Club in London's Covent Garden being raided three times in one week. In 1995 Shelly Boswell, manager of the Gardening Club, succinctly describes the process whereby a dance micro-culture disappears from view: "if they want to control drugs and be seen to be clamping down, they should support the people who are legal. They're just driving it all underground" (in Headon, 1995b, p.40).

Another example of the continuation of high profile police raids is the 86 arrests that were made at a rave held in 1995 in three adjacent venues in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. The police made use of the fact that participants had to walk along a public highway to travel between the venues, and searched and arrested people throughout the night. The whole operation involved 150 police officers drafted in from around the country (see The Guardian, 27 November 1995, p.6, and The Times, 27 November 1995, p.5). More recently one person that I interviewed whilst researching this thesis gave an eye-witness account of a police raid on The Garage Club in Liverpool in 1997. The club was in fact being raided by police and officials from the electricity supply company Manweb on suspicion of meter tampering. Manweb's suspicions proved correct, and Manweb representatives immediately declared that the club's electricity supply was dangerous. The police made the most of this opportunity, and, as the club was emptying, police officers searched club-goers. Those found in possession of drugs were immediately arrested, whilst, according to my eye-witness, those *not* found in possession of drugs were arrested for being drunk and disorderly. Positioned between

the proverbial frying pan and the fire, it is not surprising that many dance culture participants, particularly those involved in organising events, attempt to maintain a position as far away from the gaze of the police as is humanly possible.

Two examples of dance cultures that have successfully 'disappeared' spring to mind. The first is the Nottingham collective 'DiY' who organise illegal outdoor parties throughout the Midlands, the North of England and Wales. I have spoken to people who have attended these events, where attendance was free for those willing to take the trouble to search out the location (one interviewee told of a particularly enjoyable free party in the Delamere Forest in Cheshire). The DiY collective, and those who attend their parties, are an excellent example of, in Sarah Thornton's terms, a "transitory and disorderly" (Thornton, 1994, p.185) dance micro-culture. This is not to suggest that DiY are always successful in evading the gaze of the police, a party organised for New Year's Eve 1997 was prevented from occurring by a last minute-police raid.

A second example of a micro-culture that has avoided the gaze of the authorities is the British-Asian bhangra house micro-culture, which is all but invisible to outsiders. Avoiding the gaze of authorities, and slipping into the "Ecstasy of disappearance" (*cf.* Melechi, 1993) is a politically resistive act because it is attempting to subvert the due process of law, it is attempting to outwit policing authorities, and attempting to 'bypass' parliamentary legislation.

These are but two examples of dance cultures that have at least partially evaded the gaze of policing authorities, and I would venture to suggest that there are a significant number of other dance cultures that have also managed to avoid my 'academic' gaze.

A Refusal of Language

So far in this chapter I have concentrated on the way in which dance culture's relationships with policing authorities have led dance culture to take an explicitly

political stance. This has been to ensure that I have a strong case against common-sense discourse. However I have also suggested that there are elements of contemporary dance culture that are *inherently* political. These have included the anarcho-libertarianism of the Exodus collective, the 'quality first' ethos of Cream, and the utopian dreams of many Ecstasy consumers. I now wish to continue this line of enquiry by looking at an element of dance culture that could be considered to be inherently politically radical, and that is dance culture's 'refusal of language'[11].

This aspect of dance culture's political resistance is a consequence of contemporary dance music's lack of lyrics. Dance music's endless cycles of repetition and difference affirm the importance of non-linguistic communication, highlighting what Robert Beeston refers to as the "dissolution of the Word" (Beeston, 1996). A link can be made between this analysis, which places a political significance in non-linguistic communication, and my applications of theoretical positions offered by Mikhail Bakhtin and Theodor Adorno in chapter 4, where I will suggest that dance music subverts dominant values by refusing to use the power-laden linguistic structures of capitalist society, by refusing to submit to enlightenment reason.

If "music is a language which reason does not understand" (Bloch, 1964, p.195), and "defiance of society includes defiance of its language" (Adorno, 1967, p.225), then a

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[11] Hillegonda Rietveld has been at the forefront of suggestions that dancing to house and techno music can lead to a liberation from language. Describing the dancing that occurred in The Haçienda in the late 1980s, Rietveld suggests that

> language, that Apollonian creator of the symbolic order, was unable to catch the event; participants of any rave event do not seem to be able to describe their experiences as anything else than, "it was wild", "absolutely unbelievable, there wasn't anything like it", "great", "mental" or "this is not dancing, this is a religion" (Rietveld, 1993, p.65).

Elsewhere, Rietveld continues the theme; "the untying of the subject occurs in a state of complete jouissance, in a loss of its construction in language" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.148).

spokesman for Spiral Tribe (an illegal rave collective) would appear to agree. On being charged with "causing a public nuisance" after the illegal Castlemorton rave of 1992, this anonymous spokesman stated that "we prefer to call it causing a public new sense" (in Low and Shaw, 1993, p.69).

Whilst the politically resistive elements of rock music were expressed through overtly political lyrics, this does not mean that contemporary popular music should follow suit. George McKay agrees; "does the lack of lyrics inherently constitute a lack of any discursive possibility or social involvement? No: instrumental be-bop or free jazz never prevented African-American jazz musicians from contributing to the civil rights movement, for instance" (McKay, 1996, p.110).

The lack of lyrics within dance music also ties in with the politically resistant nature of the Ecstasy experience, and Ecstasy users' inability to translate their (communal) experiences into an English language that emphasises the bourgeois subject. The name 'Ecstasy' itself is connected to this element of dance culture, with the Collins English Dictionary citing a psychological definition of the word; "[an] overpowering emotion characterised by loss of self-control and sometimes a temporary loss of consciousness" (Hanks, 1986, p.485).

Applications of the work of Pierre Bourdieu

An interesting parallel can be drawn between the role of contemporary dance culture within the systemic functions of British society and Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of celibacy in the Pyrenées in <u>Les Héritiers</u> (Bourdieu, 1979). The aim of this section is therefore to draw comparisons between the culture that Bourdieu describes and contemporary dance culture. In doing so I wish to show how the politicisation of dance culture is derived from contradictions in the structural location of young people in the late 1990s. In short I wish to show that the politicisation of contemporary dance culture is not only *experientially* determined (determined through the everyday experiences of

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dance culture participants), but is also *structurally* determined. In doing so I will show how the politicisation of contemporary dance culture is a logical reaction to the socio-economic conditions that young people find themselves in.

Bourdieu shows us how celibacy is the product of the structures that govern marriage in the Béarns, whereby a person's marriage partner is decided by their parents according to customary rules. The marriage of a person can be categorised as either ascending or descending, with the system likely to favour mixed marriages between older and younger children, rather than marriages between two elder inheritors or two younger non-inheritors. This societal structure necessarily excludes the youngest children of large families from taking full part in society. Within this traditional structure the celibate's life is "circumscribed but meaningful. It...[is] meaningful because it...[is] a fulfilment of an acknowledged logic of social relations" (Robbins, 1991, p.33). However the urbanisation and the cross-cultural moves of post-war France meant that the celibate was in a situation whereby his or her traditional function was no longer needed, and they were ill equipped to negotiate the new sexual terrain.

A similar analysis can be made with regard to the position of the young individual in the 1990s, locked into an ideology of youth that was dominant in the late 1950s but is now no longer so. The "high wage, mass-production, domestic-consumer-orientated modern economy" (Hall *et al*, 1978, p.229) of the 1950's produced full employment, rising standards of living, and a mass consumer market. For working-class youth, without dependants or other major financial responsibilities, the rise in actual income was translated as a roughly equal rise in disposable income[12]. As part of this process the ideology of consumption was necessary for the reproduction of the status-quo, young people were required to be hedonistic in order to keep spending, and therefore

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[12] Stanley Cohen traces the roots of teenage culture back to the late 1940s, stating that between 1945 and 1950 "there was a large unmarried generation (between 15 and 21) whose average real wage increased at twice the rate of the adults'" (Cohen, 1980, p.179).

manufacturing output, high. The consensus of 1950s British society was almost like the 'closed system' of the traditional rural French peasant as described by Bourdieu. However, the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s meant that the old discourse of youth was no longer needed by the British economy. What was needed was thrift, and long-term structural unemployment. The "charmed cycle" was broken, like the rural French life described by Bourdieu "the edifice of mutually supporting and mutually validating functions had to crumble" (Robbins, 1991, p.51). The young person who grows up in the 1990s accepting the discourse of their parents' generation, a discourse that can be described as 'youth as consumer' (examined in further detail in chapter 2), is as ill-equipped to deal with his or her economic and social circumstance as the celibate peasant is in the Béarns. This inability to cope with a shift in economic structure means that young people transfer their energies towards dance culture rather than their 'official' careers. This has been noticed by commentators on dance culture that broadly support the scene. Daniel Newman, writing in DJ magazine, a well-respected publication within dance culture, suggests that

> the swell of interest in club-going, and particularly the drool-inducing treats it increasingly relies upon, may well be symptomatic of a growing number of disenfranchised, and effectively obsolete, young people left with little more than their ritual six hours of dance-floor derangement (Newman, 1995, p.40).

A comparison can be made between this analysis of contemporary dance culture, and Bourdieu's analysis of life in the Pyrenées. Providing the young person is aware that they are 'useless', they, paradoxically, inhabit a useful social role. This should therefore lead us to acknowledge that youth is a discursive rather than an empirical social category. There are those who choose not to be young at all, entering the world of 'mainstream' leisure activities, whilst others choose to 'drop out', refusing full-time employment if offered and immersing themselves in the world of youth culture. Such a move is accepted by 'mainstream' society, in that the young unemployed show the rest

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of society how lucky they are. And for every young person voluntarily refusing full-time employment, there is a vacancy for a young person willing to 'buckle down' in a job with low wages and minimal opportunities. It is only when young unemployed people are seen to be enjoying themselves despite their low economic status that their role in society becomes dysfunctional, in that they are not performing the function of 'the other', they are not frightening others into accepting their plight. Contemporary dance culture is full of discursively young, economically poor, people who are perceived by common-sense discourse to be dysfunctional purely because they are unemployed and enjoying themselves.

The whole notion of 'youth' has changed for British society. No longer is 'youth' that glorious period between childhood and adulthood, where the young person has money to spend on consumer durables earned from their well-paid job, a process that, in itself, provides work for those who produce consumer durables. Whilst the Thatcherite project might not have been entirely successful in replacing the values of the post-war social-democratic consensus with those of the New Right, the policy of Keynesian reflation leading to full-employment and rising incomes is but a distant memory. What is needed now, according to both of the main political parties, is thrift, not conspicuous consumption. Again, young people find themselves trapped between discourses. They see the youth of their parents as a golden age, an age of fashion, music, full employment, extended educational opportunities, an age where young people were perceived to have a say, and were perceived to have it all. For young people today, it was their parents' generation who fought off those stuffy middle-class notions of thrift and sobriety in the first place, discourses that had no place in the post-war age of "you've never had it so good", rising incomes and increased prosperity. The arrival of Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Conservative party in 1975 saw the start of a long 20-year reversal of these discourses. The return of Victorian values, or in John Major's

terms "Back to Basics"[13], has meant that young people are once again attacked. Toby Young noticed this process occurring in the years before the arrival of contemporary dance culture, but suggested that young people necessarily accepted their plight;

> the term 'youth culture' is at best of historical value only, since the customs and mores associated with it have been abandoned by your actual young person... The point is that today's teenage is no longer promiscuous, no longer takes drugs, and rarely goes to pop concerts. He leaves all that to the over-25's (Young, 1985, p.246).

Whilst Young was correct in suggesting that contemporary discourses on youth are the polar opposite of those of previous generations, he is wrong to suggest that this state of affairs is readily accepted by young people. Young was writing before the acid house explosion of 1988 and the subsequent national moral panics provoked by dance culture. Dance culture is a living testament to the fact that many young people have taken the received viewpoints of their parents' generation at face value. In the age of AIDS, promiscuity may no longer be on the agenda, but playful sexuality, taking drugs and going to pop concerts (and raves and clubs) most certainly is.

Young people today live in an age of student loans, YTS schemes, and the Job Seekers Allowance; an age where there are seemingly few prospects for self-betterment without wholesale acceptance of common-sense discourse, wholesale acceptance of low pay, jobs with no future, no career structure and no dignity. In rejecting this lifestyle, in living for today and forgetting about tomorrow, in taking drugs and ignoring the

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[13] The arrival of this phrase in the early 1990s caused much merriment within contemporary dance culture, due to the influence of the Leeds club Back to Basics, a centre for Northern hedonism, named several years before Major's party conference speech. Major's speech returned to haunt him in later years as tabloid newspapers exposed members of his party and government who were conducting adulterous affairs of one sort or another, and maintaining corrupt business practices.

ubiquitous and patronising warnings of the media, state and commerce, young people live the lives of outlaws. Like Bourdieu's celibates they are locked out of 'mainstream' society and therefore attempt to create and live a culture of their own. Despite the commercialism contained within the dance scene, despite all its flaws, young people hang on to it as *their* culture, a culture that no one else likes or understands, but a culture that is resolutely theirs nonetheless. Stanley Cohen, in speaking out against what he perceives to be the increasingly abstract nature of much contemporary theorising, has suggested that

> I sometimes have a sense of working-class kids suffering an awful triple fate. First, their actual current prospects are grim enough; then their predicament is used, shaped and turned to financial profit by the same interests which created it; and then - the final irony - they find themselves patronized in the latest vocabulary imported from the Left Bank (S. Cohen, 1980, p.xxviii).

As will be suggested in the following chapter, academia does not, as suggested by Cohen, 'patronise' dance culture through the use of high theory, it simply ignores it. Even the Labour Party, previous champions of the under-privileged, attack dance culture. In the 1990s Labour Party policy on dance culture has been indistinguishable from Conservative policy, right the way down to official Labour Party support for the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, and the Public Entertainment Licenses (Drugs Misuse) Act of 1997.

Having made this point, what is important is that dance culture participants do not *perceive themselves* as dysfunctional; "individuals who...[are] suffering from a kind of culture shock should not internalize an interpretation of their malaise which might suggest that they... [are] essentially - in themselves as individuals - inadequate" (Robbins, 1991, p.51, see also Bourdieu, 1962 and Bourdieu 1979).

Bourdieu's analysis in the final section of 'Célibat et Condition Paysanne' is particularly useful in our analysis in that it shows how the celibate cannot compete with his or her urban contemporaries in dancing. In particular Bourdieu points out structural affinities between physical behaviour in dance, attitudes and perceptions. In particular Bourdieu shows us how physical actions combine with perceptions and attitudes within dance, and lead to the symbolic fulfilment of desires that have not been fulfilled by a person in their relationship with society as a whole. This is precisely the process that occurs in contemporary dance culture. In particular Bourdieu shows us how this process occurs not through determinism but through *agency*, it is the individuals who, once they have internalised the logic of their social position, are (successfully) reconciling their low status in society through dance. This concept of internalisation is particularly useful, as, according to Bourdieu, "the process of internalization is not to be thought of as a mental process alone but rather as one of incorporation whereby the mind/body dualism is as inappropriate as the subjective/objective dichotomy" (Robbins, 1991, pp.35-6, see also Bourdieu, 1962). This directly relates to my critique of common-sense discourse on dance culture. A theory of agency allows us to acknowledge that the politics of dance culture is not purely reactive, not purely defined by a relational opposition, but defined by young people attempting to work through structural contradictions.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show how dance culture is political. In doing so I hope to have laid to rest the common-sense notion of dance culture as an apolitical culture defined by little more than drug-fuelled hedonism. I have done this through an examination of dance culture's reactions to state interference, and through other elements of dance culture not defined purely through oppositionality, but through other discursive determinants (such as the 'radical consumerism' of Cream and 'the refusal of language'). This then led me to examine the structural impasse that youth culture

finds itself in, stuck between an outdated 'youth as consumer' discourse (see chapter 2) and a new neo-Thatcherite discourse of thrift.

This chapter has therefore introduced the twin notions of discourse and deviancy. To understand these notions further a return to deviancy and 'labelling' theory is called for. This will enable us to provide a further critique of common-sense notions concerning contemporary dance culture. Contemporary cultural studies has developed a broadly Marxist approach to youth culture that has sidelined other theoretical developments such as deviancy theory, despite the rich source of theoretical material contained within it. The conclusion of this chapter is therefore intended to address the 'secondary aim' outlined in the introduction of this thesis, namely to take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of a social phenomenon, showing how contemporary cultural studies' rigid adherence to a specific Marxist orthodoxy (as outlined in the next chapter) has been misguided, and neglects useful analytical tools outside what might be termed 'the culturalist canon'. This will then lead us into chapter 2 where I will complete a more detailed examination of contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth culture.

Common-sense discourse claims that contemporary dance culture is purely hedonistic, and demonises it for its drug use. A return to deviancy theory acknowledges that if common-sense discourse labels a societal sub-group as 'deviant' then that sub-group is likely to form a culture based around the difference between their analysis of what they do and the analysis of the rest of society. This allows us to avoid an essentialism that suggests that certain acts are inherently deviant, and allows us to move towards a position where acts are only deviant because 'labelling' institutions such as print media and parliament define them as such. This is certainly the case with dance culture. Many of the participants in dance culture that I spoke to in preparation for the writing of this thesis expressed a regret that society disapproved of their activities and misunderstood their culture, but, as they were being attacked from 'outside', they expressed a

solidarity with what they perceived as dance culture's resistance to the values implicit within common-sense discourse.

Throughout this thesis I will attempt to address the thorny issue of 'opposition' and 'resistance'. In this chapter I have shown that dance culture is political in the sense that it has been politicised through its opposition to state interference and state repression. Here I am not suggesting that dance culture is entirely separate from the rest of society. Michel Foucault suggests that "resistance is never in a position of exteriority with regard to power" (Foucault, 1979, p.123). Although dance culture sees itself as 'oppositional' to the rest of society, through defining itself as 'oppositional', it is as much a part of the rest of society as it is independent from it. Where I use the term opposition, Beverly Best uses resistance, suggesting

> resistance, to be anything other than meaningless, must be founded on normative criteria, even if those criteria are only temporary, situational or strategic. Any type of engaged social criticism or political practice is conceivable *only* in terms of normative criteria according to which one discerns whether or not a relation is characterized by domination, exploitation, subjugation, etc. (Best, 1997, p.25).

Best continues by citing Nancy Fraser's assertion that "by abandoning the notion of normative justification, Foucault can neither distinguish which instances of power involve domination and which do not, nor explain why, in a given circumstance, it may be preferable to resist domination than submit to it" (Best, 1997, p.25, see also Fraser, 1989). It is hoped that this chapter steers a path between an analysis that defines dance culture through what might be termed its 'Foucaultian resistance' and an analysis that states that certain elements of dance culture, such as the 'radical consumerism' of Cream and dance culture's 'refusal of language', are inherently radical and progressive.

A return to deviancy theory also enables us to understand dance culture's usage of the terms 'mainstream' and 'underground'. In the audience research completed in chapter 6, and in discussions with participants in contemporary dance culture, these are the two terms most used to characterise the relationship between contemporary dance culture and the rest of society. The world of 'the mainstream' is, according to dance culture, the world of consumerism, individualism, and repression. In opposition to this is the world of 'the underground', a world of communality and anti-consumerism. However, merely stating that the latter is defined in opposition to the former is not to suggest that it is controlled by it[14]. *The categories of 'underground' and 'mainstream' are ways that dance culture participants divide up the world that they see.* The continual usage of these categories is evidence in itself that dance culture participants can see a qualitative divide between their micro-cultures and 'mainstream' society. To deny the power of the materiality of the discursive is surely to deny any kind of Foucaultian analysis.

Having said this, it should not be forgotten that contemporary dance culture is a culture of the relatively powerless. Contemporary dance culture does not have the cultural or political power to create a 'pure' underground. For instance, it cannot prevent

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[14] Adam Brown, a researcher at the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture, agrees. In his interview with Andy Stratford, a promoter of illegal parties in Manchester, Brown suggests that Stafford's organisation Funhouse Promotions is interesting because

> it is both a product of, and a challenge to, existing hierarchies. As Stratford has argued, restrictions and controls from government and industry have forced house music's producers and consumers to establish their own networks of production, distribution and consumption. In a sense the creation of a 'new underground' at the turn of the decade challenged both the record industry hierarchy (the underground is an alternative network) and the state (through rave's illegality). It is these challenges which prompted sections of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (Brown, 1997, p.97).

Brown's last sentence is particularly interesting in its suggestion that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act was economically rather than morally motivated.

multinational record companies from purchasing the rights to cherished pieces of dance music and turning them into packaged products for a consumer society. In Marxist terms, dance culture does not have complete control over the means of production, distribution and exchange. It fights for control, but rarely obtains it. So, whilst the categories of 'underground' and 'mainstream' appear to be polar opposites, most dance cultural texts and practices fall somewhere on a scale between these two extremes.

Whilst common-sense discourse claims that contemporary dance culture is as consumerist and individualist as the rest of society, and is entirely apolitical, this is not the case. There is certainly an element of commercialism and consumerism within contemporary dance culture, but this is not a defining factor. Earlier in this chapter I introduced the notion of 'radical consumerism' through the Liverpool nightclub Cream. A further example of the way in which consumerism within dance culture is qualitatively different from 'mainstream' consumerism might be a record played at a free party. This record may well have been purchased in a record shop that belonged to a national chain of shops, and it may well have been released by a multinational record company. However to play it at an (illegal) free party is to alter its economic status; it simultaneously emphasises its use value, whilst also denigrating its value as a commodity. Legal dance clubs pay fees and obtain specific licenses that enable them to legally play officially published records. The historical justification for such regulations was to enable artists to make a financial gain from the playing of their records in a public context. But the sale of recording rights by artists to record companies and publishers means that record and publishing companies have successfully 'subverted' this system and made it into yet another source of profit[15]. As illegal raves and parties do not pay publishing rights they are therefore guilty of 'theft' of music. However this state of affairs is rarely if ever criticised by dance music

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[15] Convoluted patterns of rights ownership have reached such ludicrous levels that, currently, whenever a Lennon and McCartney song is played in public, Michael Jackson, the 'owner' of the vast majority of The Beatles' songs, is paid a 'performance' fee.

producers eager for financial recompense, as it is more often than not considered an honour for a producer to have his records aired at illegal raves or events. On the other hand the accumulated money lost by record and publishing companies at unlicensed events does constitute a financial blow.

We can also make a link here between the practices of dance culture participants (the creation of, and participation in, free parties), and the criteria that dance culture participants use to evaluate music. In making this link we see a shift in our analysis of common-sense discourse away from a critique of the suggestion that dance culture is apolitical, towards a critique of the suggestion that dance culture is of no aesthetic worth. This analysis is extended and completed in chapter 4 where we look at the structure of contemporary dance music and see that the relationships between musical form, musical content, and the lives of dance culture participants are more complicated than common-sense discourse suggests. In the meantime it is worth noting that the categories of 'mainstream' and 'underground' are not only related to cultural practices but also to cultural texts. Dance culture participants make value judgments and praise those musical texts that are deemed to be 'underground', whilst criticising those texts that are deemed to be excessively commercial. However the criteria used is not merely whether a musical text has commercial success but whether that track was produced with commercial success in mind. This validates my suggestion above that there is no simple binary opposition between 'commercial' and 'underground'. If a track is commercially successful this need not reflect badly on the artist, providing that commercial success was not a primary aim for producing the track. However, if that artist is perceived to be craving commercial success he or she invariably comes under attack. An example of a record in the former category is <u>Children</u> by Robert Miles[16], which was popular on the most credible of 'underground' British dance floors in late 1995, and 'crossed-over' into the 'mainstream' charts at the start of 1996. Robert Miles

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[16] Robert Miles's <u>Children</u> is discussed in more detail in chapter 4, and a version of the track is contained on the compact disc bound within the cover of this thesis.

was trusted to have made the track for aesthetic and artistic, rather than commercial, reasons[17].

A useful comparison is between the analysis provided by Howard Becker in his 1963 study of dance musicians (a classic of modern ethnography), and the relationship between the concepts of 'mainstream' and 'underground' in the production of contemporary dance music. A comparison with Becker also addresses the 'secondary aim' of this thesis of 're-introducing' and re-appraising neglected theorists. Having said this, the situation has changed from Becker's day where

> the most distressing problem in the career of the average musician... is the necessity of choosing between conventional success and his artistic standards. In order to achieve success he finds it necessary to 'go commercial', that is, to play in accord with the wishes of non-musicians for whom he works; in doing so he sacrifices the respect of other musicians and thus, in most cases, his self-respect (Becker, 1973, p.83).

The essential difference between the world of Becker's jazz musicians and contemporary dance music production is the relationship between the musician and the audience. Within Becker's jazz culture it is other musicians who attack a "jazzman" for "going commercial", and leads the musician to "an intense contempt for and dislike of the square audience whose fault it is that musicians must 'go commercial' in order to succeed" (Becker, 1973, p.92). If a musician in contemporary dance culture held the

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[17] Theodor Adorno recognised this distinction as well, suggesting that the essential dichotomy within musical production was between market-oriented music and music made for its own sake (Adorno, 1932, p.106). Martin Jay, in his history of the Frankfurt School, continues the theme; "if at the present time the latter tended to be incomprehensible to most listeners, this did not mean that it was objectively reactionary. Music, like theory, must go beyond the prevailing consciousness of the masses" (Jay, 1973, p.182). Much dance music is indeed incomprehensible to those outside contemporary dance culture, its meanings lost on the majority of the public, for it is simply not aimed at 'mainstream' tastes.

dance floor in such contempt he would be attacked by fellow musicians and the audience alike. In contemporary dance culture outright commercialism is attacked by the consumers themselves; the audience, in the form of the dance floor, is perceived to be the ultimate test of quality. It is dance culture participants who complain of commercialism, and it is dance culture participants who insist upon musical experimentation on the dance floor. Producers, themselves active participants in consuming dance cultural texts, are only too willing to oblige. This is further evidence that the common-sense discourse of dance culture is erroneous in its suggestion that it is purely consumerist and hedonistic.

It is hoped that this brief comparison highlights the suggestion that contemporary dance culture contains elements that are inherently radical, and in doing so, bolsters my suggestion that dance culture is inherently political.

At this point it is worth noting that there is also a qualitative divide between contemporary dance culture, whose origins lie in the dance floors of Ibiza in the mid 1980s and the warehouses of Northern England and London in 1987 and 1988, and those dance floors whose lineage can be traced back to the British discotheques of the 1970s and 1980s. Again, dance culture participants refer to the former as 'underground', and the latter as 'mainstream'. Within the former there is a 'radical consumerism' (a consumerism not purely based upon the search for profit), within the latter there is naked profiteering untainted by any search for aesthetic beauty or political radicalism.

One need only look at the type of language employed by Mintel Marketing Intelligence in their report entitled <u>Nightclubs and Discotheques</u> to see how 'underground' dance culture differs from 'mainstream' club life[18]. Mintel highlight how the big chains such

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[18] Perhaps it is the manner in which 'mainstream' clubs desperately attempt to mimic 'underground' style to gain micro-cultural credibility that confuses those who suggest that contemporary dance culture is purely consumerist.

as First Leisure, Rank Leisure, Scottish Inns and Granada Leisure employ various techniques to hide their corporate 'mainstream' nature. For example Mintel state that

> the major national chains do not trade under consistent brand names, but prefer each site to have a different name to maintain a degree of individuality. One consequence of this strategy is that it makes it impractical for them to market their clubs on a nationwide basis, despite the fact that some of them have a nationwide geographical spread. To do so would also highlight the fact that certain clubs are part of a big chain, which is not considered advantageous when targeting image-conscious young consumers who want to feel they are visiting a specific nightclub that caters for their taste in music rather than one which is part of a chain of clubs owned by a major plc corporation (Mintel Marketing Intelligence, 1996, p.5).

Whilst the 'underground' praises those enlightened venues that provide chill-out rooms and free drinking water to prevent dehydration and heatstroke, 'mainstream' commercial forces condemn such actions, with Mintel declaring that a voluntary code forcing clubs to provide chill-out rooms and free drinking water would cause revenue to "stagnate at its present levels" (Mintel Marketing Intelligence, 1996, p.6). Not content with an increase in the number of clubs, an increase in admissions, an increase in admission prices, and an increase in the price of drinks, corporate clubs fear that the provision of facilities that could prevent a death on their premises is bad for business, as club owners "see this eating further into their beverage sales" (Mintel Marketing Intelligence, 1996, p.6). Despite these 'difficulties', 'mainstream' corporate clubs look set to continue their mission to eradicate 'underground' dance culture;

the major chains will continue to extend their geographic coverage during the next five years, bringing them into competition with more independently owned businesses. This will result in a continuation (and possibly a speeding up) of the trend seen in recent years of smaller, independent outlets closing (Mintel Marketing Intelligence, 1996, p.6).

Despite outside commercial forces, dance culture's consumerism is different from 'mainstream' consumerism. Mica Nava suggests that consumption is "far more than just economic activity: it is also about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity" (Nava, 1987, p.209). So, consumed on the dance floor, the latest white-label twelve inch bootleg record[19] becomes part of a culture that emphasises its resistance to 'the mainstream'. This is what I mean by 'radical consumerism'. Whilst this process occurs, there is no denying that a reverse phenomenon occurs whereby 'underground' texts and practices are subsumed within 'the mainstream'. Such a process has been most eloquently described by George Melly in his book Revolt Into Style, and has a long history. For example Judy and Fred Vermorel talk of the outcry surrounding the 'tango' in the 1880s, a 'moral panic' that led to condemnation by Cardinal Basilio Pompeli, speaking for Pope Pius X. However,

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[19] A white-label bootleg is an illegal pressing of a particular dance track. It could be illegal for two reasons. Firstly the copyright for the track might be owned by a record company who are testing the market with their own limited edition white-label record, distributed to club and radio DJs on their mailing list. DJs then fill in a 'reaction sheet' stating whether they or their audiences liked the record. A bootlegger might obtain a copy, and press up 500 or 1,000 copies, selling them through small independent record shops, whilst passing them off as originals distributed by the record company concerned. Secondly, a bootleg might be illegal in that it contains samples that have not been 'cleared' with the copyright owner of that particular sample. Clearance for the use of samples is often prohibitively expensive for small producers, and often the copyright owner refuses to allow a sample to be used if they do not like the track. I use the example of a bootleg white-label twelve inch record to emphasise that there are *degrees* of commercialism at work within dance culture, and that this is recognisable to clubbers; clubbers use such information in their decisions as to whether they collectively categorise a particular club, record, or DJ as 'underground'.

by 1913, the tango was an accepted 'mainstream' cultural activity indulged in, by amongst others, the Prince of Wales (Vermorel and Vermorel, 1989, p.9)[20]. What is new to contemporary dance culture is the speed of these changes. As Chris Stanley suggests "post-punk or Generation X subcultures are... characterized by a speeding up of the time between points of 'authenticity' and 'manufacture', putting into play many of the assumptions of subcultural analysis" (Stanley, 1997, p.45). Beverly Best casts this process in an Adornoesque language, and talks of

the culture industry's ability not only quickly and efficiently to diffuse forms of resistance by incorporating and commodifying the objects, styles or mannerisms of... resistance, but to capture no more than an isolated or fleeting stylistic moment (of music, fashion, etc.), package it, market it, and sell it back to the public as a complete and coherent lifestyle or youth movement (Best, 1997), p.21).

I am not attempting to deny the power of commerce to co-opt dance cultural texts for financial gain; however writers such as Sarah Thornton who criticise the suggestion that dance culture is 'oppositional' are attempting to deny the reverse process whereby dance culture co-opts and radicalises texts produced by multinational record companies. Contemporary dance culture reacts against commercialism within the clubbing experience as a whole, and there is a continual 'cat and mouse' game

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[20] Another newspaper article quoted by the Vermorels further highlights the process of societal condemnation leading to royal approval

it belongs, they said, to the jungle. Too abandoned. Too uninhibited. Frankly, too damned sexy for the British. That was two and a half years ago when the Twist was hurled on to Britain by an enthusiastic Negro with the comfortable sounding name of Chubby Checker. Dancing schools wanted to high-kick it into oblivion. From a High Court Bench, Mr. Justice Winn observed that no 'nice' girl would do the Twist. Today the Queen Twists (quoted in Vermorel and Vermorel, 1989, p.14).

between, on the one hand record companies, breweries, and leisure corporations, and, on the other hand, 'underground' dance culture. In conclusion to this chapter I wish to cite a long quotation that shows that whilst 'mainstream' consumerism is visible within dance culture it is resisted by dance culture participants. The result of this struggle between 'the mainstream' and 'the underground', between leisure corporations and multinationals, and dance culture participants around the country, is a radical culture far removed from the naked hedonism and apoliticism proposed by common-sense discourse.

Moods change as quickly in club-land as they do in the pop world. For the last couple of years it was the superclubs which dominated - huge, sprawling complexes which sought to expand across the whole country. This year, it's just the opposite. Everyone who is anyone is heading down to smaller venues for little-known nights, either at purpose-built places like the Complex in Islington or the true underground scene in a rundown pub just off Old Street.

This is the year that clubbers are going back to basics. Regular Saturday night faces are finding more pleasure in an intimate and comfortable room with friendly people and some interesting tunes rather than the purpose-built warehouses that the early nineties threw up. This new phenomenon is centred in London, although clubs like Salvation On Sunday in Liverpool prove it's a national thing...

"I think these smaller, more exclusive nights are springing up for three reasons," says Richard Benson, editor of The Face. "Some clubbers are certainly reacting to the way that clubs and the high street are moving closer together and becoming increasingly commercialised. I also think it's because music like jungle and trip hop are breaking house music's hegemony. That sort of newer music can't be played in a huge room

with 3,000 people. House music can work a crowd of that size, but other forms need smaller venues. I also think people are getting a bit pissed off with the excessive dressing up competition that clubbing has become. In the more underground clubs, people dress down and it's only the odd logo on a T-shirt that counts as a fashion statement" (Armstrong, 1996, p.10).

Chapter 2: The Failure of Contemporary Cultural Studies

The primary aim of the first chapter of this thesis was to provide a critique of common-sense and academic discourses on the nature of dance culture, in particular the suggestion of both discourses that dance culture is a purely apolitical, consumerist culture. The aim of this chapter is to examine *why* academic discourse on youth culture views dance culture as apolitical.

One of the most significant publications within academia on dance culture is Sarah Thornton's <u>Club Cultures</u> (Thornton, 1995). In her book Thornton rejects any notion of a political dance culture, stating that any suggestion to the contrary shows not "the politicization of youth" but "the aestheticization of politics" (Thornton, 1995, p.167). Thornton goes on to suggest that

> demonstrations organized to oppose these bills [the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill] hardly constituted defining moments of club and rave culture. They were poorly attended peripheral activities which pale in comparison with the dance activities of any Saturday night (Thornton, 1995, p.168).

My argument, partly put forward in the previous chapter, and expanded upon in following chapters, is not that *specific* campaigns against government legislation were central to contemporary dance culture, but that *general day-to-day* responses to government legislation have led to a politicisation of dance culture.

In this chapter I intend to make a connection between the first two aims of this thesis. Both common-sense discourse on *dance culture*, and contemporary cultural studies' discourse on *youth culture*, imply that dance culture's claims of radicalism are false, and that contemporary dance culture is merely the last in a long line of purely consumerist youth cultures. My basic hypothesis, as outlined in this chapter, is that

contemporary cultural studies has always viewed youth culture as "not political enough", and the absence of dance culture from contemporary cultural studies is merely a logical continuation of this discourse. Once this case has been made, it opens up the space for the new theoretical positions proposed in later chapters.

Why Does Contemporary Cultural Studies Now Ignore Youth Culture?

Contemporary cultural studies virtually ignores contemporary dance culture and contemporary dance music. For evidence that this is the case one need only glance at cultural studies' most comprehensive publication concerning youth culture. Containing 55 essays, Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton's The Subcultures Reader contains only one essay that deals explicitly with contemporary dance culture (see Gelder and Thornton, 1997). This is at a time when dance culture and dance music appear to have an almost hegemonic grip upon contemporary British youth, with dance culture's opposition to state regulation and control, and the massive commercial success of dance music, the most significant developments since the rise of youth culture in the 1950s.

One need only look at the statistical evidence to see that this is the case. Social Trends suggest that dance club attendance over a three month period in 1995 was approximately 14 million. In 1996 Mintel Marketing Intelligence stated that 18% of all adults attended a nightclub at least once every three months, with 4% of all adults visiting a nightclub one or more times a week (see Mintel Leisure Intelligence, 1996)[1]. That makes an average weekend's attendance (the majority of nightclubs are shut

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[1] By no means are all the visitors in Mintel's survey attending the sort of dance club that this thesis focuses upon, with Mintel's figures encompassing private clubs and 'mainstream' discotheques. However, Jeff Edwards suggests that approximately two million Ecstasy tablets are consumed every weekend in Britain (Edwards, 1997, p.5). Whilst not all participants in contemporary dance culture take Ecstasy (although a Release survey suggests that 85% of clubbers do, see Brooks, 1997, p.34), the vast majority of Ecstasy users attend dance clubs, so Edwards' statistic also suggests a weekly attendance at contemporary dance clubs of at least one million.

during the week) of over one million, with the Henley Centre, market analysts, estimating that the dance scene is worth £1.8 billion a year (cited in Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.264), and therefore of a similar size to the newspaper industry. If one compares the amount of time spent by contemporary cultural studies analysing the production, distribution and consumption of newspapers with that spent analysing dance music, then there is practically a void at the heart of the discipline.

Whichever way you look at these statistics, and no matter how flawed the method used to obtain them, we are still left with a massively popular cultural activity that is severely under-represented in academia. To understand why this is the case we need to examine how and why contemporary cultural studies' interest in youth culture collapsed in the late 1970s.

The CCCS

As we have seen in the Literature Review in Appendix 1, academic analyses of youth culture date back to the start of the century, and are primarily concerned with analysing deviant and 'problematic' youth. These are also the founding principles for the studies of youth culture dealt with in this section, with theorists implicitly categorising young people as 'folk rebels', leading to a situation where "since the 1950s youth research in Britain has been almost exclusively 'social problem' orientated" (P. Cohen, 1985, p.18).

Whilst governmental and common-sense discourses condemned youth culture in the 1960s and 1970s, sociological analyses of youth began to examine the relationship between youth culture and the economic structure of society. In theorising the actions of mods and rockers, Stanley Cohen reiterated the dominant focus of most youth culture and subcultural studies, defining "culture" as "the traditions, maps of meanings and ideologies which are patterned responses to structural conditions" (S. Cohen, 1980, p.v).

In examining contemporary cultural studies' categorisation of "subculture" we can also look to Phil Cohen, whose definition of subcultural function is "to express and resolve, albeit magically the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture" (P. Cohen, 1972, p.23). Phil Cohen's use of the word 'magically' here emphasised what was seen as an inherent contradiction; according to the theorists youth culture did not have the economic or structural power to resolve the problems that young people experienced.

Stanley Cohen, a criminologist not normally associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham where the study of youth culture became a dominant focus of analysis in the 1970s (see Literature Review), cites with approval contemporary cultural studies' belief that youth cultural resistance was merely "symbolic" and "magical". Firstly, subcultural response is symbolic "when the target for attack is inappropriate, irrational or simply wrong in the sense that it is not logically or actually connected with the source of the problem". Secondly, "the solution is 'always and only' magical in that it does not confront the real material bases of subordination and hence lacks the organization and consequences of a genuinely political response" (S. Cohen, 1980, p.xi). Whilst Stanley Cohen does offer some revisions of this approach[2], he continues to agree with its central thesis (and

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[2] For example, in the second edition of Folk Devils and Moral Panics (Cohen, 1980), Cohen implicitly suggests a flexible combination of the 'youth as folk devil' and 'youth as consumer' discourses that I examine later on in this chapter. In his analysis of contemporary cultural studies' fascination with the notion of resistance, he accuses the 'Birmingham School' of missing instances when style was "conservative or supportive: in other words, not reworked or reassembled but taken over intact from dominant commercial culture" (Cohen, 1980, p.xii). Cohen continues, neatly critiquing the sociological element of the discourse of 'youth as folk devil' that he was originally so successful in expounding eight years previously:

> There is a tendency in some of this work to see the historical development of a style as being wholly internal to the group - with commercialization and co-option as something which just happens afterwards. In the understandable zeal to depict the kids

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for this reason I feel justified in categorising his work as belonging to 'contemporary cultural studies', particularly as an essay of Cohen's appeared in the CCCS journal Working Papers in Cultural Studies. See Cohen, 1974).

In summary then, it is fair to say that the early analyses of youth by Phil Cohen and Stanley Cohen viewed youth culture as not political enough. This is all the more ironic when considering the dominant contemporary view of these early-1970s' studies; that they valorised resistance and over-emphasised the political nature of youth. This could not be further from the truth, yet this view is so ubiquitous in contemporary reviews of the field that it is almost unquestioned.

The belief that youth culture was not 'genuinely political' can also be seen clearly in John Clarke and Tony Jefferson's essay 'Working Class Youth Cultures' (Clarke and Jefferson, 1976). Adapting Frank Parkin's categories of "dominant", "negotiated" and "oppositional" (categories also adapted by Stuart Hall for his influential work on "preferred", "negotiated" and "oppositional" readings, and categories which are interrogated in chapter 5 of this thesis), Clarke and Jefferson suggest that youth culture was not truly political for it did not contain "organised political action" (Clarke and Jefferson, 1976, p.147). Stuart Hall, in an earlier paper presented to the British Sociological Association Conference of 1971, agrees;

> deviant groups who regularly, because of their deviation, fall foul of the law, and are harassed by law-enforcing agencies and the courts [need to] develop programmes, organisations and actions directed at ending their stigmatisation or redefining the legal injunctions against them (Hall, 1971, p.3).

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as creative agents rather than manipulated dummies, this often plays down the extent to which changes in youth culture are manufactured changes, dictated by consumer society (Cohen, 1980, p.xii).

According to Hall, whilst the youth culture he examined was political, it was nevertheless not political enough, for it had no "manifest political aim or goal" (Hall, 1971, p.7).

Hall's call for a "militant political deviance" at the level of culture can be viewed as a direct result of the translations of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci that he was reading at the time[3]. Phil Cohen also cites the reading of Althusser as an important determinant in the writing of his influential essay 'Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community' (P. Cohen, 1972, see also P. Cohen, 1997, p.48). In both Gramsci and Althusser's work there is an insistence that reproduction of the status quo takes place at the level of cultural superstructures. Paul Willis acknowledges this in a major benchmark of contemporary cultural studies' work on youth entitled Learning to Labour (Willis, 1977). Focusing precisely upon the sphere of youth culture, Willis asks why are working-class 'kids' not more rebellious, why do working-class boys "let themselves" get working-class jobs (Willis, 1977, p.1), and why is there "an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism" (Willis, 1977, p.3)? The conclusion of Willis's research was that the discourse of 'youth as folk rebel', spawned at least partially by "violence and indiscipline in the class room" (Willis, 1977, p.2), is not 'real' resistance, for the culture of rebellion is a way of preparing "working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power" (Willis, 1977, p.3). Therefore, implicit within the analysis of Willis, is the suggestion that youth culture was not in opposition to the status-quo, was not political in any left-leaning, progressive or radical sense.

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[3] In particular Gramsci's Prison Notebooks (Gramsci, 1971) and Althusser's essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation' (in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, Althusser, 1971).

Whilst Willis's work was completed with the best of intentions, there is an air of melancholic fatalism within it; his analysis is positively Althusserian in its mapping of the totality of the reproduction of the social relations of production. Although Willis does offer some specific suggestions for change, such as an increase in grants to enable students to "re-enter" education, this is a limited proposal. All that Willis can offer other working-class boys is help in enabling them to recognise "the intrinsic boredom and meaninglessness of most un-skilled and semi-skilled work" and the "strict meaningless...of...their worthless qualifications" (Willis, 1977, p.188). I would suggest that working-class young men in such positions are already well aware of the boredom of their jobs, and it is for precisely this reason that they invest so much time in cultural activities away from the work place. Here, for me, is the politics of youth culture, in the creation of cultural forms and youth trends and clothes and style and haircuts. These are political reactions to socio-economic positions. They are not solutions, they are not revolutionary, but they are political.

In the 1970s, during the pioneering days of contemporary cultural studies, academia could offer no hope to youth culture, implying that youth culture was young people's worst enemy, for it distracted them from "genuinely political" action, and reconciled them to a life of toil. This was particularly ironic considering contemporary cultural studies' emphasis on the 'politics of everyday life', on the politics of cultural texts and practices. Contemporary cultural studies had defined the relationship between youth culture and the rest of society as a battle that youth culture could not win. Contemporary cultural studies' categorisation of 'youth as folk rebel' meant that youth culture was seen as a 'problem', yet contemporary cultural studies offered no 'solutions', there was no way out other than through an almost mythical construction of "political action".

However, at precisely the point that contemporary cultural studies had thought that it had developed a class-based metanarrative that 'explained' youth culture, early Thatcherism was promoting a metanarrative of individualism and moral

authoritarianism that would eventually lead to both the rise of contemporary dance culture, and the collapse of contemporary cultural studies' class-based analyses of youth culture.

'Youth as Consumer'

Whilst theorists such as Stanley Cohen and Phil Cohen were analysing the reasons why common-sense discourse perceived youth culture to be a 'problem', other analysts, implicitly drawing upon the work of Mark Abrams, were beginning to examine youth as a marketing category based upon young people's distinctive patterns of consumption. Abrams' research suggested that these spending patterns were in themselves attributable to the "more than normal... sense of alienation [felt by] the 16 million young people born and brought up after the defeat of Hitler" (Abrams, 1964, pp.13-14). However for Abrams and the commercial forces that drove his work, youth's alienation was not a problem, for here was an opportunity to define a sub-social segment according to consumption, rather than, as the subculturalists were beginning to do, according to relations to the means of production.

This process mirrored general social changes. Whereas the immediate post-war period is often characterised as social change fuelled by economic restructuring, the 'post-post war' period[4] is seen as a time when young people were more concerned with devouring the remaining fruits of the peace-time 'democratic settlement' than fighting for a 'new

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[4] This period covers the years between 1955 and 1975. In the last five years of the 1950s Britain saw the rise of the first significant youth cult in the Teddy Boys. It also saw the Suez debacle, race riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill, and the gradual questioning of the terms of the post-war settlement (in particular the continuing differentials between middle-class and working-class incomes). Raymond Williams contrasts this period with "the hard, rationed, sharing world of the war" (Williams, 1976, p.87). I would add that the discursive formations of "never again" and the "new Jerusalem" continued well into the 1950s, with food rationing continuing until 1954 (Marwick, 1990, p.20). At the other end of my periodisation, 1975 sees the complete collapse of the post-war settlement with the Monetarist budget of Dennis Healey, and the election of Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Conservative Party.

Jerusalem'. Whilst the subculturalists were defining youth culture as either middle class (in the case of, for example, the hippies) or working class (in the case of, for example, the mods and rockers), Abrams stated that "the study of society in class terms [has become] less and less illuminating. And its place is taken by differences related to age" (Abrams, 1964, pp.57-58). Whilst contemporary cultural studies was attempting to find out why youth culture was cast in terms of the modern 'folk rebel' even though it was, apparently, politically fatalistic, Abrams and those who followed in his wake were codifying a new discourse, a discourse of 'youth as consumer'[5].

'Youth as Folk Rebel' and 'Youth as Consumer'; Combining Discourses

Although the discourses of 'youth as folk rebel', and 'youth as consumer' could be articulated from different ideological positions, both discourses generally agreed that youth culture was associated particularly with leisure, as opposed to, for example, work or education. Whilst contemporary cultural studies saw youth culture as "working through" contradictions that rose from economic circumstances, they nevertheless saw this "working through" process as taking place within the field of consumption. For Clarke and Jefferson this was the reason for youth culture's political failure, youth culture could not hope to be "oppositional" whilst it operated, according to this analysis, purely within the sphere of leisure (Clarke and Jefferson, 1976, p.148). For Abrams and the 'youth as consumer' model the relationship between the economy and youth culture was more direct, with Abrams' optimism a mirror image of Clarke and Jefferson's pessimism. According to Abrams young people were in the driving seat of a

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[5] To an extent the work of Thorstein Veblen can be seen as a precursor to Abrams' work in its analysis of "the leisure class" with their "conspicuous consumption", and "pecuniary canons of taste". The connection between Abrams and Veblen is the suggestion that a social class could be defined by what it did with its money, rather than where it obtained it. The difference between 'youth as consumer' and the 'leisure class' is that young people are seen within Abrams' discourse as industrious (they had to be to fund their consumerism), whereas the objects of Veblen's work exercise an "industrial exemption" (see Veblen, 1925).

new dynamic form of consumerism, fuelling the boom in domestic and leisure goods, as well as leading the way in the formation of new markets such as rock and roll music.

Whilst contemporary cultural studies defined youth subcultures according to relations to the means of production, they, paradoxically, viewed youth subcultures as, in reality, operating solely in the field of culture. Youth culture was not analysed in terms of either 'real' or even 'symbolic' *production*, but purely in terms of *culture*, with the added suggestion that the latter was itself determined (or at least "overdetermined") by the former (even if only, as the Althusserian maxim suggests, "in the last instance"). This led to a combination of the discourse of the 'youth as folk rebel' and the discourse of 'youth as consumer'[6].

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[6] Even before the development of contemporary cultural studies as a coherent body of work or discipline Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel were addressing the 'problem' of youth culture. The Popular Arts (Hall and Whannel, 1964) neatly combines the discourse of 'youth as folk rebel' with the discourse of 'youth as consumer', creating what might be termed a metadiscourse of 'youth as problem', a problem for both society and sociology:

> The point behind such comparisons [between pop and jazz] ought not to be *simply* to wean teenagers away from the juke-box heroes, but to alert them to the severe limitations and ephemeral quality of music which is so formula-dominated and so directly attuned to the standards set by the commercial market. It is a genuine widening of sensibility and emotional range which we should be working for - an extension of tastes which might lead to an extension of pleasure. The worst thing which we would say of pop music is not that it is vulgar, or morally wicked, but, more simply, that much of it is not very good (Hall and Whannel, 1964, pp.311-12).

Despite the liberal tones of Hall and Whannel, young people were being positioned as, in the immortal phrase later coined by Hall himself, 'cultural dupes', where *not only* did they have to be 'weaned' away from pop music, but they also need to widen their 'limited' tastes.

Hall and Whannel do partly combine 'consumer' and 'folk rebel' discursive formations elsewhere in their 1964 text in less condemnatory tones, describing 'teenage culture' as "a contradictory mixture of the authentic and the manufactured: it is an area of self-expression for the young and a lush grazing pasture for the commercial providers" (Hall and Whannel, 1964, p.276). However the point remains; "youth research [in the 1960s] endorsed the great moral divide between sheep and goats, between the

Contemporary cultural studies' most influential publication on youth culture, Resistance Through Rituals (Hall and Jefferson, 1975), uses the phrase 'parent cultures' to refer to the larger cultural networks of society, of which the youth subculture is seen as a sub-set; defined by Clarke *et al* as "smaller, more localised and differentiated structures" (Clarke *et al*, 1975, p.13). In the contemporary cultural studies' analyses of the 1970s, the parent culture of youth subcultures such as the skinheads was the culture of the urban working class, ideally positioned in opposition to a dominant ruling-class culture, but in practice subservient to it. For contemporary cultural studies this explained why the culture of the urban juvenile was a *sub*culture, rather than a culture in it own right, for it shared "focal concerns" with its parent culture. As I will show later on in this thesis, an understanding of contemporary dance culture demands a critique of these neo-Marxist analyses based as they are on class-based relations to the means of production[7]. This thesis also contests a dominant category of contemporary cultural studies in that I am not suggesting that the culture that I am analysing (contemporary dance culture) is a subset of a "parent culture". One of the focuses of this thesis is the examination of the relationships between

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respectable young citizens who join youth clubs, and the 'rougher elements' who do not" (Cohen, 1985, p.19).

[7] Equally, I reject definitions of youth that rise out of one of the first codified uses of the term subculture, provided by Milton Gordon in 1947. Gordon suggests that subculture refers to

> a sub-division of a national culture, composed of a combination of factorable social situations such as class status, ethnic background, regional and rural or urban residence, and religious affiliation, but *forming in their combination a functioning unity which has an integrated impact on the participating individual* (Gordon, 1997, p.41).

Again, contemporary dance culture cannot be considered to be a subculture in this sense, in that it contains individuals drawn from different classes, ethnic backgrounds, regions and geographic locations (such as urban and suburban).

contemporary dance culture and what the subculturalists refer to as "dominant culture" (whereas contemporary cultural studies was particularly interested in examining the relations between working-class youth culture and their working-class "parent" culture). As we shall see, British dance culture is defined not by its relationship to the means of production, but in the complex relationships between subjectivity, social consciousness and musical form. However, as in the 1970s, the analysis of texts remains a low priority for contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth culture. Whilst contemporary cultural studies has paid more and more attention to the study of cultural practices, the study of texts has been left to other disciplinary fields such as media studies, fashion studies and musicology. The result of this is that "there is a gap in popular culture theory where 'the text' used to be" (Best, 1997, p.18). During the 1980s contemporary cultural studies swung towards 'reception theory', epitomised by the publication of David Morley's The 'Nationwide' Audience (Morley, 1980). As a result, the discipline continued with its tendency to shy away from the analysis of texts themselves. I do not deny that the reception theory of the 1980s is important (in the final two chapters of this thesis I conduct a study into the reception of a specific television text within dance culture), however it should not be privileged over textual analyses. In chapter 4 I will go some way towards an analysis of dance music texts, showing how in their structure they say something profound to young people about their position within British society and culture, and how there is a structural homology between culture, text and socio-economic position.

Youth cultures such as contemporary dance culture cannot be defined solely through reference to 'relations to the means of production' or spending patterns. This is not to suggest that matters relating to production and consumption of material and symbolic goods are irrelevant to the study of youth. There is work to be completed in both areas. It is ironic that, with contemporary cultural studies' Marxist emphasis, there have been no attempts to analyse young people at work. Whilst some youth studies have concentrated on 'learning to labour' few have addressed 'labour' itself. Whilst contemporary cultural studies might be obsessed with relations to the means of

production, and obsessed with class, in the words of Simon Frith "it is how young people enjoy themselves..., that makes them a distinct social group, and so most sociology of youth, is, in fact, a sociology of youth leisure" (Frith, 1984, p.3).

Having shown how contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth culture imploded in the 1970s, we can leave the implicit economic determinism of these studies, whilst also denying the complete autonomy ascribed to young people by the 'youth as consumer' discourse as epitomised by Mark Abrams. We should assert the 'overdetermination' of youth; young people select aspects of their own culture within a range of choices, rather than uncritically accepting a culture forced upon them by the 'mass media' (or anyone else come to that). Here I am deliberately referring to Althusser's notion of "overdetermination" (see Althusser, 1969) and Marx's statement that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1967, p.10). In their analyses of youth culture in the 1970s it seemed as if much of contemporary cultural studies had forgotten the degree of independence that Marx assigned to the sphere of culture, preferring an excessively deterministic and mechanical interpretation of the 'base/superstructure' metaphor that would not look out of place in the fatalistic analyses of the Second International (or indeed the Zhdanovites of the mid-century Soviet Union). Marx's famous statement, and Althusser's reformulation of the base/superstructure metaphor, will continue to appear as *leitmotifs* throughout the rest of this thesis.

As stated in the introduction of this thesis I intend to show how theorists previously sidelined within contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth can be used to examine contemporary dance culture. I also stated that where more 'fashionable' theorists are used, I will attempt to use them critically. There are no more fashionable theorists within contemporary cultural studies that Althusser and Marx. In re-applying Althusser and Marx I intend to show that, in turning the <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u>

approach into a rigid orthodoxy, contemporary cultural studies denied the possibility that there might be *other ways* of applying Althusser and Marx.

Contextualising Contemporary Cultural Studies

As far as 'youth as consumer' is concerned, it must be said that the discourse of consumerism was in itself an effect of changes within post-war society as a whole. With the collapse of the post-war consensus, the discourse 'youth as consumer' necessarily also collapsed. One Marxist political group suggested that the consumerism of the post-war period was related to a situation whereby "large manufacturing factories sucked in armies of mainly semi-skilled labour to work within a strictly regulated division of labour on assembly lines, which pumped out largely standardised products" (CPGB, 1989, p.5). Whilst this is true, there are other determinants to take into account. There are the repercussions of the Butler Education Act of 1944, the expectations aroused by full employment, the role of new welfare and social security benefits, and the effects of governmental policy changes such as the abolition of conscription. There is also the anti-American discourse in British society that youth culture delighted in confronting through its voracious appetite for American rock and roll. Stanley Cohen's work also points out the connection between the rise of youth cultural consumerism and the ideology of affluence where "youth - even when, and perhaps especially when, it was being troublesome - was initially the supreme, the most glamorous and the most newsworthy manifestation of the affluence theme" (S. Cohen, 1980, p.178). This suggestion emphasises the need to destroy the view that young people are *either* consumerist *or* rebellious. As Stanley Cohen suggests, at certain points in the development of youth culture young people were both consumerist *and* rebellious, in that 'consumerist youth' were also 'folk rebels'. The British 'teenager' was born into a society intrigued by its existence, with certain sections of British society reacting strongly against this new social grouping. As Hebdige states "the word 'teenager' establishes a permanent wedge between childhood and adulthood. The wedge means money" (Hebdige, 1988, p.29). Or as Colin MacInnes's seminal

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novel <u>Absolute Beginners</u> eloquently puts it; "today, age is needy and, as its powers decline, so does its income; but full-blooded youth has wealth as well as vigour. In this decade, we witness the second Children's Crusade, armed with strength and booty" (MacInnes, 1961, p.47).

The 'new affluence' of youth created a wedge between, in the terms of contemporary cultural studies, "subculture" and "parent culture". Whilst according to the contemporary culturalists working-class youth subcultures shared 'focal concerns' with their parent culture, the effect of an affluent youth culture was to railroad through these 'focal concerns' and establish a generation gap between young and old. In its attempt to link subcultures with parent culture contemporary cultural studies denied that the generation gap was in any way significant. My critique of contemporary cultural studies sees the return of the generation gap to an academic analysis.

The distribution of cultural power is often based upon the same patterns of ownership and control as those of capital (see Bourdieu, 1980). The change in the post-war economy meant that British youth in the late 1950s had a new economic power, and from that rose cultural and political power. This is not the same as suggesting that an economic base determined the position and content of a youth cultural superstructure, but is similar to the notion of overdetermination, where, "in the last instance", the economic sphere determines cultural superstructure, even if "the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes" (Althusser, 1969, p.113). There are twists in the tale, there are historical specificities that sit uneasily in a rigidly deterministic analysis, historical specificities that Gramsci refers to as "traces", elements embedded within a social formation (see Gramsci, 1971). Attacks upon youth culture came from ideological positions that had sedimented themselves in British culture during the period of the Second World War, and the immediate post-war period. Capitalism required that the traditional ethics of hard work and thrift be replaced by those of leisure and consumption. However, the change in the economic base in the post-war period to mass Fordism was not necessarily to the liking of certain sections of society. What is

crucial to our analysis is that society was not necessarily split along class lines in its relationships with youth culture. The 'respectable' working class were as contemptuous of hedonistic youth culture as any middle-class culture[8]. As Clarke *et al* point out, during the post-war period

> critical rifts began to appear in...[the] superstructural complex. The postwar reorganisation of the technical and productive life of society, and the unsuccessful attempt to stabilise the mode of production at this more 'advanced' level, had an...unsettling and 'uneven' impact on middle-class culture (Clarke *et al*, 1975, p.63).

Whilst accepting this, it should also be stated that these changes had an equally unsettling and uneven impact on working-class culture. Even the most 'delinquent' elements of youth culture were not necessarily in direct opposition to dominant culture, as their hedonistic consumption, their material aspirations, and their admiration for physical strength, could be easily accommodated within mass Fordism. Contemporary cultural studies' divisions between working-class and middle-class youth were confused then, and if applied to contemporary youth culture would look ridiculous today[9].

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[8] An example of such a position is Richard Hoggart's Uses of Literacy where Hoggart attacks youth culture as containing "hedonistic but passive barbarian[s]" (Hoggart, 1958, p.250).

[9] The fact that the generation gap cut through middle-class and working-class attitudes also highlights a further problem with Clarke and Jefferson's usage of Frank Parkin's categories of "dominant", "negotiated" and "oppositional" (a problem that is also found in both Stuart Hall and David Morley's usage of these categories, and discussed in greater depth in chapter 5 of this thesis). It should however be noted at this stage that the first application of Parkin's model within contemporary cultural studies was by Stuart Hall in 1971 in a paper which specifically addresses youth culture entitled 'Deviancy, Politics and the Media' (Hall, 1971). When examining the possibility that youth cultural practices might be 'slotted into' these categories it should be stated that no activity is 'purely' dominant nor 'purely' oppositional; all cultural practices are a negotiation with and within ideological formations. Just because 1960s' skinheads were unreconstructed 'lumpen' working class it does not necessarily follow that their

As we have seen in this chapter, contemporary cultural studies invariably accused youth culture of fatalism, of being "not political enough". Whilst Stanley Cohen and others focused attention on 'youth as folk rebels', where young people took part in a rebellion destined to fail, there was always in the back of the mind of the subculturalist the rabid consumerism, individualism and capitalistic nature of much youth culture. And this leads us to *the* central contradiction of the CCCS approach. Contemporary culturalists suggested that youth subcultures shared 'focal concerns' with their working-class 'parent cultures'. But how could this be the case when youth culture was also functioning as a vital cog in the post-war consumer economy? Youth culture's hedonism and consumerism fitted so well into ruling-class ideology that it could be suggested that it was with *middle-class* 'adult' culture that working-class youth culture shared 'focal concerns'.

Whilst this contradiction became more obvious, the spectre of young people as 'cultural dupes' continued to hang over contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth. Whilst 'youth as folk rebel' was asking how could young people be so stupid as to play out their opposition in such an imaginary and fatalistic manner, 'youth as consumer' was suggesting that working-class young people were so caught in the embrace of an essentially middle-class consumer ideology that their purchasing patterns could be instantly manipulated.

Contemporary cultural studies never took the time to study its contradictions, and once youth's position within society had been analysed and described, contemporary cultural

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value systems, still less their actions, were in opposition to a mythically unified 'dominant ideology'. Within this thesis the resurrection of Abercrombie's 'dominant ideology thesis' (see Abercrombie, 1984, and Abercrombie and Turner, 1978) is resisted.

studies ceased to be interested in youth culture. Contemporary culturalists had devised a Gramscian metanarrative that required no more work. Contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth had an air of fatalism about them; young people were both a problem for society (due to their hedonism, and their disrespect for law and order), and a problem for sociology (due to their consumerism and their acceptance of a 'dominant ideology').

Some contemporary cultural studies' theorists continued to work in the field of youth culture studies, and the late 1970s and early 1980s saw various attempts to 'fill in the gaps' in the contemporary cultural studies metanarrative of youth. In particular some analysts looked towards the relative absence of women in academic studies on youth. Because female youth in the 1960s and 1970s found themselves primarily situated in the parental home and the school, a distinctive female youth culture arose. The absence of this culture from academic studies was striking and was primarily due to two reasons. Firstly, the study of youth subcultures had invariably been concerned with the way "youth attempts to define their culture *against* the parental home" (Thornton, 1997a, p.2)[10]. Because female youth cultures were often *based in* the home and school, as opposed to the 'street corner' male youth cultures, they were, to a large extent, ignored. Secondly, as suggested earlier, Marxist influences had led contemporary cultural studies to view youth cultures in terms of their relations to the means of production. As much of the work completed by young women was unpaid domestic labour, the idea of there being a female youth culture sat uneasily within some contemporary cultural studies' analyses.

Because female youth culture was based in the home, it was perceived to have been at least partially determined by what might be termed 'domestic ideology'. Although he does not acknowledge his contribution to this state of affairs, Phil Cohen suggests that

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[10] My italics.

several decades of work by male social scientists [has] done little or

nothing to challenge the popular view that youth was boys being boys,

usually in the street, while girls went on practising being little wives and

mothers somewhere else, usually indoors, where from this vantage point

they were both out of sight and out of mind (P. Cohen, 1985, p.28).

Whilst the boys were taking part in a 'counter-school culture', in effect "learning to labour" and taking part in a "mystified celebration of manual work" (Willis, 1977, p.185), the suggestion was that girls did little more than spend their allowances and wait for a suitable marriage proposal. The notion that women, and in particular young girls, are excessively susceptible to domestic and consumer ideologies has a long history. That contemporary cultural studies should have unwittingly reinforced this notion is unfortunate to say the least. Contemporary cultural studies had positioned young women as 'cultural dupes' *par excellence*, unable to resist an all-embracing domestic ideology when at home, and unable to experience 'real' social relations (of production) due to harsh parental control and limited employment opportunities. Femininity was also implicitly linked with a particular type of teen consumerism, with young women viewed as firmly in the grip of commercial forces when spending their limited incomes. It was, to a certain degree, acceptable that young men should fritter their wages away on a hedonistic lifestyle of beer and cigarettes, but when young women followed in their footsteps they were viewed as deviant outcasts. The notion that the discursive formations of 'mass culture' and 'consumerism' are inextricably linked to femininity will be further examined in later chapters, when looking at the role of consumption within contemporary dance culture. In the meantime it is worth noting that contemporary dance culture's gender relations are a far cry from the gender relations of 1970s' youth cultures, and work elsewhere in this thesis is designed to both highlight, and praise, this development.

Angela McRobbie made a point of redressing the gender imbalance of contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth, and as a result she is the most notable example of a contemporary culturalist who retained an interest in youth cultural study long after it had ceased to be fashionable within contemporary cultural studies. Because female working-class youth culture had largely been confined to the domestic sphere and the school, and its lack of cultural capital had been derived from its inability to break free from these environments, then it was seen by contemporary cultural studies to be less oppositional to 'dominant culture' than male youth culture (even though male youth cultures were politically fatalistic), since the home, along with the school, was the place where the values of the 'dominant culture' are passed on to the next generation (for example see Oakley, 1972, and Oakley 1977).

However female youth's enforced absence from paid employment did not necessarily entail the absence of power, or an absence of resistance. The male subculturalists' position suggested that when at school female youth were subjected to, and subjects of, a 'dominant ideology', for school furthered the ideology of domesticity and other patriarchal discourses. However, McRobbie pointed out that merely because female youth culture was often based in the school, this did not necessarily mean that female youth culture was merely a subsection of the 'dominant ideology', for female youth rejected ideologies of domesticity and femininity. McRobbie's research into school culture showed us how "the girls rejected the school without violently confronting it. They preferred to sit about the school lavatories and have a smoke rather than play truant" (McRobbie, 1977, p.46). Ironically this echoes Willis's analysis of boys in a Midlands' comprehensive school, with Willis describing the boys' relationship with the school authorities as one of "caged resentment which always stops just short of outright confrontation" (Willis, 1977, pp.12-13). What should also be suggested is that boys spent as much time in school as girls, yet they were perceived as able to reject ideological positions, where young girls were perceived to be 'cultural dupes'.

Again we return to the suggestion that boys rebelled against authority, whereas girls did not. Denied stable full-time employment, working-class girls were seen as unable to exercise their power as workers. And if they were not workers, if they were not viewed as having a direct relation to the means of production, they were merely consumers. The discourse of 'youth as consumer' became more specific, it became the discourse of 'girls as consumers', with young women perceived to be uncritically accepting a discourse that subjugated them. All this was despite Paul Willis's assertion that young boys' rejection of school ideology was merely playing into the hands of those who own the means of production, and who required a steady stream of uneducated manual workers (Willis, 1977).

The Marxist Metanarrative Collapses

As we have seen in this chapter contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth tied youth culture directly to the economic, political and social circumstances from which it arose. However the social and economic circumstances that led to the rise of youth culture have changed. The youth cultures of the 1980s and 1990s are tied to different economic and social conditions. The post-war settlement has collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. Britain has suffered two economic recessions within the space of two decades[11]. Britain has fundamentally changed and British youth culture has fundamentally changed with it.

The class-based CCCS metanarrative is woefully inadequate for the study of contemporary dance culture. Mark Abrams may well have been premature in his hailing of the classless society, but within contemporary dance culture class *does* seem less important than age, though for vastly different reasons than those provided by Abrams. Whilst a few very well-off young people are insulated against social

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[11] Writing in mid-1998 it appears that another recession is on the economic horizon (for example see The Economist, 18 July 1998).

deprivation, many young people from traditionally middle-class backgrounds are in very similar positions to the kind of working-class kids described by Paul Willis in the 1970s. Youth unemployment is rife, among well-educated graduates as well as among those who left school at 16. The younger you are the less likely you are to earn a living wage. Earning a living wage at sixteen is now all but impossible, indeed it is all but impossible to obtain a job between the ages of 16 and 18 that is not a YTS-style 'training opportunity' paying less than £50 a week. Things don't get any better at 18, when, even with a clutch of good A-Levels, job opportunities beyond stacking shelves in the local supermarket are rare. Those looking for more than a life situated in social groups D and E are able to go to university, but even before the abolition of maintenance grants this was a road that could lead to enormous debts. Those under 25s who are working invariably get paid less than those doing the same job at, say 35 or 45. Those under 25s who are unemployed receive less state benefits than those over 25, and this is exacerbated by continuing government cuts in housing benefit. Housing benefit cuts are felt as sharply by middle-class youth that have left home and gone to university as working-class youth still living in the parental home.

Whilst there may be some economic differences between the classes, these seem less important to young people than what they share, and what they share is often contemporary dance culture. The vast majority of those young people that immerse themselves in contemporary dance culture find themselves in an unenviable structural position. If they are working, they can, more often than not, see no career path in front of them, and view with envy those older than them with full-time permanent contracts, for they realise that the job for life is part of a bygone age. If they are unemployed, young people can simply see no hope. When they are black they see all the good jobs go to whites, and they get stopped and searched by the police more times than is strictly necessary[12]. If they are gay and working class they suffer prejudice in the

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[12] Despite efforts by the police throughout the 1990s to improve relations with black and Asian communities, the situation is still no better for these communities than in the 1980s. Any rise in confidence that the police might have gained in the early 1990s has been shattered in the wake of the

workplace and on the street. If they are gay and middle class they are often cut off from traditional hereditary benefits. When young people are middle class they feel particularly aggrieved that the opportunities open to their parents are no longer open to them. When young people are working class they have seen the values of their parents ripped up in front of them. In a culture that still believes in progress and teleology, working-class young people are angry that their lot seems to be getting worse not getting better, regardless of whoever is 'in power' in Parliament.

When the structural contradiction that contemporary cultural studies would like youth culture to address through "genuinely political action" is the contradiction between the ethics of 'hard work' and thrift, and youth unemployment and poverty, youth culture turns its back on the rest of society and starts dancing, and, in the process, creates an alternative 'grey' economy where full-time employment is rare, and where young people top up their meagre 'Job Seekers Allowance' with 'cash-in-hand' work. Young people, middle class and working class alike, resort to "a politics of pleasure, a hedonism (in hard times) - a pleasure for its own sake in times when moral regulation of youth is pervasive and deep economic recession is rife" (Redhead, 1993c, p.7).

However, much of contemporary cultural studies still views "a politics of pleasure" as "not political enough". Obsessed with orthodox political action based around the site of production (action such as the strike) contemporary cultural studies disenfranchises those young people that do not work in traditional, unionised, occupations[13]. Colin

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Stephen Lawrence inquiry, which examined why the murderers of a young black man in South London have not been successfully convicted, despite a wealth of evidence that points to five particular young men. At the time of writing in July 1998 this inquiry has yet to present its final conclusions, however events during the proceeding appear to point to ineptitude, corruption, and widespread racism within the Metropolitan Police.

[13] For example, in What is Cultural Studies? A Reader, Colin Sparks criticises James Wilcox's suggestion that

Sparks unwittingly acknowledges this when he suggests that Resistance Through Rituals is "a product of a transition from a mode of thought which selected sub-cultures for their oppositional content to one which saw them as incapable of expressing more than a confused and marginal response to the fact of domination" (Sparks, 1996, p.23). To single out youth culture's "confused and marginal" actions is to reify a form of political action[14] that was, even when Resistance Through Rituals was written, beginning to look anachronistic. The last "genuinely political" youth movement, the Anti-Nazi League/Rock Against Racism alliance of the late 1970s[15], fell apart amidst the kind of acrimonious bickering that has characterised so much of British left-wing politics (and is itself a characteristic of articles such as that written by Sparks).

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in all repressive societies the masses will discover their own discrete and individual forms of resistance to the established system. The pseudo-left only recognises those forms of resistance which have the blessing of the ruling order (orderly demonstrations, trade unionism, etc.) It is not prepared to consider the testimony of other popular acts of resistance (industrial sabotage, absenteeism, fiddles, delinquency, shop-lifting, 'madness', etc.) For the philistines these are 'symptoms' of capitalist decadence not tributes to the healthy instincts of the masses (Wilcox, 1969, p.28).

Sparks goes on to accuse the journal that published Wilcox's article (New Left Review) of containing "an extreme lack of theoretical rigour", and goes on to suggest that positions such as Wilcox's are, paradoxically, characterised by "theoreticism" (Sparks, 1996, p.20), Sparks further suggests that the forms of activity contained in Wilcox's analysis are "notoriously unstable and, being peripheral to capitalist production, equally notoriously ineffectual on their own" (Sparks, 1996, p.20). What action people should take when they are, for example, unemployed and therefore cast out of the sphere of production, is not mentioned by Sparks.

[14] Or in Phil Cohen's terms "political work" (Cohen, 1997, p.10), a phrase possibly chosen for its suggestion that it is infrastructurally (economically) rather than superstructurally (culturally) based.

[15] For a social history of this movement, from a distinctly 'left' perspective, see Widgery, 1986.

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Contemporary cultural studies' normative view as to what politics consists of has led it to ignore the youth cultures of the 1980s and 1990s because it sees them as apolitical[16]. A gap has appeared in contemporary cultural studies where a truly contemporary analysis of youth could have been situated. Whilst the old class-based categories have lost what validity they had, there has been little suggestion as to how they could be replaced, other than Steve Redhead's call for a "popular cultural studies" to build upon the foundations of contemporary cultural studies, whilst rejecting its Marxist metanarrative[17]. That is the 'secondary aim' of this thesis, to suggest new theoretical paradigms that can be employed in the examination of youth. I intend to do this through taking one major aspect of contemporary youth culture, namely contemporary dance culture, and showing how it not only implicitly provides a critique of older

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[16] There are few notable exceptions. However Phil Cohen, who has remained active in youth cultural study throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and is a little more pragmatic when examining the 'politics of youth', suggests that

> at first sight what appears to be political apathy in fact represents a profound cultural revolution. Young people are rejecting alienated forms of organised politics in favour of a new style of personal politics influenced by feminism and the peace movement and centred on issues of sexuality and pleasure (P.Cohen, 1986, p.5).

[17] This 'call to arms' on the part of Redhead takes the form of an introduction to the edited collection The Clubcultures Reader: Readings in Popular Cultural Studies (itself the product of seminars at the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture):

> The readings in this present collection further help to distinguish 'popular cultural studies' from some aspects of the theoretical work of 'contemporary cultural studies', whilst consolidating and extending the important ethnographic work associated with CCCS cultural studies traditions of youth and popular culture research, and applying them to 'accelerated culture' in the 1990s (Redhead, 1997, p.2).

It is intended that this thesis be part of this move away from 'contemporary cultural studies' towards a new theoretical paradigm, one that does not deny the importance of the CCCS approach, but one that does not feel duty bound to accept its central premises.

analyses of youth, but also reflects wider changes within British society as a whole. This work will be completed in chapter 4.

Evidently what is needed, and this will be reflected throughout the rest of this thesis, is a destruction of the view that young people can be characterised and categorised as either 'folk rebels' or 'consumers'. Such a destruction will be attuned to the dangers of either ignoring the resistive power of youth culture (as in the 'youth as consumer' model), or ignoring the co-optive strategies of commerce (as in the 'youth as folk rebel' model)[18]. To employ a metaphor from the culture that I will be examining, within chapter 4 I will 'raid the back catalogue' of theoretical and methodological approaches used within and beyond cultural studies to reapply positions, theoreticians and approaches that have previously been marginalised by contemporary cultural studies. In particular I will examine other elements of the Marxist canon to see if the concentration on Gramsci in the 1970s was to the detriment of other Marxist theorists such as Lucien Goldmann and Mikhail Bakhtin[19].

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[18] In a sense this project, in particular the destruction of the binary opposition between consumerism and resistance, is a microcosm of the project that the discipline of cultural studies must itself address. For too long contemporary cultural studies has oscillated between the pessimism of post-Frankfurt School elitism and the "banality" of cultural optimism (Morris, 1990). As Beverly Best has suggested

> contemporary theorists of popular culture must take on the very difficult task of charting a path between the Scylla of optimism and the Charybdis of pessimism in popular culture theory. In other words, contemporary theorizing of popular culture must allow spaces for possible resistance, as well as being able to take issues of domination, exploitation and cultural imperialism into consideration (Best, 1997, p.19).

This is one of the aims of chapter 4 of this thesis, to provide a materialist re-reading of Bakhtin that accepts that, whilst dance culture is commercialised and packaged, it can also be anarchic and revolutionary.

[19] In stating this I am not suggesting that contemporary cultural studies has deliberately marginalised certain theoretical positions, or that it has consciously set itself up as a metanarrative, merely that the institutionalisation of contemporary cultural studies has led to this state of affairs. However, the effects of institutionalisation are often denied, and it is frequently denied by those who are seen by many as

Conclusion

Now that I have at least partially achieved the first two aims of this thesis, the countering of common-sense and contemporary cultural studies' discourses on contemporary dance culture, I want to validate the texts of contemporary dance culture as artistic products, as valid as any cultural texts produced by those industries that acquire cultural capital, such as the fine arts or theatre.

There is therefore a crucial difference between my analysis and the analysis of Sarah Thornton. Thornton states that the purpose of her book "is *not* to celebrate the creativity of dance culture (it seems to me that this needs no proving)" (Thornton, 1995, p.2). Unfortunately the assertion contained within Thornton's parentheses is incorrect; contemporary dance culture is invariably viewed as the lowest of the low, as a culture of pure hedonism containing texts of no aesthetic worth. In her book Thornton suggests that there is no economic difference between what contemporary dance culture considers as either 'mainstream' or 'underground', and contemporary dance culture is fooling itself when it considers itself to be politically oppositional. Firstly, as I have shown in the previous chapter, there *are* economic differences between what dance culture refers to as 'the underground' and 'the mainstream'. There is still a healthy free party and free festival scene in this country, despite the forces of commercialism and government legislation. As we saw in the previous chapter the organisation 'Exodus' is an excellent example, as are other free party organisations such as DiY, Spiral Tribe, Smokescreen, Pulse, Babble, Floatation, Rogue, Go-Tropo,

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'running' contemporary cultural studies. For example Stuart Hall, writing in 1992, argued that "Cultural Studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work. I want to insist on that! It always was a set of unstable formations" (Hall, 1992, p.278). Whilst not denying that contemporary cultural studies is "unstable", I would argue that the power of its "multiple discourses" is not as evenly distributed as Hall implicitly suggests.

Spoof, Giro, and Desert Storm[20]. Whilst dance culture's political resistance is frequently quashed by the forces of commercialism and by policing authorities, there have been some successes in preventing co-option by external forces. Secondly, even if there is no *economic* distinction between 'underground' and 'mainstream', this does not mean that *discursive* categories of 'underground' and 'mainstream' do not exist. Dance culture discourse is strong enough to make these categories and define their contents, without recourse to a kind of vulgar economic determinism which states that, because a cultural text has a commodity value, it is automatically capitalistic in origin and in use. This is to deny the symbolic value of media texts, and denies young people the 'symbolic creativity' that Paul Willis emphasises in Common Culture (Willis, 1990).

As we have seen above, contemporary cultural studies saw youth culture as young people's way of making sense of their position in society. What happened when young people couldn't make sense of their structural location, or what happened when young people's structural situation was 'senseless', was not specifically dealt with by contemporary cultural studies. I would suggest that is precisely what has occurred with the rise of contemporary dance culture. The contradictions in British society in the 1980s were too profound to be solved, either through culture or through contemporary cultural studies' mythical construction of "genuinely political" action. What's more, contemporary youth culture has ceased trying to resolve them. In the late 1980s acid house developed into a youth culture prefacing "a hedonism (in hard times)" (Redhead, 1993c, p.7). Before we examine this culture in more detail, before I "raid the back catalogue" and propose a set of working models for the analysis of the relationship between dance culture, dance music and their televisual representations, I must first introduce you to BPM.

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[20] For a discussion of the role of these and other party organisers see Rietveld, 1998b. As Rietveld suggests "there are plenty more examples, from beach parties on the south coast and ad hoc festivities in Wales to barn parties in Scotland, not to mention the dance scene in Ireland" (Rietveld, 1998b, p.251).

Chapter 3 - Youth and Television: Institutions and Discourses

In this chapter I will examine the institutional structures of British youth television and how, in the mid 1990s, contemporary dance culture came to be represented by one particular televisual text entitled <u>BPM</u>, a 55 minute-long programme commissioned by Granada Television, and terrestrially broadcast on the British ITV network early on Sunday mornings between January 1993 and December 1995. The reason <u>BPM</u> has been chosen is that it was the only regular programme on terrestrial British television during this period that dealt solely with contemporary dance culture.

Once I have described the socio-economic and discursive determinants that led to the creation of youth television texts such as <u>BPM</u>, I will then examine some of the key concerns of institutional analyses of television. This then allows me to examine televisual discourse on youth culture in general, and dance culture specifically (the third aim of this thesis). I achieve this aim through an analysis of two key discourses in the production and commissioning of <u>BPM</u>; the discourse of post-Reithian public service, and the discourse of free-market liberalism. This then leads the way to chapter 4 where I propose a set of theoretical techniques for the analysis of the relationship between dance music, dance culture, and television.

The Origins of Youth Television

The collapse of contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth in the 1980s coincided with the creation of the television genre of 'youth television'. Within the global television industry, the major pressing concern of the 1980s was an expansion into new markets, combined with an attempt to win new audiences. This expansion was made essential by the advent of satellite and digital cable technologies, as well as the deregulation of broadcasting brought about by right-wing Western governments. As Simon Frith points out, it was the previous systems' failure to attract young

audiences[1] that meant that 'youth television' was seen as a way to expand overall audience figures, and young people were targeted, by both broadcasters and advertisers, with a previously unseen zeal. This desire to attract new audiences was increased by the pressure being applied by advertisers to attract wealthier viewers. The youth audience was seen as a prime example of such a group (Frith, 1993, p.68-73)[2].

A number of economic and technological factors made this expansion into the youth market possible.

1. The continuing reduction in the cost of receiving equipment, and their decrease in size, meant that, for the first time, television sets were not necessarily located within the family living room, but also within the bedrooms of teenagers.

2. Offering the ability to record one programme whilst another was being watched, the increasing availability of videocassette recorders meant that youth television programmes could be recorded during periods of family viewing, such as early evening, and watched at times when family viewing did not take place, such as during the day.

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[1] Frith quotes market research as stating that in the mid-eighties 16 to 24-year-olds only made up 9% of the television audience, despite making up 15% of the population as a whole, and whilst the average viewer watched 27 hours of television per week, the average 16 to 24-year-old watched only seventeen hours per week (Frith, 1993, p.68).

[2] Frith quotes Greg Dyke, head of programming at LWT in the late 1980s, as stating that "the viewing figures are going down and the sports appeal mainly to older viewers. I want to reach a younger audience which in ITV terms means anyone under 45. We're being urged by our advertisers to change our programme mix to attract better-off viewers" (quoted in Leapman, 1988). Here we can see the precarious nature of the entire structure of broadcasting, with public service ideology going by the board in the quest for increased revenue.

3.Equally important in allowing broadcasters to attract the 'youth audience' was the ability to expand into previously unused parts of the daily broadcasting schedule, such as early morning, and late into the night. It was this expansion that led to, for example, the youth-oriented 'Night Network' in the very early mornings on the ITV network, and Channel Four's <u>Network 7</u>. This phenomena was also facilitated by the increasing availability of videocassette recorders mentioned above, so youth television programmes broadcast as late/early as 4 a.m. could be viewed at a more convenient time.

These developments had a profound effect upon the role of television viewing within the family, and upon the meanings created by television. Richard Paterson states "a central notion in any understanding of the structures of television programming, in its aesthetic, economic, or cultural modes, is that it is addressed to viewers in the home" (Paterson, 1990, p.33). Whilst television was still viewed in the 1980s as "the family hearth" (Morley, 1986, p.14), increasingly it performed other functions within the spatial relations of the domestic environment. This was compounded by the relative decrease in 'family' households, and the relative increase in single-person households (see Morley, 1992, p.163).

The suggestion that "one should consider the basic unit of consumption of television to be the family/household rather than the individual viewer" (Morley, 1992, p.138) has become increasingly invalid. If we accept Morley's suggestion that "the use of the television set has to be understood in the wider context of other competing and complementary leisure activities" (Morley, 1992, p.139), then of major interest to us is how the new televisual form of youth television interacts with both youth and 'adult' cultures.

Frith quotes BARB figures as showing that in multi-set households (which by 1988 constituted nearly half of all UK households) the youth audience could, for the first time, exercise their own distinctive choices over what to view (Frith, 1993, p.72-73).

This meant that, for the first time, broadcasters could directly address what it viewed as a youth audience, without concern for the popularity of 'youth television' within other social groups. Hence the British television industry saw the advent of 'narrowcasting'[3].

Within this analysis, we should never underestimate the power of advertisers, and the role they play in the network of power relations that eventually determine the form and content of youth television. Paterson states that

> the fragmentation of audiences in the wake of the establishment of Channel 4 and the use of the video recorder both for time-shifting and for viewing hired tapes has slightly undermined the certainties of the 1970s and has introduced a more sophisticated notion of target audiences (Paterson, 1990, p.35).

As Frith states, "in commercial terms..., youth is a market, a group which consumes in distinctive ways" (Frith, 1993, p.74), yet these patterns of consumption are not necessarily dictated by advertisers; advertisers must follow trends within youth culture to be successful in their approach. My analysis here lies between the discourse of youth culture as pure resistance ('youth as folk rebel') and the discourse of 'youth as consumer' which suggests young people are purely at the mercy of commercial forces. One example of how the relationship between youth culture and advertising is not a one-way relationship is in the usage of psychedelic imagery in the advertising of soft drinks and so-called 'alcopops'. Such advertisements frequently refer to visual imagery

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[3] This is backed up by Paterson's suggestion that

> with the increasing number of multi-set households the audience can be fragmented at any time of day. This leads to a possible economic viability for thematic and minority channels and forces broadcasting provision further into the market. Scheduling for the family may well be a historical curiosity if satellite uptake is significant (Paterson, 1990, p.40).

that is directly influenced by drug culture. This is at least partly due to brewers attempting to arrest a recent decline in alcohol consumption within youth culture (at least partially caused by the vast increase in Ecstasy consumption over the past ten years). The television industry is adopting a mode of address that, in Althusserian terms, 'interpellates' Ecstasy-oriented dance culture. The advertising industry is reacting to changes in youth culture, whilst also attempting to have an influence on future changes.

An analysis of the origins of youth television should also look closely at the power of public service ideology, where youth is viewed as a societal grouping with specific needs that should be addressed by the media, irrespective of the needs of advertisers. Whilst the example in the paragraph above might seem to highlight a connection between academic, common-sense *and* televisual discourses on contemporary dance culture (a concentration on hedonistic recreational drug use), the public service ethos in British television means that there are also *differences* between televisual discourse and its common-sense and academic equivalents. Naturally the public service ethos is strongest within the BBC, but it is also visible within the ITV network and Channel Four. Crucial to my analysis is the suggestion that public service ideology is placed on top of financial pressures, with Tony Moss, Deputy Head of the BBC's Department of Youth and Entertainment Features in the early 1990s, stating that "attracting more viewers cannot be our sole criterion. We want our programmes to inform, challenge, and educate" (in O'Kelly, 1992, p.15). Within the independent networks, there are statutory regulations that limit independent broadcasters from outright commercialism, and there is also an ideology of professionalism, irrespective of legislation. Certain elements of the youth television genre attempt not merely to package an audience for the benefit of advertisers, but also, in traditional Reithian terms, to inform, educate and entertain.

This issue of public service ties in with what is viewed as a major secondary aim of youth television, the desire to increase the representation of young people. There have

been two broad aspirations here, based on the ambiguous nature of the word 'representation'. These are to increase the number of young people *seen on* television, and to increase the number of young people *working within* television. What is important is the different approaches taken by broadcasters in their attempts to achieve this goal. In short the discourse of public service 'overdetermines' the production of youth television. Approaches within the BBC, the ITV Network, and Channel Four have been widely divergent, and the approaches taken have significantly altered both the form and the content of specific programmes, and the genre as a whole. An example of this was the way Bill Hilary, Channel Four's Commissioning Editor for Youth Programming in the early 1990s, declared that "the time when broadcasters can set themselves up as the spokespeople for young people is over. I want to get away from that and get back to the grassroots and what young people are saying for themselves" (in Godfrey, 1993, p.30). Nevertheless, as McRobbie suggests, the differing approaches of, for instance, Channel Four and BBC2, "continue to reflect a different image of youth than that found, for example in the <u>Daily Mail</u>" (McRobbie, 1993, p.410).

The influence of the public service ethos in the production of British youth television has led to a move away from television aimed at an empirically defined youth towards the targeting of a discursively defined youth, where anyone can be *youthful*. In a much cited interview, Janet Street-Porter, Head of BBC Youth and Entertainment Features in the early 1990s, suggested that "I suppose the programmes we make are for people who don't have a lot of responsibilities" (in Smith, 1989). Stephen Garrett, Bill Hilary's replacement at Channel Four, appeared to say much the same thing; "it's less to do with actual age now, it's more of a, hmm, attitude. An unmarried 35-year-old may have a more youthful attitude than a married 25-year-old with two kids" (in Lyttle, 1991, p.15).

Despite appearances, Street-Porter and Garrett have not stumbled across a new social category here. There has always been an element of 'irresponsibility' (particularly

financial) and 'attitude' within discursive definitions of youth throughout the 20th century. This was hinted at in the previous two chapters. In chapter 2 I showed how youth consumerism is viewed as problematic in the thrifty Majorite and Blairite 1990s, where 'sensible' spending patterns are emphasised, and hedonism frowned upon. As a consequence young people are often rebellious in their consumerism (or, alternatively, consumerist in their rebellion). And, as I demonstrated in chapter 1, there are elements of consumerism in contemporary dance culture that can be termed radical.

Because television is still, primarily, a domestic medium, conflicts and power relationships within the domestic sphere are crucial determinants in how television is received and used; "the selection and use of messages will be shaped by the exigencies of those local environments" (Lindlof and Meyer, 1987, p.2). As Morley states

> the contemporary entry of new communications technologies (e.g. video and home computers) into the home is...marked by their differential positioning of men and women and their differential incorporation into masculine and feminine spheres of activity within the home (Morley, 1990, p.38, see also Gray, 1987, Morley, 1986, Rogge and Jensen, 1988).

This is why I laid emphasis in the previous chapter on contemporary cultural studies' re-evaluation of 'gender and generation' relationships. As well as having a different form of access to youth culture than young males, the positioning within the domestic environment of young women might be seen to alter the meanings they derive from youth television.

However, in his stressing of gender imbalances in the appropriation and use of new technologies, Morley is ignoring the crucial *generational split* in the appropriation and use of technology. As Frith notes, this split effects what texts are produced, the form these texts eventually take, and fundamentally structures the context in which texts are

received. The satellite broadcasters of the 1980s were aware from their research that the young audience were more prepared to use new technology, be it computer games or satellite receivers[4], than older generations, and therefore gradually adapted their advertising strategies, as well as increasing the output they devoted to the youth audience. Thomas Johansson takes this argument further, suggesting that "young people are dependent on electronic media in their search for a specific lifestyle" (Johansson, 1993, p.15, see also Snow, 1987). Here again we can see the dual nature of technological change, with youth co-opting technology and using for its own purposes.

New technological developments have also meant that the television set has become a site for non-broadcast material, with rented videos, computers, and video games becoming widely available. As Morley and Silverstone suggest "the television is no longer a source only of broadcast programming; its screen has become the site of a whole range of entertainment and informational services, under varying degrees of viewer control and increasingly subject to viewer choice" (Morley and Silverstone, 1990, p.31). Here we can see how one of the initial technological factors allowing youth television to happen, namely the wider availability of videocassette recorders, meant that youth television *had* to happen, for the use of videocassette recorders to view non-broadcast material meant that the percentage of young people's time in front of the television set spent watching broadcast programmes was perceived, by advertisers and broadcasters alike, to be steadily decreasing. New technology therefore proved to be a double-edged sword. The advent of domestic-youth-oriented personal computers by Sinclair, Atari and Commodore, all of which used the domestic television set for their visual output, and the current popularity of 'entertainment

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[4] Frith gives the examples of Swedish research that suggests that the young Swedish audience were more likely to watch satellite shows than national programmes, and Danish research, that suggests that 9 to 19 year olds were the biggest users of satellite services (Frith, 1993, p.69, see also Roe and Johnson-Smaragdi, 1987, Olderaan and Jankowski, 1988. This is also partially backed up by Lull, 1982, p.809).

systems' marketed by the Japanese electronics giants Sega and Nintendo, further compounded this.

In his discussion of the effects of new technology, specifically cable technology, videocassette recorders and computers, Jim Collins suggests that "these technologies have produced an ever increasing surplus of texts, all of which demand our attention in varying levels of intensity" (Collins, 1992, p.331). However the point crucial to our analysis is that with a surplus of cultural texts, the site of reception becomes a battleground for competing texts from financially motivated producers.

The primary aim of youth television was, therefore, to draw young audiences away from both non-televisual forms of entertainment, and away from rented videos, computers and video games. In the early to mid 1990s this led to the broadcasting of programmes, such as Gamesmaster and Movies, Games and Video, which were aimed at video game players and videocassette purchasers and renters. Combining this phenomenon with television advertising for videocassettes, computer consoles and cartridges, we have a situation where the uses of the television set combine and clash, where the interests of one part of the broadcasting industry are directly lined up against the interests of another part of the industry. In order to increase advertising revenue, broadcasters attempted to package for advertisers 'youth' with disposable incomes. One way of doing this was to broadcast programmes concerning specific 'youth' themes, but, in the case of Gamesmaster and Movies, Games And Video, broadcasters find themselves promoting technologies that were seen as the cause of their inability to reach the youth audience in the first place. As Noble suggests

> close inspection of technological development reveals that technology
> leads a double life, one which conforms to the intentions of designers
> and interests of power and another which contradicts them proceeding
> behind the backs of their architects to yield unintended consequences

and unanticipated possibilities (Noble, 1984, quoted in Keen, 1988, p.9).

One technological development that influenced the formal characteristics of youth television was the widespread use of remote controls, with 'zapping' seen as an advertisers' nightmare, where if a television text (be it a programme or advertisement) did not immediately grab the attention of the technologically equipped young viewer, then that viewer would simply change channels. Paterson noticed this phenomenon, stating that

> some argue that, with greater access to video, with its facility to play, freeze, speed up, and slow down, the growth in channels, and the increased tendency to zap between channels, the viewer now has an ability to recompose television (Paterson, 1990, p.37).

Or, as Jim Collins puts it,

> the VCR and remote control encourage us to treat specific programs as interchangeable options, thereby contradicting the specific interpellative strategies of individual programs, whether they be 'quality' television, evangelical television, or music television. One of the most distinctive features of television, as a medium, then, is precisely this contradiction in which the apparatus of the medium is founded on a notion of subject construction that often works in direct conflict with strategies of specific texts (Collins, 1989, p.264).

Individual thematic units within television have decreased in length to prevent channel-hopping, and to prevent the viewer switching off entirely. This shortening of thematic units significantly alters the meanings derived from any single discrete unit, with juxtapositions and continuities between units combining to create an overall

broadcasting flow. Rather than suggesting, as Fiske does, that "channel switching and zapping merely exaggerate and exploit" (Fiske, 1989a, p.63) the 'flow' of television as described by Raymond Williams, it should be asserted that 'zapping' fundamentally alters television's meaning[5]. Williams describes television as being characterised by discrete units, which, when linked by advertisements for commercial products, clips of future television programmes, and announcements, form the basis of the "segmented flow" of television[6]. Youth television can be characterised by a "secondary micro-flow", a flow of discrete thematic units *within* individual programmes, where not only is the overall broadcasting provision segmented, but *also the thematic units as described by Williams*. Within the new broadcasting flow these new shorter segments are short enough to dissuade the uninterested viewer from channel-hopping, as another item, often previewed earlier in the programme, is imminent. Williams' discrete units between adverts have themselves been segmented. One need only watch a programme such as Channel Four's The Big Breakfast to see that this is the case, with discrete individual items lasting only a couple of minutes.

This can be combined with the phenomena noticed by Paterson where

> the greater the competition for viewers in order to increase revenue
> directly the more marked the flow character of television becomes. This

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[5] Meaghan Morris, drawing upon the work of Andreas Huyssen, Tania Modleski and Patrice Petro, is concerned that, in the rush to accept zapping as a 'radical' cultural practice, cultural studies is validating a view of television reception that draws upon ideas of "mass culture as woman" (see Morris, 1990, p.23, see also Huyssen, 1986, pp.44-62, Modleski, 1986b, and Petro, 1986). In particular Morris suggests that modern television viewing is characterised by media studies as "distracted, absent-minded, insouciant, vague, flighty, skimming from image to image. The rush of associations runs irresistibly toward a figure of mass culture not as woman but, more specifically, as bimbo" (Morris, 1990, p.24). This is an important debate, and one that will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 5.

[6] For a more detailed explanation of Williams' observations concerning segmentation and flow in television broadcasting, see Williams, 1990, pp.78-118.

is because the flow helps to disguise the breaks in programmes and mask potential channel-switching moments (Paterson, 1990, p.37).

As programmes themselves become more segmented, any disruption of flow between programmes appears less obvious.

One major economic factor that has led to an expansion of youth-oriented television is the increasing availability of cheap programming material in the form of pop music videos. An example of this is The Chart Show. Produced by Video Visuals Production Limited for Yorkshire Television, The Chart Show relies entirely upon promotional music videos for its programming content, thereby massively cutting production costs. One reason for this is the relatively inexpensive nature of pop music videos. Whilst the cost of producing say, a new Madonna or Michael Jackson video could well be over the equivalent of a million pounds, this cost is recouped through sales across the world. Combine such videos with 'DiY' videos produced by pop groups for niche markets, and broadcast on programmes such as BPM, then low-cost 'music television' has become a reality in the 1990s.

Theoretical Issues in an Analysis of Televisual Discourse on Contemporary Dance Culture

Now that the circumstances that led to the production of programmes such as BPM have been outlined, I want to clarify some basic principles concerning the relationships between the television text and its audience, before going deeper into an analysis of the production of BPM itself.

As Michael O'Shaughnessy suggests "television must connect with people's actual experiences, both in terms of our real lives and our fantasy lives; unless we can recognize ourselves, our desires, and our dreams in television it will mean nothing to us" (O'Shaughnessy, 1990, p.94). O'Shaughnessy suggests there is a 'connection'

between television and people's lives. Here I would agree with O'Shaughnessy's choice of words. It is not the case that televisual representations of the dance floor are a 'reflection' of the dance floor, or that televisual representations of the dance floor have a one-way 'effect' upon contemporary dance culture; there is a *three-way* relationship between the text, the referent of that text, and the audience. This three-way relationship will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

Sarah Thornton suggests the "media are there and effective from the start" (Thornton, 1994, p.176). This is certainly true. McRobbie's analysis is similar, suggesting that television positions its

> readers or viewers in a particular relationship to the text and its meaning and in doing so play[s] a concerted role in constructing and organizing subjectivity as it comes into being in the 'inter-discursive space' where these cultural forms and meaning meet and interact with each other (McRobbie, 1994c, p.179)

This, however, is only half the story. There is an equally fruitful line of enquiry if we reverse McRobbie's suggestion, if we examine how young people position the media in their lives, how in McRobbie's terms "different, youthful, subjectivities" (see McRobbie, 1994c) play a concerted role in constructing and organising television texts. Whilst one route of enquiry might be an examination of what televisual representations of the dance floor say to young people, what fantasies and realities are encoded in such texts, this alone would make my study incomplete. Whilst McRobbie suggests "images push their way into the very fabric of our social lives" (McRobbie, 1994b, p.18), there is a reciprocal relationship, our social lives push their way into images.

One of the difficulties inherent in an examination of the three-way relationship between a specific textual form (BPM), its referent (contemporary dance culture), and its audience is that youth television is an under-theorised genre, and representations of

the dance floor particularly so. The study of youth has so far been concerned with when young people present themselves as visible entities, not as audiences. Whilst there has been a plethora of work published on children and television[7], the role of young people as television viewers and as an audience has largely been ignored (see McRobbie, 1984, p.141).

Of the research that has been completed, very little has actively sought out young people's views. This mirrors the process that Buckingham highlights when he suggests that

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[7] For a survey of research on children and television see Buckingham, 1987 and Buckingham (ed.), 1993. Research on children and television is beyond the scope of this thesis as, by definition, it falls outside the social and generic categories of youth culture and youth television. However, work on children and television can be seen as a parallel project to my work on youth and television. In particular both sets of research highlight anxieties, power relationships and contradictions within contemporary cultural forms. Buckingham suggests that, in order to complete these tasks, research should be defined historically, and connected to "evolving definitions of childhood and of recurrent responses to the perceived impact of new cultural forms" (Buckingham, 1987, p.2). In studying youth television we must therefore study the referent of youth television (youth culture), societal definitions of youth, and the relationships between 'youth' and the television industry. In particular, attention should be paid to Buckingham's mention of 'new cultural forms'. Contemporary dance culture, as reformulated in the wake of the acid house boom of the late 1980s, appears to be one such new cultural form that has galvanised both the imaginations of participants, and the fears of society as a whole.

Another major difference between my research on youth television and previous research on children and television is that my approach is multi-disciplinary. The majority of research on children has been located within the competing paradigms of the effects' tradition, critical mass communications research, the uses and gratifications approach, and cognitive psychology. The use of these approaches has led to the fragmentation of research in this area. An exception to this is the work of Bob Hodge and David Tripp in their book Children and Television (Hodge and Tripp, 1986). Hodge and Tripp's approach is more cautious and self-reflexive, and, crucially, it draws influence from a variety of academic disciplines. This thesis follows this tentative move, in that it combines semiotics, anthropology, Marxism and other cultural theories and positions.

perhaps the most significant absence in the research [on children and television] is of any sustained attempt to discover how children themselves make sense of television. Children have typically been treated as 'objects of research', whose behaviour is observed and interpreted by adults and whose responses to television are classified and quantified using adults' criteria (Buckingham, 1987, p.3).

In the study of youth this absence continues, and I hope to redress the balance in chapter 6 of this thesis, where I outline the results of eleven 'viewing sessions' where young people are interviewed whilst watching BPM. Honourable exceptions also include Dick Hebdige's Hiding in the Light, (Hebdige, 1988) and Paul Willis's study of young people's media consumption entitled Common Culture (Willis, 1990). This latter study contains the only serious book length attempt on the part of contemporary cultural studies to engage with young people's media consumption outside of the classroom or the University seminar.

A project such as the one I complete in the following chapters (an examination of the relationship between a specific youth culture, its televisual representation, and the audience) is needed by both academia and by youth culture in their respective searches for meaning, in their search for explanation. The limited research on youth television that has been published has generally concentrated on examining the institutional structures of youth television[8]. Whilst this work is valuable, it too is essentially incomplete. We cannot understand the precise meanings produced by youth television whilst working within an analytical paradigm that is dominated by a kind of institutional determinism. It is not the case that the meanings produced by youth television are directly determined by the actions of the institution. An analysis of the institution can however begin to examine the *parameters* within which textual

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[8] For an example of an institutional analysis of youth television, see Frith, 1993.

encoding takes place, and is a necessary step towards examining the text itself, and the inter-discursive space of contemporary dance culture. A brief examination of the production of BPM will highlight what an institutional analysis can tell us.

BPM: An Institutional Analysis

BPM was made by Music Box, a subsidiary of Sunset and Vine (who specialise in the production of sports programmes), and who are owned by Molinaire, a large post-production company. BPM's mode of production was an unusual one. Made on a shoe-string budget of £8,000 an hour, the production team of BPM consisted of a Director who doubled as a camera operator, an Associate Producer, a Producer, a Production Assistant who doubled as a second camera operator, and a sound engineer. Such a non-standard 'cottage industry' approach means that we cannot necessarily talk of a 'house style', and, due to it being television's only sustained attempt to represent dance culture, we cannot precisely locate BPM within any formal or generic conventions. This will be seen to be of importance in the following chapter.

Armed with these few details and a knowledge of British television, we might begin to discuss the *possibilities* for a television programme that represented contemporary dance culture, or we might at least begin to discuss the *limits* of such a budget and production crew. In a private interview Simon Potter, Producer of BPM, hinted at the results of such limitations:

> The economics actually mean that we have to be very direct in our approach. We don't have the resources to try anything too radical. We just get down there and see what's going on, we go onto the dance floor, or we go into a club and arrange an interview. While we pride ourselves on some sort of journalistic integrity, a fast turnaround of the

programme, and the financial constraints within which we have to work, mean that we have to work in a very direct way (Potter, 1995)[9].

But we still have no idea what the programme actually looked like, let alone what the programme actually meant to those viewers that watched it. To find out the former we must obviously shift our analysis to the text, to find out the latter, we must look at the interface between text and audience.

With specific relation to the former, there is a recent movement within media studies that, in reaction to the work of David Morley, suggests that the *primary* site of analysis should be the television text. This movement can be traced back to the 1970s and the popularity of neo-Althusserian analyses of the process of interpellation. This textual determinism is as limiting as any institutional determinism, in that it ignores all the lessons learnt by the reception studies and the contextual analyses of the 1980s. *Meaning is not inherent in the text itself.* A chain of televisual signifiers has no meaning outside the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations of the language of television. A comprehensive analysis of the meanings created by television should embrace production, distribution and audience, as well as textuality. As Paul Smith states

> a person is not simply determined and dominated by the ideological pressures of any overarching discourse or ideology, but is also the agent of a certain discernment. A person is not simply the actor who follows ideological scripts but is also an *agent* who reads them in order to insert him/herself into them or not (Smith, 1988, p.xxxiv).

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[9] This interview was completed two weeks before BPM was taken of air. The circumstances of it being dropped will be dealt with later.

This is of particular relevance to an analysis of television programmes that attempts to interpellate young people, as young people are particularly keen to reject any attempts to force meaning upon them. This can be demonstrated in their rejection of the youth television genre itself. When young people are told that they will like something, they are more often than not likely to reject it. In a private interview Simon Potter stated that David Stephenson, Commissioning Editor for Youth at Channel Four in 1996, was attempting to change his job title. Potter suggested that the reason for this was that "if there is one sure fire way of getting young people not to watch your programme then it's to say that it is coming out of a youth department" (Potter, 1995).

The quotation from Paul Smith above is also of relevance to an analysis of BPM in that it can be used to address directly the conflicts between the two discourses that are most important in an institutional analysis of BPM. The following section outlines these discourses; the discourse of post-Reithian public service[10], which was dominant in the *production* of BPM, and the discourse of free-market liberalism, which was dominant in the *commissioning* of BPM.

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[10] BPM should be viewed as post-Reithian rather than Reithian because although it attempted to inform, to educate and to entertain its audience, it did so through the provision of texts that had low cultural value (i.e. dance music) as opposed to the high culture texts provided during the heyday of pre-war BBC Reithianism. In Reith's day, the nearest equivalent to dance music was jazz. Whilst Reith did not entirely exclude jazz from the schedules, he did cite it as an example of 'pure entertainment', and to use "so great a scientific invention for the purpose of 'entertainment' alone [would be] a prostitution of its powers and an insult to the character and intelligence of the people" (Reith, 1924, p.17).

Equally Reithianism is based upon the principle of universality, with the construction of an 'ideal citizen' as the reader inscribed within the text. The post-Reithian BPM text is produced for a demographic segment, despite Simon Potter's reservations about such an approach (for a more detailed analysis of Reithianism see Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, and Briggs, 1961).

The discourse of post-Reithian public service is held in high regard by the production team responsible for <u>BPM</u>, who view contemporary dance culture as an invigorating and dynamic culture that is not adequately represented by 'mainstream' television, and a culture that receives detrimental publicity across a variety of other media. For them, the role of <u>BPM</u> was twofold; firstly *to educate* non-participants in the value of dance culture, and secondly *to inform* participants of the latest trends and the latest musical texts. Two quotations from Simon Potter demonstrate that this was the case;

> we made <u>BPM</u> because we felt that there was a large area of music that was obviously appealing to a lot of people but just wasn't being heard about, and wasn't being reported on because commissioning people don't understand it...

> We look at stuff that isn't just popular in the genre, but stuff that is happening at the extremes. We do explore the underground, we do look at music right on the edge of what can be loosely termed dance music, and here I'm thinking about ambient stuff which you can't really call dance music, but it does have a resonance with a dance music audience we think. And nose-bleed techno and gabber and all those other horrible labels... [Our job] is to report on the beast as a whole, but also to try and introduce people to influences that perhaps they haven't experienced before (Potter, 1995).

This post-Reithian perspective, whereby the viewer is educated and informed, rather than merely entertained, was also *political.* This is because common-sense discourse positions dance culture as a deviant 'other'; vilifying it for not conforming to societal norms, and legislating against activities that are central to it. To represent dance culture in a positive light is to work against the practices followed elsewhere in the television

industry, which attack dance culture as, if not illegal, then certainly morally suspect and of no aesthetic value. There is therefore a rupture within televisual discourse. Part of the television industry (Music Box) views contemporary dance culture as a culture of worth, whilst other parts of the industry (such as news departments) view it as a hedonistic culture of little or no aesthetic or cultural worth (just like common-sense and academic discourses).

The producers of <u>BPM</u> were, at times, good spokespeople for contemporary dance culture. Although working within Independent Television Commission guidelines concerning impartiality, <u>BPM</u> did explicitly criticise government policy, and therefore implicitly criticised common-sense discourse (common-sense discourse fully supports, for example, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994). Potter cites three occasions when <u>BPM</u> directly criticised the government; an interview with The Drum Club, a feature on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, and a feature on Spiral Tribe, an organisation that runs illegal raves. Potter suggests that the <u>BPM</u> team were not "pulling any punches in terms of criticising government policy" (Potter, 1995).

Whilst maximising audience share was a priority for Potter (he obviously wanted as many people to watch his programme as possible) this was not the primary objective of his approach. Potter characterises <u>BPM</u> as responsive and discriminating, rather than transitory and inattentive; "the audience is quite small for that time of night, but the audience are watching it for a particular reason. They are going to go out and buy the records. It's not like a chart show audience where there's a lot of kids watching it casually" (Potter, 1995). Here Potter is taking a qualitative approach to his search for an audience. He is relatively unconcerned that his audience is not as large as it might be, so long as the audience that is watching gain enjoyment and a 'use value' from the programme[11]. This was emphasised later on in our interview when Potter talked about

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[11] Finding out the precise viewing figures for <u>BPM</u> proved to be a difficult business. Simon Potter maintains that the Broadcast Research department at London TV Centre, the ITV network's central audience research bureau, consistently refused to divulge the audience figures for any programmes

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BPM's coverage of experimental music, music that was pushing the aesthetic boundaries of dance culture. In particular, Potter suggested that such music was "only going to appeal to a very limited number of people within our audience demographic, but if we think it has merits despite that, we'll cover it" (Potter, 1995). This can but emphasise the post-Reithian approach employed within the production of BPM.

The Discourse of Free-Market Liberalism

The discourse that was dominant in the commissioning of BPM was free-market liberalism. Simply put the ITV network commissioned BPM in 1993 because it thought that BPM would be able to deliver a substantial section of the lucrative youth market to advertisers. ITV management re-commissioned it for two more years whilst this was perceived to be happening. However, for reasons not entirely revealed to either the public, the press, or to the BPM production team, ITV management decided not to re-commission BPM for a fourth series. Whilst Granada, who commissioned BPM on behalf of the ITV network, refused to discuss with me the dropping of BPM, reports

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within the 'night-time' section of their schedule. However, once, the programme had been withdrawn from the schedules, London Weekend Television provided me with the results of their audience research (including total audience, audience share, and audience breakdown in terms of age, gender and social class):

Series	Total audience	Audience Share
1993	97,000	60.1%
1994	82,000	46.9%
1995	80,000	50.3%

Series	Age Group						Gender		Social Grade			
	4-15	*16-24*	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55+*	*M*	*F*	*AB*	*C1*	*C2*	*DE*
1993	7%	22%	27%	17%	13%	14%	63%	37%	8%	20%	31%	41%
1994	6%	26%	24%	16%	14%	15%	59%	41%	7%	20%	31%	42%
1995	4%	27%	24%	16%	15%	15%	59%	41%	10%	18%	33%	39%

from two dance culture magazines suggested that market research had shown that other styles of programming would be more profitable than <u>BPM</u>:

> <u>BPM</u> the ITV dance music programme, has been pulled off the air, confirming the rumours first reported in last month's <u>Muzik</u>. The final show was broadcast on December 16. <u>BPM</u> was axed together with three other specialist music shows, <u>The Beat</u>, <u>The Big E</u>, and <u>Noisy Mothers</u> after a review of ITV's late night schedules. Research indicated that general programming (including films, chat shows and sex/trivia shows) attracted more viewers than the network's specialist music output (<u>Muzik</u>, February, 1996, p.8).

> <u>BPM</u>, Britain's only national dance music TV show, has been axed after three years and 156 episodes. According to one of the late night show's producers Simon Potter, <u>BPM</u> was dropped to make way for a mix of quiz shows and light entertainment after ITV's researchers ascertained that there was no demand for a programme such as <u>BPM</u> (<u>Mixmag</u>, February 1996, p.18).

Examining the social grade of <u>BPM</u> viewers also highlights the breakdown of the Reithian principle of universality which the free-market approach attacks. Within Reithianism all viewers are equal[12], whereas within the discourse of the free market viewers from social grades A and B are particularly prized for their spending power, and their consequent ability to attract high advertising revenues. <u>BPM</u> attracted a small

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[12] It could be suggested that, within a Reithian discourse, viewers from lower social groups were, in fact, *more* prized than higher social groups, for it was working-class audiences who were in most need of education and 'culture'. This ties in to the 'mass society' or 'mass culture' thesis that was so influential within British society in the 1920s and 1930s. For a summary of the 'mass society' thesis see Strinati, 1995, chapter 1, and Carey, 1992.

percentage of such viewers, whilst the largest group of viewers were from social grades D and E. This fact could well have been a major influence in the ITV networks' unwillingness to re-commission BPM.

Competing Discourses

Of particular interest to us is when these two discourses clash, when the producers of BPM are following an agenda that directly contradicts the discourse responsible for its commissioning. Simon Potter gives an example of how these two discourses conflicted, and how, in particular, the discourse of the free-market interfered with BPM's post-Reithian public service ethos;

> the more market research people and corporations try and divide the market place up in terms of socio-economic class and age, the more dangerous it is, because you are actually contriving what are fairly artificial differences between a broad mass of people, many of whom want pretty much the same thing... If you go too far down that road, then I think the tail starts to wag the dog in terms of popular consumption (Potter, 1995).

Potter here reaffirms that BPM worked within the framework of another key Reithian ideal, that of universality[13], which Potter positions as being in *direct conflict* with the market model. By suggesting that "the tail wags the dog" Potter is implying that it is not desirable for advertisers to dictate programme content, at least not within his post-Reithian mode of working.

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[13] Scannell and Cardiff affirm that universality was one of Reith's central ideals when they suggest that, for Reith, "broadcasting had a responsibility to bring into the greatest possible number of homes in the fullest degree all that was best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement" (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, p.7).

Here we have two discourses fighting it out. On the one hand we have the discourse of the market that became dominant in the 1980s, and on the other hand we have the Reithian values that were dominant within television production from its conception until the mid 1970s.

Potter also suggests that, although <u>BPM</u> represented the politically resistive nature of contemporary dance culture in a positive light, educating outsiders in the ways and mores of dance culture, and informing dance culture participants of the latest trends, the discourse of free-market liberalism nevertheless had an indirect effect;

> the problem you've got with TV, like any other organisation or industry trying to survive in the political climate as it is, is that it is market-driven. Even the BBC has had to become market-driven in order to get its charter renewed. We have to operate and survive under what I think are quite unique and peculiar political circumstances. A right-wing government in power for fifteen years inevitably enters the public psyche, and inevitably leads to an aggressive business climate, and those pressures affect the way that we have to make our programme, because our relationship with the people that commission us is implicitly affected (Potter, 1995).

In the previous chapter I examined the collapse of the contemporary cultural studies' approach to youth culture. In providing a critique of the CCCS approach it became obvious that Althusserian and Gramscian approaches were being misused in the analysis of youth culture. However, a flexible approach, influenced by Althusserian and Gramscian models, can highlight the continuing usefulness of Marxist models. Louis Althusser suggests that "the reproduction of the relations of production" (Althusser, 1971, p.128) occurs within ideological superstructures such as the media. However, as we can see, this process does not occur when the television programme in

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hand is made by a small production company whose stated aim is not to 'reproduce the status quo' but, within a post-Reithian framework, to give 'positive exposure' to what we have seen is a politically oppositional culture. In Althusserian terms, within the production of <u>BPM</u> there are direct conflicts within and between ideological superstructures, in particular there is a conflict between the emergent discourse of market forces and the declining discourse of public service. Perhaps the situation can be best analysed not by applying a purely Althusserian method, but by analysing the production of <u>BPM</u> from a Gramscian perspective. Applying a Gramscian theory of hegemonic struggle enables us to view television and the production of <u>BPM</u> as a *site of struggle*, where the forces of free-market capitalism meet the radicalism of contemporary dance culture. In this sense <u>BPM</u> is the result of an implicit negotiation between 'forces from above' and 'forces from below'.

It appears that, in particular, the Reithian discourse has gone full circle. In 1923 the Sykes Committee defined broadcasting as "a valuable form of public property" that should be subject to "the public interest", rather than market forces (in Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, p.6). For half a century or so successive governments reaffirmed Reithian ideals, whilst broadcasters, particularly those involved in the ITV network, often fought against the restrictions that Reithian regulations made on their programming and their profits. This was certainly the case with independent producers in the 1960s and 1970s fighting against the monolithic BBC and ITV 'quangos'. Now we have Simon Potter and his team at <u>BPM</u> desperately trying to *retain* certain Reithian values, and fighting against the imposition of regulations based upon a free-market ideology that has become dominant in the management of the ITV network.

There is a dichotomy here between what might be viewed as a radical text and the 'New Right' production methods that produced it. Not only is the Althusserian model lacking here, but any model that posits a causal link between economic base and cultural superstructure would be inadequate. Again the Gramscian perspective is

useful. We are living in an entirely different conjuncture than the 1930s, and to suggest that broadcasting in general, and Reithianism in particular, are the same now as they were then would be erroneous. When the conjunctural terrain changes, ideological positions change. In the case of this analysis, a particular production ethos, Reithianism, has become disarticulated from the political position that produced it (paternalism) and is now used for an opposing political purpose[14]. This was at least partially confirmed by a statement made by Simon Potter in which he defined himself a socialist.

More recently we can see how the institutional structures and production practices of BPM have become disarticulated from the political ethos that produced them. Although some have suggested that the broadcasting industry was the only 'state' industry to avoid privatisation, this is not the case. The Conservative government's privatisation of broadcasting was more 'subtle' than the highly publicised sales of, for instance, the gas and electricity industries. 'Producer choice', the internal market, and increased competition have been instrumental in forcing the BBC to operate within a free-market model[15]. The 'auctioning' of ITV franchises has forced ITV companies to increase

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[14] A parallel can be drawn between the change from Reithianism to post-Reithianism and changes in Labour education policy. During the post-war period, Labour's education policy was centred on a belief in comprehensive education in mixed-ability groups. This was a central tenet of post-war socialism. However, with the collapse of the "post-war consensus", this position has become disarticulated from the politics that created it. Labour's policy is now based around "setting", where pupils are taught in groups of comparable academic ability. Other left-wing groups and parties are following this move, with, for instance, support in the mid-1990s from the RCP/Living Marxism group for selective grammar schools (previously a purely Conservative perspective). Perhaps this analogy is not such an obscure one for two reasons. Firstly, Reithianism and post-Reithianism both have education as a central defining element. Secondly, as Pierre Bourdieu suggests, education is central to the concept of cultural capital that is explored elsewhere in this thesis (see Robbins, 1991, for an outline of Bourdieu's analysis of education).

[15] Some would suggest that the government did not 'force' the BBC to adopt market principles, but the BBC 'jumped' more than it needed to, adopting a Thatcherite line just as Thatcherism was declining. Either way my point stands, that although it remains part of the state, it is now semi-autonomous, or perhaps, in Althusserian terms, 'relatively autonomous'.

profits in order to fund their bids, to the detriment of programming quality. Channel Four was founded as an 'independent publisher' rather than as a state producer of programmes. Central to many of these changes has been a split between production and distribution. The BBC, the ITV network and Channel Four are forced to buy programmes from independent production companies, and we have seen a consequent lessening of power of the Independent Television Commission and the BBC Board of Governors, which is essentially what the Conservative governments of the 1980s set out to achieve.

The 'frontiers of the state' have been 'rolled back' and state control has been replaced with the 'hidden hand' of the free market. The production of BPM is situated within an essentially right-wing model. However one by-product of the commissioning system has been the production of radical texts such as BPM. Neither the 'vulgar' nor the Althusserian Marxist analyses that are central to much of the discipline of media studies are applicable here. The radicalism of BPM is neither a direct reflection of the economic system that produced it, nor part of its role as an "Ideological State Apparatus" (Althusser, 1971). The same is true for other programmes that have been spawned by the lessening of control over production caused by Conservative privatisation. It is unthinkable that the Conservative Governments of the 1980s intended that their restructuring of the British broadcasting industry would lead to programmes such as BBC2's Gaytime TV. We must not forget that, whilst the 'New Right' ideologies of the 1980s may have had a libertarian impulse, the Thatcher governments contained both economic liberalism and moral authoritarianism in equal measures. The liberal 'permissiveness' of both Gaytime TV and BPM were anathema to Thatcherism, yet they were both products of the Thatcherite conjuncture.

At which point Gramsci should again re-enter our analysis. Programming is not directly related to the structure of its production, and neither is it completely autonomous; rather broadcasting is the terrain upon which ideological battles are fought out. BPM is the result of struggle; struggle between dance culture and commercial forces eager to

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attract a market with a relatively high disposable income. It is also the result of struggle between those who support free-market values and those who support a post-Reithian perspective.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter introduced us to various social, economic, technological and discursive determinants that led to the creation of the televisual sub-genre of British youth television. This then led to an analysis of various theoretical issues that should be taken into account in an institutional analysis of youth television in general, and BPM in particular. I then outlined the basic production set-up of BPM. This led to an analysis of the discourse of post-Reithian public service that was influential in the production of BPM, and the discourse of free-market liberalism that at least partially determined the commissioning of BPM. I then examined how these discourses conflicted during the three years that BPM was broadcast, as well as examining the applicability of Althusserian and Gramscian models in the analysis of these discourses.

Having successfully provided a critique of common-sense discourse and contemporary cultural studies' discourse on contemporary dance culture (the first and second aims of this thesis), and critically examined certain televisual discourses that have shown themselves to be at work in the production of BPM, now is the time to develop a new methodology, to develop new theoretical ways of examining contemporary dance culture and the relationship between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations.

Chapter 4: New Theoretical Methodologies.

Introduction

Having provided a critique of both common-sense discourse on contemporary dance culture and contemporary cultural studies' discourse on dance culture in chapters 1 and 2, the previous chapter introduced the reader to televisual representations of contemporary dance culture through an institutional analysis of <u>BPM</u>. This chapter extends this analysis, in that it contains an extended examination of the relations between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations.

Firstly I will examine the applicability of theoretical positions provided by the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin. Of particular interest in this section is Bakhtin's <u>Rabelais and His World</u> (Bakhtin, 1984a). In this text Bakhtin gives an elegant description of the carnival as it existed in the pre- to mid-Renaissance period (1494-1553), and in the first section of this chapter I will suggest that we can draw an analogy between the carnival as described by Bakhtin and contemporary dance culture. Having made this point, I then draw further upon the work of Bakhtin in my suggestion that an analogy can be made between what Bakhtin describes as 'carnivalesque' literature (literature that represents the medieval carnival) and televisual representations of contemporary dance culture (such as <u>BPM</u>). These two sections employing the work of Bakhtin therefore continue the work started in the previous chapter, namely the achievement of the third aim of this thesis, which is the countering of televisual discourse on contemporary dance culture.

This then leads me on to an extended application of the notion of 'homologous structures'. Through an application of Lucien Goldmann's joint concepts of 'genetic structuralism' and 'homology' I will propose a working model for the analysis of the relationship between contemporary dance culture and <u>BPM</u>. This work goes some way to addressing the fourth and final aim of this thesis, the countering of common-sense

discourse on the relationship between young people and television. In particular I will show how the relationship between a specific cultural practice, textual representation, and audience is far more complicated than common-sense discourse suggests.

Having shown how the work of Lucien Goldmann is particularly useful in the study of contemporary dance culture, I will then re-examine a more fashionable theorist to see if the work of Theodor Adorno is as useful as that of Goldmann. In a sense this section uses contemporary dance culture to show some of the contradictions central to Adorno's work on popular music and the 'Culture Industry', and goes on to suggest that even if Adorno's criticisms of popular music were valid (which they are not), they could nevertheless not be applied to contemporary dance music (or, to be more precise, they could not be applied to the relationship between production, distribution and consumption in contemporary dance music).

Having introduced the reader to theoretical positions offered by Bakhtin, Goldmann and Adorno, the final substantive section of this chapter examines the formation of the musical sub-genre of jungle to see how an analysis of jungle culture can further our understanding of contemporary dance culture. In particular this section on jungle will introduce the reader to the suggestion that contemporary dance culture offers an 'auto-critique' of itself. Common-sense discourse suggests that contemporary dance culture is mindless. The final section of this chapter shows that this is far from the case in its examination of the extent to which the micro-culture of jungle has itself analysed and provided a partial critique of the socio-economic structural location of contemporary dance culture.

Bakhtin's Carnival

According to Bakhtin, within the early modern period (1494-1553) carnival was a set of resistive practices opposed to the 'serious rituals' of officially sanctioned culture. In this section I will suggest that contemporary dance culture performs this function

within late-20th century Britain, that it is, in the jargon supplied by the author Hakim Bey, a "temporary autonomous zone" or "TAZ"[1] (Bey, 1985). Contemporary dance culture is a temporary crisis of legitimation. In the Althusserian terms employed earlier on in this thesis, Ideological State Apparatuses (see Althusser, 1971) have ceased to function, and have collapsed under the weight of society's ideological contradictions. 'Repressive State Apparatuses' in the form of, for example, Parliamentary legislation and the police raid, have taken over, and there is an ambiguity and confusion in the state's position on dance culture[2]. As we saw in chapter 1 there have been a variety of legislative acts that prohibit and inhibit dance culture since the late 1980s. This process looks set to continue with the anti-dance culture Public Entertainment (Drugs Misuse) Act (1997) and the Health and Safety of Young People at Dance Events and Clubs Bill (1997).

Despite contemporary cultural studies' disinclination to accept contemporary youth culture as having a resistive impulse, the subjectivities on offer from officially

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[1] Chris Stanley prefers the term "wild zone" suggesting that

> the wild zone is that space nominated as deregulated. It is 'fenced off' as the neglected space of industrial erosion. It is the alternative space of urbanization as an affirmative postmodern wilderness. These spaces are not without law, but rather are the spaces of the without-laws. The wild zone is an inevitability of urbanization in terms of relationship between economics and governmentality. The contemporary wild zone reflects both the impossibility of control within the global city and also alternative patterns of consumption (Stanley, 1997, p.37).

[2] I am using Althusser's broad definition of the state here, where the state is what the ruling class uses to ensure reproduction of the relations of production. Althusser splits the state into two separate sets of apparatuses. One he calls Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), which he defines as the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons. These function ultimately, massively and predominantly by violence, by force. These take over when the other set of State Apparatuses fail, and these he terms Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). In the category of Ideological State Apparatuses we find education, the family, the law, the parliamentary system, the trade unions, and the media (see Althusser, 1971).

sanctioned culture are invariably rejected by participants in contemporary dance culture. The vast majority of those participants that I have interviewed suggest that contemporary dance culture is a way of coping with the alienation that they feel from 'mainstream' society, talking in terms of creating their own culture, a culture that, albeit temporarily, breaks down hierarchies, and which feels like the distant pre-echo of a truly egalitarian culture. They accept that the dance scene is commercialised, and that they are being used to swell the profits of club owners and other commercial forces, but they still maintain that there are brief fleeting dance floor moments that empower them, that feel revolutionary to them. Contemporary dance culture provides a space for youth to protest against social inequality, and provides a space where, in the words of Angela McRobbie (the only significant academic working in contemporary cultural studies to support dance culture publicly) "young people, who are as yet unformed as adults, and relatively powerless as a result, can... impregnate a scornful, often condemning adult social order with the politics of their adolescent identities" (McRobbie, 1994a, p.3).

It might be suggested that dance culture is not oppositional, "not political enough", because dance culture is partially sanctioned by the state (in that the state allows some dance events to take place). There are two points to be made here:-

1.This view negates the Gramscian influence in contemporary cultural studies. Contemporary dance culture is a classic case of *negotiation*, whereby dominant class forces gain consent to lead by providing 'cultural space' for the activities of 'submissive' forces. This is precisely what Gramsci meant by hegemonic struggle. Within the space won through struggle, within the dance floor, the rules of contemporary dance culture, rather than the rules of the state, hold sway. This Gramscian analogy is useful. Many contemporary dance culture participants appear apathetic towards politics, yet become passionately opposed to the government and state when their cultural activities are outlawed and repressed, when the unspoken negotiated agreement is breached in order to rein in freedoms, to 'force' a new

consensus upon youth. In a sense one can draw a comparison between this analysis and some analyses of contemporary cultural studies when they talk about youth "territory", where young people have won 'cultural space' from the state and ruling order through struggle (see P. Cohen, 1972, Clarke, 1973, and Robins and Cohen, 1978).

2.This view, ironically, can be the result of an uncritical reading of Bakhtin himself, where Bakhtin attempts to present the carnival as autonomous from authority, rather than as an event at least partially sanctioned by medieval church and state. The medieval carnival was restricted both temporally and spatially. The situation is the same for contemporary dance culture; the dance floor carnival is bound by licensing laws which attempt to prevent events occurring outside licensed premises or outside licensed hours. Dance culture *is* partially sanctioned by the state, but, like the medieval people and their carnival, dance culture participants attempt to create "a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations..., a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.6).

Crucial to my analysis is the suggestion that dance culture is merely a temporary and only partially successful attempt to create an alternative 'oppositional' culture. The ideological and commercial forces of capitalism, and the legislative and repressive forces of the state, prevent this attempt from being entirely successful. Whilst the repressive forces of the state are poised and ready, contemporary dance culture is always aware that, "in the last instance", the space that it has won in negotiation can be reclaimed at any time, even if "the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes" (Althusser, 1969, p.113). To suggest otherwise would be to posit an idealist analysis that I reject entirely. However, the occupants of the dance floor on a Saturday night seem not to care about the pressures of the state and commercial forces bearing down upon their culture. Despite rising entrance prices for contemporary dance events, and despite commerce's partially successful attempts to repackage dance culture and sell it

back to the people that created it in the first place, the dance floor still seems to be a Temporarily Autonomous Zone, or, in Althusserian terms, a 'relatively autonomous zone' (see Althusser, 1969, and Althusser and Balibar, 1968, esp. pp.99-100)[3]. Whereas within Geoff Mungham's analysis of the dance floor social relations of the early 1970s "there is order and youth partakes of it gladly" (Mungham, 1976, p.92), the opposite now occurs, there is disorder and youth partakes of that even more gladly.

Through their rejection of 'mainstream' subjectivities, the occupants of the dance floor are, albeit briefly, united in resistance. Again, to extend our neo-Althusserian analysis, participants in dance culture refuse to accept the interpellative positions offered by ideology. The dance floor space is resistant to ideology. However the Academy often sees it as resistant to analysis. This is partly due to contemporary cultural studies' preference for the study of the social relations of production rather than consumption[4]. This inclination, allied to contemporary cultural studies' view of dance culture as purely a culture of consumption, implicitly links the dance floor with an acceptance of a dominant ideological discourse. There are three fundamental problems with this analysis:-

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[3] It should be acknowledged that, within Althusser's essay 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' (see Althusser, 1969), the phrase 'relative autonomy' means 'autonomous relative to', rather than 'more or less' or 'nearly' autonomous. However this is complicated by Althusser's insistence that cultural superstructures are determined by the economic base or infrastructure "in the last instance". It could be suggested that Althusser's own position is contradictory, and that Althusser wants it both ways; he wants to give an independent determining power to the superstructures, as well as maintaining his materialist credentials. This internal contradiction is never resolved within Althusser's work, and has been at the root of many of the battles between Althusserians and Marxists from other traditions (for example see Clarke *et al*, 1980).

[4] An example of this is the continuing centrality within youth culture studies of Paul Willis's research on school culture, which suggests that delinquency among school children fulfilled a central role in capitalism by providing continuing waves of unskilled manual workers (Willis, 1977).

1.Contemporary dance culture should be viewed as a combination of both production and consumption, it is neither one nor the other.

2.As we have seen in chapter 1 the role of consumption within dance culture is qualitatively different to the role of consumption within 'mainstream' cultures. 'Consuming' the music at, for example, an illegal party, where there is no entrance fee, is vastly different to buying a compact disc in a high street shop. 'Consuming' drugs at such a party is also different from buying a drink in a licensed Public House. In ignoring issues around youth consumption, contemporary cultural studies does dance culture a disservice. Frank Coffield (Professor of Education at the University of Durham) and Les Gofton (lecturer in Behavioural Science at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne) see issues around consumption as being central to youth culture in general, and drug culture specifically;

> In the absence of regular, decent employment, young people construct their identities through *consumption*; hence the importance of a particular make of trainer to define status and develop style. The most important task for young people in a post-modern society is to learn how to consume. Thus goods such as alcoholic drinks, drugs, clothes and music are all used to explore individual identities (Coffield and Gofton, 1994, p.23).

To ignore issues around consumerism is therefore to rob young people of their identities.

3.All cultural texts and practices are worthy of analysis. Contemporary cultural studies has often been premised upon a rejection of high/low culture distinctions, and a willingness to study cultural texts that are perceived by common-sense discourse to be of low cultural worth. To ignore texts produced by contemporary dance culture, and to ignore the cultural practice of raving, is to suggest that contemporary dance

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culture is the lowest of the low, and outside the grand remit of academia. Again Bakhtin is useful in rebutting this position; notwithstanding the sanctions of official law, both contemporary dance culture and the medieval carnival are "a certain form of life, which... [is] real and ideal at the same time..., on the borderline between life and art, in a particular midzone as it were" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.8). Contemporary dance culture breaks down the bourgeois binary opposition of high and low. It is both socially inclusive and avant-garde, it is both formulaic and unstructured. Here a connection can be made to George Melly's analysis of pop, a culture that "succeeded in blurring the boundaries between itself and traditional or high culture" (Melly, 1970, p.4). Simon Frith and Jon Savage appear to agree; "dance acts like Orbital or Derrick May draw a more accurate map of the 1992 body - its formation in and by the contemporary experience of desire and space - than any 'fine' artist we can think of" (Frith and Savage, 1997, p.15).

Taking the analogy with Bakhtin further, we can see certain aspects of the 'traditional' nightclub[5] in the official festivals of the middle ages, where, Bakhtin tells us,

> the official feast asserted all that was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions. It was the triumph of a truth already established, the predominant truth that was put forward as eternal and indisputable (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.9).

Louis Althusser describes this process as the reproduction of the social relations of production (see Althusser, 1971). Within the traditional 'mainstream' nightclub

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[5] By 'mainstream nightclub' I mean those clubs whose lineage can be traced back to the British discotheques of the 1960s and 1970s. The contemporary British dance club can be traced back no further than the acid house and rave movements of the late 1980s. Qualitative differences are too numerous to mention, but are succinctly described by contemporary dance culture as 'mainstream' and 'underground'.

reproduction of gender relationships takes place, with spatial relationships, and verbal and physical interaction working towards the reproduction of the status quo. However, these clubs are anathema to participants in contemporary dance culture. Within contemporary dance culture there is an attempt to ignore gender, where styles of dance and physical interaction are, to a certain extent, beyond gender. In previous social relations of youth culture, dancing was "inextricably linked to femininity", and seen by men as "an unfortunate prerequisite to courtship" (McRobbie, 1984, p.143). Contemporary dance culture rejects this notion, with Steve Redhead describing

> a fracturing of the conventions which have commonly structured the body in dance in pop history. Instead of, as usual, the female body being subjected to the ever-present 'look', the dancers... turned in on themselves, imploding the meanings previously associated with exhibitionist dance. In Acid House, and connected scenes, dancing no longer solely represented the erotic display of the body (Redhead, 1990, p.6).

Within the contemporary dance floor intimate physical contact can take place without respect to gender, and signs of affection are not necessarily sexually oriented. This qualitative shift within dance culture cannot be over-emphasised; whereas in pre-acid nightclubs, sexual relations involved "the mechanics of pure sexual attraction rather than the more roundabout rituals of courtship" (Sandall, 1991), nowadays this process is peripheral to the dance experience[6]. Mary Anna Wright agrees, suggesting that an albeit brief liberation from traditional gender relations is *the* enduring legacy of contemporary dance culture;

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[6] The Mass-Observation group of the 1930s were perhaps ahead of their time in noticing precursors to this contemporary shift; "the old element of sexual approach still exists in the dance, but the new form gives dancing a new meaning. The dance is a partial substitute for more intimate sex relations" (Cross, 1990, p.174).

at one of the first dance nights I went to I fumed to myself as I felt the man behind me blowing on my shoulders. I tried to ignore him but he started rubbing ice over me. As I turned he started giggling and moved to do the same to a man standing near, who appreciated the efforts to cool him off... Such gender-free utopias may only be short lived, but the memories of the experience are longer lasting (Wright, 1998, p.240)

This process whereby traditional gender relations are diminished has been intensified and accelerated by the massive social and cultural shifts that derive from fear of HIV infection, and by a culture that shuns the gender relations of previous generations. This is not to say that previous dance cultures were *entirely* based around courtship, or that courtship is *entirely* absent from contemporary dance culture, merely that, within the latter, emphasis is placed upon musical appreciation, self-expression and communality. A Bakhtinian analysis does not suggest that contemporary dance culture has successfully altered gender relationships, merely that, within the spatial and temporal limitations of the contemporary dance floor, there is an overriding tendency to subvert traditional relationships. Perhaps, "in the last instance", economic forces from outside contemporary dance culture, through Ideological State Apparatuses, will crush the politics of raving, but, in the meantime, contemporary dance culture is still fighting a political battle, although, hopefully, "the lonely hour of the 'last instance'" will never arrive.

The contemporary dance floor, like the carnival, celebrates a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order", and marks "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.10). This quotation from Bakhtin is a useful one; it highlights the temporality of the dance floor, whilst also acknowledging carnival's resistance to 'mainstream' values. McRobbie describes the changes in subjectivity within contemporary dance culture;

the atmosphere is one of unity, of dissolving difference in the peace and harmony haze of the drug Ecstasy... The irony of this present social moment is that working-class boys lose their 'aggro' and become 'new men' not through the critique of masculinity which accompanies... changing modes of femininity..., but through the use of Ecstasy they undergo a conversion to the soft, the malleable, and the sociable rather than the antisocial, and through the most addictive pleasures of dance they also enter into a different relationship with their own bodies, more tactile, more sensuous, less focused around sexual gratification... Rave favours groups and friends rather than couples or those in search of a partner (McRobbie, 1993, p.419)[7].

Whereas previously dance was "an absorbing and pleasurable activity in its own right" for women, within contemporary dance culture men have shown that they are willing to experiment with dance's auto-erotic elements, using dance as communication and communion. Whereas in previous social relations of dance "the [male] youth at the dance was remarkably undemonstrative, except when drifting towards heavy drinking or actual drunkenness" (Mungham, 1976, pp.95-96), on the contemporary dance floor

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[7] Simon Reynolds puts forward the same view, but suggests that at its extremes, the asexual impulse of Ecstasy can lead to a misogynist homo-eroticism;

> Speed/ecstasy doesn't negate the body, it intensifies the pleasure of physical expression while completely emptying out the sexual content of dance; it allows a 'regression' to the polymorphous 'body without organs' of infancy. Particularly for me, the drug/music interface acts to dephallicize the body and open it up to enraptured, abandoned, 'effeminate' gestures. But removing the heterosexist impulse can mean that women are rendered dispensable... There's a sense in which E, by feminizing the man, allows him to access *jouissance* independently rather than seek it through women (Reynolds, 1997, p.107).

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expressiveness through the body is a major aim of dance, and alcohol consumption is unfashionable[8].

The unstructured and liberating forms of contemporary dance also echo the special type of communication that Bakhtin suggests occurred during the medieval carnival. Like carnival speech, contemporary dance styles, and the other interactions that take place within the space of the dance floor, "liberate from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times", with contemporary dance demanding "ever changing, playful, undefined forms" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.10-11). Ecstatic interpersonal relations on the dance floor, and their play with different relations and forms of being, are distant relatives of medieval carnival laughter, described by Bakhtin as "not an individual reaction to some isolated 'comic' event... [but] the laughter of all the people... It is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.11).

The facially and physically expressed joy of the dance floor is also non-specific and non-referential, it is aimed at the communality of the dance floor itself. As the musicologist Phillip Tagg has stated

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[8] For instance, the phrase 'beer monster' is used to refer to those male youths who disrupt contemporary dance clubs with drunken behaviour, with Matthew Collin and John Godfrey suggesting that Ecstasy consumers in the mid-1990s "looked down on 'beer monsters' as lumbering, clumsy, unenlightened, potentially violent and likely to harass women on the dance floor" (Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.274, see also Cavanagh, 1994, p.13). Coffield and Gofton also notice this phenomenon;

> many raves do not involve drinking. Some devotees of the rave scene assert that drinking is antithetical to the ethos of the rave, which is based around 'peaceful, love feelings' - or was until recently. 'Beer monsters' have no place here. For one group, at least, their drug related leisure activities arise out of a rejection of alcohol drinking (Coffield and Gofton, 1994, p.14).

rave is something you immerse yourself into together with other people. There is no guitar hero or rock star or corresponding musical-structural figures to identify with, you just 'shake your bum off' from inside the music. You are just one of many other individuals who constitute the musical whole, the whole ground - musical and social - on which you stand... Polarising the issue, you could say that perhaps techno-rave puts an end to nearly four hundred years of the great bourgeois individualism in music, starting with Peri and Monteverdi and culminating in Parker, Hendrix and - Lord preserve us - Brian May, Whitney Houston and the TV spot for Bodyform sanitary towels (Tagg, 1994, p.219).

Bakhtin suggests that the carnival "does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators..., they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.7). Here an uncritical application of Bakhtin can lead to a problematic analysis. Just because the *principle* of carnival, or in our analysis contemporary dance culture, involves everyone, then the practice need not necessarily do so. It is essentialist, and consequently idealist, to equate practice with concept. *In principle*, contemporary dance culture is an inclusive culture, and many of the participants that I have interviewed talk of how open and friendly dance culture is, how class, sex, and race (the holy trinity of social divisions worshipped by many contemporary cultural studies' scholars) seem irrelevant on the dance floor. Perhaps it could be suggested that contemporary cultural studies' reluctance to study dance culture is because here is a culture that, at least in principle, fleetingly denies the existence of those social divisions that many academics are so adept at discovering. However this is not to suggest that there are not elements of dance culture that do discriminate. Equally, to state that a principle of contemporary dance culture is to eradicate divisions between actors and spectators is not necessarily suggesting that contemporary dance culture is completely successful in achieving this aim. To suggest that, for instance, there are no spectators at dance events, ignores the often omnipresent plain-clothed police, bouncers

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and club owners who regularly prowl the outer reaches of the dance floor. What needs to be stated however is that contemporary dance culture disapproves of this; unlike previous dance forms, contemporary dance culture is, *in principle*, participatory[9].

Bakhtin's description of the carnival is of an event subject only to "the laws of its own freedom" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.7). Again, this is idealist, and again, if used in our analysis of contemporary dance culture, an overstatement. Dance events are obliged to abide by licensing laws and public performance laws, with a majority of events largely complying with statutory regulations, and a minority consciously and overtly flouting the law[10]. Some academics might well take this partial authorisation by the state, and partial compliance on the part of contemporary dance culture, as proof that contemporary dance culture is apolitical or consumerist. This ignores the fact that, *in principle*, contemporary dance culture is antithetical to authority. To suggest that it is

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[9] This factor can be contrasted with, for instance, the Mass-Observation group's observations on dancing in Blackpool in the 1930s

> Each evening during the summer, some 5,000 people go to the Tower Ballroom not to dance but to watch other people dancing. They go as early as 5:30 to get seats in the balconies and on the ballroom floor to watch the Children's Ballet which begins two hours later. When the performance is over, the majority of them stay in their seats simply to watch the dancers and to hear Reginald Dixon. The audience is composed of middle-aged people and family groups. They have little to say, but sit watching the floor below them just as they sit on the promenade or the beach watching the sea in front of them. Observers asked them why they watch the dancing. Like the dancers themselves, they usually did not know (Cross, 1990, p.174).

[10] Rietveld, in an albeit brief analysis of house music events from a 'neo-Bakhtinian' perspective, makes the same point; that in reality regulatory authorities and discourses *do* impact on "the festival 'spirit'";

> a house music event is very much dependent on an 'unregimented' interaction between its participants. Therefore, regulating licensing laws as well as increasingly sophisticated methods of surveillance by the state and a growing information industry can be conceived of as an over-production of interference with a festival 'spirit' (Rietveld, 1998a, p.167).

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not entirely successful in resisting legal and commercial discourses (or in Althusserian terms RSAs and ISAs) is not to suggest that dance culture is in willing submission. *There is a struggle between dance culture and agents of the state*; if there were not, it would not be a criminal offence to organise, or attend, unlicensed dance events.

This section has shown us how an application of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin can be used to counter the suggestion that contemporary dance culture is apolitical and consumerist. I have done this through an examination of contemporary dance culture's rejection of the social categorisations offered by 'mainstream' society. As McRobbie suggests, contemporary dance culture offers "a suspension of categories, there is not such a rigid demarcation along age, class, ethnic terms. Gender is blurred and sexual preference less homogeneously heterosexual" (McRobbie, 1984, p.146). In resistance to ideology, the participants of dance culture have created their own alternative social organisation, and whilst on the dance floor have also created their own alternative subjectivities. The dance floor carnival is therefore about defining itself in rejection to 'the mainstream', it is about an otherness that highlights the fact that social roles are constructed and ideological, rather than natural and apolitical.

Televisual Representations of the Contemporary Dance floor

In the previous section I introduced the reader to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. In particular I made an analogy between the medieval carnival and contemporary dance culture. The previous section was therefore a prelude to this section, which draws an analogy between televisual representations of the contemporary dance floor (BPM) and textual representations of the carnival (carnivalesque literature). This section therefore directly addresses the third aim of this thesis (the critical examination of televisual discourse on contemporary dance culture). In both the previous and following sections I am also addressing the 'secondary aim' of this thesis (the re-appropriation of 'neglected' or 'forgotten' theorists), as well as also partially addressing the second aim of this thesis (the countering of contemporary cultural studies' discourse on

contemporary dance culture). Mikhail Bakhtin is frequently used in literary studies, but rarely used within the field of media studies or contemporary cultural studies. When Bakhtin is used in the latter field (such as in the work of John Fiske) his work is misanalysed and misappropriated. The previous and following sections redress this.

What links televisual discourse with contemporary cultural studies' discourse is an unwillingness and inability to represent contemporary dance culture (in particular an unwillingness to represent contemporary dance culture in a positive light). As McRobbie suggests, "if dance exists and has existed as a mass popular leisure activity, and if in turn it has gone largely unconsidered by sociologists and social historians, the same holds true for images of dance and for the way dance finds itself inscribed in other visual texts" (McRobbie, 1984, p.133). British youth television, and its representations of contemporary youth cultures, have been particularly under-theorised, with the exception of work by Simon Frith (see Frith *et al*, 1993).

Youth television's representations of contemporary dance culture can be split between two sub-genres. Youth television texts such as <u>BPM</u>, <u>Hypnosis</u>, and <u>Club Nation</u> use dance clubs as their textual referent, with footage taken in dance clubs from around the country. Here the spatial and temporal relationships of the dance floor are shifted, a time shift is made to the time of broadcast, and a spatial shift fits the dance floor within the gaze of the television camera, compressing it into a television set sited within the realm of 'domestic ideology'.

Sean Cubitt describes <u>Top of The Pops</u> as trying to fit "the larger-than-life world of pop in the little box in the corner of the living room" (Cubitt, 1984, p.47). The same can be said of the sub-genre of youth programming that deals with contemporary dance culture[11]. The oppositional subjectivities on offer on the dance floor are at least

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[11] We can also apply Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen's comments concerning 'traditional' forms of dance when they suggest that participants in dance frequently consider that televisual representations of dance "fail to re-present the *live* experience" (Jordan and Allen, 1993b, p.ix). Jordan and Allen go

partially lost within televisual representation, whilst, at the same time, it could be suggested that the mechanisms for reproduction of the social relations of production are present, but hidden. The 'language' of television is vastly different from the language of the dance floor, and this factor prevents a clear translation of event to text.

The ideological nature of televisual representations of dance culture is heightened by the formal impression of disposability that television discourse attaches to contemporary dance culture, a discourse that attempts to position dance culture as merely one choice in what Stuart Hall has termed the "domestic-consumer-orientated modern economy" (Hall *et al*, 1978, p.229). Whilst the producers of television programmes such as <u>BPM</u> might view dance culture as politically resistant and of cultural value, the institutional structures of the broadcasting system as a whole do not, and merely wish to tap into the credibility of dance culture to exploit it for profit. Dance culture participants vehemently oppose this commercialisation; for them dance culture is not merely one leisure activity chosen from a range of others, but is a distinct culture separate from the rest of society. The institutional and textual discourses of television that suggest that dance culture is disposable weaken dance culture's position as a deviant 'other', thereby weakening its political resistance. Whilst contemporary dance culture positions itself as resistant to (or, to put it another way, accepts the oppositional positioning of) common-sense discourse, televisual representations of the dance floor reverse this process. They draw dance culture back within common-sense discourse, hiding the qualitative differences between contemporary dance and previous forms. The dance floor on the screen, like the officially sanctioned carnivalesque literature of the seventeenth century, has turned the carnival into a 'parade'. Like the parade, and to paraphrase Bakhtin, contemporary dance culture on television is brought into the home and becomes part of the private life of the family. The privileges

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further, and suggest that the "act of choosing leads, inevitably, to the fact that all dance seen on television has been constructed through the selection, recording and re-ordering of the primary activity of dancing" (Jordan and Allen, 1993b, pp.xi-xii).

formerly allowed in the carnival are more and more restricted; "the carnival spirit with its freedom, its utopian character orientated toward the future..., [is] gradually transformed into a mere holiday mood" (see Bakhtin, 1984a, p.33).

The cerebral pleasures of the carnivalesque dance floor are not entirely lost in the process of representation; they are visible to the eye, but the bodily sensuality of the dance floor is gone. The subjectivities on offer to the occupant of the dance floor are not available to the viewer at home, who becomes a spectator from a distance; "shifted from public sphere to the bourgeois home..., carnival ceases to be a site of actual struggle" (Wills, 1989, p.131). Youth culture has fought for a space for its own activities, and the result of this fight is contemporary dance culture. To take dance culture from its 'natural' environment and to re-site it in the bourgeois home is to change its context to such an extent as to irrevocably weaken its resistive power.

Television's representations of the dance floor result, as Sean Cubitt suggests, in "a sanitising of pop music's sexuality and rebellion, a miniaturisation of its torment, thrills and excesses" (Cubitt, 1984, p.47). Whilst the contemporary dance floor offers "an extreme barrage of the senses" (Russell, 1993, p.122) with its strobe lighting, thick smoke, and dense soundscapes, the viewer at home has to make do with a two-dimensional representational scale, and sound through a television speaker primarily designed for the reproduction of speech, not music. This is particularly the case with the 'youth audience', unable to afford 'NICAM' digital stereo reception equipment. The youth television viewer is the 'spectator' of dance culture, and, as suggested in the previous section, spectatorship is antithetical to the principle, if not the practice, of the carnival[12].

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[12] This is not to suggest that young people don't enjoy watching such programmes. As Sarah Thornton suggests "youth subcultures aren't 'anti-television'... Music-orientated television programs which tie into club culture... have not accrued the connotations of Top of the Pops." (Thornton, 1994, p.180). Youth television's representations of contemporary dance culture are enjoyable, but this does not necessarily

Running alongside the de-carnivalising nature of televisual discourse is the gendered gaze of the television camera, which, as McRobbie puts it, "confirms and illustrates the convention of dance as sexual invitation" (McRobbie, 1984, p.139). The gendered gaze inevitably arises within the institutional and discursive structures of television production. In particular, the structure of the televisual shot coincides with the male gaze, or mode of looking. Women are taken out of the participatory and liberatory social relations of the dance floor and positioned as objects of the male gaze. As John Fiske and John Hartley suggest "the dance of sexual display *naturalises* our view of women as sex-objects by showing it to be part of the social structure and thus acceptable on the fireside screen" (Fiske and Hartley, 1993, p.45, see also Lange, 1975).

An analogy can be drawn here between my analysis, and Angela McRobbie's work on the film Flashdance. In her analysis, McRobbie looks at how the male gaze of the camera objectifies the female dancers in the film, and suggests that

> when women's bodies are used in these contexts it is inevitably to help sell some product. Selling and serving have always been women's work and young women have been at the forefront in the drive to sell, to advertise and to attract consumers (McRobbie, 1984, p.138).

In the case of BPM the effect of this is even more jarring, when products, such as the ubiquitous 'chat line' advertisements that pepper late-night and early-morning television, are selling 'happiness' as a cure for loneliness. Rather than the straight financial transaction of the film-goer, within television all manner of products are being

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mean that they are not ideological, that they are not part of a process that destroys the resistive politics of the contemporary dance floor.

sold to all manner of viewers, whilst the dancers themselves are 'sold' to the viewers, and the viewers are sold *en masse*, and in advance, to advertisers.

Ann Jefferson suggests that

> there is nothing that inherently protects carnival from its potential vulnerability to an observing gaze. Its participants can always be transformed from active and equal subjects into the objects of a representation constructed by an author who places himself above or beyond the scene of carnival. In fact authoring is by its very nature a decarnivalising activity, for its authorial perspective and the demarcations between observer and participants are against the whole spirit of carnival... This indicates, first, that carnival does indeed create a different order of human relations from those constructed by and associated with representation, and second, that carnival may therefore constitute some kind of solution to the *impasse* of representation (Jefferson, 1989, p.165, see also Stallybrass and White, 1986, pp.118-148).

One specific effect of observing the carnival is to conform to the bourgeois individualism that contemporary dance culture seeks to reject. As the reception studies approach to television pioneered by Brundson and Morley suggests, the 'individual' television reader is joint author of the meaning of the television text[13]. Within this authoring process, the radical notion of the supra-individual, the collectivity of the dance floor, is lost. Dance culture's power to break down the boundaries between the

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[13] For a general summary of this field, see Morley, 1992.

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observer and the observed, "where the body is neither the subject of self-expression nor the object of the gaze" (Melechi, 1993, p.33-4)[14], is destroyed.

Within contemporary dance culture the object/subject dualism is broken down, resulting in the physical materiality of a 'communal body'[15]. Participants in contemporary dance culture "lose subjective belief in their self and merge into a collective body" (Jordan, 1995, p.125). On the one hand contemporary dance culture's concentration on the body, and the breaking down of barriers *between* bodies, mocks capitalist individualism and the reified individual[16]. On the other hand televisual

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[14] Although this quotation originally referred to a particular sub-section of dance culture, within a specific historical moment, Melechi's analysis is still valid when used in an analysis of contemporary dance culture, of which acid house was the primary precursor.

[15] My use of the phrase 'communal body" is related to Bakhtin's body of "grotesque realism". I have chosen a different term to emphasise the shift in referent between the medieval carnival and the contemporary dance floor, but the basic functions and attributes remain the same. For example the following quotation can be easily adapted and used to describe the actions of the communal body of the contemporary dance floor:

> In grotesque realism... the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people... [T]his is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualised. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are constantly growing and renewed (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.19, also quoted in Jefferson, 1989, p.166).

[16] Herbert Marcuse, in an essay entitled 'hedonism', explains how class relations create this cult of the individual, and lead to the reification of human relations:

> In this society, all human relationships transcending immediate encounter are not relations of happiness: especially not relationships in the labor process, which is regulated with regard not to the needs and capacities of individuals but rather of capital and the production of commodities. Human relations are class relations, and their typical form is the free labor contract. This contractual character of human relationships has spread from the sphere of production to all of social life.

discourses *reaffirm* the subject/object distinction, and in doing so reaffirm individualism, with the resulting isolation of the individual leading to the loneliness mentioned earlier.

The reaffirmation of the subject/object dualism (and the concurrent 'deaffirmation' of the collective body) also has relevance for our analysis of the gaze. Ann Jefferson points out that

> the self (subject) experiences himself and the world quite differently from the way in which he is experienced and perceived by others, and this difference is centred on the body. The subject's position in the world is determined by his body, and it is from its vantage point that his gaze embraces a world which sees as if from a frontier (Jefferson, 1989, p.154)

Subsumed within the collective body the invisible 'individual' (in inverted commas for he/she does not exist in principle, only in analysis or observed by a 'real' individual, watching from the sidelines) has no gaze, gendered or otherwise. Whereas within the outside world "I am situated as it were on the border of the world I see; in plastic-pictural terms I have no relation to it" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.30), on the dance floor the border between self and other is collapsed. Subsumed within the collective body,

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> Relationships function only in their reified form, mediated through the class distribution of the material output of the contractual partners. If this functional depersonalization were ever breached, not merely by that back-slapping familiarity which only underscores the reciprocal functional distance separating men but rather by mutual concern and solidarity, it would be impossible for men to return to their normal social functions and positions. The contractual structure upon which this society is based would be broken (Marcuse, 1968, p.164).

Dance culture does, albeit temporarily, break the "contractual structure" of society, and it is for this reason that is criminalised and attacked by the state, its allies in the media, and common-sense discourse.

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the 'individual' can jettison gendered modes of looking, he or she is no longer defined as an observer (and therefore defined as a member of 'the mainstream') but becomes part of the dance floor.

In Bakhtin's analysis of the carnival, the individual's body is downgraded. The supra-individual nature of the communal body alleviates the necessity for communication between subjectivities; 'individuals', previously autonomous, are subsumed within the carnival body. Whilst the occupant of the dance floor is attempting to disappear into the communal body, the gaze of the television camera prevents this. Whilst the dancer remains aware of the omnipresent camera, disappearance is impossible. Short of using covert cameras (a practical impossibility with contemporary technology and decidedly unethical as well) television will never be able to avoid interfering with the mechanisms of the dance floor whilst filming, particularly in relation to those clubs and events that are shrouded in smoke and feature a darkened dance floor.

Other youth television texts such as The Word, Juice, and Dance Energy use non-professional and professional dancers in an attempt to recreate the dance floor 'atmosphere' within the television studio, with dancers representing the forms of dance and the relationships of the dance floor. However the aura of rebellion and resistance that is perceptible on the dance floor is lost, the official sanctioning of the broadcasting industry and the omnipresent cameras lead to a self-consciousness on the part of the dancers. The spatial and temporal relations of the television studio prove to be a pastiche in the Jamesonian sense, a blank parody of the dance floor (see Jameson, 1984). The link that exists in BPM to the actual dance floor is lost, and the result is the same as when medieval carnivalesque literature lost its ties with folk culture, where carnival laughter was "cut down to cold humor, irony, sarcasm. It ceased to be a joyful and triumphant hilarity. Its positive regenerating power was reduced to a minimum" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.38).

Some academic theorists, notably John Fiske, have attributed aspects of the carnival to the television text itself (see especially Fiske, 1987, pp.240-264). This is a crucial error, for the carnival is the event lived by the people, and representations of the carnival, are, at best, a diluted alternative, and, at worst, mock the dance floor carnival[17]. Fiske introduces us to the notion of television as 'lived culture', but even if, for a moment, we accept this notion, then we must ask ourselves where is this culture lived? The positioning of the television set within the privatised sphere of home and family must limit the decoding potential of any set of televisual signifiers. To shift context from the 'temporary autonomous zone' of the dance floor to the private space of the home inevitably shifts meaning into the domain of 'domestic ideologies'. Bakhtin himself placed great emphasis on 'particularity' and 'situatedness', and on relations between time and space (see Holquist, 1990, pp.12-13), so for Fiske to appropriate Bakhtin's analyses and pay so little attention to location is a severe methodological flaw.

Fiske himself admits in a later essay that "notions of *jouissance* and affective pleasure require an intensity of viewing and a loss of subjectivity that do not accord with television's typical modes of reception. Television is not an orgasmic medium" (Fiske, 1989, p.71). The phraseology of Fiske echoes McLuhan's hot/cold distinction (see McLuhan, 1964) with an essentialism and technological determinism worthy of Baudrillard. The intensity of the contemporary dance floor is itself beyond such Barthesian notions[18]. The concepts of *plaisir* and *jouissance* uphold the binary

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[17] As Clair Wills suggests "it appears a mostly compensatory gesture when critics enthuse about the 'carnival*esque*' they find in the latest (post-)modernist novel. Surely they can't really confuse reading a good book with the experience of carnival grounded in the collective activity of the people?" (Wills, 1989, p.130). Unfortunately this is precisely what Fiske does with his analysis of 'carnivalesque' television.

[18] Barthes himself recognises that when the body becomes a sign or image it loses its radicalism and is subsumed within bourgeois ideology. Michael Moriarty's reading of Barthes' Mythologies acknowledges

opposition between mind and genitally centred body. Describing the pleasures of the carnival body as belonging to the realm of *jouissance* is inappropriate. *Jouissance* emphasises genital orgasm, whilst also emphasising the dismemberment of the body; "it is only as fragment and fetish that it interests and excites" (Jefferson, 1989, p.171, see also Barthes, 1975). Contemporary dance culture, and the carnival body, are closer to the Freudian pre-Oedipal state of polymorphous perversity[19] than the post-Oedipal mind/body dualism[20]. It should also be borne in mind that in Barthes' The Pleasure of the Text *jouissant* reactions to texts are not possible at the present. The idea of the text of *jouissance* is but a prediction on the part of Barthes, and, as John Sturrock suggests, "Barthes is a disappointing prophet" (Sturrock, 1979, p.72).

The fragmentation of the body and the binary opposition between mind and body is an analysis that should be rejected. Bakhtin was tutored within the neo-Kantian tradition, a tradition that emphasised the *connections* between notions such as sensibility and understanding, physical sensation and mental concepts, mind and body (see Holquist, 1990, ch.1). As a result of this a Bakhtinian analysis is particularly interested in

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this, with Moriarty stating that "the body is particularly prone to mythical appropriation, for it can so easily appear as the natural basis of an (ideological) representation" (Moriarty, 1991, p.188).

[19] Rietveld suggests that MDMA is a primary determinant in this process, stating that, "as an entactogenic drug, MDMA makes the skin subtly sensitive, creating a higher sense of tactility. This may affect the user's sexual feelings, which in Freudian terms may best be described as being polymorphous, having returned to the mental state of an infant which can not yet speak" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.181, see also Rietveld, 1993).

[20] Simon Reynolds would appear to agree, but suggests that pre-oedipal infancy is entirely *jouissant*, thereby implying that, come socialisation, it comes into conflict with cerebral *plaisir*:

> Arguably one of the few truly new and 'subversive' aspects of rave is that it's the first youth subculture that's not based around the notion that sex is transgressive. Rejecting all that old-hat sixties apparatus of libidinal liberation, and recoiling from our sex-saturated popular culture, rave instead locates *jouissance* in pre-pubescent childhood or pre-Oedipal infancy (Reynolds, 1997, p.106).

examining the *dialogue* between the mind and the body, rather than emphasising their separateness. The contemporary dance floor experience, particularly when heightened by amphetamine-based stimulants such as Ecstasy, breaks down the mind/body dualism, with a bodily sexuality beyond bourgeois individuality[21].

Television is not 'a carnival' because it is not strictly participatory. Although television viewers are participants in the creation of meaning, they are not active participants in the creation of the initial signifiers of the television text[22]. The issue is not, as it is for Fiske, merely about the production of meaning, but is also concerned with the struggle for control of the production of textual signifiers. Television texts are not produced by contemporary dance culture, although they require an audience (in the case of <u>BPM</u> dance culture itself) for textual closure. Structuralism has taught us how a particular *parole* or speech act only has meaning through its position within a *langue* or language. The result of this is that when we speak what we say can be "considered as potentially having already been said" (McRobbie, 1994c, p.194, see also Barthes, 1957 and Barthes, 1964), and we find ourselves trapped within "the prison-house of language" (Jameson, 1972). 'Translated' into television the dance floor is trapped within the prison house of televisual discourse.

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[21] Martin Jay sees a similar theme in a review by Theodor Adorno. According to Adorno jazz led the suppression of genitally centred sexuality, and therefore provided "a foretaste of the social order beyond patriarchal authoritarianism" (Jay, 1973, p.188, see also Adorno, 1941, p.123). This is rare praise indeed, considering Adorno's well-documented antipathy to all forms of jazz music.

[22] This can be directly contrasted with the dance floor, where participants are active in the production of the dance floor 'text'. Without a horde of dancers, the producer, the DJ, the promoter and everyone else are useless. Adam Brown expands upon this

> raves support the argument that the audience, the consumer, can also be the producer... The crowd is not just a collection of passive individuals who have little or no impact upon the 'event' which is being consumed; they are integral to it. Raves without 'consumers'..., lose their social (and democratic) meaning: they are 'living cultures' made possible only by those who attend them (Brown, 1997, p.96).

Fiske points to Barthes' claim that wrestling is a contemporary carnivalesque activity (see Barthes, 1973, p.20), and then attempts to make the same claim for wrestling's televisual representation, without the significant change of analysis that is necessary, and should be expected, with such a major shift of analytic referent. Fiske describes the carnival as having "[an] insistence on the materiality of the signifier,... its excessiveness, its ability to offend good taste" (Fiske, 1987, p.249). Yet Fiske's analysis of the television text denies this materiality, all Fiske achieves is an extension of the boundaries of the definition of good taste, without accepting that, for instance, wrestling, or indeed contemporary dance culture, do indeed offend and oppose this discursive category. Another major problem with Fiske's claim is that to emphasise the importance of signifiers is to downplay the importance of textual signifieds. In doing so Fiske places the producer over and above the textual reader, whilst claiming elsewhere that the textual reader is all-powerful. I do not wish to separate signifier and signified within my analysis, and within the following section I will show how the relationship between signifier and signified within televisual representations of contemporary dance culture is not one of dominant and dominated, but is equal and *homologous*. Although not mentioned by name, Fiske is obviously one of those critics that would fit into Beverly Cook's categorisation as arguing "for a type of pluralistic, value relativism which seeks to discern only the 'differences' among cultural texts, as opposed to designating some texts as better than others, for fear of 'essentializing' one definition of cultural value to the exclusion of others" (Cook, 1997, p.25).

Fiske does not acknowledge that the materiality of the signifier is fundamentally altered when represented on television. It has been argued that the televisual text is polysemic, not least due to the importance of the reader's subjectivity as a primary determinant of meaning, and Fiske himself has been an important force in asserting the power of the viewer. For Fiske to claim that the signifieds of certain "carnivalesque" texts are unimportant in the creation of meaning, and that the textual signifier reigns supreme, is a negation of his initial theoretical position. Fiske's claim is curiously close

to the assertion of televisual discourse that its representations of dance culture capture the intensity of emotion and sensation present at contemporary dance events, that, in Fiske's terms, there is no difference between "the real and its representation" (see Fiske, 1987b, p.151). Both Fiske's analysis, and television's representations, are, to a certain extent, misleading in their suggestion that textual representations of contemporary carnivals are the same as the lived event.

Dance Culture, Music and Television: A Goldmannian Analysis

In the previous section we saw how the work of Mikhail Bakhtin is of use in examining the relationship between a lived cultural form (in Bakhtin's case the carnival, in our case, contemporary dance culture) and its textual representation (in Bakhtin's case carnivalesque literature, in our case youth television and BPM). It is the aim of the following section to pull together some of the threads from this work on the textual representation of a lived culture to see if the work of Lucien Goldmann (in particular The Hidden God and Towards a Sociology of the Novel, Goldmann, 1964, and Goldmann, 1975) and Paul Willis (in particular Profane Culture, Willis, 1978) is of use in examining the relationship between contemporary dance culture, BPM, and its audience. Common-sense discourse suggests that dance music is mindless, and televisual representations of dance culture merely represent a simplistic leisure culture. This section will counter this in its suggestion that there is a homology[23] between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representation.

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[23] The use of the notion that there is a homologous relation between cultural texts and the society or culture that produced them originates in Marx's 1852 manuscript The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Marx, 1973), where Marx conceptualises a homologous relation between ideology, social class, the economy and cultural superstructures. In particular Marx suggests that the French Social Democrats of the time held views in keeping with petty bourgeois ideology, irrespective of whether or not they could actually be *economically* defined as petty bourgeois;

> one must not form the narrow-minded notion that the petty bourgeoisie, on principle, wishes to enforce an egoistic class interest. Just as little must one imagine that the

democratic representatives are indeed all shopkeepers or enthusiastic champions of shopkeepers. According to their education and their individual position they may be as far apart as heaven from earth. What makes them representatives of the petty bourgeoisie is the fact that in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically. This is, in general, the relationship between the *political* and *literary representatives* of a class and the class they represent (Marx, 1973, p.85).

Here Marx posits a relationship between ideology, social class, base and superstructure that is not simply reflective or economically determinist, but is homologous.

Writing in 1955, Lucien Goldmann extended the analysis of homologous structures, suggesting that there are homologies between the form of literary works and the "world view" of the class or sub-class fraction in which the writer is situated. Writing in The Hidden God (Goldmann, 1964), Goldmann shows how there is a homologous relation between the position of the *noblesse de la robe* in seventeenth century French society and the "tragic vision" found in the works of Pascal and Racine (Goldmann, 1964). Goldmann extended this notion in Towards a Sociology of the Novel (Goldmann, 1975) where, borrowing from The Theory of the Novel by Georg Lukács (Lukács, 1971), Goldmann examined the notion of literary form, suggesting that the meaning of a text is found not necessarily in the content of that text, but in its form. However, there is not a simple homology between literary form and the social consciousness of a class or sub-class fraction, rather novelistic form is

> *the transposition on the literary plane* of everyday life in the individualistic society created by market production. There is a *rigorous homology* between the literary form of the novel, as I have defined it with the help of Lukács and Girard, and the everyday relation between man and commodities in general, and by extension between men and other men, in a market society (Goldmann, 1975, p.7).

Whilst Goldmann privileges the novelistic form, Paul Willis took the notion of homology and used it within his PhD thesis to refer to the relationship between cultural artefacts and the social consciousness of two specific youth subcultures (Willis, 1972a). In the major book-length study that rose out of his PhD thesis, Willis states that a homologous relationship is

> concerned with how far, in their structure and content, particular items parallel and reflect the structure, style, typical concerns, attitudes and feelings of the social group. Where homologies are found they are best understood in terms of structure. It is the continuous play between the group and a particular item which produces specific

Before we engage directly with dance culture, it is worth noting that an analysis of homologous structures might well allow us to examine the extent to which young people consider themselves to be members of the 'youth television' audience; the extent to which there might be a homology between youth culture and youth television. John Hartley suggests that

> the institutional organization of the industry seems designed not to enter into active relations with audiences as already constituted trading partners, but on the contrary to *produce* audiences - to invent them in its own image for its own purposes (Hartley, 1987, p.134).

If this is the case, then some of the main premises of my research are invalidated. If we accept Hartley's argument, then the fact that the majority of viewers of a programme such as <u>BPM</u> are members of a specific youth culture (contemporary dance culture) is

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styles, meanings, contents and forms of consciousness. The artifact, object or institution in such a relationship must consistently serve the group at a number of levels with meanings, particular attitudes, bearings and certainties. It must help to support, return and substantiate particular kinds of social identity and the practice and application of particular kinds of sensibility - conscious and unconscious, voluntary and automatic. Items which have this kind of relationship to a social group are likely to be differentially sought out and pursued by, rather than simply randomly proximate to, a social group. We may say that all such items constitute the 'cultural field' of a social group... Homological analysis of a cultural relation is synchronic. It is not equipped to account for changes over time, or for the creation or disintegration, of homologies: it records the complex qualitative state of a cultural relationship as it is observed in one quantum of time (Willis, 1978, p.191).

Whilst this definition is useful, there is one specific problem with it. In suggesting that the cultural artefact must "support, return and substantiate" identity Willis is implicitly suggesting that identity is prior to culture. The relationship is not as one-way as Willis suggests, identity demands support from cultural artefacts because it does not exist outside culture itself. Clarke *et al* make the same mistake in their suggestion that cultural artefacts *reflect* "focal concerns" (Clarke *et al*, 1975, p.56).

not relevant. It would appear that, according to Hartley, the only social group that is important in the analysis of BPM is that social group created by the text within the process of viewing. Hartley takes this argument further, claiming that

> audiences are... invisible fictions that are produced institutionally in order for various institutions to take charge of the mechanisms of their own survival. Audiences may be imagined empirically, theoretically or politically, but in all cases the product is a fiction that serves the need of the imagining institution. In no case is the audience 'real', or external to its discursive construction. There is no 'actual' audience that lies beyond its production as a category (Hartley, 1987, p.126).

This is not the case when dealing with youth television. The social category of 'youth' is a discursive construct, and broadcasting institutions are only one component in an array of institutions and societal groups that help to create and give cultural value to this particular term.

Whilst it could be suggested that Hartley is arguing for a deconstruction of the notion of 'the audience' rather than specific audiences, such a suggestion is misleading, because *there is* such a thing as the 'audience' for BPM, as contemporary dance culture is a recognisable and definable social category. As Hartley himself admits "television as an industry is subject to certain market forces" (Hartley, 1987, p.134). As institutions that contribute to the creation of a social category of youth, Thornton suggests, quoting Bourdieu, that the media are central to the ways in which we "create groups with words" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.139, see also Thornton, 1994, p.176). However, even Thornton, who entirely rejects notions of dance culture as a culture of resistance,

does not go as far as suggesting that the media have single-handedly created the discourse of youth in circulation within society[24].

Hartley's central point is that there appears to be no correlation between the construct of a socio-empirical grouping and the discursive and textual construct of an audience. The difference between my analysis and Hartley's is that 'youth' is a socio-*discursive* construct rather than a socio-*empirical* one (it is not merely 'people between the ages

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[24] In a sense, my criticism of Hartley also ties in with my criticism of subcultural theory. There are two possible conclusions to Hartley's analysis. The first possible conclusion is that, by suggesting that the audience for BPM is an exclusive creation of televisual discourse, Hartley is guilty of homogenising that audience. As we saw in the previous footnote, Paul Willis is also guilty of this homogenisation by suggesting that "identity" is logically prior to culture. This is a form of essentialism that should be rejected, for the next step would be to ascribe attributes to the category of 'youth' that are prior to the people that instantiate them, and the culture that creates them. However, Willis does go some way to correcting this error in a later text, where he suggests that "popular music becomes one of the principal means by which young people define themselves" (Willis, 1990, p.69).

The second possible conclusion is that Hartley is implicitly criticising the aggressive targeting techniques in use within television institutions and the feeling of "being part of an audience" resulting from textual practices derived from them. Within this second scenario, Hartley is implying that these techniques are homogenising. Either of these conclusions suggests that the theoretical outlook of Hartley, or actions of television institutions themselves, lead to a homogeneity that simply does not exist. Subcultural theory within contemporary cultural studies would appear to do the same, in that it homogenises youth culture along class lines, and, at times, refuses to acknowledge the subtle differences within youth that cut across class differentials.

This has been highlighted by McRobbie in her critiques of subcultural theory. Within McRobbie's analysis gender can be seen to cut across class lines (see McRobbie, 1993). However, I would suggest that *both* the class-based and gender-based cultures of previous generations have broken down, single spectacular subcultures have splintered into micro-cultures with their own distinctive patterns and activities, many of which can be collected under the 'umbrella' term of contemporary dance culture. Although the youth audience can be 'labelled' as a single entity, it is actually far from this, it is a diverse collection of micro-cultures. It is an acknowledgement of this splintering that prevents the homogenisation of differing cultural practices that other theoretical approaches have led to. In particular, we have seen what McRobbie terms "a rejection of the primacy of the youth and social class couplet that underpinned the development of 'subcultural theory'" (McRobbie, 1994c, p.181).

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of 16 and 25'), and that there is a correlation between intended audience (the reader inscribed within the text) and actual audience. Youth television programmes such as BPM, and the advertisers that fund their production, are successful in attracting 'youthful' audiences[25].

Once we have suggested that there may be a homology between youth television and youth culture, we can go on to suggest that there may be a homology between BPM and contemporary dance culture. There is certainly a likeness between a "[textual] *form* itself and the *structure* of the social environment in which it developed" (Goldmann, 1975, p.6)[26]. To be a regular viewer of BPM is to be a member of contemporary dance culture, for in being a regular viewer of BPM one learns about some of the key aspects

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[25] Simon Potter confirms that the 'youth' element of BPM is discursive rather than empirical when he cites a letter from a Ted Gadsty, age 59, protesting at BPM being dropped from the schedules, with Gadsty stating "it's my weekly regeneration" (Potter, 1995).

[26] It is worth noting at this point that the author of a cultural text need not be aware of the meaning inherent within the text's structure. Here the Goldmannian analysis is a direct reaction to Leninist and Zhdanovite emphases upon *Tendenzliteratur* (overtly political texts). Goldmann's analysis is heavily indebted to his one-time tutor Georg Lukács, and is part of the tradition started by Engels' analysis of realism and naturalism, where Engels suggests that the political intentions of an author are less important than the objective social content of the text itself, and, crucially, the writer might well be opposed to the social meaning derived from the structure of his or her text (see Jay, 1973, p.173, Laing, 1978, pp.12-59, Steiner, 1967, and Lukács, 1963). This 'para-Marxist' approach should be born in mind when reading the section entitled *Adorno: Modernism, Music and Repetition* later on in this chapter.

It is also worth noting that Goldmann can be used to reject any notions of individualism or individual authorship of textual forms. As Goldmann suggests, his description of the complex structural similarities between the novel and society "is obviously a particularly complex structure and it would be difficult to imagine that it could one day emerge simply from individual invention without any basis in the social life of the group" (Goldmann, 1975, p.6). Here Goldmann's thesis predates the more fashionable claim by Roland Barthes concerning "the death of the author" (see Barthes, 1977, pp.142-148) by four years (Goldmann's *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* was first published in 1964, whilst Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' was first published in 1968).

of contemporary dance culture through watching a programme that is broadly sympathetic to the 'movement' as a whole.

Taking my analysis further, is there a homologous relationship between contemporary dance culture, its televisual representation, and the main musical genre that is incorporated within both these cultural phenomena, namely contemporary dance music? Theresa Buckland hints at such a relationship when she describes dance music videos as "the fast edit visual equivalent of House music, where cutting and splicing of ready made sounds is a compositional technique" (Buckland with Stewart, 1993, p.71).

This view highlights the definition of homology that I am employing, in that I am suggesting that there is an exact structural likeness between subcultural activity (dancing), visual text, and music. Most contemporary house and techno music is based on a strict 4/4 time signature (or as the musicologist Phillip Tagg defines it "four bars 2/4...*alla breve* in classical terms" (Tagg, 1994, p.213). In particular house and techno has been described as 'four-to-the-floor' due to its perfectly sequenced kick drum on all four crotchet of each bar[27]. Figure 1 shows the drum pattern from the Italian 'dream house' track by Robert Miles entitled Children[28]. Within this graphic representation of bars 109 and 110, we can see the kick drum and open hi-hat perfectly sequenced on each crotchet beat, and a syncopated closed hi-hat that provides a contrast to the open hi-hat and kick drum.

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[27] Or as Tagg puts it; "[an] almost continually metronomic kick drum knocking out the crotchet pulse" (Tagg, 1994, p.214).

[28] This track can be found on the compact disc bound within the cover of this thesis.

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Figure 1

Drum Name	109	2	3	4	110	2	3	4
Start — Length ———— Pitch ———— Velo-On ——— Velo-Off——— Chan								
Sound 5								
Sound 6								
Sound 7								
Sound 8								
Sound 9								
Sound 10								
Kick drum	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈
Sound 12								
Sound 13								
Sound 14								
Sound 15								
Snare	◇		◇		◇		◇	◇
Sound 17								
Open hihat	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈	◈
Sound 19								
Sound 20								
Sound 21								
Closd hihat	◇	◇	◇		◇	◇	◇	◇
Sound 23								
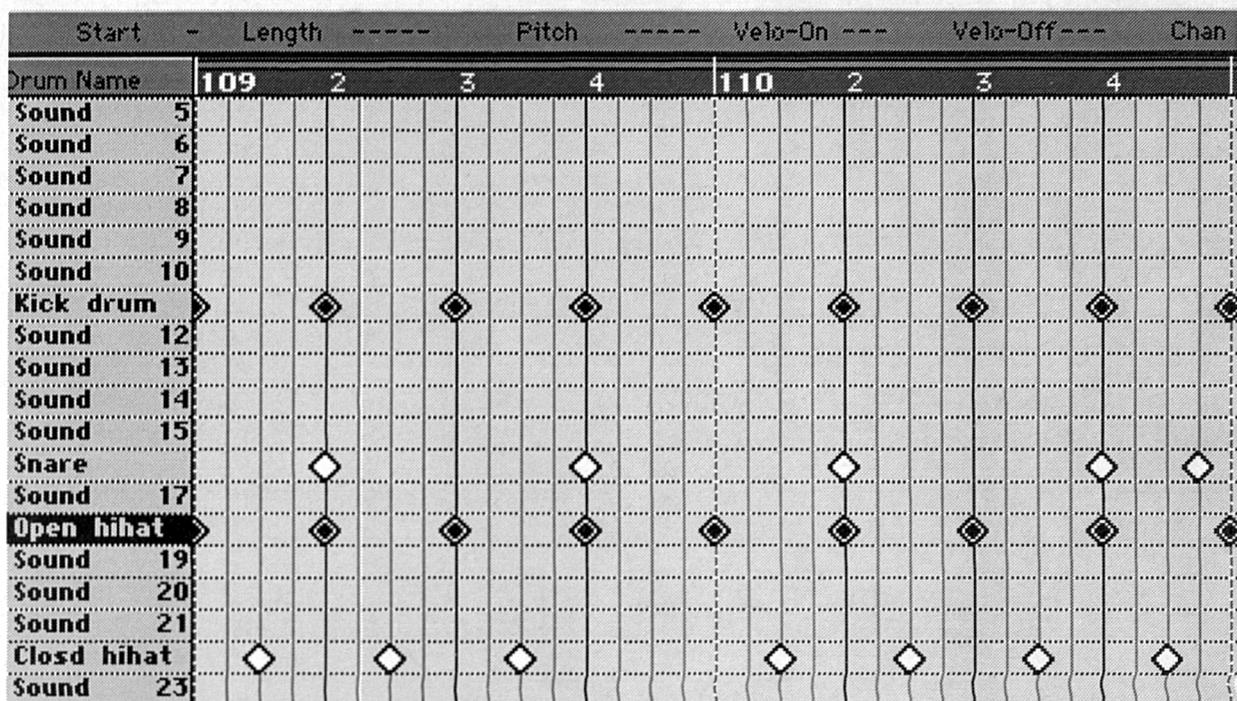
It is the crotchet beat of house and techno that causes those who are not active consumers of dance music to suggest that "it all sounds the same"[29]; in their listening they are concentrating on *rhythm*, rather than the melody or the occasional vocal that break up this repetition. It may well 'all sound the same' to the uninitiated listener, but this is because such a listener is employing a 'reception technique' derived from previous musical forms that is not applicable to contemporary dance music. For example, to employ a listening strategy more in suiting with "rockology" (Tagg, 1994) is to misunderstand the meaning of house and techno. As Tagg suggests, contemporary dance music's "musical structuring differs more radically from that of its precursors than most previous forms of pop" (Tagg, 1994, p.213)[30].

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[29] For a polemical critique of the continual usage of this time signature from within contemporary dance culture see Thompson, 1995.

[30] Tagg uses the phrase "rave" to refer to the style of dance music that his daughter has introduced to him, with Tagg citing The Stereo MC's Everything (Sabres on Main Street Mix) (see Various Artists, 1993), Usura Open Your Mind (see Various Artists, 1994), Frequency-X Hearing Things (see Various

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Here I am suggesting that *structure* has *meaning*. An acknowledgement of this enables us, as Tagg has noted, to study what "the structural characteristics of a certain type of music can tell us about the culture of which that music is such an important part" (Tagg, 1994, p.209). This is precisely what an examination of homologous structures allows us to do, it tells us something about contemporary dance culture. Although Lucien Goldmann belongs to a tradition that has been 'critiqued' for various reasons, some of his work is directly relevant to such an analysis. In particular Goldmann's homological analysis of the relationship between societal groups and literary texts is remarkable for its applicability to dance culture.

Goldmann suggests that the fundamental relationship between societal groups and the literary texts that they produce is not found in the content of those texts, but is found in what he describes as "the form of the content" (see Goldmann, 1964, pp.3-22 and pp.89-102, see also Evans, 1981, p.60). Paul Willis, implicitly drawing upon the work of Goldmann, suggests that "songs bear meaning and allow symbolic work not just as speech acts, but also as structures of sound with unique rhythms, textures and forms" (Willis, 1990, p.64). I would add that this is particularly the case in the dance music of the mid 1990s, where, within many sub-genres such as techno, lyrics are almost entirely absent. With no lyrics, we therefore rely solely upon the music for meaning. As much contemporary dance music is non-linguistic, meaning is therefore generally derived from learnt cultural and social knowledges, and from an interpretation of structure. Theodor Adorno puts this in a slightly different manner;

> the relation of works of art to society is comparable to Leibniz's monad.
> Windowless - that is to say, without being conscious of society, and in
> any event without being constantly and necessarily accompanied by

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Artists, 1990), Snap Exterminate (Endzeit 7") (see Various Artists, 1992), B.M.O. Mastermind (see Various Artists, 1993), and Capella U Got 2 Know (see Various Artists, 1993).

consciousness - the work of art, and notably of music which is far removed from concepts, represents society (Adorno, 1976a, p.211).

Adorno's position differs from those who view non-lyrical music as being entirely autonomous from society as a whole (such as Hegel[31]). Such a view should be rejected. Whilst dance music tends towards a systemic purity, this purity nevertheless has meaning[32]. Willis's research is also useful here, in that it also emphasises that the meaning of non-lyrical music is conveyed through structure and form; "discussions with young people suggest that the rhythms and sounds of popular music do indeed have a capacity to hold particular kinds of meaning and pleasure, to evoke certain emotions within their listeners" (Willis, 1990, p.64).

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[31] Hegel suggests that

> subjective inwardness constitutes the principle of music. But the most inward part of the concrete self is subjectivity as such, not determined by any firm content and for this reason not compelled to move in this or that direction, rather resting in unbounded freedom solely upon itself (Hegel, 1964, p.210).

[32] Possibly the purest form of contemporary techno is the minimalist techno sub-genre of 'trance', with Sheila Whiteley defining trance as

> slow build up music, heavily overlaid, minimalistic (often based on one rhythmic cell), with stepped dynamics which constantly build up, but without a sense of climax. The use of, for example, a particular riff for thirty or more bars, drone-like at times, focuses the sense of being 'entranced' with a particular sound or sound event and, as such, there is a relationship to drug experience (put into a state of rapture, ecstasy). Trance is very often a hybrid form, e.g. ambient trance. In this instance, the music would be heavier than ambient but would focus comparable techniques such as soundscaping and textural colours. The growing depersonalisation of Trance has lead to a 'stripping down' to the 'pure' form, to the bare essentials of the analogue synth, the Roland TR909 kick drum and hi hats. All aspects of the music - basslines, pads, stabs and rhythmic patterns, 'sound effects' and lead instruments - are now generated from this sound source (Whiteley, 1997, pp.141-2).

It is also possible to view music without lyrics as *even more powerful* than the traditional song[33]. Such a view is supported by Dahlaus and Zimmerman who suggest that music began to hold such a position towards the end of the eighteenth century; "conceptless instrumental music - and precisely because of and not despite its lack of concepts - was elevated to a language above verbal language" (Dahlaus and Zimmerman, 1984, p.179).

Perhaps therefore we can suggest that "rockology" (Tagg, 1994) is but a brief historical aberration, and that popular music is reverting to its non-lyrical form. Adorno would agree, although he puts the drawing of music within enlightenment reason at a much earlier date, suggesting that pre-capitalist music "did not 'represent' anything outside of itself; it was on the order of prayer and play, not painting and writing. The decay of this reality of music by its becoming an image of itself tends to break the spell" (Adorno, 1939, p.72). According to Adorno some music carried on this tradition, and I would suggest that much contemporary dance music also does so.

An analogy can also be made between Adorno's analysis of polyphonic music and contemporary techno, with the definition of polyphonic music being that which is "composed of relatively independent melodic lines or parts" (Hanks, 1986, p.1189). Polyphonic music, like techno, represented life, though not in a literal or reflective manner. As Martin Jay explains "originating in the rhythms and rituals of everyday

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33 Willis's research is also of use here;

> songs can provide symbolic materials towards the formation and articulation of specific grounded aesthetics which are about and enable survival: contesting or expressing feelings of boredom, fear, powerlessness and frustration. They can be used as affective strategies to cope with, manage and make bearable the experiences of everyday life... One informant felt that in house music, as in much other dance music, the words weren't of any real significance. It was the 'feel' behind the music which was more important (Willis, 1990, p.64-5).

life, music has long since transcended its purely functional role. It [is] thus tied to material conditions and above them, responsive to social realities and yet more than merely their reflection" (Jay, 1973, p.182).

This is not to suggest that there is a pluralism of meaning within contemporary dance music, merely that we have to look beyond purely linguistic structures to discover how meaning is fixed. Here we have a link with Russian formalism as characterised by Mikhail Bakhtin, in particular Valentin Voloshinov's concept of multiaccentuality within the parametric constraints of textuality. In the case of contemporary dance music, we must look towards both *context* and *structure* in order to examine meaning. Only then can we continue to counter both common-sense discourse on dance culture, and common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television. Common-sense discourse on dance culture sees dance music as simplistic and devoid of meaning through it not being in a traditional song format. An analysis of the form and structure of dance music shows how this is not the case, how there is meaning in structure. Common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television sees BPM as a disposable television programme watched by young people for trivial reasons; pure entertainment for a lost generation. However if we can say, as I am suggesting, that the structure of BPM is similar to the structure of house and techno music, then the least that we can say is that the situation is more complicated than common-sense discourse suggests.

The metronomic 4/4 beat is a good example of how form determines meaning within contemporary dance music. Such a simple pattern might initially appear to be devoid of meaning, yet the meaning invested in it by dance culture is huge. Along with timbre, volume and instrumentation it is one of the defining characteristics of the contemporary dance floor[34]. Even the government would appear to agree that musical form is an all

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[34] The lack of lyrics within house and techno music leads Benjamin Noys to suggest that they are characterised by a "refusal of meaning" where house and techno are vehicles for "pure sensation" (Noys, 1995, p.323). Noys is incorrect; he ignores the central premise that form and structure bear meaning.

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important characteristic of contemporary dance music; the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 criminalises the participants and organisers of events at which are played, in the (immortal) words of the Act, "sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats". It is ironic that legal discourse sees house and techno music as being inherently political, whilst common-sense discourse, and to a certain extent contemporary cultural studies' discourse, see it as apolitical; a mere kick-drum beat devoid of meaning.

BPM's footage from nightclubs and raves made use of the repetitive beat of house and techno, particularly in its editing. In the first two series special effects were overlaid on top of the representational image, frequently following musical rhythm. The relationship between visual text and soundtrack, where visual edits and effects matched the beat and rhythm of the music, goes beyond the *similarity of form* inherent in an isomorphic relationship, and approaches the *exact structural likeness* of a homologous one.

As well as the homologous relationship between editing and music, we have a similar relationship between dancers, music and visual text in that the dancers have synchronised their body to the beat. There is therefore a homology between action and text. As television viewers we see this as it occurs; BPM recorded the soundtrack to their clips directly from the DJ's mixing desk onto a time-coded DAT cassette, thereby ensuring a perfect synchronisation with the cameras. As well as the television audience

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This is bemusing as Noys goes on to make the point that I am making in his criticism of the dominant mode of subcultural music criticism; the concentration on lyrics. Noys describes this critical approach as assuming "a neutrality of musical forms as vehicles of meaning" (Noys, 1995, p.324).

This is not to suggest that "pure sensation" is not a goal of contemporary dance culture, indeed the idea of music making the dancer 'rush' is central to house and techno music. 'Rushing' itself is not a refusal of meaning, it is the opposite, it is the investing of meaning within a cultural practice. "Pure sensation" is a culturally constructed concept.

witnessing the dialectical relationship between dance floor and DJ, they could also 'feel' this relationship through listening to the music and observing the crowd's reaction to it.

Broadening the definition of repetition beyond musical rhythm, the structure of BPM remained the same from week to week; opening footage from club, spoken introduction, more club footage, interview with club promoter, more footage, video clip of the week, and so on[35] (see Appendix 3). John Caughie notes that, with the exception of the auteurist text, repetition lies at the heart of generic categorisations of television. Interestingly Caughie ties this to the notion of subjectivity and suggests that televisual subjectivity is essentially concerned with repetition and difference (Caughie, 1991, pp.127-8). Perhaps we can therefore suggest that BPM has a self-consciousness concerning repetition that is either missing, or deliberately hidden within other television texts.

Ecstasy: Use[r]s and Gratifications

So far we have suggested that the relationship between dance music, BPM and the audience is more complicated than common-sense discourse suggests. In particular we have suggested that the central meaning of contemporary dance music is not contained within lyrics but within musical form and structure, and that BPM made use of this

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[35] There is however one aspect of BPM that *disrupts* repetition. BPM's slot in the ITV schedule was continually shifted from month to month, thereby making advance programming of one's videocassette recorder based on the previous week's time-slot a precarious activity. This can be put down to three broad factors. The first of these is the low cultural capital of contemporary dance culture; ITV Network Centre felt able to alter BPM's slot in the schedule with no prior warning, making way for such ratings' grabbers as American Gladiators and ITV Sport Classics. Secondly, the scheduling of BPM was completed within the market rather than the post-Reithian paradigm. The ITV network considered the needs of advertisers over the needs of the audience. Thirdly, the ITV Network remains unsure of the role of night-time television; it has yet to settle down into a stable format, and has yet to appeal to a stable definable audience, if such an audience exists.

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form and structure in its textual composition. It is at this point that I want to connect the repetition that is at the centre of both contemporary dance music and BPM with *subjectivity*, in particular the drug-based subjectivities on offer within contemporary dance culture. This section therefore shows that drug consumption within contemporary dance music is not purely hedonistic, but is at least partly due to the psychological and 'subjectival' relevance of the psychopharmacological effects of specific drugs such as Ecstasy.

Over the past ten years there has been a massive increase in drug consumption within youth culture. There is a wealth of evidence to support this assertion. The Home Office's own statistics suggest that 1.5 million Ecstasy tablets are consumed every weekend (cited in Wroe *et al*, 1995, p.18). A survey of 700 young people aged between 14 and 16, compiled by Manchester University, suggests that 51% of those questioned had taken drugs, whilst 76% had been offered them. The Guardian has suggested in the same words on two separate occasions that "drug-taking has become an integral part of youth culture" (The Guardian, 15 August 1995, p.10, and Boseley, 1995, p.2). One report suggests that within certain areas the majority of school-leavers have, at some point, consumed an illegal drug (see Parker *et al*, 1995). A survey of 3,000 under-18s conducted by the drug and alcohol advice agency Turning Point suggests that the majority of those who had approached the agency for advice in the previous twelve months considered drug use as 'normal'. Wendy Thompson, Turning Point's chief executive, is quoted as saying "young people see the use of recreational dance drugs and cannabis as...entirely acceptable" (in Bellos, 1995b, p.6). Within dance culture this acceptability is further accentuated, with a survey completed by the drugs advice agency Release suggesting that 97% of clubbers had, at some point in their lives, taken drugs (Brooks, 1997, p.34).

As a result of this cultural shift, characterised by Patrick Mignon as "the democratisation of bohemia" (Mignon, 1993), it could be suggested that it is the non-drug takers who are the deviants within dance culture, in the sense that they

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deviate from the norm of drug consumption within British youth culture[36]. Howard Parker, professor of social policy at Manchester University, agrees "over the next few years, and certainly in urban areas, non-drug-trying adolescents will be in a minority group. In one sense, they will be the deviants" (in Boseley, 1995, p.2). This point should be remembered when we come to the analysis 'oppositional readings' in the following chapter.

In particular, contemporary dance culture is inextricably linked to the use of Ecstasy. The majority of participants in contemporary dance culture regularly take, or have regularly taken, the drug Ecstasy. One suggested result of Ecstasy consumption is that, by stimulating the 1b receptor in the brain, the user does things over and over again without necessarily being aware of the fact, in short, Ecstasy encourages repetitive behaviour. Add Ecstasy consumption to house and techno music's sequenced 'four-to-the-floor' kick drum on every crotchet beat and you have a dance floor full of dancers who appear to have entirely synchronised their bodies to the music. A Liverpudlian dance culture member explained to me the significance of this homologous relationship between Ecstasy and dance music;

> Ecstasy and dance music just go hand in hand. They match, they 'sync', they are part of the same experience. When you dance on Ecstasy the Ecstasy enables you to climb inside the music and to feel its beat. It enables you to perfectly lock on to the drum pattern so that your body has almost become a machine. You can't stop it, you physically can't stop dancing, or at least you can't stop twitching to the music, because the drug has enabled you, or rather it forces you, to perfectly match the music (anonymous source, 1995).

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[36] Such a suggestion is not new; Jock Young suggested in 1971 that "drugtaking is almost ubiquitous in our society - the totally temperate individual is statistically the deviant; it is only the type and quantity of psychotropic drugs used which varies" (Young, 1997, p.71).

Tom Baker, in narrating the Channel Four Equinox programme entitled 'Rave New World' agrees, suggesting that, in stimulating the 1b receptor, Ecstasy "may have found the part of the brain that makes you want to dance" (in MacDougal Craig, 1995, n.p.).

Dr. Martin Paulus, Resident in Psychiatry, University of California at San Diego, offers a similar account;

> One basis of the rave phenomenon is the music synchronising people's behaviour to an underlying rhythm. When you move to that rhythm you essentially do one type of behaviour - demands on your behaviour are to do the same thing over and over again; you're taking a drug that does the same thing over and over again, and it seems to fit perfectly together (in MacDougal Craig, 1995, n.p.).

There is a homology between the Ecstasy-influenced subjectivity of the dancer and the house and techno music played by the DJ. However, because the dancers have synchronised themselves to the rhythm, there is nothing that annoys them more than a disruption of the sequenced 4/4 beat. This has led to an increase in popularity of DJs who are able to switch from one record to another without the listener necessarily being aware of it.

This has not gone unnoticed by record producers, who will provide 'DJ remixes' of a dance track that emphasise sequenced beats exactly on the bar, thus enabling a seamless switch between records. This has enabled the dance track to have a 'four structure' at the level of the track as a whole. Mike Turner describes this 'metastructure'; "everything has to be [in] fours, you subconsciously expect it, a loop

lasts for four beats, a riff lasts for four loops, a verse lasts for four riffs etc." (Turner, 1996, n.p.)[37].

The effects of Ecstasy use have gone full circle, record companies are now producing records for Ecstasy consumers, specifically designed to heighten the Ecstasy experience[38]. Rather than Ecstasy use facilitating dancing to music, music facilitates dancing on Ecstasy. However, this is not merely a one-way relationship, with drug having an *effect* upon behaviour and psychopharmacological state, there is in fact a three-way relationship between cultural activity, musical text and drug. As Willis suggests in his ethnographic analysis of hippy culture

> drugs...supplied the raw material of open and exceptional circumstance which could be interpreted in appropriate social and cultural ways to reflect and develop other aspects of consciousness and activity so as to further modify the drug experience, and so on and so on (Willis, 1978, pp.135-6).

Willis emphasises that the recreational drug, along with the DJ set and the television text, are *used* by young people in the same way; the television text, the DJ set and Ecstasy are *adapted* to meet social needs and desires. This analysis of the relationship between drug, musical text and dancing emphasises the *cultural* element of contemporary dance culture[39]. Culture is the process by which societal groups adapt

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[37] Sheila Whiteley points towards the austere modernist work of Terry Riley and Steve Reich as a precursor to contemporary dance music where "the constant reiteration of a harmonic/rhythmic cell induced a hypnotic effect" (Whiteley, 1997, p.129).

[38] Simon Reynolds hints at this when he suggests that young people in Britain "'like the music you can drug to', the music that best intensifies the chemical's effects" (Reynolds, 1997, p.107).

[39] Rietveld, in her analysis of the British acid house movement, implicitly highlights a similar homology between a musical form and drug, where both are 'used' for purposes specific to the culture in hand; "the

the raw materials of their social reality. It is not just the case that the artefacts outlined above are merely commercial goods sold for a profit (*exchange value*), they also have a *use value*. This analysis is therefore related to the critique of the 'youth as consumer' discourse in chapter 2, and goes some way to suggesting that the relationships between contemporary dance culture, contemporary dance music, and programmes such as BPM are far more complicated than common-sense discourse suggests.

Again I draw upon Goldmann's support in making my case;

> the psycho-motor behaviour of every individual stems from his relationship with his environment. Jean Piaget has broken down the effect of this relationship into two complementary operations; the assimilation of the environment into the subject's scheme of thought and action and the attempt which the individual makes to accommodate this personal scheme to the structure of his environment when this cannot be made to fit into his plans (Goldmann, 1964, p.15).

Goldmann continues this theme in his later work

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sense of community which can be found in American house records, fitted the idea of being pitched against a society which legislated against parties as well as the fact that people under the influence of the drug ecstasy wanted to be 'nice' to their fellow human beings" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.7). In a footnote to this statement Rietveld continues, suggesting that

> an example of a changed meaning of a song as a result of context of consumption is Promised Land by Joe Smooth (DJ International, 1987), which in Chicago made a comment on the local active policy of ethnic segregation but in England, for some people, it was no more than a happy song, while for others it signified a sense of hope and community for a mass of party people in the face of the illegality of their leisure time pursuits (Rietveld, 1998a, p.7).

genetic structuralism starts out from the hypothesis that *all* human behaviour is an attempt to give a *meaningful response* to a particular situation and tends, therefore, to create a balance between the subject of action and the object on which it bears, the environment (Goldmann, 1975, p.156).

My research suggests that young people *use* specific cultural artefacts; the DJ set, the television text, the recreational drug, to help them to understand their position within contemporary society. They also use different artefacts in the same way; they choose specific artefacts, specific musical sub-genres, specific television programmes, specific drugs *because they have a similar structure*, a structure that they see in their lives. This structure is based around repetition; the repetition of the kick drum, the repetition of the loop, the riff and the verse within the musical text, the repetitive nature of dancing itself, and the repetitive nature of the television programme <u>BPM</u>, in its editing, in its visual representations, and in the musical texts that are used within it. This consumption of texts is not simply to do with gratifying needs, with pleasure, but is to do with the search for meaning, and is part of the Piagetian concept of accommodating oneself to an environment over which the person has only partial control. Or for those of us that might prefer a more Marxist vocabulary we can return to the quotation from Marx cited earlier in this thesis; "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please" (Marx, 1967, p.10). Common-sense discourse ignores this complex relationship, this search for meaning, and denigrates Ecstasy usage as unadulterated mindless hedonism.

Common-sense discourse assumes that Ecstasy is a new drug. It was, in fact, first patented in 1913 by the German firm Merck, but remained largely unused in this country until the mid 1980s (see Saunders, 1995, ch.2). I would suggest that its current popularity in Britain is due to the relevance of its psychopharmacological effects to contemporary youth micro-cultures, in particular those whose genealogies can be traced back to the summer of 1987 in Ibiza, and the associated rise of the 'Balearic'

micro-culture in London the following winter[40]. The position of Ecstasy within British youth culture can be contrasted with the American experience. Whereas in Britain Ecstasy is viewed as a 'dance drug', in America the use of Ecstasy is concentrated in the home. This emphasises that Ecstasy does not necessarily 'impose' its effects upon the user; different consumers experience the effects of Ecstasy in ways that are not directly determined by its psychopharmacological properties. The following section is intended to explain *why* Ecstasy is so central to the lifestyle of dance culture participants.

The Culture of the Weekender

Contemporary dance culture is often viewed as a culture of the 'weekender'. During the week members of contemporary dance culture often work, if work is available, in what have been termed 'McJobs'[41], repetitive employment that requires little concentration. Those who have managed to find skilled employment often describe their jobs as repetitive as well. For instance I asked five random club-goers at the Liverpool club Voodoo what their occupations were. Their responses were as follows; hairdresser at a salon in North Wales, chamber-maid at The Feathers Hotel, Liverpool "cleaning out the prostitutes' rooms", building worker, Youth Training Scheme brick-layer, and unemployed ("I live with my mum"). These occupations are all based on doing the same thing repeatedly; cutting hair, making beds, placing one brick on top of another, and signing on at the Job Centre every fortnight at exactly the same time. Regular attendance at weekend clubs such as Voodoo is both a *release* from the

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[40] For descriptions of the London Balearic scene see McKay, 1996, p.105, and Melechi, 1993.

[41] "Low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector" (Coupland, 1992, p.5). Although originally a term used to describe American youth, the publication of Coupland's book in Britain in 1992 popularised the term here.

repetition of their jobs, and, paradoxically, a repetitive act in itself (all five respondents were habitual clubbers).

Again, connections can be made with an Adornoesque reading of dance culture, with Adorno suggesting that the consumption of standardised repetitive musical texts reflects the standardised and repetitive nature of work in late-20th century society;

> they want standardized goods and pseudo-individualisation, because their leisure is an escape from work and at the same time is moulded after those psychological attitudes to which their workaday world exclusively habituates them. Popular music is for the masses a perpetual busman's holiday. Thus, there is a justification for speaking of a pre-established harmony today between production and consumption of popular music (Adorno, 1991, p.310).

Flowered Up's song <u>Weekender</u> provides a description of this weekly escape from the humdrum realities of a work-based routine;

> I see you everyday, you walk the same way
>
> weekender
>
> you go to work, Friday is payday
>
> weekender
>
> give it up, give your life up
>
> weekender

> ...Just live a little (have a good time)
>
> have a good time, have a gooo-ood time
>
> no work just party - party!
>
> you got a new shirt, you got a new suit
>
> saved your life for a two day flirt

you pay the price coz Monday sure does hurt

Tell at work your weekend tale

still need the pleasure of a dirty sale

Monday's back - what can you do?

(© Sony Music Entertainment Ltd.)

Here Flowered Up are offering a partial critique of the culture in which they are situated[42]. As we shall shortly see, the more recent musical sub-genre of jungle also offers a similar partial critique of house and techno culture. Part of this critique is a description of the process by which, as Michael O'Shaughnessy suggests, "the pleasures of drinking, dancing, sport, TV, and sex carefully structured into our weekends become the fodder which sustains and reproduces us as workers so that we will carry on with our drudgery for another week" (O'Shaughnessy, 1990, p.92).

Siegfried Kracauer offers a similar analysis, suggesting that, by offering an escape from reality, dancing persuades the dancer that a future liberation has, albeit temporarily, arrived:

> What one expects and gets from travel and dance - a liberation from *earthly woes*, the possibility of an *aesthetic* relation to organized toil - corresponds to the sort of elevation above the ephemeral and the contingent that might occur within people's existence in the relation to the eternal and absolute. With the difference, however, that these people do not become aware of the limitations of this life Here but instead abandon themselves to the normal contingent within the limitations of the Here. For them, this life here has the same significance as the

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[42] It could also be suggested that the *musical structure* of Weekender is, in itself, a critique of house music's repetition. A sprawling fifteen minute epic, Weekender takes on board elements of rock and jazz, and is noticeably different from the 'four-to-the-floor' structure of most house and techno.

ordinary office environment: it encompasses in space and time only the flatness of everyday life and not all that is human as such... And when they then renounce their spatio-temporal fixity during their breaks, it seems to them as if the Beyond (for which they have no words) is already announcing itself within this life here (Kracauer, 1995, p.72).

As Kracauer was writing this in 1925, he does not have a direct connection with Flowered Up. However, both agree that dancing is a form of glorious escape, where one can forget one's "earthly woes", and both agree that dancing offers a glimpse of freedom. Both agree that this process is not necessarily beneficial in the long term. As I have suggested, this 'tactic', a foregrounding of repetition, is also partially 'critiqued' by a sub-genre of contemporary dance music entitled jungle, which uses different musical methods to highlight the difficulties of contemporary life. In the meantime it is worth noting that Rietveld makes a similar point to the one that I make here, and provides similar analogies;

> if a person escapes mentally in such an intense manner during the weekend in order to re-enter the same routine, this type of subjectivity would have a conservative effect. An event which requires a lot of human energy in order to facilitate a temporary escape, allows people to let off steam without affecting the overall hierarchical structures of society (Rietveld 1998a, p.199).

However Rietveld goes on to cite debates within the mid-20th century Soviet Union concerning carnival and folk festivals, and, suitably enough for this thesis, draws upon Bakhtin for her response;

> the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin represented carnival as an anarchic breeding ground for a real potential cultural and political resistance, exactly because of its ambivalent quality, like that of spring's

death-rebirth. My argument is that the political effect of 'loss' and of carnivalesque occasions depends on its social context... 'Grassroots' events such as 'gay' clubs, (travellers) free festivals, as well as early warehouse, squatters and rave-like blues parties, have provided a.. context which can strengthen the bonding of an alternative community (Rietveld, 1998a, pp.199-200).

I would agree with Rietveld's analysis, and I suspect that Flowered Up (and, as we shall shortly see jungle culture) would as well. Weekender is both a critique, and a celebration, of dance culture. It highlights the negative effects of merely 'losing it' every weekend, only to return to work on Monday. It offers no solutions to the 'weekender' phenomenon, for there are none apparent, and it does not condemn it outright; rather it highlights the dichotomy of dance culture, a dichotomy that sees dance culture attempting to evade the repetitive nature of contemporary life through an act and a musical form that is based upon repetition[43]. Perhaps Flowered Up see the

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[43] Compare my analysis of Weekender with Simon Reynold's analysis of The Easybeats' song Friday on my Mind which reached number six in the British singles chart in 1966.

> I know of nothing else that bugs me
> More than working for the rich man
> Hey, I'll change that scene one day
>
> Today I might be mad
> Tomorrow I'll be glad
> Cos I'll Have Friday on my mind...Tonight!
>
> I'll spend my bread
> Tonight!
> I'll lose my head...
>
> Monday, I've got Friday on my mind.

Amazing, isn't it, that nearly thirty years on, the Easybeats' awesome mod anthem 'Friday on my mind' still describes the working-class weekender life cycle of

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highlighting of this phenomenon as the first stage towards a general raising of consciousness that would eventually lead to a change in society. Adorno would have approved;

> a successful work, according to immanent criticism, is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure (Adorno, 1967, p.32).

Despite its repetitive nature, *or perhaps because of it,* dance *music provides an* exploration of, and an explanation for, the repetitive nature of their lives. Participants suggest that *this phenomenon is furthered and deepened by the repetitive trance-like* state caused by the use of Ecstasy. Whilst making specific reference to BPM, one respondent in Voodoo (Lesley) emphasised the ambivalent attitude that she had to her regular 'consumption' of nightclubs and Ecstasy; "I only got interested in BPM when they showed the Tribal Gathering[44]. I watched it and saw all these sweaty people with huge great pupils and it made me realise what we do to ourselves at the weekends". Whilst participation in contemporary dance culture is not good for Lesley, it helps her in her search for meaning, in her search for an explanation as to why modern life is as it is.

> drudgery, anticipation and explosive release. What really grabs me is the poignancy of that line, 'Hey, I'll change that scene one day'. Nearly thirty years on, we're no nearer to overhauling the work-leisure structures of capitalist existence. 'Today I might be mad': all that rage and frustration goes into going mental at the weekend, helped along by a capsule or three of instant unearned 'glad'ness' (Reynolds, 1997, p.110).

[44] Tribal Gathering 1995 was a large, seventeen-hour, legal outdoor event in Oxfordshire which attracted, according to different sources, 25,000 to 30,000 people. For further details see Jones, 1995 and Green, 1995.

In summary then we have a complex homologous relationship that provides an implicit critique of common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture, and provides an implicit critique of common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television. There is a formal and structural likeness between Ecstasy, contemporary dance music, and the recreational and occupational activities of members of contemporary dance culture; they are all based on repetition. Add this to editing style and special effects and we have a four-way relationship between drug, cultural activity (dancing), musical text and televisual text.

Homology: From Form to Style

Ecstasy has been described as a psychedelic amphetamine (see Saunders, 1995, p.150). Ecstasy use can also therefore be linked to the 'psychedelic' nature of much contemporary dance culture, and shifts our analysis from the *structural* and the *formal* to the *stylistic*. Here I draw upon Willis's extension of the definition of a homology beyond Goldmann's "form of the content" to include the "style, typical concerns, attitudes and feelings of the social group" (Willis, 1978, p.191). In particular I also draw upon Willis's suggestion that the content of an object or artefact must have

> the ability to reflect, resonate and sum up crucial values, states and
> attitudes for the social group involved in it. The artefact or object must
> consistently serve the group with the meanings, attitudes and certainties
> it wants, and it must support and return, and substantiate central life
> meanings (Willis, 1974, p.11).

Whilst repetition (form) is the most significant aspect of contemporary dance culture, style is the most prized. By this I mean that the structure of the beat, the 4/4 time signature, is taken for granted; it is essential, yet not commented upon. Judgments of quality are based upon either the sound that is assigned to that beat, or the sounds that

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break up that repetition. An example of the former is the prized status of the Roland TR-909 drum machine throughout the 1990s. Connoisseurs of dance music ignore the 'form of the content' and talk of the search for a perfectly 'eq-ed' 909 drum sound[45]. An example of the latter, where a judgment of quality is based upon the quality of the sounds that *break up* the 4/4 repetition, is the prized status of the Roland TB-303 bass sequencer within acid house and post-acid house dance culture[46]. The sound of the TB-303 is itself considered to be psychedelic, indeed the TB-303 is used within dance culture to create what are termed 'acid lines', an oblique reference to LSD. The current status of the TR-909 and the TB-303 is such that, although there are machines that produce very similar sounds for a fraction of the cost, most professional dance musicians insist upon using these machines.

A difficulty arises here in that an adequate definition of psychedelic in the context of popular music is notoriously hard to come by. Richard Norris, of the popular techno act The Grid, has suggested that psychedelia is characterised by the excessive use of technology (in Roberts, 1988, p.66, see also Russell, 1993 p.125, and McKay, 1996, pp.108-9). This is certainly an important element of contemporary house and techno music. A postcard used by The Grid as promotional material for their Evolver album

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[45] To 'eq' a sound is to alter the relative strengths of different frequencies within that sound. Tim Oliver explains further;

> a musical sound is made up of a fundamental frequency, which dictates the perceived pitch... plus any number of harmonic frequencies above, which dictates the tone or timbre of the sound. When you use an equaliser you change the relative levels of these harmonics, picking out and boosting desirable frequencies and cutting those that don't sound good (Oliver, 1996, p.83).

[46] It is worth noting at this point that, although the TB-303 was originally designed as a bass sequencer, it is not used for that purpose in contemporary dance music; it is used to create high-pitched undulating frequencies that are laid on top of the musical rhythm. In particular this sound is described by dance culture participants as 'squelchy' or 'acidic'. Again, this emphasises that dance culture uses cultural artefacts and production tools for purposes other than those for which they were designed.

and Rollercoaster single in 1994 emphasises this in its usage of a photograph of a Roland TB-303 sitting on a child's lap (with the image therefore also encompassing the pre-oedipal status assigned to dance culture in the previous chapter. An analysis of the political nature of pre-oedipal regression will be returned to later on in this chapter, and in the conclusion of chapter 6).

The dictionary definition of psychedelic also includes specific sounds, in that a secondary definition of psychedelic is "relating to or denoting new or altered perceptions or sensory experiences, as through the use of hallucinogenic drugs" (Hanks, 1986, p.1233). Sheila Whiteley, however, proposes a definition of psychedelic where musical techniques are intended to mimic the hallucinogenic high. These techniques include:

> an overall emphasis on timbral colour (blurred, bright, tinkly, overlapping, associated with the intensification of colour and shape experienced when tripping).

> upward movement in pitch (and the comparison with an hallucinogenic high).

> characteristic use of harmonies (lurching, oscillating and the relationship to changed focus).

> sudden surges of rhythm (and the associations with an acid 'rush') and/or a feel of floating around the beat (suggestive of a state of tripping where the fixed point takes on a new reality).

> shifting textual relationships (foreground/background), collages and soundscapes which suggest a disorientation of more conventional musical structures and which focus a total sense of absorption

with/within the sound itself. These techniques provide a musical analogy for the enhancement of awareness, the potentially new synthesis of ideas and thought relationships which can result from hallucinogens (Whiteley, 1997, p.140).

Kristian Russell also talks of the psychedelic nature of acid house clothing, record sleeves, and sound effects employed in contemporary dance music (Russell, 1993). Combine this with psychedelic drugs such as Ecstasy and we have a stylistic relationship between youth micro-culture, dance music, and drug[47].

I would also suggest that the <u>BPM</u> text was also psychedelic. Firstly it represented the psychedelic imagery of the dance floor, complete with complex coloured lighting patterns. Secondly, <u>BPM</u> frequently altered this image with over-contrasted colours, negative images, and other special effects such as 'tracing', where the image of, for instance, a dancer appeared to remain on screen long after he or she had moved out of shot. Thirdly, complex moving images, such as those popularised as 'fractals' and 'The Mandelbrot Set', were occasionally overlaid on top of the representational image, particularly within the first and second series of the programme. The viewer saw the

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[47] Rietveld makes a similar same point when she posits an almost dialectical relation between drug, psychopharmacological effect and house music:

> With the involvement of both DJs and dancers in the production of house music, who often release material independently without the delays which are caused by corporate structures of the major music industry, the reaction to local popular taste is rapid. Therefore, the popularity of a particular drug in a prominent dance space can lead to the incorporation of its psychological and physiological effects, such as fragmented perception or an increased heartbeat, into its soundtrack. However, it must be stressed that a physiological condition does not determine a cultural effect. Rather this condition is interpreted and given meaning within a specific cultural framework. Therefore, house music as a medium within a certain cultural setting provides limits and conditions within which, for instance, effects of dance drugs can be articulated (Rietveld, 1998a, p.165).

dancers through an intricate web of colours. As well as being classic psychedelia, such images are also, again, repetitive, in that they are based upon the iteration of simple mathematical formula, in the case of the Mandelbrot Set, z^2+c. The Collins English Dictionary would appear to make the connection between this visual style and drug explicit in its definition of psychedelic as "the vivid colours and complex patterns popularly associated with the visual effects of psychedelic states" (Hanks, 1986, p.1233).

BPM's special effects are similar to those used by multimedia artists such as Hex, and the Electronic Sound and Pictures organisation (ESP). Graham Brown-Martin, the Managing Director of ESP, makes the direct connection between contemporary special effects and, particularly, Ecstasy;

> I suppose it's come from acquired knowledge, if you like, of the use of substances such as MDMA and - so we understand - when people are under the influence of MDMA, it's not really a hallucinogen, but if they close their eyes, patterns emerge which tend to pulse to the music or are triggered by other lights in a club environment. What we're doing is taking that effect and putting it onto television screens (in MacDougal Craig, 1995, n.p.).

So here we have another facet of the homologous relationship between dance culture, recreational drug, and televisual representation: they are all psychedelic.

To conclude our homological analysis, it should also be stated that B P M was specifically designed to fit into the schedule of a dancer's night out. BPM was broadcast between 3 and 5 a.m. on Sunday mornings. This gave the dancer plenty of time to collect their coats upon the imminent closure of a nightclub, the majority of which shut at 2 a.m., and make their way home. With the effects of Ecstasy still apparent, they switch on the television and lock into the rhythmic patterns of sound and

image. Ecstasy is used to enhance the televisual experience, and the television is 'used' to enhance the drug experience. So here we have a seven-way homologous relationship; recreational drug, music, cultural activity (dancing), editing, representational image (of dancers), special effects, and 'reading strategy' are all, in essence, repetitive.

Interlude: An 'Adornoesque' example of common-sense discourse

As suggested earlier, the aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the relationships between contemporary dance culture, televisual representations of contemporary dance culture, and the audience for these representations. In the previous section I have suggested that there is a homologous relationship between cultural practices and cultural texts based on repetition. In particular I have made use of theoretical and methodological positions provided by Lucien Goldmann and Paul Willis to show how dance culture recognises and foregrounds repetition. This analysis has revolved around the suggestion that the repetition of daily life is (homologously) present in contemporary dance music. The most well-known theoretician for the analysis of repetition in popular culture is Theodor Adorno, a mid-century writer working within the Institute of Social Research, otherwise known as the Frankfurt School. It would therefore seem appropriate if I spent a little time examining what Adorno's view on the relationship between contemporary dance culture and contemporary dance music might be. Such a process will perform two functions. Firstly it will enable us to provide a critique of the common-sense suggestion that Ecstasy use is purely hedonistic, and that contemporary dance music is mindless and of little aesthetic value. Secondly, it will enable us to re-evaluate a theorist who has become synonymous with 'cultural pessimism'. Before I deal specifically with the work of Adorno, I want to give an example of what initially appears to be an Adornoesque analysis. This will take the form of an analysis of a newspaper article written by Mark Steyn and published in The Independent newspaper. An examination of this review gives the reader a good example of the kind of attitudes that surround discussions on

contemporary dance culture, and the kind of attitudes that surround discussions on the relationship between young people and television. Following this I intend to show what a 'real' Adornoesque analysis might look like, showing how the work of Adorno can be used to praise, rather than criticise, contemporary dance culture. In many academic discourses Adorno is used as a stick with which to beat contemporary 'low' cultural forms. I intend to show that Adorno's work might well have been misinterpreted by academic discourse, and can be used to show how 'low' cultural forms are more complicated and sophisticated than common-sense and academic discourse suggest.

Steyn's article (reproduced in full in Appendix 3) is a review of two television programmes, an episode of the BBC series Timewatch featuring a Shaker community in the United States, and an episode of Dance Energy, a BBC2 programme featuring items on contemporary dance culture (particularly Black dance culture) and shot in a studio in London. Steyn begins his review by stating that "on Timewatch, we heard once again the strains of 'Tis the Gift to be Simple', the enduring Shaker hymn which so inspired the composer Aaron Copland" (Steyn, 1990, p.14). Here we have Steyn expressing his own cultural credentials, making obvious his own cultural prejudices. As an element of contemporary high culture, Steyn is suggesting that Shaker hymns appear enduring and timeless, and then attempts to compare and contrast Shaker songs with the work of the Hispanic rapper Mellow Man Ace featured on Dance Energy. Firstly, Steyn uses personalised abuse, suggesting that the only inspiration that Mellow Man Ace could possibly have gained from rap music was an inspiration "to change his name from some baptismal liability like Irving Schmuck". Secondly, Steyn compares and contrasts the two cultural forms. Shaker culture is characterised as a high cultural form that is grounded in "frugal self-denial"[48], whilst Dance Energy is characterised as a low cultural text containing little more than "rampant hedonism".

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[48] This is ironic in that Steyn ignores the fact that the hymns of the Shakers were initially the product of a popular culture that resisted the status quo, and that their assimilation within high culture is only recent.

Rather than the argument appearing as an attack by high culture on popular culture, Steyn twists the argument round by suggesting that broadcasting institutions are on the side of low culture, directly impoverishing high culture; a situation where the Philistinism of the BBC means that "the United Society of Believers rated a one-off documentary, [and] the slap-happy sappy rappers of LA, Philadelphia and London get not only <u>Dance Energy</u> (Monday) but also <u>Dance Energy Update</u> (Wednesday)". Steyn, either through wilful ignorance or deceit, refuses to believe that any culture can change even minutely within two days. The culture he defends is timeless and static, whilst the nuances and tastes to be found within contemporary dance culture change from day to day, a vibrancy that makes it appear all the more exciting to the initiated. However this vibrancy and excitement is interpreted by Steyn as a lack; a lack of quality which means that the music will not last, and that "<u>Dance Energy</u> is a show whose sell-by date is calibrated in nano-seconds". For Steyn, dance music is a textual form of little worth, liked by those who know no better.

Steyn goes on to quote a track from American rapper KRS-1, claiming to not understand the lyrics and suggesting that "rap, like opera, seems most agreeable when it's in a language you don't understand"[49]. Here Steyn is emasculating rap, whose primary formal characteristic is generally held to be the overtly political nature of its lyrics, whilst making the claim that with opera meaning transcends linguistic barriers. Within this discourse opera and high culture are authentic and timeless, whilst rap is "a 'musical' genre wholly dependent on technology whose exponents are so incapable of performing live on television that they have to mouth their latest single, and then stand around sheepishly as the record fades behind them". Note the inverted commas around the word musical, with Steyn suggesting that rap is not music at all. Here it could

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[49] The exact piece Steyn quotes is worded as follows "Like rappers with nothing to say, I crush these idiots and throw them away, Doesn't matter how fatter the wallet, I'd rather get it together, and *splatter* whatever egotistic mystics with macho poses. If you heat more plastic, you get Guns and Roses, Understand?" (see Steyn, 1990, p.14).

certainly be suggested that the origin of Steyn's argument is a Frankfurt School analysis, where modern technology is inauthentic and fake, not having the quality and intellectual resonance of 'timeless' instruments such as those used by the Shakers[50]. Again, I am not suggesting that the position that Steyn holds is homologous with common-sense or academic discourse, merely that there are connections.

After KRS-1 has performed his rap, the studio audience are seen to respond "with what became a familiar 'ooh-ooh-ooh' grunting sound, rather like the end of the Goodie's seminal record 'Funky Gibbon'". So not only are dance culture participants criticised for their cultural choices, they are reduced to the status of wild animals, and referred to as "troops", again suggesting a Frankfurt School analysis where consumers are characterised as regular, regimented, and having identical animalistic reactions.

Steyn's article can be viewed as a bourgeois individualist attack on the communality of the dance floor. In countering such attacks, this thesis echoes Bourdieu's text Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (Bourdieu, 1984) in that it aims to show how there is no such thing as innate 'good taste'; the reason that dance culture is considered 'degenerate' is that there is an unequal distribution of cultural capital that disfavours young people. As we have seen, a homological analysis addresses this for it

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[50] For a more detailed analysis of the 'art versus technology' argument see Frith, 1986. In the meantime it is worth comparing Steyn's article with Adorno's comments on the "cult of the matser violin", where Adorno suggests that the modern audience

> promptly goes into raptures at the well-announced sound of a Stradivarius or Amati, which only the ear of a specialist can tell from that of a good modern violin, forgetting in the process to listen to the composition and the execution, from which there is still something to be had. The more the modern technique of the violin bow progresses, the more it seems that the old instruments are treasured (Adorno, 1978a, pp.277-8).

With this warning in mind I am left wondering whether Steyn could tell the difference between a Shaker product and a modern reproduction.

allows us to examine the sophisticated structures of contemporary dance culture, and the musical sub-genres associated with them, and their televisual representations, at any one point of time.

Applying Adorno: Modernism, Music and Repetition.

Having now shown how 'cultural pessimism' is used by journalistic discourse, we can now go on to examine the work of the 'Grandfather' of cultural pessimism, Theodor Adorno. In particular I wish to show in this section that, if Adorno were alive today, he might well cite approvingly certain elements of contemporary dance music. As we have seen in the previous section common-sense discourse sees dance music as being of little or no aesthetic worth. As we saw in chapter 2 contemporary cultural studies' discourse also frequently sees contemporary dance culture as resistant to analysis. This section will show that both discourses are incorrect, and that the form of contemporary dance music, and the relationship between contemporary dance music and its audience, are far more complicated than both discourses suggest.

In this section I also wish to show some connections between an Adornoesque analysis and a Bakhtinian one. In their book entitled Dialectic of Enlightenment (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944) Adorno and Max Horkheimer suggest that the "seriousness" of "the culture industry" is undermined by the playfulness and the unconventionality of the modern carnival; "the eccentricity of the circus, peepshow, and brothel is as embarrassing to [the culture industry] as that of Schöenberg or Karl Kraus" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944, p.136). Whilst Adorno and Horkheimer emphasise the carnival's "eccentricity", Adorno suggests in his book entitled The Culture Industry (Adorno, 1991) that "the seriousness of the lower perishes with the civilisational constraints imposed on the rebellious resistance inherent in it" (Adorno, 1991, p.85). Irrespective of the contradiction between the carnival's "eccentricity" and its "seriousness", I would turn this latter statement around and suggest that, whilst the repetitive nature of dance music and Ecstasy is enhanced by the physicality of the

dance floor carnival, a glimmer of spontaneity and difference breaks through. Adorno and Horkheimer appear to agree;

> the culture industry does retain a trace of something better in those features that bring it close to the circus... in the 'defense [sic] and justification of physical as against intellectual art' [Wedekind]. But the refugees of a mindless artistry which represents what is human as opposed to the social mechanism are being relentlessly hunted down by a schematic reason which compels everything to prove its significance and effect (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944, p.143).

The difference between, on the one hand, Adorno and Horkheimer, and on the other hand Bakhtin, would appear to be a matter of historical specificity and of degree. For Adorno and Horkheimer only a glimmer of hope remains, and that is in the 'residue' of carnival left untouched by the tyranny of enlightenment reason.

Another similarity between a Bakhtinian and an Adornoesque analysis is an emphasis on the difference between the carnival and the carnivalesque, between the event and its textual representation. Whilst Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that there are some elements of the carnival left within contemporary society (I would suggest that this includes contemporary dance culture), once "the culture industry" represents and co-opts such events, their disruptive power is lessened, they become merely carnivalesque. Adorno suggests that

> the colour film demolishes the genial old tavern to a greater extent than bombs ever could... No homeland can survive being processed by the films which celebrate it, and which thereby turn the unique character on which it thrives into an interchangeable sameness (Adorno, 1991, p.89).

An analogy can be made here between my Adornoesque and Bakhtinian analyses and the use of the terms of 'underground' and 'mainstream' in contemporary dance culture. Many dance culture participants suggest that contemporary dance culture is at its most powerful when it remains 'underground', untouched by the media. A Bakhtinian analysis posits a revolutionary power for the dance floor carnival, a power to break out from enlightenment reason and governmental power, and a power to resist the 'corruptive' nature of televisual and linguistic representation. Some illegal 'underground' clubs and events do manage to achieve this status, untouched by commercial forces, and invisible to both 'mainstream' and micro-cultural media.

Moving away from Adorno's work on "the culture industry" towards his musicological work, Adorno believes that the production and consumption of popular music is characterised by 'pseudo-individualisation' and standardisation. Both aspects tie in with the analysis of repetition and difference explored in previous sections. Dominic Strinati explains;

> the idea here is that popular songs come to sound more and more like each other. They are increasingly characterised by a core structure, the parts of which are interchangeable with each other. However, this core is hidden by peripheral frills, novelties or stylistic variations which are attached to the songs as signs of their putative uniqueness (Strinati, 1995, p.65).

This a perfect description of four-to-the-floor techno and house, where individual tracks are interchangeable with each other. It could be suggested that 4/4 dance music is the epitome of the "reprise form" that Adorno criticises when he accuses jazz of merely repeating a mechanised theme over and over again, a process hidden by 'pseudo-individualisation'. However, dance music's emphasis on the beat can be framed in a more positive light. Firstly, it is somewhat disingenuous to accuse dance music of 'hiding' its most obvious formal characteristic. Dance music does not

deliberately hide its repetitive nature, it foregrounds it as a defining characteristic. Contemporary dance culture holds its machine aesthetic in high regard, it does not hide, as rock music does, behind a veneer of 'authenticity'. Rock music attempts to obscure the fact that it makes as much use of electronic machinery as dance music. It does this through the suggestion that 'traditional' rock instruments enable a direct connection to be made between the consciousness of the performer, and the mind of the listener. Whereas dance music emphasises its artificiality and mediation, contemporary rock music does not. Adam Brown agrees;

> house provides a challenge to traditional (rock) notions of music making and authenticity, posing a challenge (aesthetically and organizationally) to assumptions about popular music. House does not value what Frith has termed 'rock authenticity', ideas of originality (in the strict sense of the term), or production (where the artist is seen as having some kind of primary physical contact as an instrument). Sampling does produce original music, but it does so partly by copying, appropriating, changing and recontextualizing previously recorded sounds. In this sense it marks a departure from previous forms of pop music (Brown, 1997, p.95).

Whilst there are interchangeable individual texts within dance music, and whilst the 'four-to-the-floor' kick drum is symbolic of the repetitive nature of contemporary life, interchangeable texts are combined in such a way by the club DJ so as to provide an ever-shifting soundtrack, a meta-text, where individual texts merge and mutate in the

creation a new musical form[51]. Gene Santoro traces the origins of this new textual form;

> DJs who work turntables replace bands as sound sources. Left out of the high-priced music wars by their lack of access to sophisticated equipment, the early 1970s black street musicians, like their graffiti-artist contemporaries, re-shaped a form using what was cheap and available: turntables, old records, manual dexterity. They molded [sic] shredded musical history into new shapes within a single tune (in Rose, 1991, p.22).

Although an analogy with Raymond Williams' concept of television scheduling as 'segmented flow' is tempting, such an analogy would be incorrect. In Williams' analysis of television, individual texts remain the same (although they can be contrasted with their neighbours in the schedule), and meaning is derived through intertextuality. However, there is no televisual equivalent of the DJ mix. Through mixing two or three records together the DJ creates an entirely new textual form, and in doing so the distinction between production and reproduction, so central to a Frankfurt School analysis, appears to be less than relevant. The DJ is simultaneously a *re*producer of a 'primary' text (the record) and the producer of an equally important

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[51] For a more detailed, if outdated, examination of the role of the club DJ see Langlois, 1992. Rietveld also gives a compelling description of the role of the DJ in house scenes, and this certainly bares quotation in the context of this thesis:

> In the discourse of house music it is the method of the DJ and the use of electronic technology such as sampling which create a text. Through the technique of fading and blending recordings, this text seemingly has no beginning or end. The texts used are themselves combinations of other texts. The order in which records are played makes comment on them. In a musical piece which uses recognisable samples a similar process occurs. This radical intertextuality creates a fabric of texts, each connected with another through cross referencing (Rietveld, 1998a, p.147).

'secondary' text, the DJ set. The DJ who simply plays one record after another receives short shrift from the dance floor, and dance tracks are now produced so that they can be inserted into a DJ set;

> technological development, understood at first as extra-musical, then guarded by compositional intentions, converges with inner-musical development. If works of art become their own reproduction, it is then foreseeable that reproductions will become works (Adorno, 1977, p.83).

If we add consumption to this analysis, then the results are interesting. The mark of a good DJ is often said to be his or her ability to 'read' the dance floor. The best DJs form a dialectical relationship with the dance floor, they feed off each other, a relationship that heightens energy and inspiration. Production, distribution and consumption are spatially and temporally linked, they become parts of a single process. This relationship requires and elicits a great deal of concentration on the part of those involved in the dance floor process, a form of *praxis* that is characteristic of contemporary dance culture, and a form of *praxis* that Adorno might well have approved of. Charlie Hall, a well-known British DJ, describes in a fictional short story how it feels when this process is completed, when the dialectic between DJ and dance floor is at its most powerful;

> it's a question of getting locked into the groove, the ideal night was one where the first mix goes right, there's a surge from the crowd as they sense new energy on the decks and you go right with it... And it was one of those nights when everything falls into place, the first mix was spot-on and the crowd's energy jumped. All the right tunes were at his fingertips as soon as he dug into the box, the records kept coming, the temperature was rising, the vinyl grew hazy with condensation as it came out of the sleeve (Hall, 1997, p.78).

Contemporary dance culture emphasises a breaking down of the distinctions between production, distribution and consumption, whilst other music within capitalist society *emphasises* these distinctions, with the result being 'commodity fetishism'. Here we must return to pre-capitalist music for an Adornoesque analogy. According to Adorno there was a continuum of production, reproduction and consumption of music within pre-capitalist music, with a resultant improvisation similar to the dance floor-inspired DJ set. However, within the capitalist era, this continuum ceased to exist. Martin Jay continues;

> [in the capitalist era] the composition was like an isolated commodity separated from the performer, whose interpretive flexibility was highly circumscribed. In the nineteenth century there had been "irrational" performers whose individualism corresponded to the persistence of areas of subjectivity in liberal society. In the twentieth century, however, with the rise of monopoly capitalism, their counterparts were really trapped by the tyranny of the text. Here once again Adorno mentioned Stravinsky's imposition of his own "taste" on the performer, although he was also afraid that Schöenberg's music could not avoid similar problems when it was performed (Jay, 1973, pp.184-5, see also Adorno, 1932, p.359).

Such an "imposition" is impossible within the DJ's recontextualisation of the producers' 'original' text. No producer can control how his or her text is 'used' by the DJ. Whereas capitalism separates production, distribution and consumption, contemporary dance culture successfully resists this. Whereas within 'capitalist music' the consumer is passive, within contemporary dance culture the consumer, by his or her presence on the dance floor, is forced to become part of the production process itself[52].

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[52] Again, here we have echoes of Adorno's comparisons between jazz and Schöenberg. Martin Jay outlines Adorno's analysis of jazz; "the listener, instead of being forced to engage in a kind of *praxis*, as

Herbert Marcuse, a colleague of Adorno at the Institute of Social Research, would have approved; the continued separation of production and consumption is, according to Marcuse, symptomatic of an "unfree" society (Marcuse, 1968, p.32, see also Jay, p.172, p.181).

A further trait of contemporary dance culture that Adorno might well have approved of is its resistance to narrative closure. The reconstitution of 4/4 dance tracks within a DJ set is an example of this, where the beginnings and endings of individual tracks are merged into each other, or in the case of many DJs ignored altogether[53]. Adorno approves of this, suggesting that narrative closure in Beethoven sonatas, with their triumphant endings, are linked to "the great idealist systems, with Hegel the dialectician, in whom at the end the epitome of negation and thus of becoming self results in the theodicy of the existent" (Adorno, 1976b, p.127). Rather than the discrete bourgeois text, Adorno favours music that emphasises developmental sections, "thereby liberating the potential of the subject via using the potential of the technical means of the music of his time" (Bowie, 1989, p.81, see also Lindner and Lüdke, 1980, p.498). Contemporary dance music as reconstituted by the club DJ often consists of nothing but developmental sections.

Returning to the notion of 'pseudo-individualisation', Adorno suggests that standardisation elicits "a system of response-mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the

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was the case with Schöenberg's atonal music, was reduced to masochistic passivity" (Jay, 1973, p.187, see also Adorno, 1969).

[53] Many DJs avoid using the often beat-less intros or outros of individual dance tracks, preferring to mix together a DJ set with little respite from the 4/4 kick drum. This DJing style is taken to the extremities of physical dexterity by Jeff Mills whose use of three record decks and rapid changes between records mean that he often plays an average of 60 records an hour, mixing together the aggressive eight or sixteen bar percussive peaks of specific records. A Jeff Mills DJ set has no beginning, middle or end, rather it is an intense celebration of the tribal metronomic 4/4 beat.

ideals of individuality in a free, liberal society" (Adorno, 1991, p.305). However, to apply this to contemporary dance culture would be to miss the point. Dance culture is consciously and deliberately antagonistic to individualism. It is essentially a communal experience that rejects the isolationism and the 'individualisation' that many perceive to be defining characteristics of late-20th century Britain. For Adorno the form of popular music is based upon standardisation and pseudo-individualisation (part of an overall fetishism of music), and this process enforces a "regression of listening" on the part of the consumer; "the ban on changing the basic beat during the course of the music is itself sufficient to constrict composition to the point where what it demands is not aesthetic awareness of style but rather psychological regression" (Adorno, 1967, p.123). This psychological regression is characterised by an infantilisation of the listener.

Again, there are similarities at this point between an application of Adorno and an application of Bakhtin, but a Bakhtinian analysis is less fatalistic. According to Adorno, listeners to popular music are "arrested at the infantile stage...they are childish" (Adorno, 1978a, p.286) Within a Bakhtinian analysis, this state is, as suggested earlier, a regression to the polymorphous sensuality of the child; it is about rejecting individualism, subsuming yourself within the communal body, "undoing... the constructed 'self'" (see Rietveld, 1993, p.43) and returning to a pre-linguistic child-like

state. Adorno disagrees; the listeners' childishness "is not that of the undeveloped, but that of the forcibly retarded" (Adorno, 1978a, p.286)[54].

According to Adorno the characteristics of regressed listening include the inability to listen to anything other than truncated parts of a composition. Such a criticism is ironic coming from Adorno, who, according to Martin Jay, rarely examined entire compositions (see Jay, 1984, p.131), and who, as we have seen above, directly criticised narrative and ideological closure. It should also be noted that those composers that Adorno *does* praise also make use of narrative closure. Adorno is himself aware of this; he criticises Beethoven's symphonies for the "the crushing repression, of an authoritarian 'That's how it is'" (Adorno, 1976a, p.210). In relation to contemporary dance culture, the criticism that listeners are regressed, inattentive and unable to listen to more than a small part of a piece of music carries little weight. The mark of a good DJ is often viewed to be his or her ability to play an extended DJ set of four or more hours (it is surely no coincidence that such a time-frame is similar to the time-frame of a single dosage of Ecstasy), and dancers frequently engage in heroic feats of endurance when attending all-night events that go on for up to twelve hours. Mary Anna Wright explains further, and in doing so emphasises that both music and drug are used by dance culture for its own purposes;

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[54] Herbert Marcuse, a colleague of Adorno at the Institute of Social Research, could be seen to disagree with Adorno:

> As cognition gives way to re-cognition, the forbidden images and impulses of childhood begin to tell the truth that reason denies. Regression assumes a progressive function. The rediscovered past yields critical standards which are tabooed by the present... The liberation of the past does not end in its reconciliation with the present. Against the self-imposed restraint of the dscoverer, the orientation on the past tends towards an orientation on the future. The *recherche du temps perdu* [translated by Rietveld as "to find lost times, the state of being one has forgotten"] becomes the vehicle of future liberation (Marcuse, 1969, p.34, see also Rietveld, 1998a, p.198).

DJs control the music and take the dancers on a journey over a night - not just one record - build up, peak and slow down like movements in a symphony. The music is used as a tool to create a rush - music is a powerful tool in trance induction. Your mind and body respond to the subtlety (in McKay, 1996, p.111).

An Adornoesque criticism appears to want it both ways. Whilst Adorno can be used to criticise dance music for "impotently repeating itself" and for being "atemporal and immutable" (Adorno, 1981, p.37), if the music were to provide an ending, a narrative closure, it would come under criticism for its "totality" or "total rationality" (Adorno, 1973, p.69). Whereas a Bakhtinian analysis would hail dance music's "absence of any real harmonic progression" (Adorno, 1981, p.87) as leading to a suspension of time and therefore to a suspension of societal rules, an Adornoesque analysis criticises this "phantasmagorical emblem of time standing still" (Adorno, 1981, p.87). Whereas within a Bakhtinian analysis this suspension of the temporal order and suspension of societal rules can lead the dancer into the ecstasy of a pre-linguistic state, for Adorno this "ecstasy is without content... It is stylized like the ecstasies savages go into beating the war drums. It has convulsive aspects reminiscent of St.Vitus' dance or the reflexes of mutilated animals" (Adorno, 1978a, p.292). For those who have witnessed the dancing at techno clubs and hardcore raves, this description is perceptive, the irregular jerky movements of the dancer lost in the communal body do resemble the uncontrollable jerky movements of the chorea sufferer, with their twitching, uncontrollable reflex reactions. However, to suggest that such an experience is "without content" is to deny thousands of dance culture members the profundity of their own experiences, and is to deny the disruptive power of the carnival. To suggest, as Adorno does, that the consumption of popular music is characterised by distraction and inattention (see Adorno, 1991) is to deny participants in contemporary dance culture the empowerment that they find in dance music.

In some texts Adorno refers to popular music as "infantile", in others he suggests that it is characterised by an "adolescence". In the following astute observation, Adorno looks forward to the accelerated youth cultures of contemporary society:

> They call themselves 'jitter-bugs', bugs which carry out reflex movements, performers of their own ecstasy. Merely to be carried away by anything at all, to have something of their own, compensates for their impoverished and barren existence. The gesture of adolescence, which raves for this or that on one day with the ever-present possibility of damning it as idiocy the next, is now socialized (Adorno, 1967, p.128).

Here we do have a connection between the views espoused by Mark Steyn in the previous section and those of Adorno. However, whereas Adorno and Steyn see continual change as a tool of exploitation, within contemporary dance culture this trait can be seen as a tactic to prevent commercial co-option.

The defining characteristics of repetition and bricolage within house and techno musics have led many to claim that they are essentially postmodern forms. An analysis of Adorno and Horkheimer is useful in that it shows that repetition and bricolage are not textual strategies limited to the condition of postmodernity, but can be found in modernist texts. In chapter 5 I will examine how discourses of modernity also cast the difference between mass culture and high culture in terms of the difference between masculinity and femininity, with high culture equalling activity, productivity and objectivity (masculine) and mass culture equalling passivity, consumption and emotionality (feminine). Adorno is as guilty of this as most modernist writers, with his talk of "the girl behind the counter", "the girl whose satisfaction consists solely in the fact that she and her boyfriend 'look good'" (Adorno, 1978a, p.280), and "the woman who has money with which to buy is intoxicated by the act of buying" (Adorno, 1978a, p.279). Whilst this gender essentialism has been criticised elsewhere (see Huyssen, 1986), in using a Bakhtinian analysis we can highlight the importance of traces of a

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low 'folk' culture that is neither elite nor mass, and which foregrounds a breaking down of gender barriers. Contemporary dance culture breaks down these binary oppositions, it is simultaneously populist, the soundtrack to a million Saturday nights out, and avant-garde, in its production and in the radical recomposition of form inherent in the DJ set. In some of Adorno's writings, Adorno criticises the separation of high and low forms of art (see Adorno, 1976a, p.18), whilst in other texts he criticises popular music for appearing to break down these boundaries, whilst in fact reaffirming them;

> among the symptoms of the disintegration of culture and education, not the least is the fact that the distinction between autonomous 'high' and commercial 'light' art, however questionable it may be, is neither critically reflected nor even noticed anymore (Adorno, 1967, p.127).

We have reached an impasse in our application of Adorno. When musical texts reaffirm the high/low distinction, they are criticised for belonging to the bourgeois age, when they simultaneously echo pre-bourgeois texts whilst looking forward to a post-capitalist era, Adorno reaffirms categorisations that he himself has labelled as "questionable".

Whilst an application of Adorno can lead to a degree of cultural pessimism, it is crucial to note that the production of contemporary dance music is a far cry from the production methods of Adorno's "Culture Industry", where, in relation to popular music, 'the jazz monopoly rests on the exclusiveness of the supply and the economic power behind it" (Adorno, 1967, p.129). Recording studios are now no longer the preserve of record companies, and now that non-corporate access can be gained to record pressing plants we are beginning to see dance culture participants gaining a degree of control over the means of production, distribution and exchange unthinkable within the totalising embrace of the 'Culture Industry'. This must be a central part of any Marxist analysis, no matter how 'Western' or anti-economist. In particular the

production of dance music is now taking place on a small-scale, with dance culture participants pressing up maybe 500 copies of a record, with any profits reinvested in new equipment. This is hardly the mass-production monopoly capitalism that Adorno talks of, and is a direct attack upon the 'star system' that Adorno directly criticises (see Adorno, 1978a, p.276). As technological innovations proliferate, and as consumers become producers, these changes lead to new sounds and musical styles. To equate musical production with the production of functional artefacts is to ignore some crucial distinctions between the two. The production of dance music is changing all the time, and, through the use of technologies such as the internet and digital sound recording, music production is being wrestled from the hands of the monopoly corporations that are anathema to Adorno.

It is a bizarre thought, but not such an outlandish one, that if Adorno had lived in the late-20th century, he could well have been a fan of contemporary dance music, a form that liberates the subject from language, from linear narrative, and from textual closure. Andrew Bowie's reading of Adorno can be used to qualify such a statement; "the implicit warning it contains is...that of the need to sustain means of articulation which enable subjects to assert some kind of freedom against the dominant modes of discourse" (Bowie, 1989, p.83). Whilst some commentators have suggested that the repetition of the 4/4 time signature is a form of fascistic regulation (see, for example, Thompson, 1995), my analysis would be to suggest that it can offer a textual space outside of official discourses, within which meaning is only fixed through the context of the communal dance floor and contemporary dance culture. Chris Stanley offers a similar analysis;

> the rave party, in which music is the determining element, appropriates and inverts that which is offered 'officially'. Specifically, rave music, as with computer technology, can be adapted from copyright sources. The use of sampling, mixing and editing demonstrates the possibilities afforded by contemporary recording technology when the original

source is 'stolen' from the multinational recording companies. The technology can be employed to create music and sounds which are not mass produced and may only be heard on one occasion... By continually reproducing its own means of reproduction - sequencing and sampling - it becomes like a reflexive utterance that is capable only of mediating upon itself: there is no ultimate founding narrative presence (Stanley, 1997, p.50).

Adorno suggests that "the current musical consciousness of the masses can scarcely be called Dionysian" (Adorno, 1978a, p.270). This could well have been the case with the musical referent of Adorno, but the spirit of contemporary dance culture does mirror the spirit of Dionysus, with its irrationality, spontaneity and rejection of discipline.

We could go on for ever, citing examples of where Adorno's critique of popular music can be either co-opted by myself in my search for analytical tools with which to study contemporary dance culture (a search that is allied to the achievement of the secondary aim of this thesis), or superseded by it. Perhaps the problem is not with Adorno himself, but with the fact that, as stated earlier in this thesis, contemporary cultural studies continues to oscillate between the perceived pessimism of Adorno and the 'cultural optimism' of the likes of John Fiske. Perhaps now is the time to jettison this binarism. Other theorists are beginning to agree. Beverly Best, in her call to arms on behalf of what Steve Redhead has called 'popular cultural studies' (as opposed to contemporary cultural studies)[55], suggests that any theorising about popular culture

must recognize the contradictory nature of popular cultural products, in that they can be the site of both hegemonic *and* counterhegemonic ideological production depending on the context of their reception and

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[55] See Redhead, 1995, pp.100-13, and Redhead's introduction to Redhead *et al* (eds.), 1997, pp.1-3.

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production. And while oppositional force exercised through cultural production may be ephemeral, it can still be the motor which drives permanent historical change (Best, 1997, p.19).

Jungle as Critique? Homologous Structures in Drum and Bass

One recent development that appears to address directly, in a critical manner, the homological analysis presented earlier in this chapter is the emergence of a new musical sub-genre entitled jungle[56], which, since its inception, has subsequently developed into a thriving dance micro-culture. The emergence of jungle has led to a major schism within contemporary dance culture, and it is crucial that we examine jungle culture and jungle music to show the extent to which contemporary dance culture provides self-developed theories concerning its own existence and the role it takes within the lives of its participants. Before I examine the micro-discourses circulating within jungle culture, it is necessary to examine jungle music itself.

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[56] There are two suggested etymological origins of the word 'jungle' in the context of contemporary dance culture. Firstly 'junglist' is Jamaican patois. Within this definition, Push and Bush suggest that a junglist is a resident of Trenchtown in Jamaica (Push and Bush, 1995, p.90). MC Navigator of the London pirate radio station Kool-FM has a similar story;

> the name jungle comes from this place in Kingston, Jamaica called Tivoli Gardens. The people who live there call it the Jungle, and the Junglists is the name of the local gang. The chant 'Alla the Junglists' was sampled from a sound system tape: the people over here started calling the music 'jungle' (quoted in Reynolds, 1995).

Another suggested origin is that, in much the same way that 'nigger' was reappropriated as a self-defined description by American blacks in the 1980s, the phrase jungle was co-opted by London blacks after British fascists termed late-eighties rave as "jungle bunny" music, due to its heavy black influence (see Push and Bush, 1995, p.90). It is for this latter reason that there is much controversy over the usage of the word. Many claim that the term is racist, whilst those who use the word suggest that it has lost all previous connotations. Many who oppose its usage refer to jungle music as 'drum and bass'; hence the title of this chapter section.

A typical jungle track consists of a frenetic high-hat percussion track at around 320 beats per minute, a second percussion track at around 160 beats per minute, and an irregular and shifting bass-line at around 80 beats per minute. The 160 b.p.m. drum track invariably has an erratic beat emphasis, thereby directly rejecting the 'four-to-the-floor' basis of house and techno music, and thereby rejecting an essential element of the foregrounded repetition within house and techno-aligned micro-cultures. An example might be where the first beat of each bar is on the beat, and the rest are syncopated. Another example is where emphasis is placed on the first two beats of each bar or where the drum track is based around syncopated second and fourth crotchets. Vocals, strings and synthesised sounds are sandwiched between percussion and bass.

Crucial to our analysis is the suggestion that jungle, whilst still based upon the 4/4 time signature, firmly eschews the kick drum sequenced on each crotchet beat that characterises house and techno music. Instead of the kick drum, jungle relies upon sped up 'break beats', often sampled from American hip-hop records[57], or the result of hours of computer programming using software such as Steinberg's Cubase, which allow each drum hit to be graphically represented and edited on screen. The origin of dance music's appropriation of the break beat is generally accepted to be the Bronx, New York in the early 1970s, where a DJ would mix two records together, extending the mix at the point of a drum break by cross-cutting between the two records using an audio mixer. These break beats can then be digitally 'chopped' so that each four bar structure is different[58]. This not a mere 'surface' change that an Adornoesque reading can ignore. The morphological metaphor that characterises the Adornoesque and

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[57] It is this origin that led to jungle's frequent emphasis on the first two beats of the bar, the traditional waltz beat that characterises hip-hop, which can be contrasted with house and techno's traditional march (four-to-the-floor) emphasis.

[58] For a more detailed analysis of the formal characteristics of jungle see Noys, 1995. For a critical appraisal of hardcore see Reynolds, 1992.

Goldmannian analyses of techno and house given above (repetition as central core, other sounds providing a peripheral difference) is destroyed. There is no repetition at the heart of jungle, rather there are never-ending circles of change and difference.

One important point to make is that jungle does not exist in tolerance of house and techno music, it developed in opposition to it. Two Fingers and James T Kirk, in their polemical novel entitled Junglist explain further:

> Hardcore went underground and evolved into jungle - and all the ravers that were into Hardcore slid into Happy House or back to their Garage[59] roots. Back to that false high, that false hope. That false love when you're EEEing off your face...When you love everyone and everyone's your soulmate, the closest person to you in the entire universe. Arms flying, elbows swinging. All feet STAMPING on the DOOF! All people into it. Eyes wild, smiles strapped to their faces. House: that middle-class bullshit. So boring and predictable, so irredeemably foul in its twisting of the bass-line, turning it into that abomination of a metronome. A black music form watered down and turned into an acceptable, even positively welcomed form. Taken over by those who desire to have music that they can dance to and always look like they have the rhythm (Two Fingers and Kirk, 1995).

Although it has its origins in the 'hardcore' rave music of the early 1990s[60], my research has led me to believe that jungle clubs are relatively free of Ecstasy. The suggested reason for this is that jungle simply does not mix with Ecstasy in that jungle

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[59] Garage is a slicker, more traditionally 'musical' vocal form of house music that is predominantly American in origin.

[60] For a brief history of the origins of jungle see Headon, 1994.

percussion is too fast for the body to synchronise with, and that its bass-line is too irregular, unlike the characteristic repetitive kick drum patterns and bass-lines of much house and techno music. The homologous relation between Ecstasy and music is therefore 'critiqued' by jungle's inner musical structure.

Some of my interviewees go further than this, suggesting that, whilst they feel that they *have* to take Ecstasy to be able to dance to house and techno, this is not necessary with jungle. A typical comment is provided by Guy, who features in Session 3 in chapter 6; "the thing I like about jungle is that I can dance to it 'beered-up'. I can't do that with techno". Whereas house and techno music are designed for the Ecstasy user, jungle is not.

BPM's occasional forays into jungle culture were noticeably different from their visits to house and techno clubs. Shorn of a sequenced beat on each bar, the dancers either stayed rooted to the spot, moving their arms and gyrating their hips, or frenetically jumped up and down. There appeared to be less of the tension visible in those who dance to, in particular, techno, and more of a relaxed fluidity to their movements. This is noticeable in the lack of 'gurners' in BPM's footage in jungle clubs[61].

The structural relationship between drug (Ecstasy) and music (house and techno) has broken down. This breakdown is signified by something as seemingly insignificant as the beat emphasis on a record. Or has the homologous relationship broken down? Do

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[61] Gurning is a side-effect of Ecstasy whereby Ecstasy consumers' facial muscles are contorted. During the early 1990s gurning was seen to be part of, to borrow the phrase that Bourdieu employs, the 'habitus' of the dance culture participant, in that is part of the grammar of actions that allows dance culture to differentiate between members and non-members (see Lechte, 1994, p.47 and Bourdieu, 1962). The usage of Bourdieu's adaptation of Marcel Mauss's concept of 'habitus' (see Lechte, 1994, p.25) is particularly suitable at this point, as Bourdieu's initial usage of the phrase, and its attendant concept of 'hexis', were first used in the analysis of the role of dancing in Béarns, France examined in chapter 1 of this thesis.

we have a wide variety of different homologies between musical sub-genres, micro-cultures, and the televisual representations of these phenomena? Goldmann suggests that "by structure, we mean the regularities which make it inevitable that a change in one part of a whole brings about certain complementary changes in the other parts so that an overall significance is preserved" (Goldmann, 1967, p.87). This is a perfect description of what has happened in the shift from hardcore techno (originally based on four-to-the-floor kick drums) to jungle. If we remove the recreational drug from the analysis above, and replace it with an 'attitude', then much of the homological analysis above can be used to analyse jungle culture.

That there is a specific attitude surrounding jungle clubs and music is not in doubt. Indeed the micro-culture has spawned its own adjective, 'junglist', to describe itself and its cultural artefacts. Jungle's manic percussion track is widely considered to reflect the frantic speed of inner-city life, and this is made explicit in one of the rarest of things; a lyric in a jungle record, entitled Inner City Life by the artist Goldie:

> Inner-city life
>
> inner-city pressure
>
> taking over me
>
> I won't let go, no no (©FFrr Records)

Goldie, in a later interview, explains further;

> In my music is everything that I have learned, everyone that I've met, everything I've experienced, and a lot of other pressures that are going on socially, like girls having kids young, guy's left them, no money, guy's doing drugs, no way out of it, the whole pressure you're living with in that inner-city situation. Jungle isn't black or white, it's everybody below a certain level that has socially been fucked by drugs or living in the inner city (in Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.261).

As suggested in chapter 2, one of the many antecedents of contemporary dance culture was 1960s pop culture. Writing in 1970 George Melly suggests that

> pop culture is for the most part non-reflective, non-didactic, dedicated only to pleasure. It changes constantly because it is sensitive to change, indeed it could be said that it is sensitive to nothing else. Its principle faculty is to catch the spirit of its time and translate that spirit into objects or music or fashion or behaviour. It could be said to offer a comic strip which compresses and caricatures the social and economic forces at work within our society (Melly, 1970, p.7).

Contemporary dance music in general, and jungle specifically, performs a similar function. Jungle's 'speed' aesthetic *reflects* the speed of inner-city life, and is *reflected in* both its percussion and in the rapid changes of form and content that have accompanied its development. In doing so it neither condemns nor glorifies. As suggested, one of the ways that it emphasises speed is through the speed at which the micro-genre has changed. Like pop culture it is "sensitive to change" and by being sensitive to change it itself changes. The result being a culture that never stands still, yet still reflects, refracts, and ultimately rejects 'mainstream' cultural values. Melly continues;

> the automatic application of the law of obsolescence to everything whatever its original function or intention, is the side of pop culture which repels, and is intended to repel, the potential fellow traveller, the pop 'white liberal'. Furthermore, without this frantic rejection of the past and equally obsessive worship of the present, pop culture would be unable to function, and would split to become a poor relation of traditional culture in its upper reaches and a modern branch of popular culture in its lower (Melly, 1970, p.9).

This situating of pop culture within and between the binary oppositions of 'high' and 'low' could be neatly fitted into my Adornoesque analysis outlined above, and can be used to provide a critique of Adorno's suggestion that rapid changes in form are a "gesture of adolescence" (Adorno, 1967, p.128).

In terms of its development the speed of jungle not only emphasised the pace of inner-city but also enabled jungle to enclose itself, to repel commercialisation. But this was not entirely successful, and the "revolt into style" process described so eloquently by Melly continued. In 1997 and 1998 jungle was deracinated, ripped from its street roots to form the aural backdrop to, for example, television adverts for deodorants. Jungle now wins national awards such as The Mercury Prize (for Roni Size's 1997 album New Forms, see Williams, 1997), and is packaged by commercial forces for audiences beyond contemporary dance culture.

The pre-eminence of 'speed' within early jungle was also combined with an emphasis on 'darkness', a reference to the largely Black origins of jungle culture, as well as highlighting the shadow cast by the urban and suburban poverty-traps in which so many jungle consumers find themselves situated. Two Fingers and Kirk explain further:

> House is a false sound, a false consciousness, a false sense of reality. The people who listen to it, enjoy it and dance to it want to lose their worries and fears in the mere act of dancing. But jungle's truer to humanity's real roots. It cuts away the falseness, gives you the ups AND the downs, the dark and the light. White is good, Black is bad/evil. Therefore House is good and God and Jungle is bad and dark. The dark forces of those jungle bunnies come to get us. Anything that involves more than one black person, that is aimed at other black people, is

inherently dangerous. Because it hasn't been reconstructed and regurgitated for the white mass culture (Two Fingers and Kirk, 1995).

Here we see that jungle is not necessarily opposed to those who participate in house and techno micro-cultures, it is merely criticising the tactic of 'four-to-the-floor' dance music in its attempt to provide an explanation and exploration of their participants' lives. Whilst house and techno styles foreground repetition to highlight the repetition in the lives of dance culture participants, jungle foregrounds both speed and darkness to highlight the fast pace of contemporary life and the shadows of poverty hanging over disenfranchised youth.

With this foregrounding of darkness we can see a crucial difference between jungle and the other offshoots of the hardcore rave music of the early 1990s, other offshoots that nevertheless have a homologous relation to specific drugs and specific micro-cultures. In the period 1993-4 hardcore rave music split in three ways, forming 'darkcore' (which eventually became jungle), 'happy hardcore', and a variant of the Dutch genre 'gabber'[62]. Whilst gabber and happy hardcore have similarities to jungle, neither

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[62] Rietveld, in her ethnography of the Dutch house scene, describes the genesis of gabber culture within the Netherlands;

> [in 1989] complaints started to be voiced about violence and too much drug use at urban house gathering which was in contrast to the original feeling of togetherness... Football fans and (mainly male) urban youth had discovered the pleasures of the drug ecstasy and of losing oneself in trance dance. However, their preference for the cheaper and harsher combination of amphetamines and alcohol caused feelings of aggression. In Amsterdam, the name 'gabbers' was used for young men who hung out with their 'mates' in groups in places like the Leidse Plein. In July 1989 they caused problems in the Amsterdam night club Mazzo, which needed to be emptied with the help of a lot of police. It was the notion of the gabber as party-goer which slowly became a dominant factor in the production of a specific Dutch house music style (Rietveld, 1998a, pp.76-77).

combine jungle's rejection of the four-to-the-floor beat emphasis with its darkness. Gabber is certainly as fast and as dark as jungle, but retains the kick drum on each crotchet beat of techno. The aggressive nature of the super-fast kick drum can be directly related to the use of amphetamine sulphate at gabber events. The 'happy hardcore' of the mid 1990s is as fast as jungle and also uses break beats, but deliberately opposes jungle's darkness and its emphasis on 'reality', preferring to offer an escape from reality within the confines of the utopian rave (much in the same way as acid house did in the late 1980s). This is not to suggest that the happy hardcore scene is any less political than jungle culture, or any less oppositional, merely that it adopts different tactics. For example Simon Reynolds detects a "political resonance" within happy hardcore's utopian aesthetic, suggesting that

> amidst the socio-economic deterioration of a Britain well into its second decade of one-party rule, where alternatives seem unimaginable, horizons grow even narrower, and there's no constructive outlet for anger, what is there left but to zone out, to go with the flow, to *disappear?* There's also an inchoate fury in the music that comes out in an urge for total release from constraints, a lust for explosive exhilaration (in Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.249).

Collin and Godfrey continue, and in doing so make the connection that I have made between happy hardcore, acid house and post-acid scenes:

Later on in her account Rietveld also describes the dancing at gabber events in the Netherlands as "a head banging, or, at faster speeds which appeared in 1992, a pogoing movement... facilitated by the non-syncopated four quarter rhythms" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.90). This dance style can now be seen at British gabber-style raves. For an example of the genre, see the Various Artists collection entitled Hardcore Terror Volume One: The Dutch Masters, in particular the much quoted and much criticised track by Wedlock, entitled I'm The Fuck You Man.

Dance as escape, Saturday night fever - the idea could be applied to any section of the house scene. But in a country experiencing ever-increasing economic polarisation, and in 1991, the year of the deepest post-war recession, the end of Thatcherite ideological certainties and generalised fear about the consequences for Britain of the outbreak of war in the Gulf and the Balkans, this analysis had powerful resonance (Collins and Godfrey, 1997, pp.249-50)

The desperate 'escape from reality' within happy hardcore can be related to the continued use of Ecstasy within this scene. Eddie Otchere, an aficionado of happy hardcore in his teenage years, and later co-author of the aforementioned novel Junglist under the pseudonym James T Kirk, suggests that where jungle "faces up to reality", happy hardcore was a refusal of reality; "with lasers, lights, dancers, the whole big circus, it was all about being lost in some netherworld where you never grew up" (in Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.247). This circus-type rave can be related to Bakhtinian carnival (or indeed Adorno's 'eccentric' circus), and the refusal to "grow up" is, again, connected to Ecstasy use and can be related to the pre-oedipal and infantile subjectivities on offer in the early rave cultures of the late 1980s.

Matthew Collin and John Godfrey firmly believe that there is an exact structural likeness between musical form, specific dance micro-cultures, and drugs, and can be quoted to validate my hypothesis concerning homologous relations;

> hardcore was pushing its own limits, going even further *out there*: the helium babble of double-speed disco divas, accelerated piano riffs and breakneck drum loops formed a homology with an increase in amphetamine use and a perceived decrease in the quality of Ecstasy. By this time, 'Ecstasy' no longer simply meant MDMA, but was a common name for a range of substances that might include MDMA, the heavier MDA or the more speedy MDEA (Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.248).

Collin and Godfrey go on to quote Chris Simon of the hardcore record label Ibiza;
"The music was getting faster because the drugs were getting faster, they pushed the
tempo further to see how high they could take the music" (in The Independent, 17
August 1992, see also Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.248).

Whilst some micro-cultures and micro-genres mutated in tandem with an increase in
the use of amphetamine sulphate (the popularity of gabber in Britain in the mid 1990s
can certainly be seen as related to an increase in amphetamine consumption), music
designed specifically for the Ecstasy experience is still popular (although, of course, it
may not be by time of the publication of this thesis). There has also been the
development of a gabber/happy hardcore hybrid, which combined gabber's ultra-fast
'four-to-the-floor' kick drum with happy hardcore's utopian aesthetic. This
micro-genre, which eschewed the darkness of gabber and jungle, became known as '4
beat'. In particular 4-beat was connected to scenes that indulged in amphetamine and
Ecstasy cocktails. Simon Reynolds summarises this scene in 1997;

> the old skool rave spirit endures in Scotland, and through the popularity
> of happy hardcore pretty much everywhere in Britain apart from
> London. Scottish bouncy techno and happy-core (a.k.a. 4-beat) have
> preserved in miniature form the lost euphoria and togetherness of
> 1988-92, but on an aesthetic level they've arrested the music's
> development, expunging all post-1992 developments and focusing on
> cheesy piano riffs, Joey Beltram-style 'Mentasm' synth-stabs, shrieking
> diva-vocals and above all the stomping 4-to-the-floor beat (i.e. all the
> whiter-than-white elements that activate and accentuate the E-rush and
> encourage dancers to 'go mental') (Reynolds, 1997, p.103).

Meanwhile, the jungle of the mid 1990s emphasised a feeling of darkness, frequently
conveyed through the use of strings and 'pads' that have a dark 'feel'. In this sense

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sounds are expressing a social reality, in a similar way to that described by Adorno in his theory of 'mimesis' in music (see Jay, 1984, p.138). Perhaps it is the dark, fast 'attitude' of jungle that provides us with a stylistic and structural (homologous) relationship between a specific dance culture and a musical sub-genre, without reference to a drug of choice. It is surely no coincidence that the most well-known jungle club in Britain in 1995 was called Speed, and the musical precursor to jungle was known as 'the darkside' or 'darkcore'.

As we have seen, each micro-genre and micro-culture has an attitude specific to it. However, perhaps the correct term is not 'attitude' but 'world vision'. Goldmann asks

> What is a *world vision*? It is not an immediate empirical fact, but a conceptual working hypothesis *indispensable to an understanding of the* way in which individuals actually express their ideas. Even on an empirical plane, its importance and reality can be seen as soon as we go beyond the ideas or work of a single writer, and begin to study them as part of a whole (Goldmann, 1964, p.15).

> a 'world vision' is a convenient term for the whole complex of ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which opposes them to members of other social groups (Goldmann, 1964, p.17).

World visions, such as those held by dance micro-cultures, are not necessarily logical responses to material conditions, indeed they often manifest themselves in illogical behaviour. For instance drug use within techno and house cultures is seen by participants as a way out of their repetitive lives, but ends up becoming a repetitive act in itself. Drug misuse is an illogical and imaginary solution to a very real problem. Mary Evans' analysis of world visions backs this up; "a world vision is not in itself a

necessarily developed or coherent view of the world: it is an *imperfectly organised* set of beliefs, questions and principles which can be brought to coherence by an individual"[63] (Evans, 1981, p.46), or as Goldmann himself states, the coherence of a world vision "is not *logical* but *human*" (Goldmann, 1989, p.111)[64].

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[63] My italics.

[64] At this point, it is worth noting how the language of a Goldmannian analysis and the language of ethnography are similar. For instance the following quotation is from the ethnographer of deviance James Henslin;

> persons who belong to a group that is significant to them have a *shared world*, a common culture that tends to cause them to see the world and to interpret their experiences in very similar ways. This common culture provides a frame that surrounds their everyday experiences, yielding a similar interpretation of events that impinge upon that 'world-held-in-common' (Henslin, 1972, p.46).

Theories of structural homology and ethnography share the same view: that subcultures and micro-cultures inhabit qualitatively different environments from the rest of society, and that academic work can unlock these semi-private worlds. The textualist (or to coin a phrase the structural homologist) can do this by examining cultural texts produced and consumed within this shared world, and, in examining the structure of these texts, can describe the 'world view' of the group. The ethnographer looks at the spoken language of the group through an observation of everyday discussions, and suggests that the content of these discussions can help to explain the 'shared world' of the group. What links the structural homologist and the ethnographer is that both involve a researcher's analytic interpretation. The Bakhtinian analysis that I employed in the previous chapter is also pertinent to this point, with Michael Holquist suggesting that the central point of Bakhtin's philosophy is "a pragmatically oriented theory of knowledge; more particularly, it is one of several modern epistemologies that seek to grasp human behavior through the use humans make of language" (Holquist, 1991, p.15). Where ethnography is interested in language, a Bakhtinian analysis is interested in dialogue. Perhaps my combination of Bakhtin, Goldmann and ethnography enables this thesis to combine three academic fields of enquiry (formalism, textualism and culturalism) that have previously been viewed as mutually incompatible. Maybe the 'culturalists' and the 'textualists' are not as dissimilar as previously thought.

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The world vision of 'underground' jungle cultures was markedly different from the world visions of previous dance cultures. Steve Shapiro, a graduate student at McGill University in Canada, suggests that the British jungle experience was

> less about a utopian vision, less about escaping through the music, and more about an acknowledged temporary hiatus from the difficulties of real life. Nothing will have changed after a night out, but for a moment, a good time will be had... Jungle has been perceived by ravers and house music fans as being unpleas[a]nt, and they accuse it of promoting aggressive behaviour. Frankly, rave and house music seems to have a predominantly white middle-class audience, whereas jungle has a much stronger presen[c]e of black people. They have a mode of representation and cultural refer[e]nts based on a very different experience of life. This experience is something shared by many working class and poor young people. They share a common existential experience of urban and suburban ghettos (Shapiro, 1995, n.p.).

Mary Anna Wright puts this in more succinct terms; "it doesn't lie; there's none of the 'everything's gonna be alright' stuff in the lyrics" (in McKay, 1996, p.109).

Whilst I have suggested that the tactics employed by jungle culture are markedly different from those employed by, for example, house and techno cultures, I still feel able to collect all the micro-genres and micro-cultures outlined above under the umbrella term of contemporary dance culture. Although, as suggested in chapter 2, connections between class and youth (sub)culture have broken down, the connections between economics and contemporary dance culture have not. Contemporary dance culture constitutes an *economic group* in that it contains specific modes of production, distribution and exchange for cultural and symbolic goods. This is not to suggest that dance culture constitutes an *economic class*. Members of dance culture have specific economic interests, yet "not all groups based on economic interests necessarily

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constitute social classes" (Goldmann, 1964, p.17). The vast majority of members of house, techno and jungle micro-cultures have incomes less that the national average. Many of them are unemployed, and the majority see the culture to which they belong as opposed to 'mainstream' social groups.

There are elements of jungle culture that did not directly arise through opposition to the specific tactics employed by house and techno cultures, but through reference to previous musical cultures. One example is the use of the break beat, the usage of which can be traced back through black music cultures such as rap and hip-hop. The use of sampled break beats is central to jungle music, yet this central defining characteristic of the musical form is derived through reference to previous musical cultures, rather than through any opposition to house, techno or 'mainstream' cultures. For many this is *the* defining characteristic of jungle music, implying that, through its reference to, yet difference from, the earlier forms of funk, jazz, reggae, ragga, and hip-hop, it is simultaneously both black and British. The use of the break beat is all the more powerful because it is 'black', yet its 'blackness' is not defined as a polar opposite of 'whiteness', but as having characteristics that have developed in isolation from 'whiteness'. In particular jungle emphasises that the break beat can be traced through a whole hidden history of black music. This is further emphasised by post-jungle's current hip-hop aesthetic, where jungle has hybridised with hip-hop to form the micro-genre 'jump up'.

Jungle musically defines the urban experience for many young working-class black people in Britain. Jungle music is certainly, in Adorno's terms, a commodity, yet it has cultural value and social resonance beyond its monetary value. It expresses a resistance to the poverty of the inner city. It does this purely through its musical structure, through the claustrophobic break beat drum patterns and percussive intensity;

> music will be better, the more deeply it is able to express - in the
> antinomies of its own formal language - the exigency of the social

situation and to call for change through the coded language of suffering. It is not for music to stare in helpless horror at society. It fulfils its social function more precisely when it presents social problems through its own material and according to its own formal laws - problems which music contains within itself in the innermost cells of its technique (Adorno, 1978b, p.130).

Sarah Thornton, like George Melly, suggests dance micro-cultures have a "built in obsolescence" (Thornton, 1994, p.178). This can certainly be seen with the rise of jungle. As predicted by Benjamin Noys writing in the Spring of 1994[65], the period between autumn 1994 and the summer of 1995 saw the affirmation of a rift within jungle culture, a rift that developed into a full scale schism between 'ragga' jungle (which has since mutated into 'hard step' and 'jump-up' jungle), with its emphasis on aggressive male vocals and harsh percussion, and 'intelligent' or 'ambient' jungle[66].

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[65] Whilst Noys' prediction was correct, he cites a different reason to my interviewees;

> [jungle] could also implode from inside under the weight of the different genres it has so far held together through its core identity. This would happen if these various musical textures begin to detach themselves from the break beats under the force of experimentation. Such an event could signal another burst of possibilities as the scene fragments again to produce a new diversity of musical forms (see Noys, 1995, p.330).

Within my analysis the split that Noys predicted was not caused by pressures that were internal to the musical form of jungle. I would suggest that this musical split was an *effect* of changes within the micro-culture of jungle as a whole, which my interviewees have suggested was caused by different patterns of drug usage within jungle culture.

[66] Ambient jungle is characterised by its use of 'natural' sounds such as whale and bird song, whilst intelligent jungle makes more use of strings, either synthesised or sampled. However the intelligent and ambient prefixes are often interchangeable. This is at least partly due to the suggestion that the intelligent prefix is derogatory and/or racist due to its implicit suggestion that there are 'unintelligent' sub-genres such as ragga jungle. This debate is, to a certain degree, a re-run of the arguments around 'intelligent techno', although, unlike intelligent jungle, intelligent techno did (in a somewhat patronising manner) *explicitly* define itself against the perceived 'low intelligence' of hardcore rave music.

Some clubbers that I have interviewed have suggested that this split was reflected in pharmacological changes (or at least partially determined by them)[67]. As 'crack' cocaine and powdered cocaine made continuing inroads into jungle culture (see Saunders, 1995, p.64, and Knight and Ahuka, 1994) the perceived aggressive effects of the drug made themselves apparent in the formal characteristics of ragga jungle. Running parallel to this phenomenon, some interviewees commented upon the widespread availability of 'skunk'[68] within Britain in the summer of 1995. This phenomenon was linked by interviewees to the development of 'ambient' and 'intelligent' jungle[69]. The formula is as follows: take 160 b.p.m. jungle, emphasise only two beats in each bar, and emphasise an erratic and booming bass-line. Suddenly 160 b.p.m. jungle becomes more like 80 b.p.m. dub reggae, a slow vocal-free version of reggae that emphasises a booming bass, and a musical genre that has always been linked to the consumption of cannabis.

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[67] For a brief examination of drug usage within jungle culture see Saunders, 1995, pp.190-3.

[68] Skunk is a particularly potent form of herbal cannabis, characterised by its strong odour. The consumption of skunk has been widespread in the liberal political climate of the Netherlands for a number of years, but its increased popularity in Britain can be traced to the arrival of sophisticated 'hydroponic' indoor growing systems that have meant that drug suppliers can gather a large crop from a relatively small initial investment (see Headon, 1995c).

[69] Simon Reynolds takes a slightly different view, suggesting that cannabis use, combined with an increase in popularity of cocaine, led directly to the rise of the jungle genre itself:

> Ecstasy has been largely displaced within the jungle scene in favour of cocaine and marijuana; the latter, with its increasingly high THC content, creates a sensory intensification without euphoria, tinged with nerve-jangling paranoia. This drug-state fits perfectly jungle's ultra-vivid synaesthetic textures, hyperspatialized mix-scapes and tension-but-no-release rhythms (Reynolds, 1997, p.103).

Some interviewees have suggested that the speed of these changes (possibly allied to the speed that jungle always emphasised in the first place, highlighted by jungle's 320 b.p.m. hi-hat) is due to jungle being produced by musicians who are completely immersed within the culture of jungle. As jungle's parent culture of rave grew in the late 1980s, one way of obtaining 'cutting-edge' music was through the exchange of DJ tapes, usually recorded live at a rave and sold within days of being recorded. This enabled dance culture participants to obtain music that was only available to DJs, and formidable collections were built up by the most avid fans. The exchange of tapes was a means of maintaining status as a 'fully paid up' member of dance culture, rather than an interested outsider. If a person was able to provide a mix tape that another had not previously had access to, then their status, their (sub)cultural capital, was seen to increase. Within this process a parallel can be drawn with Bourdieu's analysis of the exchange of gifts as maintaining prestige and confirming membership of a particular subsection of society. However, within contemporary dance culture the 'macro role' Bourdieu assigns to gift-exchange is reversed. Such generosity is seen as directly opposed to the rugged individualism of Thatcherite Britain, and to exchange tapes was to show that you were opposed to 'the mainstream' (see Bourdieu, 1977). In general, exchange of cheap and easily replenishable items, such as DJ tapes, bottles of water, chewing gum, T-shirts and inhalers[70] is another part of the 'habitus' of dance culture.

Connected to this phenomenon, the early 1990s saw the rise of the bedroom DJ. With the aid of two record decks and a 'mixer', participants in dance culture could produce their own DJ tapes to be circulated informally among their friends and to be sent to clubs in order to obtain paid DJ work. The late-1990s' equivalent of the bedroom DJ is

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[70] During participant observation I noticed that some dancers were using and sharing medicinal inhalers such as those sold by the firm Vicks. I asked why, and was informed that it enabled dancers to breath more clearly in the hot and smoky atmosphere of a club. Others, such as Collin and Godfrey, suggest that decongestants such as Vicks VapoRub are used "to intensify the MDMA hit" (Collin and Godfrey, 1997, p.247).

the bedroom producer, who purchases cheap sampling and sequencing equipment, presses up maybe 500 or 1000 copies from a D.A.T. tape onto twelve-inch vinyl and then sells these records to record shops, friends and DJs. The split between producer and consumer has broken down so that the three-way relationship described above between the production of music, the consumption of music, and recreational drug use is sped up. As suggested above, the widespread availability of skunk within Britain from May 1995 run concurrently with the development of a whole new micro-culture and musical sub-genre.

But "built-in obsolescence", combined with commercial co-option, has prevented dance culture's latest generic additions from gaining more than a footnote in musical history. The speed of change within contemporary dance culture is accepted as necessary by its participants, but infuriates mainstream commentators, who accuse dance culture of 'ephemerality'. It equally infuriates commercial forces, who, once they have co-opted and repackaged a youth cult, find that it is no longer credible. This pattern occurred with old-style rave culture, and occurred with jungle. Whilst these genres and micro-cultures remain popular, they have ceased to be credible. They have also ceased to be as innovative as they originally were. Generic jungle tracks, with their samples from The Winston's Amen, Brother track (Winstons, 1967), are now seen as hackneyed and formulaic, and the search is now on for a new musical form, a form with a new symbiotic relationship to British youth.

Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter I introduced the reader to the suggestion that an analogy could be drawn between the medieval carnival and the dance floor within contemporary dance culture. In this section I introduced the reader to the notion of the dance floor as a 'temporary' or 'relatively' autonomous zone. In particular I examined the utopian subjectivities on offer on the contemporary dance floor, and how, despite the temporal limitations of the dance floor, participants were radicalised in the

acceptance of these subjectivites. Extending my Bakhtinian analogy I talked about the dance floor as a place where social hierarchies are subverted, and where, in particular, traditional gender roles are rejected. This section therefore represented an extension of the first aim of this thesis, namely the countering of common-sense discourse's suggestion that dance culture is apolitical and purely hedonistic. Dance culture's subversion of social hierarchies and gender roles represent an important rejection of the current social order.

My use of Bakhtin in the first section of this chapter then led to an attempt to theorise the difference between a lived cultural practice and a media representation of that cultural practice. Here I suggested that an analogy could be drawn between Bakhtin's descriptions of carnivalesque literature and televisual representations of the dance floor. The following section on structural homologies within dance culture took this as a starting point, but, rather than emphasising *difference*, began to look at the *connections* between the dance floor, televisual representations of the dance floor, and the audience for these representations. Whereas the first two sections of this chapter led to a reappraisal of Mikhail Bakhtin, this next section led to a reapplication of Lucien Goldmann's work on structural homologies. A Goldmannian analysis, centred on an analysis of structural homologies based around the notion of repetition, shows us that the relationship between young people and television is not simply visible to the naked eye, but requires theoretical work. A Goldmannian analysis therefore suggests that the relationship between young people and television is far more complex than common-sense discourse suggests. In particular, this section suggested that structure has meaning, and that the repetition at the heart of contemporary dance music is also at the heart of contemporary dance culture, and represents a symbolic attempt on the part of contemporary dance culture to understand its place within late-capitalist society. In particular this section showed how Ecstasy is not used by participants within contemporary dance culture for purely hedonistic reasons, but is tied to the repetitive nature of both dance music and life within British society. The key point of this section was my suggestion that

young people *use* specific cultural artefacts; the DJ set, the television text, the recreational drug, to help them to understand their position within contemporary society. They also use different artefacts in the same way; they choose specific artefacts, specific musical sub-genres, specific TV programmes, specific drugs *because they have a similar structure*, a structure that they see in their lives. This structure is based around repetition.

Having reappraised the work of two Marxists not currently found in the contemporary cultural studies' canon (Bakhtin and Goldmann) our attention then focused upon an analysis of the work of Theodor Adorno. My initial reason for evaluating the applicability of Adorno to the study of contemporary dance music was initially due to Adorno's interest in musical repetition. However it soon became apparent that my Adornoesque analysis could be combined with my Bakhtinian one, in particular when considering Adorno's suggestion that 'the carnival' might allow a glimmer of socialist transformation to shine through the totalising embrace of 'the culture industry'. Here also lay a connection to my Goldmannian analysis of structural homologies based upon repetition. My application of Adorno enabled me to continue my analysis of the form of contemporary dance music, showing how DJ sets, DJ remixes, the non-narrative nature of contemporary dance music, and changes in the production, distribution and consumption of contemporary dance music meant that we could extend our analysis of the political nature of dance culture. This section also highlighted some of the central contradictions of Adorno's work, thereby at least partly fulfilling the secondary aim of this thesis, which is to show that the work of currently *in-vogue* theorists such as Adorno is often misused, whilst the work of unfashionable theorists such as Goldmann is often as, if not more, useful for cultural theorising.

In order to test and extend my Goldmannian analysis I then went on to examine the development of the musical sub-genre of jungle. In particular I showed how a change

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in musical structure was also reflected in a change of, in Goldmann's terms, the "world vision" of those who ally themselves with the jungle scene. Here I suggested that there was not a single homology between the whole of contemporary dance culture, a specific drug, and one musical form, but that there were a range of structural homologies between micro-genres, micro-cultures and a variety of recreational drugs. Crucial to this section was Goldmann's suggestion that "by structure, we mean the regularities which make it inevitable that a change in one part of a whole brings about certain complementary changes in the other parts so that an overall significance is preserved" (Goldmann, 1967, p.87). In particular I made the implicit suggestion that the study of the formation and collapse of structural homologies allows us to examine social relationships in a diachronic manner, something that was perceived as not possible by Paul Willis who, in the 1970s, first adapted the notion of structural homologies to examine the relationships between youth culture, music and drugs. In this section on jungle (and in the earlier section of this chapter named after the Flowered Up song Weekender), I showed how there appeared to be an on-going debate between micro-cultures and micro-genres as to the best 'tactic' to use in contemporary dance culture's search for an explanation and exploration of the lives of its participants.

Chapter 5: Ethnoanalysis: Method and Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a critical evaluation of the various available ethnographic methodologies that can be utilised in a study of the relationship between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations. In particular I will show how this evaluative process led me to reject simply "doing an ethnography" as a suitable research method, whilst also showing how an analysis of anthropological and ethnographic techniques eventually informed the method chosen for the in-depth study of the relationships between Liverpudlian dance culture and the youth television text <u>BPM</u> contained in *chapter 6.*

In particular the following two chapters represent a sustained attack on common-sense discourse, in that these chapters will show how young people's relationships to both contemporary dance culture, and televisual representations of contemporary dance culture, are complex and sophisticated and highlight the degree of discrimination exercised by young people. These final two chapters will show how young people are not cultural dupes; they are not simply driven to cultural forms of little worth by unscrupulous commercial forces. These two chapters will show that young people are knowledgeable and discriminating in their cultural choices. As we have seen in previous chapters dance culture is not simply about mindless hedonism, but is about an engagement with social forces, and about, at least partially, a rejection of the current political order. In the following two chapters I intend to show that young people are as discriminating in their television viewing as they are in their music listening. Whilst dance culture participants actively reject the subjectivities offered by 'mainstream' society, they also reject the subjectivities offered by televisual representations. The following two chapters show how this process takes place.

Although the term 'ethnography[1]' has become a "buzz-word" in Television Studies (see Lull, 1988, p.242), this type of research can often reap rich rewards in showing us how meaning is determined at the interface between text and audience. This is not to suggest that such a study can tell us the precise 'meaning' of a televisual text, merely that it can signpost the textual and discursive parameters within which the viewer decodes a text. Certain meanings can be suggested, and certain meanings discarded, by a well-researched ethnographic study. In particular, ethnography can be used to describe the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1962) in which certain meanings are made, and the relationship between this *habitus* and the creation of meaning. The aim of my ethnography influenced research is not to 'prove' that context or *habitus* is an important variable in the creation of meaning. Rather it is my intention to contextualise a specific practice, namely the viewing of <u>BPM</u>, within the wider sphere of contemporary dance culture as outlined in previous chapters. If, as John Corner suggests, one of the initial reasons for the formation of media studies was the limitations of a purely textualist approach (see Corner, 1995, p.149), then an ethnographic study would appear to be an ideal tool for this very purpose. This is not to suggest that ethnographic analyses are more important than technological, historical or institutional analyses, merely that they are a valid accompaniment. This chapter therefore attempts to show how an interdisciplinary approach "can reveal more about dance culture and its televisual representations than an approach that merely relies upon one field of reference" (the 'secondary aim' of this thesis).

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[1] Danny Saunders provides a useful definition of ethnography in the context of 'communication and cultural studies', suggesting that ethnography is

> a method of fieldwork research, largely derived from anthropology, where the researcher attempts to enter into the culture of a particular group and provide an account of meanings and activities 'from the inside'. The method emphasises the cultural distance that the researchers have to bridge if they are to make intelligible the community or group under study (Saunders, 1994, p.109).

In my examination of the debates concerning audience response, it has become clear that it is not only acceptable, but also necessary, to avoid using any specific 'meta-analytical' techniques that have been validated and academically accepted by previous theorists. As we have already seen certain theoretical methods have been rejected by academia whilst they are still of use and relevance (such as the method provided by Goldmann and employed in the previous chapter). David Morley agrees with such a position, suggesting that questions of methodology are

> ultimately pragmatic ones, to be determined according to the resources available and the particular type of data needed to answer specific question, and would further hold that all methodological choices *(ethnography included) incur what an economist would call an* 'opportunity cost' - *in terms of the other possibilities excluded by any* particular choice of method... The choice of method, in itself, can neither guarantee nor damn a given study (Morley, 1992, p.13).

It is for this reason that I have developed research methods that are specific to my object of study. I have chosen analytical techniques and emphasised theoretical positions that are particularly suitable for the study of the relationships between contemporary dance culture and <u>BPM</u>. This is in keeping with earlier chapters where analytic tools were chosen not out of adherence to a political or critical metanarrative, but due to their suitability for the job in hand (although it could be suggested that 'suitability' or 'fitness for purpose' are themselves metanarratives). So, for instance, the work of Mikhail Bakhtin informed my analysis of contemporary dance culture because Bakhtin's conceptualisation of the medieval carnival has important parallels with contemporary dance culture. Lucien Goldmann and Paul Willis informed my research on the relationship between dance culture, musical form, and Ecstasy because their development of the concept of structural homology is useful in analysing the structures present within these phenomena. Louis Althusser has informed some my

work on the relationships between the economy, society and dance culture because, once suitably modified, his thoughts on ideology, overdetermination, and relative autonomy are suited to a contextual analysis of contemporary dance culture. I have completed an institutional analysis of youth television because concepts such as 'public service broadcasting' are held by youth television producers (and those who commission youth-oriented programmes within the British television industry) to be core to the discourse of youth television production. In relation to chapter 6, I have developed a specific method derived from anthropology and ethnography because *my research demanded that I do so*. Every ethnography is different; each ethnography requires the development of a specific method, and my research is no exception. The rest of this chapter is therefore devoted to an examination of the theoretical approaches that I have deployed, discarded and developed in my search for a justifiable method.

Cultural Currency and Time

Opposition to or acceptance of discourses takes place at the level of social consumption of texts. But how does this process work within a television text whose referent, contemporary dance culture, has been defined as oppositional to dominant discursive frameworks? In particular, previous chapters have shown us how there were contradictory discourses encoded within <u>BPM</u>. Of particular interest therefore is the extent to which viewers resolve, or attempt to resolve, these contradictions imbedded within the text. To answer this question, and to quote Ien Ang, "a move towards the 'ethnographic' - is desperately called for" (Ang, 1989, p.103).

If we accept that the meanings created at the interface between text and audience are, at least partially, determined by the information available to the viewer[2], then to study

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[2] Fiske, in his retrospective study of how television texts are read, suggests that

> pleasurable culture was produced at the interface between the program and my everyday life, and... the meanings involved in it would be produced by the

texts from a previous historical conjuncture would mean reference to discourses and knowledges that have a different cultural power. This is why I chose to complete ethnographic research on <u>BPM</u>, a programme that was contemporary at the time of the 'viewing sessions'. As we have seen <u>BPM</u> was comprised of a mixture of pre-recorded footage at nightclubs and outdoor raves, interviews with producers and DJs, and promotional videos of dance music releases. As such <u>BPM</u> was designed by Music Box to appeal to the immediate post-club audience. This was confirmed by Simon Potter; "a lot of the clubs are closing at 2 o'clock around the country and people do want to continue their nights out" (Potter, 1995). As consumers of other media texts, such as magazines, clothes, and music-based products, the <u>BPM</u> audience were interpellated by a particular discourse of 'youth'. To a certain extent therefore, viewers' access to this discourse determined the meanings they created when they 'read' this particular programme.

However, and here we have a methodological obstacle, the referent of <u>BPM</u> was a culture that was in a perpetual state of change. Musical styles shift almost week to week. Last weeks' DJ set is history, and as records emerge from 'the underground' and enter 'the mainstream', they lose their cultural resonance and importance within contemporary dance culture. In the previous chapter we saw how this speed of change is used by dance culture to resist commercial co-option. It is also used by cultural commentators to attack dance culture, comparing it unfavourably to 'timeless' texts situated within an acknowledged canon. Completely contemporary research on <u>BPM</u> is therefore impossible: contemporary dance culture explicitly rejects nostalgia, and any archival knowledge is drawn from musical texts, rather than visual representations.

Here is an example of how, once a track reaches the Top 40, it is neither contemporary nor relevant to dance culture. The track is <u>Higher State of Consciousness</u>, by Josh

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interdiscourse between the social discourses in the text and those through which I made sense of my 'self', my social relations, and my social experience (Fiske, 1990, p.85).

Wink, initially released in America by Wink's own record company Ovum under the artist title Winx. This record provided the highlight for many a dance event in the summer of 1995, in particular the "Tweakin' acid funk mix", with its innovative mix of a hip-hop break beat and high frequency acid lines. Initially, this record was not available for purchase in the UK. However, British distributors imported some copies of the record from America. The consequent cost of these copies, approximately £10-£12 for a twelve inch single, meant that it was financially beyond the reach of most ordinary consumers. However, to maintain their roles as cultural leaders, DJs are quite prepared to spend this amount on certain records, providing that they are of sufficient quality and are relatively rare in the UK. This phenomenon can be traced back to the Northern Soul scene of the 1960s and 1970s where rare American imports were sought after by DJs.

The massive dance floor popularity of Higher State of Consciousness led to the British record label Strictly Rhythm licensing it for release in the UK, and it was released on 9 October 1995 under the title of its creator, Josh Wink. Within a week the track had entered the UK National chart at number eight, thus guaranteeing it a spot on Top of the Pops, which Wink promptly turned down. However, the British release was promoted on the basis of a 'radio edit', and was markedly different from the "Tweakin' acid funk mix" that was so popular during the summer of 1995. Dance culture members reacted against this move, and Higher State of Consciousness changed from an exceedingly fashionable dance floor classic to 'commercialised' pop song in the space of a fortnight.

Michelle Lanaway, a Liverpool-based journalist and friend of Wink, explains:

> There was a real buzz built up around Josh Wink before he did any interviews. He was really clever about it though, he didn't want to go and do loads of interviews, he wanted to wait until he was ready. The buzz came through on the strength of the records. He put out I'm Ready

on Ovum [in America], his own label, then Virgin picked it up for Virgin Underground in America, and it came to Britain on import through Virgin. Then Virgin licensed it for release over here, whilst Strictly Rhythm released <u>Higher State of Consciousness</u>, and XL released <u>Don't Laugh</u>. Virgin just didn't know how to handle Josh Wink and how to market him and push him into the charts, but at the same time you had all the dance music magazines picking him up. So the release didn't actually coincide with when all the magazines wanted to push him. They [Virgin] then re-released <u>Higher State of Consciousness</u> after he was on the cover of <u>Muzik</u> magazine (Lanaway, 1995).

So by the time Virgin had developed appropriate marketing tools and gained enough publicity and radio airplay to enable <u>Higher State of Consciousness</u> to climb the national charts, contemporary dance culture had already assimilated Wink within their fold, and were eagerly awaiting new releases. However <u>Higher State of Consciousness</u> was remixed and re-released, and dance culture reacted angrily to this move;

<u>Higher State of Consciousness</u> was no good as a radio record because it was too long, and it's got incredibly high frequencies in it. When <u>The Evening Session</u> [a Radio One show, broadcast on occasion from nightclubs around the country] came to Cream in Liverpool they played 30 seconds of it, and it just wasn't radio-friendly for that time of the evening. You can't make a three-minute radio edit out of a track like that, because the reason why it is so brilliant in the first place is because it has so many different influences in it (Lanaway, 1995).

Thus we arrive at our first methodological problem. If the musical texts that are an integral part of <u>BPM</u> lose their cultural currency so quickly, and are inherently unsuitable for playing outside their natural context of the DJ set, then how do we organise a "viewers' workshop" to examine a text that, even when broadcast, is already

out of date (turnaround time between shoot to transmission could be anything from two weeks to twelve months, the latter being the case when a particular episode contained a compilation of previous shows)?

Multiaccentuality, Location and Time

John Fiske suggests that "the meanings and pleasures of television are accented by the semiotics of its place of reception" (Fiske, 1990, p.89). Note Fiske's use of the term 'accented', rather than altered. Perhaps a connection can be made between Fiske's tentative suggestion and Voloshinov's more rigorously defined concept of multiaccentuality. Using the linguistic theory of Voloshinov also provides an oblique connection to the Bakhtinian analyses that I applied in the previous two chapters[3].

Voloshinov asserts that "the social multiaccentuality of the ideological sign is a very crucial aspect. By and large, it is thanks to this intersecting of accents that a sign maintains its vitality and dynamism and the capacity for further development" (Voloshinov, 1973, p.23). Perhaps this is why television is also perceived to have 'vitality', why it has the capacity to speak to us as individuals, and as members of a particular society at a particular time. Perhaps this is also why the subject positions offered by television are accepted by viewers: the viewer feels that he or she is being directly addressed. The concept of multiaccentuality allows us to examine the pleasure gained by individuals in the consumption of television texts, without reverting to the excessively individualistic and functionalist nature of a 'uses and gratifications' approach. This is a particularly important aspect in the study of youth television. Frequently youth television has a narrowly defined 'target' audience, but must avoid 'narrowcasting' to such an audience to the exclusion of what might be termed 'secondary' audiences. So in the case of <u>BPM</u>, the target audience was, roughly, the

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[3] Bakhtin, to avoid persecution under Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union, published certain works under Voloshinov's name, although it is not clear precisely which works (see Morris, 1994).

16-34-year-old market, yet in 1995 its secondary market of 35 and over accounted for 46% of its total average audience of 80,000. Simon Potter, Producer of <u>BPM</u>, confirms that, whilst the production team of <u>BPM</u> are instructed by advertisers to aim at a specific socio-economic 'market', they nevertheless view their programme as of interest to other social groups;

> the more market research people and corporations try and divide the market place up in terms of socio-economic class and age, the more dangerous it is, because you are actually contriving what are fairly artificial differences between a broad mass of people, many of whom want pretty much the same thing (Potter, 1995).

The concept of multiaccentuality has further use in that it recognises that there is polysemy within the parametric constraints of textuality, rather than the pluralism that Fiske's work occasionally suggests[4].

Following the semiological and structuralist maxim that television is structured like a language, we can therefore suggest that there are a range of different meanings for different readers of a single televisual sign, without suggesting that these meanings have nothing in common with each other. We should remember that polysemy is systemic, it results from the properties of *langue*, the language system in which a specific sign is situated. Multiaccentuality however, is a property of *parole*, it is a property of the sign itself, the single utterance, the smallest unit of meaning. This is an important distinction, particularly when examining how polysemy works within a

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[4] An example of this is Fiske's book <u>Television Culture</u> (Fiske, 1987), where Fiske attempts to show how television viewers resist a text's ideological closure, and are left free to determine meaning. In doing so Fiske appears to have developed a kind of Foucaultian pluralism. Firstly, Fiske appears to suggest that viewers are completely free to determine the meaning of a specific set of televisual signifiers (pluralism), and secondly, he appears to suggest that the ideological power of the text inevitably *creates* resistive readings (*c.f.* "wherever there is power, there is resistance", Foucault, 1979, p.123).

specific text. As Morley suggests, when signs are placed next to each other, polysemy is limited; "the construction of syntagmatic relations between... separate signs/words/images... (before the operation of textual closures) must act to narrow down the meaning-potential of the signs as they stand in isolation" (Morley, 1992, p.123).

It was my acknowledgement of the process of 'accenting', and the role context plays within this process, that led me to believe that the 'viewing sessions' that I wished to hold should be completed within domestic environments, and, due to the speed of change within dance micro-cultures, the texts should be viewed at the time of their transmission, rather than taking the form of a special 'time-shifted' screening. There were problems with this ideal scenario. Firstly, <u>BPM</u>, the text I intended to use, was broadcast early on Sunday mornings between 1993 and 1995, typically somewhere between 2 and 5 a.m., depending on the television schedule for that particular week. There were obviously ethical, practical and theoretical problems here. Firstly I would have to decide which domestic environment to use, my own or that of a viewer or group of viewers. If it was my own domestic environment would I be able to persuade a representative sample to visit a relative stranger's flat at such an hour, and would the viewers be able to relax enough to watch the programme in the way that they usually did? What is more important, how could I guarantee my own safety and that of the viewers on their journeys to and from the viewing session? Any viewing session would require a discussion after the broadcast. How many people would be prepared to stay up until 6 a.m.? If the viewing sessions were to be held in the viewers' own domestic environment, then what sort of people would be willing to allow a relative stranger into their home in the middle of the night? Would it be ethical to 'invade' the personal space of viewers at such an hour, and would such an invasion alter their reading of the text? The answers to these questions came once I approached people to take part in the study, and are outlined below.

When choosing a sampling technique, I was left with no alternative but to use a different approach to traditional 'standardised sampling' techniques, as I did not know the size of the 'population' of the culture that I wished to examine. My method was therefore as follows; with the purpose of finding potential interviewees, I went three times to a local dance club (which shall henceforth be known as Black Magic), and on the third visit I approached those people that I thought I recognised from previous visits[5].

There were both positive and negative results of the "judgmental sampling" (Fetterman, 1989, p.42) described above. On the positive side, this method avoided any premature narrowing of focus that is occasionally caused by random samples. This method also meant that the participants that I approached were not casual observers but active participants in dance culture, in that they regularly visited the club, week in, week out.

One problem that did arise was that two of the people that I eventually selected for interview were employed by Black Magic; one worked as a promoter, and the other as a DJ. Other interviewees were also employed within contemporary dance culture; one worked in a record shop, one was a journalist, and another a lighting engineer. However, this did not necessarily mean that my sample was unrepresentative. As suggested in previous chapters, one prominent phenomenon within contemporary

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[5] My reason for changing the name of the club is that I subsequently found out that some of my interviewees were employed by the club, and I felt that they would be more likely to co-operate if the name of the club was not mentioned in my thesis. This name changing follows in the tradition of the Mass-Observation group changing the name of Bolton to 'Worktown' in The Pub and The People: A Worktown Study (1943). Another example is Robert and Helen Lynd's anthropological examination of a 'typical' American city, Middletown in Transition, where Muncie, Indiana was renamed 'Middletown' (see Lynd and Lynd, 1937). Both Lynd and Lynd and the Mass-Observation group were attempting to highlight the typicality of Indiana and Bolton, and I would suggest that this is also the case with my research; Black Magic is a typical British techno club, with many of its weekly guest DJs playing at other clubs around the country.

dance culture is the level of involvement that participants have in the production and distribution, as well as the consumption, of cultural texts. It is not unusual for people to take low-paid employment within a nightclub, for instance, helping out with the lights or distributing flyers, in order to secure free and guaranteed entry to the club. This factor actually enhanced this thesis; the comments of these interviewees were particularly incisive, and I maintained the regularity that I wished to achieve with my sample.

This facet of contemporary dance culture can also be connected to broader macro-social movements. Mainstream employment has undergone similar changes to dance culture; enforced flexibility, less job security, shorter contracts, and an overall move away from employment towards self-employment, combined with periods of short-term unemployment. This process has been visible for many years, with Charles Handy noting that

> [during the 1970s) 'long-term unemployment', 'youth unemployment' and 'redundancy' became familiar words, words which increasingly infected all social groups. Jobs began to be a scarce commodity, and 'work' started to mean other things besides the conventional full-time job. Second and third careers, moonlighting and the black economy became part of our language (Handy, 1984, p.ix).

This last sentence is of particular relevance to my research, in that some of the 'semi-professionals' that worked at Black Magic were officially registered as unemployed. Within youth culture, the distinction between employment and unemployment is fading, and people are, albeit illegally, topping up their 'Job Seekers Allowance' with part-time 'cash-in-hand' work. Although not exactly what Handy envisaged, there are parallels between this situation and the so-called "work scenario" that Handy originally advocated as an alternative to full employment (see Handy, 1984, pp.178-88). Particularly useful is Handy's suggestion that "all work carries status"

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(Handy, 1998, p.184). At the time of interview Stephen (viewing session 5 in chapter 6) was one of four resident DJs at Black Magic, and occasionally played at other clubs. He was well respected throughout the North-West dance scene, yet he did not make enough money from DJing to support himself financially and topped up his income with state benefits. Stephen's job had a great deal of 'status' yet it was, in the language of Handy, 'priced below a living wage'.

I could have avoided selecting employees and 'semi-employees' by explicitly rejecting some prospective interviewees once I had found out their occupations, or by only visiting the club once and approaching anyone that was dancing. However the former method would have meant that I was actively excluding certain people who were central to the micro-culture I wished to examine, and the latter method would have inevitably led to the inclusion of people who were not regular participants in dance culture. The responses of employees and 'semi-professional semi-employees' were particularly useful in that they were more fully conversant with the mores of contemporary dance culture, and had a stronger historical grasp of the cultural changes that are at work than other participants.

Once I had got my bearings in the club, I approached prospective interviewees and asked if, at some point in the future, they would be willing to take part in a real-time viewing session. Approximately half of the people that I approached said that they were willing to take part in some form of interview, but only four people initially showed any willingness to take part in a real-time rather than a time-shifted viewing session. This was not necessarily out of fear for their safety; merely that those with the energy to stay awake after the club wished to go on to an after-hours party or to relax on their own at home, and those who were tired wished to go bed. I was therefore limited to performing only one real-time session, consisting of one group of four people.

John Corner claims that ethnographic studies frequently "over-state the extent to which the removal of acts of viewing from the naturalised and fragmented flow of mundane use... creates an unacceptable degree of distortion in viewers' responses" (Corner, 1991, p.279). Whilst this may be the case, context should always be viewed as an important determinant in the creation of meaning. Shown early on Sunday mornings, BPM was specifically scheduled to coincide with young people's return from raves and nightclubs. Therefore, in viewing BPM, connections were made between the viewers' recent activities on the dance floor and those shown on screen. However, the problems I came across meant that most of the viewing sessions had to occur at a more convenient time. This had one discernible effect. In the previous chapter part of my critique of common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture was based on an analysis of Ecstasy consumption that suggested that Ecstasy use in contemporary dance culture was not a purely hedonistic activity devoid of meaning, but was, on the contrary, directly related to the drug's homologous relationship to contemporary dance music. I then extended this analysis suggesting that there was a homologous relationship between music, drug and televisual representation. Due to the ethical, practical and theoretical problems outlined above it proved impossible to arrange an ethnographic interview with interviewees who were under the influence of Ecstasy. If a viewer of BPM is under the influence of drugs such as Ecstasy then this will alter their viewing strategy and the meanings they create when they interact with the text. Altering the psychotropic context of the viewing of BPM would therefore alter its meaning. This is one 'context' that Corner has not anticipated in his criticism of those ethnographers who are "wary" of special screenings (see Corner, 1991, p.279).

As far as the location of viewing sessions went, only one prospective interviewee showed any reluctance to watch BPM in a domestic environment. This female interviewee did however agree to the more neutral territory of a University seminar room, and the session was held there. All the other interviewees were given the option of completing the viewing session in their own accommodation, or in my own flat. Only three chose to watch the programme in their own accommodation, and seven

chose to watch it in my flat. This initially took me by surprise, but then I realised that privacy, rather than safety, was paramount in interviewees' minds. If they visited my flat, it would be my privacy that would be invaded, and I would leave the interview knowing nothing of their domestic life. I suspect there were also issues concerning policing at work here, in that the whole process was working on a 'need to know' basis. I did not need to know interviewees' full names and addresses, and therefore my interviewees had greater peace of mind knowing that they were, essentially, anonymous.

Group or Individual Viewing Sessions?

Another methodological decision was whether to hold individual or group viewing sessions. Graeme Turner, in criticising the method of Morley's <u>Nationwide</u> study, suggests that, in the group viewing environment, "it is likely that a consensualising process was engendered by the group itself" (Turner, 1990, p.135), referring to the degree of agreement between class-based and occupation-based viewing groups. Certainly this consensualising process occurs, but Turner ignores the fact that very often viewing takes place in groups anyway, and that, within these groups, viewers talk to each other about what they are viewing, and that a 'negotiation' of meaning between viewers takes place quite naturally. One aim of my research should be to examine the consensualising that went on when <u>BPM</u> was viewed in groups. However, I came across a major methodological issue: would my presence in a viewing session inhibit such a discussion, or would it engender a discussion different from one that might spontaneously arise? This question was never definitively answered, in that all viewing sessions were completed in my presence. It would have been impossible to do otherwise. Such a scenario would have at least involved my placing a tape-recorder

into the hands of interviewees, and under such circumstances I would still be present 'by proxy' even if I was not in the room[6].

In discussing the issue of 'group ethnographies', Morley quotes Pollock as stating that "the very assumption that there exists the opinion of every individual is dubious" (Pollock, 1955, p.233, see also Morley, 1992, p.17). In a similar vein, Seabrook suggests that "if people are asked about their opinions, they assume that they ought to have some, and obligingly evolve them on the spot" (Seabrook, 1973, p.47). There are two complex yet inter-related points here. On the one hand Pollock states that there is no such thing as 'individual' opinion, implying that opinion is socially constructed. On the other hand Seabrook suggests that 'opinion' is not necessarily in existence until formulated in response to a specific question. Either way, these criticisms cannot be levelled at my ethnographic study in that I am not attempting to examine viewers' opinions *about* BPM, but attempting to discover what BPM, during its period of transmission, *meant* to young people; what discourses were 'activated' by the text, as well as examining the relationship between the dance floor, its televisual representation, and the audience for such texts. In earlier chapters I have suggested that the contemporary dance floor is beyond individualism. The 'individual' on the dance floor subsumes him or herself within the communal body. Within my viewing sessions the opinion of the 'individual viewer' is therefore not as important as in the viewing of other television genres, and the inclusion of group viewing sessions is entirely validated.

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[6] The only other possibility would have been to have tape-recorded interviewees' conversations without informing them. In my view this would have been unethical, and I therefore rejected this option immediately. Despite these problems, I feel that certain sessions did have a high degree of realism (in the popular sense of the word), and, in the results contained in chapter 6, I have indicated when I felt this occurred.

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Whether viewing sessions involved groups or individuals was left up to the interviewees. If the interviewee suggested a group interview, as occurred on a few occasions, then I complied with this request, if an interviewee was happy with taking part in a viewing session on their own, then this is what occurred.

'Passive' versus 'Active' Audiences; Distraction and Femininity

Another potential problem can be summed up by Ellen Seiter's suggestion that television viewing is a "touchy subject" due to its connotations of laziness and its low cultural capital (Seiter, 1990, p.62). However to pay too much attention to this would be to ignore the specifics of my ethnographic study. I would suggest that, in the context of my research, a discourse that states that television viewing is 'idle' and 'passive' and associated with a lack of education and/or unemployment is less important than Seiter suggests for five specific reasons.

1. Television viewers are not passive anyway. Television theory has shown us that viewers are 'active readers'.

2. My interviewees are more active than most, in that they have voluntarily given up their time to help me complete my research. My research would be incomplete without their 'activity'.

3. My interviewees are also active in the sense that they are active members of the culture that I am studying, and the culture that BPM is representing. Without my interviewees, and people like my interviewees, BPM would having nothing to film, and I would have nothing to write about.

4. Passivity has a qualitatively different role in youth culture than in the rest of society. Passivity is viewed as a way of combating the fiercely materialistic nature of British society, and a way of mentally coping with periods of unemployment. On a hot sunny

day, when there is little work to be done, 'chilling out' is seen as an ideal way to pass the time. As a result of this young people either steadfastly refuse the positioning offered by the dominant social discourses concerning television viewing habits, or gleefully accept, with a heavy dose of irony, the role of 'couch potato', with the intention of further irritating other, older, social groups. Coffield and Gofton address this issue in their analysis of the difference between adult 'pub-oriented' culture and the youth and drug cultures that surround bars and nightclubs:

> Consumption... is escape, rather than integration into the adult world. As work disappears, consumption rather than production becomes the arena within which identity is assembled... The traditional pub gives way to the multifaceted bar with American or mock colonial decor, or becomes, in truly postmodern fashion, reinvented as one style among many. Suddenly, the pub and its traditions are deconstructed, and are challenged by the demands of a new clientele. Illegal drugs are an extension of this process. The conspicuous consumption of time and its essential wastefulness lie behind the latest type of drug taking (Coffield and Gofton, 1994, p.12)

5.Connected to this is the concept of 'chilling out' as an essential part of the dance club experience, particularly in the context of taking a break from dancing whilst in a hot club.

Drawing upon Meaghan Morris's analysis of the concept of 'distraction' within cultural studies, I would also suggest that passivity is connected with femininity within dominant discursive formations (see Morris, 1990, pp.22-4). Here we have a complex web of associations between the concept of chilling out and the supposed qualities of the contemporary television viewer; both chilling and television watching are essentially "distracted" activities, and the viewing of <u>BPM</u> is even more so, with its rush of edits and images.

We can also see other supposed feminine traits in the 'mass culture' of television viewing, such as emotionalism and "subjectiveness" (see Huyssen, 1986, ch.1 and Modleski, 1986b). However what is important to remember is that these 'feminine' traits have a qualitatively different meaning in contemporary dance culture, and are not necessarily subjugated to 'masculine' reason and objectivity. Dance culture is pejoratively viewed as 'mass culture' by common-sense discourse, but its participants should not be too worried about this; for it suggests that its communality is in direct opposition to the kind of consumerist individualism that is often linked to the conditions of postmodernity and Thatcherism. The chain can then be completed by suggesting that dance culture can be mythically represented as a feminised unruly mass (in the same way that the original 'masses' were perceived to be feminine).

A connection can also be made between this analysis and the application of Bakhtin and Voloshinov in previous chapters. In previous chapters I have described how many dance culture participants are unable to translate their experiences on the dance floor into words. Experiencing this, Hillegonda Rietveld suggested that "language, that Apollonian creator of the symbolic order, was unable to catch the event" (Rietveld, 1993, p.63). If, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest "'the feminine' is what cannot be inscribed in common language" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1985, p.516) then it is possible to suggest that the non-linguistic dance floor carnival is 'feminine'. As I showed in chapter 2, dancing has always traditionally been linked to femininity (see McRobbie, 1984, p.143), and, in the case of contemporary dance culture, there is a specific rejection of 'traditional' masculinity (see McRobbie, 1993, p.419).

Morris attributes the negative connotations of passivity and the 'feminisation' of distraction to cultural studies itself. However, such a discourse has been mobilised since the popularisation of television in the post-war period. It is not cultural studies but society as a whole that mobilises a connotative chain that runs from television viewing, through passivity, to femininity. Here is an example from a letter written by

John Ruskin in 1872, where Ruskin passes comment on the behaviour of two American girls on a train from Venice to Verona;

> They pulled down the blinds the moment they entered the carriage, and then sprawled, and writhed, and tossed among the cushions of it... They had French novels, lemons, and lumps of sugar to beguile their state with; the novels hanging together by the ends of string that had once stitched them, or adhering at the corners in densely bruised dog's ears, out of which the girls, wetting their fingers, occasionally extracted a gluey leaf (in Cook and Wedderburn, 1960, vol.xxvii, p.346).

Whilst common-sense discourse emphasises the feminising effect of passivity, cultural studies does the opposite, it insists upon television viewing as activity. However in its attempt to claim that all *media consumption is activity in its own right, cultural studies* seems to position passivity as an undesirable other, to be turned into activity at all costs, without acknowledging a possibly resistive role for passivity[7].

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[7] There is one honourable exception in Paul Corrigan's Schooling the Smash Street Kids (Corrigan, 1979). Corrigan suggests that some of his work could

> leave us with an impression that kids enjoyed a certain sort of institution more than others because they could buy a certain amount of freedom in the dance hall, the disco and the football ground. This is true, but needs to be seen against the background of the institution that remains more strongly that of the boys - the street. All other activities in their spare time take place in relationship to the vast amount of time spent hanging about on the street. The difficult thing for us 'outsiders' to appreciate is that such activity is, in fact, *activity*, that it forms a series of actions which all of us feel are of no consequence. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of my research was my discovery that the main activity that the kids took part in was 'doing nothing', a phrase I had to retranslate from its commonsense meaning. Within our own lives, leisure revolved around concrete action; we must realise that for these boys action has to be understood in different ways (Corrigan, 1979, p.119).

Deliberate passivity is viewed as unacceptable by common-sense discourse. For instance Glasgow Councillor Jim Coleman has waged a one man war against 'chill-out rooms' in Glaswegian nightclubs. As we saw in chapter 1 the Public Entertainments Licenses (Drugs Misuse) Act of 1997 encourages the provision of chill out rooms. However, Councillor Coleman is quoted as saying "if we allow chill-out areas, we will be sending a signal that we accept the existence of a drugs culture within the city and within the licensed premises that we're supposed to give licenses to" (in Pemberton and Petridis, 1996, p.15, see also Udo and Willmott, 1996, p.9).

It is fascinating that Corrigan connects street-corner 'doing nothing' with adolescent masculinity, thereby disarticulating it from femininity (although, perhaps, this should not be such a shock when considering the connotations of female 'street-corner' activity). It is equally fascinating how Corrigan frames "hanging around" in terms of rule-breaking, which is a deliberate and conscious activity. Corrigan continues;

> For too long sociologists in the past had said that individuals who broke rules did so for a whole range of unconscious or semi-conscious motives. The new deviancy theory gave the rule-breaker, the deviant, a consciousness about his or her actions, it presupposed that the deviant had some direction in his actions, and consequently a *knowledge* of the rules he was breaking (Corrigan, 1979, p.120).

In short Corrigan's analysis is that passivity is frowned upon by common-sense discourse, and, in resisting common-sense discourse, young people are being 'actively passive'; they are consciously and deliberately flouting a societal rule. This, to me, seems different from other analyses to be found within contemporary cultural studies. I would suggest that, in general, contemporary cultural studies takes a normative approach to the notion of passivity, suggesting that there is no such thing as passivity because everything is activity. Corrigan appears to take a different view, and suggests 'passivity' is not defined according to some 'active' norm, but is discursively defined within common-sense as a deviant activity. In suggesting that 'chilling out' has an important medico/physical function within the sphere of the dance floor I am not reverting to a normative definition, because I also accept that young people hold "chilling out" in high regard, and that, within the discourse of dance culture, chilling out is used to deliberately antagonise 'mainstream' society and those who adhere to common-sense discourse.

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It is, however, Coleman who is making the connection between Ecstasy and 'chilling out', rather than dance culture itself. Kathleen Turner, Policy and Publications Officer for the government-sponsored Scottish Drugs Forum, states that "some young people at dance events suffer from dehydration whether they take drugs or not. Chill out areas are a basic part of club runners' customer care" (in Pemberton and Petridis, 1996, p.15). Even Michael Forsyth, Conservative Secretary of State for Scotland in the mid 1990s, and Kevin Orr, Head of Strathclyde Police Drug Squad, have stated that they approve of 'chill out' areas (see Faulds, 1996, pp.22-4). This has been ignored by Coleman, who, paradoxically, continues to connect Ecstasy, a stimulant, with passivity. Perhaps Councillor Coleman's campaign is motivated by an attack on the deviance of 'chilling out' as an activity in its own right, rather than an attack upon Ecstasy consumption *per se*.

In summary then, my argument concerning passivity and television viewing is that television viewing is not a passive process, especially among my interviewees (who actively deconstruct their readings during interview, and who actively criticise BPM). Secondly I would suggest that passivity within contemporary dance culture is also a mode of resistance.

Problems with Oppositionality and the 'Encoding/Decoding' model

One major methodological issue that must be dealt with is the question of 'oppositional readings'. This problem stems from the academic dominance of Hall's reformulation of Parkin's theory of 'preferred readings' (see Hall, 1980, pp.138-148, see also Parkin, 1971). It is my intention to avoid categorising the readings of my interviewees as "preferred"/"dominant", "negotiated", and "oppositional". To justify my rejection of these categories, ubiquitous as they are in media studies, I need to provide a critical justification, and this section is intended to perform this function.

BPM is seen as promoting a 'deviant' culture. Karole Lange, a former programme development executive at the BBC Department of Youth and Entertainment Features, suggests that the dominant view within the higher echelons of the BBC of 'youth television' is of programming that is low quality, amateurish, and opposed to the discourse of public service broadcasting (Lange, 1994). Within journalistic and common-sense discourses, the audience for programmes such as BPM are either considered to be patronised by banal nonsense (cf Brown, 1992), or are viewed as lapping up mindless messages due to their much touted three-second attention span.

Both the form and referent of televisual representations of the dance floor are attacked by forces quite willing to resurrect the discourse of 'youth as folk rebel' that I have re-evaluated in chapter 2. However, and this brings us to a central difficulty if I was to apply Parkin and Hall's method, if a young person provides an 'oppositional' reading of a youth television programme, for instance one that suggests that BPM represents an immoral and corrupt youth culture, then to what extent is this 'oppositional' in the sense provided by Parkin and Hall? Although in 'opposition' to the youth television text, the young person's reading falls neatly within what used to be termed 'the dominant ideology'.

Evans explains;

> without very careful contextualisation, any given reader's variation from other readers (or what the analyst expects) cannot be labelled as anything but variation. If a particular cultural group, say adolescents, is typified by rebelliousness, then it would be sociologically inconsistent to label a rebellious adolescent reading as oppositional; indeed, given his contextualisation, it would be the non-rebellious response that would be resistant (Evans, 1990, p.159).

This ties in with my analysis of drug usage and deviance in previous chapters; when the consumption of illegal drugs is the norm, rather than the exception, then the non-drug user could be viewed as 'deviant'. Within Evans' analysis any notion of a textual reading as relating to a tacit acceptance or rejection of a dominant ideology is lost. Televisual representations of the dance floor such as <u>BPM</u> are texts that are, at times, politically resistant. <u>BPM</u> is a television programme where to oppose 'preferred' meanings is frequently to support common-sense discourse, and where to accept what Hall terms the "dominant-hegemonic reading" (Hall, 1980, pp.138-148) is to be *opposing* the hegemony of a 'ruling-class alliance'. We can talk about polysemy and closure, and we can talk about preferred readings and 'oppositional' readings, but we cannot assign class, ideological or political positions to these readings.

Perhaps the problem here is not one of the characterisation of the text-reader relationship as producing either preferred, negotiated or oppositional readings, but is the fact that a "dominant ideology" is not encoded in programmes such as <u>BPM</u>. This is certainly the view of Simon Potter, Producer of <u>BPM</u>, who, as we saw in chapter 3, maintains that <u>BPM</u> did its best to put across radical ideas, and, at times, was directly critical of Conservative and Labour policy on, for example, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994. Perhaps yet again we can refer to both Althusser's notion of "overdetermination" (see Althusser, 1969) and Marx's statement that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please" (Marx, 1967, p.10), whilst combining these with the Gramscian notion of consensus. The production of <u>BPM</u> was 'overdetermined' by I.T.C. guidelines, but within this Simon Potter and his team made their own history, and attempted to position themselves as a radical voice. At the end of 1995, with <u>BPM</u> dropped from the ITV schedules, Potter spoke openly about how he saw the <u>BPM</u> production team as at least partially autonomous from the ITV network and the 'mass media';

> we made <u>BPM</u> because we felt that there was a large area of music that
> was obviously appealing to a lot of people but just wasn't being heard

about, and wasn't being reported on because commissioning people don't understand it. They don't understand it for a number of reasons. One, they don't want to understand it, because a lot of them are 30 or 35 plus and grew up with a different music tradition such as punk and the new romantic scene which are rooted in a slightly different tradition. I think that, lazily, they don't know what's going on, they rely on other people to find out, and invariably they find out too late. It took us four years to get this, we originally pitched this as a series when 'acid house' first reared its head in the late eighties. Because it wasn't being widely reported people think there's nothing in it (Potter, 1995).

Here Potter aligns himself with contemporary dance culture, and suggests that, through negotiation and struggle, he won a place in the schedules for contemporary dance culture, despite the television industry's suspicion that "there's nothing in it" (itself surely connected to common-sense discourse's view that contemporary dance culture is little more than mindless hedonism). I would suggest that we shouldn't be looking for ideological positions within individual texts, but we should view television 'ideology' on a macro level. Perhaps it is at the level of the schedule as a whole that ideology can be seen to be at play. So consumerist quiz-shows, competitive sports sponsored by multinational corporations, and soap operas with their continual reaffirmation of 'family values' are given peak-time slots and form the backbone of British television. But, as Gramsci has shown us, no ideological battle is ever complete, and the terrain of television is no exception. Dance culture between 1993 and 1995 won a small concession, namely a place in the schedules on a Saturday night in the form of BPM. The hegemonic struggle continued, and, as we saw in chapter 3, the forces of commerce led to BPM being dropped from the schedules. The arrival of BPM was a classic example of struggle and negotiation leading to dominant forces giving concessions to oppositional forces, with the result being a temporary and partial consensus.

As on other cultural terrains this consensus included and excluded social groups, and was 'balanced' around a position that favoured the reproduction of the status-quo. It is this 'balance' across the schedules that allowed <u>BPM</u> to criticise government policy directly. News and documentary programmes inevitably supported the cross-party 'consensus' on contemporary dance culture (thereby implicitly supporting common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture), and cross-schedule balance was maintained. During 1993-5 dance culture was included within the schedule, within the broadcasting consensus. Yet, as of 1996, the forces of commerce, and a concern about the connection between dance culture and drug culture, led contemporary dance culture to occupy the space of the deviant 'other', excluded from the schedules, excluded from the consensus.

The issue of 'oppositionality' also ties in with some of my earlier comments on ethnography. How do we do ethnography now that we have lost any notion of ideology? I can see dangers appearing here. One danger is falling into what Corner has termed "descriptivism", whereby ethnographic studies are unable to connect with wider power structures due to a commitment to studying the 'everyday' (Corner, 1995, p.152). Another problem is the Althusserian bias of certain elements of media studies. The problem arises not from Althusser's <u>For Marx</u> (Althusser, 1969), where we find the notions of overdetermination and relative autonomy that have appeared throughout this thesis, but from the essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses; Notes Towards An Investigation' in <u>Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays</u> (Althusser, 1971). Indeed it could be suggested that the problem does not even arise from Althusser's more generalised notion of ideological reproduction to be found in the first half of his essay, but arises from his analysis of the precise *mechanisms* of ideological reproduction, namely the 'misrecognition' of one's self in the process of interpellation, an analysis that sees the influence on Althusser of his tutor, Jacques Lacan, and beyond to Lacan's inspiration, Freudian psychoanalysis. It is this part of Althusser's work that has had the most influence upon media studies, in particular what became known as 'Screen theory' after the journal of the same name. If we were to employ the terms

used by Althusser in his essay we would suggest that <u>BPM</u> is a part of an Ideological State Apparatus interpellating a group of people who have been criminalised by a Repressive State Apparatus. Such an analysis is surely erroneous.

To raise these questions is to re-evaluate one of the defining strands of media studies and cultural studies. If one of the founding principles of media studies was that the discipline was a political project to expose the workings of the "dominant ideology" in media texts, then when a coherent "dominant ideology" is noticeably absent, what is there left for the media academic to do? Perhaps the answer is to reject an individualist model of television consumption, as Luis Rivera-Perez does in his essay 'Rethinking Ideology: Polysemy, Pleasure and Hegemony in Television Culture' (Rivera-Perez, 1996), and to reject an economic determinism that suggests that all television texts are by their very nature ideological. This is not to reject Althusser *per se*. It could be suggested that the broadcasting ISA is not interpellating the televisual reader, but, through the ideology of independent commercial broadcasting, the broadcasting ISA is interpellating the production company itself. It is Potter and his team who are forced to accept an ideological position, not the <u>BPM</u> audience. Potter is of course aware of this, he railed against targeted audiences and I.T.C. guidelines on impartiality when making <u>BPM</u>, yet he accepted them nevertheless.

Terminology

Throughout this chapter I have used the term ethnography to describe the process by which I intend to examine the audience for <u>BPM</u> at close quarters. As my examination of method and methodology continued, and as my audience research began, it became apparent that my usage of the word 'ethnography' was incorrect.

Firstly my method was not strictly ethnographic in that it did not conform to the leading definition of ethnography as "the work of describing a culture" (Spradley,

1979, p.3, see also Seiter *et al*, 1989b, pp.226-7). The written report of my interviews in chapter 6 is not merely *descriptive*, it is also *analytical*[8].

Secondly, according to Seiter *et al*, "ethnographies are based on long-term and in-depth field work" (Seiter *et al*, 1989b, p.227). My audience research does not fit into this definition for two reasons. Firstly, my research was not 'long-term' in that data collection was completed over a period of months rather than years. Secondly, much of the data contained in chapter 6 was not collected in the 'field'. Seiter *et al* suggest that

> audience studies are carried out by academics with specific social and cultural backgrounds, who "go out into the field" to learn about the uses and understandings of groups of viewers with social and (sub)cultural backgrounds usually different from their own (Seiter *et al*, 1989b, p.227).

I reject the suggestion that my ethnographic work is 'field work' on two grounds. Firstly, I was not 'going out into the field' in the sense of 'visiting' or 'observing' a different culture, I was analysing a culture of which I was a part. Secondly, I was analysing people of the same 'social and cultural background' as myself. Some of the participants in dance culture that I spoke to were students at Liverpool John Moores

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[8] It is interesting to note that John Caughie suggests the opposite, and claims that 'undisciplined' ethnography lapses into 'description' and consequently moves away from 'evaluation'. In particular Caughie criticises ethnography's relocating of 'value' onto consumption (see Caughie, 1991). This is not the purpose of my ethnographic work, which is to examine the creation of meaning. My notion of value is outlined in previous chapters, and is not necessarily linked to what happens at the interface between text and audience.

University with similar biographies to my own[9]. I was already a 'native', and not an 'outsider' like most ethnographers. The usage of categories such as 'native' and 'outsider' is therefore problematic.

James Henslin uses a different language to address what is essentially the same 'problem', namely

> that of determining whether the researcher's experiences as a member of a group are representative of experiences of members of that group or whether they are representative of the particular background that the researcher brings with him when he enters it. Since the sociological researcher ordinarily has educational and socialization experiences that are atypical of the members of the group he is studying, it is likely that he will react in atypical fashion to what he experiences within that world (Henslin, 1972, p.49).

What happens when the researchers' "educational and socialization experiences" are similar to his or her group is not addressed by Henslin. Perhaps, as Sara Cohen suggests "anthropology's focus upon the 'other', its boundaries between us and them, bear little relation to the situation of ethnography within the contemporary advanced industrial world of the mass media" (S. Cohen, 1993, p.125, see also Grossberg, 1989). Everett Hughes makes a similar point which states that *generally* an anthropological approach is unsatisfactory as it is best suited to the analysis of small homogeneous societies. However Howard Becker suggests that, whilst this is true, an anthropological

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[9] In the 1993/4 period, between 11% and 15% of those aged between 16 and 24 were in full-time education. These students spent an average of £23 a week on 'entertainment' (including CDs, tapes and videos). The social category of 'student' is therefore a significant one in British society, and one of the primary sites and primary determinants in contemporary dance culture. This is particularly noticeable in large university towns and cities where many dance culture venues run into financial trouble over the summer due to a decline in the student population (figures from Social Trends, 1996).

approach can be used on smaller societal sub-groups, such as ethnic groups, regional groups and occupational groups, and therefore need not focus on societies outside the national boundaries of the ethnographer (see Hughes, 1961, pp.28-9, and Becker, 1973, p.81).

In a sense I occupy a dual role within this debate. In the previous chapter I was directly observing cultural phenomena, and placing my observations within analytic frameworks derived from (amongst others) Mikhail Bakhtin, Lucien Goldmann and Theodor Adorno. During the data collection for the next chapter, I was interpreting other people's responses to a cultural representation (BPM). Research for earlier chapters might well be seen as representing a more anthropological approach, whilst the research for chapter 6 fits more into the category of 'media ethnography' and audience studies. What links both these approaches is a move away from 'objective' ethnography towards a more reflexive and discursive approach[10].

My research does retain some links with ethnography in that it involved an extended period of observation. It has, however, gone beyond this. I do not merely describe a culture from the outside, I am not merely an 'innocent' observer. Equally my interviewees do not neatly fit into any of the four main categories provided by ethnography; respondents, informants, subjects and actors.

1.The people examined in my research are more than mere 'respondents', defined by Spradley as "any person who responds to a survey questionnaire or to queries presented by an investigator" (Spradley, 1979, p.31). At times a dialogue occurred between interviewer and interviewee, particularly after the screening, and general discussions before and after the screening often led interviewees to consider their activities in a new light.

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[10] For a brief summary of the shift in ethnography from 'objective' studies towards a more 'dialogical' approach see Cohen, 1993, pp.123-5.

2.My interviewees do not fit the category of 'informant'. Spradley provides a definition where informants are

> first and foremost native speakers...Informants are engaged by the ethnographer to speak *in their own language or dialect*. Informants provide a *model for the ethnographer to imitate*; the ethnographer hopes to learn to use the native language in the way informants do (Spradley, 1979, p.25)[11].

This categorisation is inadequate for the purposes of my study, for I *am also a native;* I already understand, indeed at times I speak, the language of my interviewees. It is only during the process of analysis that my role separates, it is only at this point that my interviewees become 'different' from me. If, as Meaghan Morris suggests "the choice of the term 'ethnography'... emphasises a possible 'ethnic' gap between the cultural student and the culture studied" (Morris, 1990, p.22), then to choose to *not* use the term ethnography consequently emphasises the 'ethnic' similarities between my interviewees and myself. This is not to suggest that I am exactly like my interviewees, rather that, during analysis, during academic work and in the writing of this thesis, I am only momentarily outside the culture that I am examining.

Morris's quotation is drawn from her critique of the move towards ethnography within British cultural studies. In particular Morris suggests that media ethnographies employ 'the people' as "both a source of authority for a text and a figure of its own

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[11] John Irwin gives a definition of an informant that appears to contradict Spradley's. Irwin suggests that the difference between an informant and a respondent is that the informant can distance him or herself from their normal 'position' and see the object of study from the researcher's point-of-view (see Irwin, 1972, p.136, see also Campbell, 19955, pp.339-342). This phenomenon would be impossible if the informant spoke in another language as Spradley suggests.

critical activity" (Morris, 1990, p.23), thus leading to a situation where media ethnography is "not only circular but (like most empirical sociology) narcissistic in structure" (Morris, 1990, p.23). This is not the case in my ethnography because the 'authority' for my research lies not in the raw data collected, but in the application of theoretical models to this data. Morris suggests that one way out of the 'circuit of repetition' is "theorizing the problems that ensue" (Morris, 1990, p.25). This chapter does exactly that, theorising the problems that have ensued in the processes of collection and analysis of my ethnographic data.

3.Spradley's definition of a 'subject' is equally problematic. According to Spradley a subject is a participant in research that aims to test a hypothesis. However, Spradley insists that "investigators are not primarily interested in discovering the cultural knowledge of the subjects; they seek to confirm or disconfirm a specific hypothesis by studying subject's responses" (Spradley, 1979, p.29). This is simply not the case; my research has the aim of discovering the cultural knowledge of the interviewees, and showing how this cultural knowledge is both discriminating and sophisticated, thereby providing a critique of common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture, and providing a critique of common-sense discourse on the nature of the relationship between young people and television. It is certainly not the case that I am "not primarily interested in discovering the cultural knowledge of the subjects". To do so would be considered if not unethical, at least questionable within media studies[12].

4.One final term within the lexicon of ethnography that must be rejected is 'actor'. Spradley defines an actor as "someone who becomes the object of observation in a natural setting" (Spradley, 1979, p.32). You don't interview actors, you merely watch them. Whilst participant observation was certainly part of this research, and whilst

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[12] The use of 'subject' is also problematic due to its use in 'subjectivity theory' within media studies, and due to its perceived emphasis on the individual.

many of my interviewees were also actors, they were usually more than this. There is a link here to my Bakhtinian analysis. As suggested in previous chapters the carnival rejects the opposition between 'actors' and spectators. It is for this reason that I define those who consider themselves to be members of contemporary dance culture as 'participants'.

As this project is not strictly an ethnography, I therefore reject the categories of informant, respondent, subject, and actor, and throughout this chapter I use the term 'interviewee' to describe those taking part in this project. I had originally thought of using the term 'participant', but this would have led to some confusion between 'participants in contemporary dance culture' and 'participants within my research'. I retain the use of the word 'participant' to describe those people that were active members of contemporary dance culture at the time of my research, whilst employing 'interviewee' to describe those participants in contemporary dance culture that took an active part in my audience research.

For the various reasons outlined above, this project did not conform to any of the leading definitions of ethnography. I have rejected any notion of the discursive audience as defined by the text itself. I have rejected the empiricism of classical ethnography. I have rejected notions of activity and passivity as defined by both common-sense discourse and media and cultural studies. I have also rejected the media studies' emphasis on ideological texts interpellating the individual viewer. I intend to emphasise a coherence between readings, rather than emphasising, as some theorists do (i.e. Fiske), a multitude of different individual readings. This project therefore requires another name. I did consider Clifford Geertz's term 'thick description', but rejected it due to its universality; I wanted something that was specific to this project (and something that emphasised this specificity). I have chosen the term 'ethnoanalysis'. The prefix 'ethno-' indicates, amongst other things, *culture* (see Hanks, 1986, p.524), which is precisely the object of my study. The suffix '-analysis' emphasises that this

project is not merely descriptive[13]. The whole term suggests connections with, yet a difference from, ethnography itself.

Ethical and Legal Concerns

As described in the opening chapter of this thesis, the social group from which my interviewees are drawn is, at least partially, criminalised. This had caused me some concern, particularly in my role as a participant observer of this social group. However, the consumption of recreational drugs or attendance at events that contravened the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 was not required in order for me to fulfil my duties as a participant-observer. 'Participating' in this context meant participating in discussions *about* events, rather than participating in those events themselves. Ned Polsky agrees; "successful field research depends on the investigator's trained abilities to look at people, listen to them, think and feel with them, talk with them rather than at them" (Polsky, 1997, p.219). John Irwin explains further; "in the observation of criminals in their natural setting, what is important is not so much seeing every facet of their lives, as being present when 'normal' discussions take place" (Irwin, 1972, p.120)[14].

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[13] Geertz's defines analysis as "sorting out the structures of signification - what Ryle called established codes, a somewhat misleading expression, for it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of a cipher clerk when it is more like that of the literary critic - determining their social ground and import" (Geertz, 1973, p.9).

[14] To have employed what Fred Davis has termed the "Martian situation" (quoted in Douglas, 1972b, p.18), or what Clifford Geertz describes as "I-am-a-camera 'phenomenalistic' observation" (Geertz, 1973, p.6) would have been impossible with this research. However past participation in dancing during previous leisure time does not necessarily mean that the resultant research is not objective. The point I make here is that the "Martian situation" is an impossible one to hold in this context, I already had knowledge of, and was a participant in, contemporary dance culture, and could not deny this knowledge.

Whilst I am aware that there are concerns that the sociologist might 'go native' when studying 'deviant' cultures, I defend my research on contemporary dance culture because it has enabled me to provide a critique of common-sense, academic and televisual discourses, and has allowed me to compare and contrast a lived culture with its televisual representation[15]. Dance culture is attacked within the British media for its drug consumption, and it is often blamed for deaths connected with drug use[16]. Within this research 'going native' therefore refers to the consumption of Ecstasy.

However, whilst Ecstasy use is inextricably linked to contemporary dance culture, contemporary dance culture is not, in itself, the 'cause' of Ecstasy use. With the exception of BPM, televisual, journalistic and common-sense discourses on dance culture see nothing but Ecstasy consumption, and if I am to provide a critique of these discourses then one aim of this thesis should be to put Ecstasy consumption back in its place as merely one component of contemporary dance culture. In previous chapters I have gone to considerable lengths to describe the complicated relationships between Ecstasy and contemporary dance culture, and in this process I have shown how monocausal explanations for complicated phenomena such as Ecstasy consumption are naïve and simplistic.

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[15] Interestingly, Jack Douglas suggests that in 'going native' the ethnographer becomes a spokesperson "for *moral interest groups* rather than seek[ing] objective knowledge of those groups" (Douglas, 1972b, p.4, author's original italics). Within my thesis, these two processes work together; I have sought objective knowledge so that I am able to defend dance culture from attacks based on ignorance and prejudice. Further to this, knowledge itself within dance culture is *participatory* rather than 'subject'-based. The term 'trainspotter' is used within dance culture to humorously categorise someone whose knowledge is based upon catalogue numbers, facts, and figures, rather than on experience.

[16] For instance much of the newspaper and television reporting on the death of Leah Betts in 1995 ignored the fact that Betts died in her own home at her 18th birthday party, due to the consumption of drugs that had been purchased from a friend. Betts had no reported connections with dance culture, yet newspaper and television reporting blamed the "dance" or "rave" drug Ecstasy for her death (Ecstasy is not a "rave" or a "dance" drug, as we have seen it has certain properties that make it popular within contemporary dance culture, but this does not mean that its use is limited to contemporary dance culture).

When we compare and contrast discourses on rock culture and contemporary dance culture, then a difference becomes apparent. Rock culture is supported by the State as a valuable export and part of our cultural heritage, it is held in high regard by the great British public, and thousands of column inches are written on this unique part of British society. In particular 1997 saw the rise of the phrase 'Cool Britannia' with the newly elected Labour government forming a cultural industries task force to regenerate Britain's economy, and enable Britain to develop a sense of national self-esteem. This task force is headed by leading figures in the rock industry such as Alan McGee of Creation Records. It is worth noting that the rock band Oasis are signed to Creation, and McGee is a close confidant of Noel and Liam Gallagher, two Burnage boys famed for their drug consumption. Noel Gallagher was even received by Tony Blair at No.10 Downing Street despite his reputation. Contrast this state of affairs with dance culture. Contemporary dance culture is viewed as a deviant culture, and has been criminalised by Parliament and marginalised by the media[17]. Perhaps the 'revolt into style' process outlined in the previous chapter will happen to contemporary dance culture as a whole, but at the moment this looks a long way off. It has taken thirty years for this process to occur with, for instance, The Beatles. Vilified for their use of psychedelic drugs by the press and the state (Liverpool City Council once refused to erect a statue of the band due to reports of the band's drug use) they are now national heroes, fondly cherished by, amongst others, The National Trust, who have just purchased Paul McCartney's old home in Liverpool. But the press, when commenting on dance culture, have ignored the central message of the revolt into style process undergone by The Beatles, and by rock culture in general. Participation in dance culture, and participation in rock culture, does

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[17] Simon Potter, Producer of **BPM**, suggests that the perception of contemporary dance culture as being little more than drug culture hinders his job of attempting to portray dance culture in a positive light; "we are not helped by the sort of tabloid perception of dance music as being drug addled, when of course you can level that sort of accusation at any form of popular music. Look at the amount of cocaine going down at rock concerts. It's something that I resent" (Potter, 1995).

not necessarily lead to drug use. Whilst being linked to Ecstasy consumption, dance culture goes beyond it, and is as invigorating as the rock culture that historically preceded it.

When common-sense and televisual discourses link dance culture and Ecstasy consumption they serve to isolate contemporary dance culture from the rest of society. As Becker suggests

> where people who engage in deviant activities have the opportunity to interact with one another they are likely to develop a culture built around the problems rising out of the differences between their definition of what they do and the definition held by other members of society (Becker, 1973, p.81).

Dance culture is in a terrible double-bind. Common-sense and televisual discourse vilify and isolate dance culture for its Ecstasy consumption, whilst dance culture's response to this is to ignore and subvert social values around drug consumption, thereby further isolating itself[18].

Beyond the legal issues mentioned above, there were also other ethical and methodological problems. For instance how could I gain the trust of interviewees? How could I get the inside information that I required on, for instance, the role Ecstasy has in their television viewing? If I had been researching a more 'traditional' criminal subculture the short-term nature of my research might well have been a hindrance in this respect. However, I did gain the trust of my interviewees relatively quickly. I informed potential interviewees that everything that they said would remain

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[18] It is noticeable that, within contemporary dance culture, non-drug users are keen to defend those dance culture members who themselves choose to take drugs. For an example of this solidarity see Headon, 1995a.

confidential if they so wished. This, combined with my age and appearance[19], meant that I was perceived to be trustworthy. Interviewees wanted to give me the information that I required to tell the 'outside world' that their culture was a creative, invigorating and innovative one. Participants in contemporary dance culture want and need a critique of common-sense and journalistic discourses. Most interviewees were not necessarily concerned about hiding their identities or their criminal activities. Whilst altruism was a major motivation of my interviewees (as it often is in ethnographies of deviance), it was not the case that I always remained an 'outsider'[20]. Interviewees did not treat me as such once they became aware that I had considerable knowledge of the ways and mores of dance culture. The position of 'insider' is to be expected towards the end of most participant-observation research projects; the researcher becomes part of the world that he is researching. In the research for this thesis, this occurred earlier than is usual.

Indeed it was my knowledge of, and participation in, contemporary dance culture that caused me more concern than the possibility of always remaining an outsider. However, whilst doing participant observation, and whilst talking to interviewees, I was able to step back and view dance culture from the perspective of an academic. It was this 'dual perspective' that proved particularly fruitful. As an insider I could be trusted, and gained access to the 'meaning world' through observing and listening to interviewees. As an outsider I could also relate interviewees' conversations about contemporary dance culture and television to the production of television and the world

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[19] I deliberately dressed down whilst visiting Black Magic, and dressed in a style in keeping with that particular nightclub. As is to be expected, much of contemporary dance culture considers dress to be a defining aspect of identity. However the clientele of Black Magic eschew the more glamorous styles of dress popular at other Liverpool clubs such as Cream, and favour a more relaxed and informal style. It was this style that I emulated.

[20] For a brief examination of the role of altruistic responses in ethnographies of deviance see Henslin, 1972, pp.66-7.

of cultural and social theory. I was able to step back, to view the big picture, to examine the mechanics of macro-cultures as well as micro-cultures[21]. This dual role is quite a traditional one within ethnographic research; for instance Jack Douglas talks of the advantages of comparing the information gained as an observer of a culture with that gained by being a member of the same culture (see Douglas, 1972b)[22].

Chosen Method

In summary then, my examination of ethnographic methodology led me to approach regulars at one specific nightclub in Liverpool and ask them if they would be willing to take part in a tape-recorded viewing session of the television programme <u>BPM</u>. I approached thirteen potential interviewees (or pairs of potential interviewees). Only one potential interviewee refused to take part. Interviewees were left to make the decision as to the location of their interview, and whether the interview was to be done on their own, or with friends. Eleven viewing sessions were arranged by telephoning those prospective interviewees that had expressed a willingness to be interviewed. A

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[21] Irwin warns us that "this can go on and on until we have encompassed the whole world, so we must arbitrarily draw the line somewhere" (Irwin, 1972, p.133). Within this research the 'line' is drawn around the worlds of television and contemporary dance music; their production, their distribution, and their consumption.

[22] I acknowledge that, perhaps, my usage of the categories 'insider' and 'outsider' are problematic here, for the reasons outlined by Becker:

> When a rule is enforced, the person who is supposed to have broken it may be seen as a special kind of person... He is regarded as an *outsider*. But the person who is thus labelled an outsider may have a different view of the matter. He may not regard those who judge him as either competent or legitimately entitled to do so. Hence a second meaning of the term emerges: the rule-breaker may feel his judges are *outsiders* (Becker, 1973, pp.1-2).

Within my study, an outsider is someone who is not a member of contemporary dance culture.

further session would have been held, but on telephoning the number supplied by the prospective interviewees, I found that they had moved. Ten viewing sessions were situated in the domestic sphere; seven were held in my flat, and three were held in interviewees' flats. One interview was completed in my office at Liverpool John Moores University.

At the time of the interviews, my apartment in Liverpool was a one-bedroomed flat with a small living room that could seat four interviewees and myself. I had a relatively cheap 20-inch colour television and video recorder, certainly nothing that would look out of place in the living rooms of my 'target audience'. I also had a CD-based hi-fi system if the interviewees wished to listen to music either before or after the viewing sessions. Here I echo Paul Willis who, commenting on the centrality of music to his interviewing technique, suggests that "by and large, the taped sessions fitted in well, since listening to records and talking is precisely what they *would have been doing anyway*" (Willis, 1978). Listening to music in small groups is an important element of contemporary dance culture, and most of the viewing sessions started with an informal discussion with appropriate music playing in the background. As David Fetterman suggests a "naturalist approach avoids the artificial response typical of controlled or laboratory conditions" (Fetterman, 1989, p.41).

'Time of viewing session'

Due to the practical and ethical problems described earlier, the majority of viewing sessions were not completed at the time of transmission of the selected programmes, but were time-shifted.

'Collection of Data'

Lull suggests that, during an ethnographic study, "specific references to the objectives of the research program should not be made" (Lull, 1990, p.179). This however

directly conflicts with Spradley's statement that "informants have a right to know the ethnographer's aims" (Spradley, 1979, p.36). Whilst bearing in mind both these statements, I gave the interviewees a brief description of the aims of my thesis during my initial discussion with them at Black Magic. So, come the actual viewing session, interviewees were already broadly aware of what was required of them. Before starting the cassette recorder, and after settling down with a cup of tea (which was, without exception, drunk before each interview), I asked what Spradley and McCurdy term a "grand tour question" along the lines of "how do you think television deals with dance culture" (see Spradley and McCurdy, 1972). These brief discussions are not presented in the written reports found in chapter 6. This is because the primary objective of these preliminary discussions was to encourage interviewees to begin talking *before* the programme was shown, so that the first five minutes of the programme were not filled with an embarrassed silence.

Lull states that "the observer must not lead conversation or direct behavior" (Lull, 1990, p.179). I let the interviewees make the first move in any discussion during and after the viewing of the text, and asked 'follow up' questions to clarify the interviewees' points, and to direct the conversation onto my research agenda. These follow-up questions often took the form of what Henslin describes as 'reflection', whereby the interviewer picks up a phrase used by the interviewee, and asks them to elaborate upon what they meant by it (see Henslin, 1972, p.74). However, it must be said that the result of these follow up questions was often a generalised unstructured discussion. Such a situation is not only unavoidable, but positively desirable. As Polsky states, successful field research "does *not* depend fundamentally on some impersonal apparatus, such as a camera or tape recorder or questionnaire, that is interposed between the investigator and the investigated" (Polsky, 1997, p.219).

The recordings of the interviews were selectively transcribed within 24 hours of the interviews taking place. In the case of group interviews, this transcription process by-passed the problems of speaker identification and the need for expensive

'multi-track' recording facilities. This recorded verbal data was *supplemented* by note-taking. I use the word 'supplemented' carefully; this information was intended to *back up* the tapes. I also made brief notes immediately after each interview[23].

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[23] As Lull suggests "the natural breaks occurring during observational studies give the researcher time to take detailed notes about what transpired during the preceding minutes or hours" (Lull, 1990, p.177).

Chapter 6: Ethnoanalysis; the <u>BPM</u> Case Study

Introduction: Presentation of Data

This chapter contains the results of the ethnoanalytic project described in the previous chapter. It is intended that this data, and the analysis of this data, go some way towards providing a critique of common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television.

In the written reports below, all interviewees' names have been changed. Grammar has been corrected (although the misuse of relative pronouns has not), but not in a way that converts what might be termed 'written speech' into 'writing' itself. Where '...' appears some words have been omitted as they were irrelevant to the point being made. When the interviewee has over-used a speech 'prop' such as the peculiarly Liverpudlian (Scouse) usage of 'you know' between sentences, then this has been omitted. Appendix 5 contains a *verbatim* transcript of *Session 1*. It is suggested that the reader compare the contents of Appendix 5 with *Session 1* below to ascertain the precise transcription techniques used in the representation of interview data. All interviews were held in the summer of 1995. Appendix 4 contains a brief structural analysis of the episode of <u>BPM</u> used in viewing sessions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. The format of this episode does not vary greatly from the episodes used in the other viewing sessions.

In the individual reports below I have deliberately avoided the suggestion that those interviewed are somehow 'representative' of members of specific social groups. Within my ethnoanalytical work I want to tread a fine line, emphasising the diversity of readings to be found when young people interact with television texts, whilst avoiding the individualism of many other audience research projects. Categorisations based upon, for instance, gender and class are simply not apparent in the results of my research and to impose them from above would be a distortion of the viewing strategies of dance culture participants.

This is not to suggest that there are no connections between 'individual' readings, rather there is a complex web of determinants that feed into the reading of a television text, be they discursive, economic, or social. However, if there is one common thread running through each interview, then it is the discourse of contemporary dance culture itself. Members of contemporary dance culture have a formidable knowledge of the culture in which they invest so much time and money. This knowledge is used in their critical consumption of <u>BPM</u>, with interviewees making direct comparisons between their own experiences of contemporary dance culture and those elements of contemporary dance culture represented by <u>BPM</u>.

A further connection between many of the interviews is a concentration on the aural element of <u>BPM</u>. This, however, does not suggest that *all* members of dance culture disrupt what might be termed 'the specular hierarchy' in the same way, indeed in *viewing session 10* Karen and Lorna do the opposite with their suggestion that they normally view the text with the sound turned down, and supply their own musical accompaniment.

There is one consistent divide between two groups of readers, and that is a divide between the readings of participants and non-participants in contemporary dance culture. This is due to the production of <u>BPM</u> employing the discourse of contemporary dance culture within the encoding of the <u>BPM</u> text. To the outsider, this discourse appears transparent or irrelevant; they do not see it, or do not acknowledge it as a crucial part of the text, whilst for the participant in contemporary dance culture the text is decoded with reference to this discourse and compared to their experiences of contemporary dance culture. Often the viewer's enjoyment is related to whether they consider the programme a 'true' representation of 'their culture'.

I use the phrases encoding and decoding not to draw the reader's attention to any particularly usage of the model described by Stuart Hall (see Hall, 1980), but to

emphasise that many of the texts that represent contemporary dance culture, and many of the texts produced by contemporary dance culture, are *coded*; they require a 'key', and without this key the meaning potential of the text is limited, or at least altered. This key is both *learned* and *earned*. Dance culture participants spend a great deal of their lives immersed in contemporary dance culture, discovering the physical, intellectual and emotional joys that are contained within it. Without this 'key', without knowledge of this coded discourse, then common-sense discourse is used to interpret the text. As many elements of contemporary dance culture define themselves in opposition to common-sense discourse, then the meanings produced by dance culture participants and non-participants are often diametrically opposed.

Viewing Session 1: Nigel

Nigel is a freelance lighting designer for various nightclubs throughout the North West, and is in his late twenties. He has been an enthusiastic music fan for many years, and has gradually become increasingly interested in contemporary dance culture, to the extent that it now provides him with a good living and career structure in his home town of Manchester. We watched a time-shifted episode of BPM on the afternoon of 27 July 1995 (programme originally broadcast on 16 July 1995). The episode chosen featured footage from Tribal Gathering 1995, an event that Nigel had attended two months previously. Nigel was the only interviewee that regularly viewed BPM, often watching the programme when he returned from working in nightclubs on a Saturday night. The viewing session was located in the living room of my flat.

One noticeable factor in the viewing session with Nigel was his suggestion that the reason he viewed BPM was to receive *information*. This would situate Nigel's reading of BPM within the public service ethos that, as we saw in chapter 3, was so central to the production of BPM. Nigel specifically referred to the fact that BPM's footage from nightclubs always lists the track playing, and, crucially, the DJ playing it;

it's reasonably informative, you get to hear stuff which you might have heard the name of. It comes from being more choosy in my music... So if you can get a gist of what someone [a particular DJ] is playing you are at a slight advantage when you go out. There are lots of DJs about, and you can get a hint of what they do...I watch it quite regularly, and there's always some bit of information that I find quite interesting.

Two conclusions can be drawn from Nigel's comments.

Firstly, he suggests that much contemporary dance culture is DJ-oriented. Many dance culture participants suggest they do not necessarily go to a club to meet their friends, or to dance to whatever records happen to be playing; they go to hear a particular DJ. As described in previous chapters, a dance music DJ will recontextualise records in a style unique to them. Through the mixing together of a selection of records (aided and abetted by manual dexterity and sophisticated technology) the DJ is able to play a set that bears little resemblance to a mere succession of records. Nigel gave the example of Laurent Garnier, a Parisian DJ who performed at Tribal Gathering 1995, who is known for his eclecticism, for his use of samplers within his DJ set, and for the structured flow of his long sets (up to eight hours).

Secondly, by giving a taster of a DJ's particular style and sound, <u>BPM</u> allows dance culture members to make informed choices about how they can spend their time and money. This highlights the discriminating nature of many dance culture participants. The knowledge that Laurent Garnier is to play a nightclub in Liverpool such as Black Magic would mean that participants such as Nigel would make a particular effort to attend in order to hear Garnier's set. Having said this one thing noticeably absent from <u>BPM</u> is information as to where specific DJs are playing in the future.

Nigel also commented on how he considered that <u>BPM</u> was trying to develop a new aesthetic in its screening of the dance floor; "I like the way they use particular camera

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tricks, it spices it up more, it can get a bit boring just looking at people dancing all the time".

Nigel also highlighted the qualitative difference between pre-acid house discos and contemporary dance culture, and said this was reflected in how television programmes represent the dance floor. In particular Nigel compared <u>BPM</u> with the programme <u>Hitman and Her</u> presented by Michaela Strachen and Pete Waterman in the late 1980s;

> <u>Hitman and Her</u> was aimed at your 'Fridays'[1] and your 'townie' night out, and that really has died a death. A lot of the people who were going to that are going to the lighter end of house music, like Cream[2] or The

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[1] 'Fridays' is a club in the basement of Liverpool's famous Adelphi hotel (a hotel that received a great deal of publicity during and after its depiction in the 1996 BBC 'soapumentary' <u>Hotel</u>). Contemporary dance culture appears to have almost entirely passed its clientele by, both in their musical and other lifestyle preferences. Nick refers to its clientele as 'townies', a phrase used to characterise and stereotype working-class blue and white-collar workers in their twenties and early thirties, whose weekend rituals invariably consist of alcoholic inebriation, the desperate search for a sexual partner as the nightclub or pub closes, and a visit to a take-away restaurant on the way home. In fact there is little difference between Mungham's description of the clientele of dance halls in the mid-1970s and the clientele of Fridays (see Mungham, 1976).

[2] As suggested in the opening chapter of this thesis, Cream is itself a good example of how a specific club can move between the categories of 'underground' and 'mainstream' over a period of years. Cream started off as a well-respected 'underground' club. However, its ever-increasing popularity led to dozens of coaches arriving at Cream every Saturday night from as far afield as Scotland and London, with queues that on occasion snaked for up to half a mile, which resulted in clubbers waiting for as long as two hours to gain entry. Cream had spawned a mini-empire, consisting of the sale of T-shirts, bags, jackets, top ten records and compact discs. Cream also featured artists such as Kylie Minogue and M-People (winners of the 1994 Mercury music award), and, at the time of interview, were organising a club 'tour' where the Cream resident DJs were to play in nightclubs in other towns under the Cream banner, culminating in a summer residency at an Ibizan nightclub.

In the summer of 1995, 'underground' culture in Liverpool held Cream in disdain for its 'mainstream' music policy, and for its pandering to commercial forces. In particular Robert (viewing session 2) suggested that, despite the fact that Cream regularly employed highly respected American DJs such as

Roger Sanchez and Frankie Knuckles, the regulars at Cream didn't have the necessary respect for dance music, they didn't have the kind of relationship with dance music that Robert and his friends had.

During the twelve month period after this particular interview Cream went some way to answering the criticisms that were being voiced by members of the Liverpool 'underground'. Cream gradually phased out their policy of booking DJs who pandered to the dance floor, and started to book DJs who, in a move that echoes BPM's post-Reithian ethos, would educate what might be termed 'mainstream dancers' in 'underground' music. This also led to the opening of a jungle room where 'underground' dance culture participants could listen to the latest 'underground' DJs such LTJ Bukem, the most respected jungle DJ of 1996.

However disagreements between Cream and LTJ Bukem led to the severing of their relationship, and, towards the end of 1996, Cream announced a new DJ policy for 1997. Paul Oakenfold was to become resident in the back room, the second dance floor, of Cream. Part of this arrangement was that Oakenfold would not be allowed to play anywhere else that night, and that he would play for three hours every week without fail. The same deal was struck with the DJ collective known as XPress 2 (DJs Rocky, Diesel, and Ashley Beadle), who were booked as weekly residents on the main dance floor of Cream. The aim was to introduce 'underground' music to the perceived 'mainstream' audience at Cream, with XPress 2 and Oakenfold renowned for their commitment to 'underground' musical styles.

The move was only partially successful, and the nature of this partial success validates Robert's view that 'mainstream' audiences have a different relationship to music than dance culture. Oakenfold's back room went from strength to strength, with a great deal of Liverpool's dance culture participants flocking to the back room of Cream every weekend. However, XPress 2's residency in the main room was a failure. The traditionally 'mainstream' audience in the main room of Cream simply could not understand XPress 2's more 'underground' style of house music, preferring a more commercial style known as 'handbag' (see glossary), a style that, at the time, littered the upper reaches of the national sales charts, and a style that XPress 2 were not willing to play. Robert's (viewing session 2) view, and in holding this view he is typical of Liverpudlian dance culture as a whole, was that the dance floor crowd in the main room of Cream were more interested in clothes, fashion, sex and drugs than in music. A deep love and knowledge of music was the true mark of a member of Liverpool's 'underground' dance culture.

The 'mainstream' Cream audience rejected the idea that they were to be musically educated at Cream, and, with dwindling entrance numbers, Cream capitulated and booked the more commercially successful Nick Warren, who was more accessible to those Cream clubbers not immersed in contemporary dance culture and dance music. In a sense, as a big corporation, Cream straddles two discourses of post-Reithianism and free-market commercialism in much the same way as BPM.

Garage Club. Maybe the change in music has dictated the change in the programme style.

Viewing Session 2: Catherine and Robert

Catherine is a fashion designer and artist, and Robert is a record shop assistant and DJ. Both are in their mid twenties. Robert's interest in dance culture is long standing and his knowledge is extensive. He is almost entirely immersed within Liverpool's dance scene, and spends most of his waking hours listening to house music, be it in the club where he DJs, in the clubs he attends out of pleasure, at the shop he works in, or at home, where he has a professional DJing set-up to work with. Catherine, Robert's long-term partner, is less involved in the Liverpool scene, although she does attend the club Black Magic every week. At the time of interview Catherine was finishing her fashion degree at Liverpool John Moores University (although I work at Liverpool John Moores I had no contact with Catherine, and I was unaware of her status as a student until the interview took place). Catherine and Robert watched a time-shifted episode of BPM on the afternoon of Friday 28 July 1995, five days after the original broadcast on Sunday 23 July 1995.

I approached Catherine during a visit to Black Magic as I had noticed that she had been present on all three of my previous visits. She introduced me to Robert, and suggested that I interview them both. Both had occasionally seen BPM, but were not regular viewers. The viewing session was located in the living room of my flat. As will become apparent, Robert's in-depth knowledge of dance music marks him out as a true expert, particularly in the anthropological sense of "a person who has an exceptional understanding of the implicit and the explicit, the esoteric, and the ordinary dimensions of his social world and an ability to articulate these" (Irwin, 1972, p.127).

One defining characteristic of the session with Catherine and Robert was the centrality of the categories of 'underground' and 'commercial'/'mainstream' within their reading

strategies. They used these categories to make sense of the programme, and were quick to position particular clubs, tracks and artists in relation to their interpretation of these terms.

The essential quality of 'mainstream' consumers, is according to Robert, a lack of "respect" for contemporary dance music;

> they can't appreciate it, they only ever hear the stuff that gets played in places like the Conti', and that's all they're content with, they're not content with delving deeper into the sort of things that come from America that don't get into the charts.

Here Robert is going beyond the suggestion that there is merely a qualitative difference in *musical style* between 'underground' and 'mainstream' clubs. In particular Robert posits a different relationship between *musical text* and *audience* in such clubs. For instance Robert suggested that, whilst he disliked 'gabber' music, he could understand that some people had a similar relationship to this music as he had to the style of music that he listens to, which is predominantly American house. Barbara Bradby calls the relationship between text and audience in 'underground' cultures "connoisseur-ist" (Bradby, 1993, p.166). Robert's description of the difference between 'underground' and 'mainstream' is an excellent example of this.

Robert's mention of "The Conti'", the Continental nightclub in central Liverpool, is particularly interesting. The Continental is almost unanimously spurned by the Liverpool dance scene. Robert refers to "The Conti'" whilst Nigel talks of "townies" and "Fridays"; both refer to resolutely 'mainstream' nightclubs playing 'mainstream' music.

Robert went on to suggest that the opposition between 'underground' and 'mainstream' is not necessarily a quantitative difference. Robert explained that, whilst the general

perception of 'mainstream' music was of a music that was more successful in terms of sales than 'underground' styles, this was not necessarily the case. Weekly sales charts are perceived to belong to the world of 'the mainstream', and have become recognised as a method of quantifying the success of a particular record. However, in Robert's experience, 'underground' music is frequently more popular than 'mainstream' music. This is hidden by the fact that the sales of 'underground' music are not taken into account by those who compile sales charts. Robert also suggests that 'mainstream' music is often sold *on the back of* the success of 'underground' music. Robert's job in a specialist record shop has given him some insight into this. Commenting on the choice of a particular video in BPM's 'video top ten', Robert explained how a particular 'mainstream' song could get into the charts, and therefore played on radio and the video shown on television, with few people actually liking it;

> that tune [When I Call Your Name by Mary Kiani] will probably get in the charts but it won't be because of this mix [the a-side soundtrack featured in the video], but because Hardfloor[3] have done remixes of it on the b-side and everybody who has gone into the shops has brought that twelve inch or single solely because of the Hardfloor remixes on the other side. That's one of the reasons why the charts are bollocks. All these remixes 're-do' the track entirely, and the song gets in the charts, but it's not their [the remixers] mix that gets played [on the radio and television] it's the really commercial one [the a-side]. I'd imagine that it's really quite annoying for people like Hardfloor.

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[3] Hardfloor are German duo Ramon Zenker and Oliver Bondzio. Hardfloor are famed for the release of the track Acperience, a track that, although it took nearly two years to reach a wide audience, almost single-handedly kick-started an acid house revival in Britain in 1994. For brief details see Harrison, 1995.

Robert also suggested that the promotional videos that are shown on <u>BPM</u> are not representative of the 'underground' dance floor. Commenting on the video by Dreadzone, Robert said

> I can't see this getting much play [in nightclubs]. It's the same as the last one that was on, the reason people have bought this record, and we have sold quite a few copies, is because it's got an XPress 2 mix on the other side and it's a really good remix, and it bears absolutely no resemblance to this whatsoever.

Again this reinforces the suggestion that the split between 'underground' and 'mainstream' is not merely a quantitative one. Rather there is a qualitative difference in the music itself. According to Robert more care and attention is paid in the production of 'underground' music, with the result that it is simply better than 'mainstream' dance music. This is because the primary motive for the production of 'underground' music is *musical*; the primary motive is to experiment with form and advance the genre as a whole, rather than merely to make a profit. Again this emphasises the connections between my analysis of contemporary dance culture and Howard Becker's analysis of the culture of jazz musicians outlined in chapter 1. Robert works in a successful record shop, and cannot be accused of being 'anti-commerce'. For him to sell is certainly not to sell out (see Thornton's criticisms in Thornton, 1993, p.174). Remixers such as XPress 2 have 'underground' cultural capital as well as quantitative success, yet Robert's criticism is that this is never acknowledged by the charts. Dreadzone's single will appear in the charts, and will receive significant airplay, but the musical text that people are really buying, the b-side remixes, will never be promoted on <u>BPM</u>, because the record company have only shot a video for the a-side. Whilst Sarah Thornton belittles 'underground' dance culture's claim that it is constantly under attack from 'the mainstream' (Thornton, 1993, p.15), Robert's observations bear this out.

As in Becker's study once a group, or a remixer, is perceived to have deliberately altered their style in order to achieve commercial success, then their cultural capital rapidly diminishes. For instance Robert made the following comment on the Public Enemy video in BPM's video chart;

> I like Public Enemy, they've done well but they've never ever sold out. They've always remained at the cutting edge.
>
> *Interviewer*: What do you mean by "sold out"?
>
> *Robert*: [They haven't] changed their style to become more popular. Some of their albums have sold really well, but even with the ones that haven't, they've never tried to change their next album.

Commenting on the video and record Take 5 In The Jungle by Teknicolor, Robert reaffirms the fact that 'underground' dance culture is opposed to overt commercialism ;

> *Robert*: This is commercial jungle. This would have no respect amongst the jungle DJs.
>
> *Interviewer*: Why not?
>
> *Robert*: It's cheesy. It's tacky. It's the Take Five tune [a jazz record initially released by Dave Brubeck in 1961, reaching number six in the single charts], and they've just put a jungle beat behind it, and a ragga chant. There's been no skill involved in making this tune. Jungle is really innovative, it's special because it's a British thing, nothing else, it didn't come from America, it came from the ghettos of Britain. This kind of thing shows you how big it's getting. It wouldn't surprise me if this was in the charts.

Robert is a dedicated and sophisticated consumer of dance music. His qualitative judgments enable him to place a musical text on a sliding scale between the polar opposites of 'underground' and 'mainstream'. Although using the same terminology,

this is a greatly different categorisation than the broadly class-based oppositions that Thornton criticises (see Thornton, 1993, pp.125-7).

One noticeable characteristic of <u>BPM</u> that was unreservedly attacked by both Robert and Catherine was the male gaze of the camera in dance floor footage. Whilst I was discussing the qualitative differences between 'mainstream' and 'underground' cultures, Catherine's instant reaction to the visual text was "oh no, I hate angles like that! I'm sorry, up the skirts is a no no! I hate that, it really annoys me". Robert's reaction was "it's trying to keep the male public attention. You can't deny that one, it's up the girl's backside basically".

One interesting facet of the discussion with Robert and Catherine was the implicit suggestion that, due to the physical presence of the television camera on the dance floor, the true spirit of the dance floor could never be represented on television. The following discussion took place during one particular sequence;

> *Robert:* People like those girls probably heard that <u>BPM</u> was in that club on that night and come down especially
> *Catherine:* In their smallest outfits and bra-tops!
> *Robert:* It's amazing what people will do to get on TV or in <u>Mixmag</u>[4]. My friend Mark [surname deleted] is a photographer. He says that when he goes to a club with a camera the things he is offered for him to take their photographs is just ridiculous!

Later on the following conversation arose

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[4] A monthly magazine dedicated to dance culture.

Catherine: As soon as they see a camera it's like "let's dance really well, let's look at the camera and try not to grin too much".

Robert: You'll definitely get people who will try to act cool, and will try to pretend that the camera is not there, and then you'll get some people who just flaunt themselves.

The presence of the camera on the dance floor means that the communal relations of the dance floor are weakened, and replaced with a relationship between individual dancers and the camera. No longer are dancers lost in the brief ecstasy of disappearance, subsumed within the communal body, they are now spotlighted by the camera, dancing as individuals for the benefit of an omniscient audience. Previous chapters saw how contemporary dance culture is beyond gender-based sexuality; the presence of the television camera reaffirms and reproduces 'traditional' gender relations.

The problem of how to represent dance culture is also present in the promotional videos of records that *do* have cultural capital. Commenting on the video for <u>Soul Man</u> by Kenny Larkin, the following discussion took place

Catherine: It's a bit weird

Robert: It's sort of that virtual reality thing

Catherine: It could be better

Robert: You tend to find that people just don't know how to express dance music in videos.

Catherine: It's touching on something that could be really really good, but it's just not quite getting there.

Interviewer: What prevents people from expressing dance music in videos?

Robert: I dare say that the person who did this video probably just works for the record company, and they just hear this music and they

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don't understand it... I don't really think that a tune such as this should have a video, it's [the music] just a feeling rather than something like this [the video]. A prime example would be The Bucketheads song which got in the charts. The person who made that, Kenny 'Dope' Gonzalez, is one of the major American producers, and when he did that track I'm sure he didn't have that video in mind. The video just disses the tune... In rock music videos do play an important role, but in dance music videos are not needed. Club, dance, house music and that doesn't need videos. People buy house music because they'll hear it in clubs, but they'll never get to see the video unless it gets in the charts. There's no need for them.

In general though, the discussions that Robert and Catherine initiated tended towards a concentration upon the *referent* of the text. In the case of dance floor footage this consisted of discussing the featured club, the DJ and the track playing, and in the case of videos and interviews this consisted of talking about the band or artist and the music.

When discussing videos and interviews the reactions of Catherine and Robert were mixed. For instance Robert said that most of the videos shown were not by artists that would be played at Black Magic, but the interview with Bandulu featured members of the group who were guest DJs at Black Magic two weeks before the viewing session, and he acknowledged that they were "very well respected on the British techno scene". During interviews Catherine and Robert paid little attention to the visual image, and concentrated on the spoken and musical audio track.

In summary, Catherine and Robert's viewing strategy was to compare the referent of BPM to their experiences of dance culture. On most instances this comparison was based upon a criticism of the referent of the episode of BPM under discussion, a club scene that they deemed 'mainstream', although they accepted that, on occasions, BPM

did refer to their culture. When this was the case, such as the Kenny Larkin video, it did so in a manner that did not interest them.

Viewing Session 3: Angela, Julia, Guy and Sarah

This session was the first attempt at a 'post-club' screening. This involved visiting the critically acclaimed night entitled 'Bugged Out', held in the Sankey's Soap nightclub in Ancoats, Manchester. This viewing session contains three interviewees that I had approached at Black Magic two weeks prior to interview. The interviewees were Angela, a second/third year drama student at Liverpool John Moores University, Julia, a second year business studies student at Liverpool John Moores University, Guy, a Liverpool John Moores University psychology MA student, and Sarah, a recently qualified supply teacher. I had not previously met any of these interviewees. All interviewees were in their mid twenties, and whilst Sarah and Guy had seen previous episodes of BPM, Angela and Julia had not.

We watched the same episode as Robert and Catherine, except that this time we watched the episode on 5 August 1995, two weeks after its initial transmission on 23 July 1995. The viewing session was located in the living room of my flat and began at 6 a.m. The reason a time-shifted episode was viewed rather than a real-time episode was that a 'deal' was struck between the interviewees and myself. If I could ensure that they would gain free entry to the Bugged Out night in Manchester a fortnight after initially meeting them, then they were willing to be interviewed. This was arranged with the club promoter, although, as the club was held on a Friday, an interview held during the transmission of BPM proved impossible (BPM is broadcast on a Sunday morning). No drugs were consumed on the night, although both the interviewees and I thoroughly enjoyed our time at the club. The club closed at 3 a.m. and we waited patiently for our 4.30 a.m. coach to Liverpool. After a short taxi drive from Liverpool's coach stop to my flat, we settled down with cups of tea and the interview began. Despite it being time-shifted, and despite it being held at a slightly later time than BPM is normally

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transmitted, there was a consensus that this felt like a real-time interview. The interviewees left my flat, tired and weary, at some point after 8 a.m.

What was noticeable about this session was that the decoding strategies employed by the participants were similar to those of Catherine and Robert in that they all compared BPM to their experiences of dance culture. In particular Julia, Angela, Guy and Sarah compared the dance floors featured on BPM with their earlier visit to Bugged Out. However, whilst their reading strategies were similar to Robert and Catherine's, they often came to the opposite qualitative judgments, specifically with relation to their views of the video clips featured. For instance the Dreadzone video (which Robert had suggested would not be played in 'underground' clubs), was watched, or rather listened to, with great glee by Angela. Sarah asked Angela if she had seen the band, and Angela commented positively on their performance at Glastonbury six weeks prior to the viewing session. All the group voiced their appreciation of the music that *accompanied* the video.

A further similarity between this viewing session and the previous one was that, like Robert and Catherine, Julia, Angela, Guy and Sarah often concentrated on the music rather than the televisual image. For instance Angela's viewing strategy was to make a direct comparison between the music played in the dance clubs that she frequented and the music featured in BPM, even in the form of the soundtrack to a video promo. In general comments on the visual image were rare.

There were two further examples of this. First was the discussion surrounding an interview with the Scottish singer Mary Kiani and the video clips of her previous band, Time Frequency. This discussion was entirely based upon the merits of the music. In a sense the visual element of the interview was transparent, they 'saw through' the videos and interviews, and concentrated on the music. Sarah and Guy commented on the fact that they had heard the track only recently in a bar. After a few seconds Sarah

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added that she considered it "an awful song", "twee" and "handbag"[5], a derisory term used by some clubbers to describe house music that is excessively commercial, and not dissimilar in meaning to Robert's "cheesy". Guy was the lone voice of support, claiming that the track "would be dead good on the dance floor" and was funny.

The second example of the music accompanying the image being compared to a night out was the discussion that accompanied the footage taken at Kelly's nightclub, in Port Rush, Northern Ireland. Sarah suggested that they had heard the track playing at the same bar as they had heard Time Frequency. Guy added "this version as well, it was quite good music [that night], well, cheesy music". Like his comments on Time Frequency, Guy's comments on the music accompanying the sequence from Kelly's showed a postmodern willingness to appreciate music that he knew had low subcultural capital. Where, for Robert, "cheesy" is simply a term of derision, for Guy, its nearest dictionary equivalent might well be "kitsch". Music could be cheesy, but still enjoyable.

There was only one point in the session when the visual text was commented upon, and this was when the group was asked how the dance floor sequence from Kelly's

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[5] Dance culture's usage of the word 'handbag' started life as a derogatory term for 'mainstream' discotheques, derived from the perceived practice of women dancing round their handbags. I choose my words carefully here, by 'perceived practice' I am referring to the fact that, in my considerable experience of both contemporary dance culture and 'mainstream' discotheques, I have never once seen this actually take place, and would suggest that this practice is what might be termed an 'urban myth'. Sarah Thornton noticed its usage in her research in 1988 (see Thornton, 1993, p.128), and the term has remained a staple part of dance culture's argot ever since. However, since 1993 it has been used to describe a musical sub-genre, a form of relatively fast 4/4 house music with prominent female vocals, 'break downs' (where the kick drum stops, and the track 'breaks down', only to be built up again), and a proliferation of piano 'stabs'. Initially its usage to describe this sub-genre was critical, but since then, in much the same way that the word 'jungle' was reappropriated to have positive connotations, handbag is used within the gay scene to describe a lighter 'happier' variant of vocal house music. Within the context of this interview however, Sarah, who is not a fan of handbag, is combining both negative connotation with its sub-generic meaning.

nightclub, Port Rush, Northern Ireland compared to their recent experience at Bugged Out. Angela replied

> *Angela:* No one's sweating, no one's got make up running down their faces!
>
> *Julia:* Everyone's dressed up in silly clothes, and white gloves.
>
> *Angela:* I don't know..., if there was a camera there tonight then everyone might have been showing off in front of it, but tonight everyone was really into each other, not into themselves like this lot.

By suggesting that the presence of a television camera on the dance floor might alter people's actions, Angela, like Catherine and Robert, is implicitly commenting upon the impossibility of truly representing the dance floor experience. In particular the spirit of unity that she noticed on the dance floor at Bugged Out, everyone being "into each other", what I have referred to in previous chapters as the communal body, is not represented within the visual text. Angela's statement backs up my suggestion in chapter 4 that, during the process of televisual representation, the communal body is replaced by a sense of individualism; the dancer is singled out by the television camera, and this represents a form of surveillance that inhibits and destroys dance culture's communitarianism.

Viewing Session 4: Graham

This session was held on Tuesday 8 August 1995 and we viewed the episode watched in the previous two sessions. By now I was really getting the feel of interviewing, and was beginning to notice patterns developing. It was for this reason that I continued to show to interviewees the episode broadcast on 23 July 1995 rather than the episode transmitted on the previous Sunday (6 August 1995). It would have been more difficult to compare and contrast interviewees' decodings of two different episodes, and my initial fear that dance culture participants would reject older material (even if it was

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only a couple of weeks out of date) did not materialise. I feel that this was at least partially due to the dance floor footage being at least a couple of weeks out of date at the time of broadcast anyway, so an extra couple of weeks did not matter. In particular I noticed similarities of reading that were based upon interviewees using the discourse of dance culture to 'unlock' the discourse of BPM. Watching the same, but by now less contemporary, episode, aided this process.

Graham is a freelance computer programmer in his early thirties, and lives with his girlfriend and their two children. A regular at Black Magic, Graham had not seen a complete episode of BPM before. The viewing session was located in the living room of my flat.

This viewing session was useful in seeing the extent to which a knowledge of cultural theory alters the reading strategy of a BPM viewer (Graham has a knowledge of media cultural theory, primarily drawn from having been a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, a political grouping closely tied to the development of cultural studies in the 1980s). The results were interesting in that I had the feeling that, at times, Graham did not merely view the text and give me his reading, but he gave me his analysis of his reading based upon his theoretical knowledge. He was quite aware of this, stating that this is how he consumes dance culture generally, his textual readings are always mediated through his knowledge of cultural theory and music production.

This helps demonstrate that the discursive nature of the written 'versions' of interviews within this chapter does not necessarily invalidate this 'ethnoanalytic' project as a whole. As stated earlier, this thesis is not situated within traditional anthropological ethnography in that it is not pretending to be objective; in particular its self-reflexivity allows it to acknowledge and analyse its discursivity. The theorising of interviewees' readings does not lead to the 'discovery' of *meaning*, rather it helps us to understand the *structure* of an interviewee's reading. In the majority of cases, the interviewees themselves do not have the analytical tools that I employ, but when they do, they come

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to similar conclusions as when I interpret 'ordinary' dance culture participants' readings[6].

For instance the <u>BPM</u> footage taken at Swoon, Stafford, triggered a comment by Graham on that particular club, and how much he enjoyed his last visit there;

> *Graham:* That's a good club... You should go, it's a very good club, nice 'housey' place.
>
> *Interviewer:* Why is it good?
>
> *Graham:* It's quite small, bigger than somewhere like ...[Black Magic], but not as big as Cream, but, because it's in Stafford, it's got people coming in from all over the place, *from as far as Birmingham, and all* villages and everywhere else, whereas in cities you don't really get that kind of mix.

This is an example of Graham talking purely as a dance culture participant. However his next comment demonstrated how his knowledge of media studies allowed him to theorise the process of televisual representation.

> *Interviewer:* Does this adequately represent that club?
>
> *Graham:* I don't know, it's difficult because the perspective of the camera is a completely different perspective than that of a dancer on the floor or even on the sidelines, you're not seeing the same angles. You

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[6] This is connected to Fiske's suggestion that

> to the extent that a training in semiotics and discourse analysis gives me some purchase on the structures of a text, it ought to give me some purchase, too, on the new text produced by my students in discussion. In particular, it ought to enable me to identify within it the play of popular discourse, the play of an academic discourse, and the interplay between them (Fiske, 1990, p.91, see also Fiske, 1989b).

might see some of the shots that are looking up, as you fall over or whatever, but you definitely don't get the down shots. This looks very 'spacey', and I don't remember many dance clubs where there's that much space around, and they're all dancing in a circle round the camera, rather than everyone facing one way...

...With the cameras in the club everybody looks really self-conscious. One of the really good things about a lot of dance places is that there is no need to look around, you just go in there and go ballistic!

Graham went on to make an interesting suggestion concerning the male gaze of the camera. When commenting on one particular video, which, ironically and unbeknown to him, featured a procession of very convincing transvestites, Graham suggested that "just as there are in clubs, there's a lot of 'lech' material on the programme generally". This is an interesting avenue, to suggest that the representational text is scopophilic, *but no more so than participating in the event itself.* This is to suggest that there has been a shift back towards (female) dancing as the object of the (male) gaze, rather than as a pleasurable activity in itself. Perhaps the analyses of dance culture in earlier chapters, and the analyses of Angela McRobbie (see, for instance, McRobbie, 1993, p.419), have been unduly hasty in attributing 'new men' characteristics to male participants in dance culture.

An alternative view is that sexuality in general is flourishing in clubs. In particular gay clubs have never been more popular with heterosexual music fans. It has been suggested that this is because intimate physical contact can take place without there being a 'penetrative' agenda, and that admiring, from a distance, the sexuality of dancing is now an acceptable activity in itself. However the intervention of the camera, where the viewer, or perhaps the voyeur, cannot be seen by the dancer, disrupts the sense of 'trust' that had previously existed. In viewing session 6 (see below) Sandra makes a comment that is connected to this; "She feels ashamed there, of the camera".

The sense of privacy within the four walls of the club has been broken by the camera. Virtually anyone could be watching. Whilst the sense of trust currently found within the contemporary dance scene has been bolstered by tight door policies on the most sexually liberated clubs, with a vetting procedure for male clientele, this good work is undone by the television camera. Whereas acid house clubs rejected sexuality outright, with an emphasis on androgynous clothes, post-acid clubs see a return to overt sexuality. Many wear items of clothes they wouldn't dream of wearing at any other time, often changing into the most revealing clothes once they had gained entry into the club. The prospect for both men and women of revealing (nearly) all on national television must be truly frightening.

Whilst the interviewees in the previous session commented positively on the fact that BPM attempted to attract members of different dance micro-cultures, and that there was something of interest for dance culture participants with differing musical tastes, Graham thought otherwise. Returning to his thoughts on the disruption of the musical flow inherent in BPM Graham suggested that

> a category of 'dance' as broad as this is too big for one session, because each of the sub-genres are probably big enough in themselves to do an hour's show, whereas [with this programme] you're moving from trip-hop to hip-hop to trance to techno to piano house in one go, and out of those five I only like three of them.

Later on Graham continued this theme

> This would have been turned off long ago if I had been watching this. Maybe that is actually reflective of dance culture, in that I'm really selective about where I go, when I go, and who I go with. It's got all the annoying bits about dance culture.

Again here we have an interviewee suggesting that <u>BPM</u> is an accurate representation of dance culture. However Graham is an interviewee in a specific micro-culture and has little time for other micro-cultures found under the umbrella term of contemporary dance culture;

> this programme does give you a good idea of how segregated dance music is, where they move from one club to the next. Not only along race lines, where this jungle club is black and all the other clubs have been white, but also with Swoon, which is a much more housey club and much more middle-class than the one in Northern Ireland. That's my impression from looking at it [<u>BPM</u>] but it's also the way I feel about a lot of music places.

Viewing Session 5: Stephen

Time-shifted viewing of the <u>BPM</u> episode watched in the previous three sessions, held on Wednesday 9 August 1995 (17 days after transmission). Stephen is unemployed and supplements his state benefits by DJing on a weekly basis at Black Magic. At the club I arranged to meet Stephen at midday in a pub that was equidistant from our respective flats, and after walking a short distance the viewing session took place in the living room of my flat. Stephen is single and in his early thirties.

Again, the viewing strategy employed by this particular interviewee can be characterised as a concentration on the music when 'viewing' both videos and dance floor sequences. Only when directly asked did Stephen direct his comments away from the music towards the visual text. During a dance floor sequence at Swoon, Stafford, Stephen suggested that "because the camera's there and everyone knows it's there, people seem to be reacting to the camera. A lot of them seem really self-conscious."

One noticeable factor in the viewing session with Stephen was that, in commenting on the wide variety of musical sub-genres covered by BPM, Stephen stated that this was, for him, the programme's strength. In a similar way to Nigel in session 1, yet completely at odds with Graham in the previous viewing session, Stephen saw this diversity as informative, it allowed him to hear "relatively good" tracks from a wide variety of genres. Stephen suggested that his current tastes were very narrow; "I only buy acid house" and "I now actually consciously avoid buying tunes that are by people who are established". Therefore to listen to a "gay club anthem", jungle and hip-hop was, for Stephen, a refreshing change. Despite the limited range of his current tastes, Stephen can still be characterised as a "connoisseur-ist". He is prepared to listen to most of the sub-genres that can be grouped under the title dance music, yet, when he does so, he makes strict qualitative judgments concerning each particular track. However, unlike Robert and Catherine, his judgments on the tracks featured on BPM were mostly positive;

> I really enjoyed the programme actually, really good. I was impressed by the diversity of it, but also whatever they were selecting from whatever genre wasn't terrible at all. I was sort of expecting it to be the blandest jungle, the blandest garage, the blandest techno whatever, but it was really interesting what they were playing... I was basically watching a lot of stuff I'm not normally interested in.

This qualitative appreciation of the music did not prevent him from being critical of what bands said in interview. Here Stephen criticises Bandulu's reasoning behind their use of vocals within their music, and, in doing so, talks of the relationship between the DJ and dance floor within, in particular, Black Magic;

> *Stephen*: That interview was shit, I really really like Bandulu. That interview got me thinking about a lot of things.
> [pause]

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Interviewer : Like what?

Stephen: When they were talking about what they were doing with their music I was thinking "don't know about that". They all seemed to be coming out with conventional opinions about what they are doing and how they see it. For example I think the biggest consciousness expanding factor in acid house is in the togetherness of all the tunes rather than an individual tune, or what you're trying to say with one particular tune[7]... What goes through your head when you're hearing the right sort of music, rather than what this tune is saying... If you're mixing records together [in a club] a lot of them are instrumental. A surprising amount is actually achieved in terms of the effect it has on the way people think, rather than individual lyrics.

This directly relates to the comments made in previous chapters concerning instrumental dance music. Often this music is so thought-provoking precisely due to its ability to break free from the totalitarian grip of power-laden language, and into the realms of free-floating signifiers not linked to specific signifieds; "music is a language which reason does not understand" (Bloch, 1964, p.195).

Viewing Session 6: Sandra

Time-shifted viewing of the BPM episode watched in the previous four sessions, held on Monday 14 August (22 days after transmission). Sandra is in her mid twenties and is a professional dancer and teacher. This was the first viewing session held in the interviewees' own flat, and was held in the early evening. In this instance I felt that the change of context did not affect the reading of the text (although, as we shall see in a later session, this does not prove that context is unimportant). Sandra's knowledge of

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[7] Within contemporary dance culture, the noun 'tune' does not mean harmony, but refers to a particular track.

BPM has been gained from two sources. Firstly she occasionally viewed the programme in 1993, when she was still an active participant in dance culture. Secondly, Sandra's work as a classical dancer and choreographer had led her to choreograph a fashion show for an episode of BPM at Kelly's in Port Rush two years ago. However, unlike previous interviewees, Sandra is not currently a member of a dance micro-culture. I approached her at Black Magic because I thought I had recognised her from a previous visit, although this turned out not to be the case, and she was on a rare visit to the club. I nevertheless took the opportunity to interview a 'non-participant', and as we can see, this proved fruitful.

Sandra's work choreographing a <u>BPM</u> fashion show at Kelly's meant that her criticisms of the dance floor sequences were influenced by a knowledge unavailable to previous interviewees;

> that time when I worked on it...I was really shocked by how much they organise what they film, they don't just go round the club, they say "right, you fifteen people can you come over here and dance" and filmed it like that, whereas I thought they just went round and picked people out randomly, but they really organise. I didn't think they were that honest about it.

> [later] I would suspect that there were actually a lot of people standing around, they cornered off the rowdier elements.

> *Interviewer*: What do you mean by that? Do you mean they got all the people who were dancing madly in one corner?

> *Sandra*: Yeah, that's what they did when I was there. That didn't show anything of that clubs' size or scope. It's very ornate, it's got a room

with a throne in it, and stuff like that, loads of couches, loads of different types of bars. So they haven't really shown what's going on.

The dance floor is no more, it has been converted, albeit temporarily, into a television studio, where the Director dictates where and when dancing takes place. <u>BPM</u> is a construction of the worst sort, in that it hides the mechanisms of its own construction behind a thin veneer of verisimilitude.

Sandra's lack of knowledge of the specific pieces of music in <u>BPM</u> meant that she activated different discourses to other interviewees, and her reading was dominated by the *visual*, rather than the specifically *aural* readings of previous interviewees. This suggests that there is a difference in reading strategies between dance culture participants and non-participants.

Examples of Sandra's concentration on the visual were numerous. Here are three examples.

1. When watching a dance floor sequence Sandra ignored the harsh abrasive sounds of the jungle music and suggested that

> they always go to dead posey clubs rather than the really sort of raw ones, everyone always dead well-dressed. It's not my picture of what a jungle club would be like, it's a lot more glamorous, expensive clothes and that[8].

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[8] As Sandra has gradually stopped frequenting clubs, her knowledge of contemporary dance culture leads her to misrecognise elements within, in this case, jungle culture. At the time of interview the clothing worn at jungle clubs was a mixture of expensive designer labels, with, in particular, clothes by Moschino, Versace and Dolce and Gabbana worn by many jungle clubbers. Whilst jungle emphasises the poverty traps in which many participants find themselves, it offers a temporary release from poverty through, amongst other elements, the wearing of expensive and well-designed clothes.

2.When watching an interview Sandra suggested "I think it's improved, what it looks like, the editing, the camera work has improved".

3.When watching the first dance floor sequence from Swoon in Stafford, Sandra did not comment on the music, or that the DJ was Boy George, a reference other interviewees had commented upon, but gave a reason why she no longer went to nightclubs;

> my god, this looks like Cream! This is part of the reason why I've stopped going out to clubs like this... This total glamour and sex on the dance floor, I'm not interested! The dancing is really inhibited now compared to when I first went out. I think there's much more of a uniform now.

So, despite Sandra witnessing at first hand the dance floor being 'manipulated' before the filming of a particular shot, she is still equating the visual representation with the 'real' dance floor, she is still suggesting that the BPM image is a 'window on the world' of contemporary dance culture. No doubt some would suggest that the reason for this is that Sandra no longer goes to nightclubs, and wouldn't know what the contemporary scene was like, whereas Sandra's response would be that she saw the original development of the current scene in the late 1980s and rejected the way it was moving.

Viewing Session 7: Nicola

Time-shifted viewing of the BPM episode watched in the previous five sessions, held on 17 August 1995 (25 days after transmission). This was another viewing session held in an interviewee's flat, although, as in the previous interview, I feel that this did not affect the interviewee's reading of BPM. Nicola is in her early twenties and is

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unemployed, although at the time of interview she was completing voluntary work at a local 'listings' magazine. It was through this magazine that she happened to be at Black Magic, reviewing the club for a forthcoming issue, although she was not a regular visitor to the club.

Again, this viewing session was with an interviewee who is not a current member of any dance micro-culture. By this I mean that, although Nicola is a participant in other youth cultural activities, her involvement in dance culture has so far been limited to the occasional visit to Black Magic in Liverpool, and Whirly-Gig in Shoreditch, London. She has none of the partisan alignments with specific clubs, events and musical sub-genres that have characterised previous 'connoisseur-ist' interviewees (i.e. Catherine and Robert: Black Magic, American techno and house, Angela: Megadog, British trance and techno, Stephen: Black Magic, acid house and American techno). Nicola's musical allegiances appear less micro-cultural, or according to the classificatory system that arises from dance culture, Nicola's tastes are 'mainstream', rather than 'underground'.

This factor influenced her reading of this particular episode in the sense that she commented on the fact that, at the start of the sequence taken at Swoon, the on-screen information informed the viewer that the DJ was Boy George, who has traded his considerable career as a singer/songwriter for the life of a club DJ. Although we never see him on screen, Nicola's interest was sparked by his involvement in the dance floor dialectic, and I happened to notice a couple of Boy George audio cassettes in her small collection. What is interesting about this minor detail is that the text is enforcing a micro-cultural perspective on a non-micro-cultural member. By this I mean that the text is positioning the DJ as a central element of contemporary dance culture; the DJ as *auteur*. Non-micro-cultural members do not place the DJ at the centre of the musical experience. Whereas a member of a house micro-culture (such as a regular at Swoon) could well have been able to tell that the DJ was Boy George by listening to his DJ set,

Nicola would never have guessed that this was the case without the prompting of the on-screen text.

As with the previous interviewee many of Nicola's comments were concerned with visual image rather than musical soundtrack. This is due to non-participants in dance culture placing less importance on music. Whereas many dance culture participants take joy in subverting the specular hierarchy[9], non-participants do not. Here is one example that encapsulates this;

> I like the camera work a lot, apart from the up the skirt shots, it makes it more interested than just straight shots. Having said that I don't particularly like the club shots because, I don't know, it seems to be trying to recreate the club atmosphere, but you can't do that on TV in my opinion. They always seem to focus on one person who seems intent on showing off to camera.

In the first part of this statement, Nicola draws a distinction between the style of shot used during interviews, and the gaze of the camera within club sequences. In the second part of this statement, Nicola comments on the self-consciousness of the dancers, and the realist televisual technique employed. Nicola is also implicitly stating that, as I suggested in an earlier chapter, the collectivity of the dance floor is not visible within <u>BPM</u>, and this is replaced by an individualism that simply isn't relevant or visible on the dance floor itself. This is the point that Angela was making in session 3, when she suggested that the club we had visited earlier on that night was different to

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[9] This is particularly the case with those who frequent Black Magic, which, at the time of interview, was held in an old drinking club that had obviously seen better days. Paint was peeling away from the walls, lighting was minimal, and the general appearance of the club was less than salubrious. This did not matter to those regulars whose primary concern was dancing to the music on offer, although visitors to the club who were not regular dance culture participants frequently voiced their disapproval of the state at the venue.

the dance floor as represented by BPM. According to Angela the presence of the television camera destroys the dance floor atmosphere. I would suggest that the representational technique of realism attempts to convince the audience that the mechanisms for the reproduction of the televisual image are hidden.

A further example of Nicola placing emphasis upon the visual, rather than the aural, was in her viewing of the Kenny Larkin video criticised by Robert and Catherine. Unlike Robert and Catherine, Nicola did not compare the quality of the sound track to the video. Instead Nicola concentrated on, or rather allowed herself to appreciate, the visual track, irrespective of the music:

> Absolutely stunning graphics. To be quite honest the music is quite 'nothing-y', just a bit repetitive, but this video is brilliant!

Whereas within the argot of micro-cultural members, the word repetitive is a compliment (in viewing session 5 Stephen stated that he "loved repetition", and disliked dance music's usage of orchestral strings which, for him, disrupted this repetition), within Nicola's vocabulary repetitive simply means dull. Unlike Robert and Catherine, Nicola doesn't necessarily view the video as a representation of the music, but as an enjoyable form in itself. For Robert and Catherine, Kenny Larkin is a much-admired artist whose music is devalued by its meaning being grounded and fixed through a promotional video; for Nicola it is the promotional video that is of interest.

A further example of this is Nicola's comments on another dance floor sequence taken at Swoon;

> I really don't see what they're trying to achieve with these club shots. They seem to stretch for far too long, you've got an idea of what the club is like, what sort of clientele it has from the first couple of seconds,

but you can't pick up the atmosphere at all on telly, so I think they go on

a bit too long.

Again an emphasis on the visual. Most dance floor sequences on <u>BPM</u> contain a mix between two records, and micro-cultural members often enjoy listening to the music and how it is mixed, yet for Nicola this is an irrelevance. Beyond the informative paradigm that Nigel highlighted in his reading of <u>BPM</u>, Nicola can see no other enjoyment to be gained from the images of dancers performing for a camera, particularly when the performative nature of the dance floor is hidden behind a realist representational technique.

Viewing Session 8: Collette

Time-shifted viewing of the <u>BPM</u> episode watched in Session 1 (featuring Tribal Gathering 1995) held on 14 September 1995 (approximately two months after transmission). I returned from my annual holiday and decided that, rather than showing Collette a fresh episode of <u>BPM</u>, I would show her the episode used in viewing session 1 to see if there were connections between the readings of two dance culture 'professionals'. Collette is in her late twenties and, along with her long-term partner Simon, is one of the promoters of Black Magic. Unwilling to watch the episode in either her own or my flat, we settled on the location of my office at Liverpool John Moores University.

The main comments provided by Collette in her viewing of <u>BPM</u> were concerned with the gap that she perceived between the quality of the referent of the text, and how this was translated into a television programme. Here are a few examples;

> They have covered a good selection of people who are at the forefront
>
> of the scene... It's the only programme on TV that's strictly dance
>
> music, but I'm involved in it, and I wouldn't go out of my way to watch

it. It just doesn't translate well into TV viewing... The content of it, what they've covered, is good, they've picked the right things. It's just the limitations of the medium...

The whole point of being in a club is that you're in the club, there's loads of other people there, and there's the atmosphere and all that. It's impossible to transpose that onto a TV programme.

Interviewer: What would you like to see, at 3.30 in the morning?

Collette: I was just thinking, you don't want to watch the telly basically. It's the last thing you want to do. But, as a programme, if it was on during the week, I would watch it out of purely professional interest in that there might be someone on that I know. But you're not really going to find out anything new, or get any ideas, because it's such a watered-down version. I can understand why they put it on on a Saturday night, because you've just been to a club and they've got some decent tunes on, but you've got to be a sad and lonely person if it's just yourself sitting watching it in the house.

Collette drew a firm distinction between the *form* of <u>BPM</u> and its *content*. Although this particular episode featured various DJs that Collette had booked to play at Black Magic, the dance floor footage was considered irrelevant, and the various interviews were perceived as formulaic, staid and unoriginal. Commenting on the three interviews with Lol Hammond (from the band The Drum Club), Richie Hawtin (a DJ and musician also known as Plastikman) and DJ Billy Nasty, Collette suggested that, despite the pivotal role of the DJ within contemporary dance culture, the people behind the names appear to have little to say;

they're all nice enough lads, it just comes across as really dull. The cult of the DJ; they've been built up, you obviously have them on at your club before you're going to fill the club up, they get paid an extortionate amount of money for playing a two hour set, but, at the end of the day, they're not really personalities, are they? That's why, when you interview them, all you're going get is "I'm setting up a studio with a mate" and "I've done such and such an EP with such and such a person". They're not really your rock and roll, charisma, types...

[Commenting on Richie Hawtin] He's a brilliant DJ, he does brilliant stuff and that, but they all look incredibly alike don't they, the way they come across when they're being interviewed?

...It's spot the difference between the three interviews. They could all be the same person. It's quite interesting for me to see, because I know them all... Where else are you going to see The Drum Club on TV?

Whilst discussing the sub-generic differences within contemporary dance music, Collette came to a similar description of her culture as that provided by Robert in viewing session 2. In particular Collette pointed to the phenomenon of so-called 'trainspotters', those so immersed in 'underground' culture that their knowledge of factual information marks them out as 'connoisseur-ists';

> *Collette*: Techno is meant to be for people who know about it, people who are really into it, like trainspotting.
>
> *Interviewer*: What's trainspotting?
>
> *Collette*: Knowing exactly what tune it is, who mixed it, knowing when it was put out [released], looking over the DJ box and seeing what mix it is, music as a hobby... Whereas on the other side, the handbaggers don't give a shit, they just know the chorus. "We all know the words, we want

something familiar to us that we know", whereas in the techno scene it's the opposite, they want new stuff, stuff they haven't heard before, to make them think.

As in previous viewing sessions, Collette commented upon the male gaze of the camera, both within videos, and within dance floor footage;

> Every single dance music video, you have to have the token woman 'funky dancing' in the background. It really gets on my wick. It must be quite hard to do something interesting on a low budget, but they're all so formula aren't they?

> It could just be any club anywhere, couldn't it? You can't tell the difference, they could just film in one club... It's like all the photos you get in <u>Mixmag</u> and <u>DJ</u>. I'm sick to death of seeing girls in silver mini-skirts!

> As I was saying, you get the same shots in this as you would in any dance music magazine. You have to have the nice looking girl in the skimpy outfit...

It is interesting that, whereas in chapter 3 I drew an implicit analogy between the camera movements and positioning in <u>Top of the Pops</u> and those of <u>BPM</u>, Collette, like Robert in viewing session 2, draws an analogy between television and the genre of 'club photography' within photo-journalism, claiming that both processes mean that dancers alter their behaviour when they know they are within the gaze of the camera. Collette suggests that when a camera encroaches on the dance floor, dancers are encouraged to 'pose' for generic 'club' shots. However, whilst many of these poses are part of a postmodern 'knowingness', and are based upon an ironic ridicule of the genre

of 'club photography', this is not always apparent in the final text, and is not always apparent to those without knowledge of the 'club photograph' genre.

Viewing Session 9: Alan

Time-shifted viewing of the BPM episode watched in viewing sessions 2 to 7, watched on the afternoon of Friday 15 September. Alan, like Stephen in viewing session 5, is a resident DJ at Black Magic. In his mid twenties Alan is well respected within the Liverpool scene, due to his DJing abilities and his deep knowledge of dance music.

Like previous interviewees who were participants in dance culture, Alan's viewing strategy placed emphasis upon the soundtrack at the expense of visual representations, with Alan criticising musical sequences and video soundtracks if they were perceived to be commercial. For instance, Alan suggested that the soundtrack to the video of Mary Kiani was "just pop music". Asked to explain further, he suggested "I'd see all that on kids' telly or Top of the Pops. It's chart-bound material". Alan was aware of BPM and its post-Reithian aims through his in-depth knowledge of dance culture as whole, and expected BPM to live up to its self-proclaimed public service remit of covering 'underground' music styles. Where BPM was guilty of pandering to commercial forces it was roundly criticised by Alan. For Alan 'pop music' is disposable, unsubtle, and without depth or emotion (a point of view that I personally disagree with); it is, in short, 'mainstream'. A later comment on the Dreadzone video reinforces this; "I'm not into this really. Quirky, folky. I don't like folk samples. It's too er, poppy, it's at the pop end". Here Alan hints at a slight difference between his and Robert's categorisations. Whereas Robert suggests that 'mainstream' and 'underground' are binary oppositions, Alan views the categories of 'mainstream' (pop) and 'underground' as extreme points on a sliding scale upon which any particular record can be situated.

Whereas the 'underground' music that Alan listens to is often defined in terms of its subtlety and refinement, the 'mainstream' musical texts that BPM chose to use are, according to Alan, clichéd and 'obvious'. Commenting on the record Take 5 In The Jungle by Teknicolor, which samples extensively from Dave Brubeck's Take Five, Alan stated that

> I'm not into that. It's really obvious. I hate that, when something really obvious is sampled and something is just stuck under it, I'm not into it. I like the drums at first [before the sample was heard] but I'm not into this. This is 'pop jungle' like you've had 'pop dub' before. It's just annoying! It's probably that this is one of the few jungle records that has a video, so they put it on.

Whilst Alan suggests that he concentrates on sound rather than visual elements, there is also the implication that jungle culture itself is an aural, rather than a visual culture. Whilst this may seem obvious, the relative lack of importance of the promotional video within jungle culture is one way of preventing major record labels 'co-opting' jungle culture for commercial purposes. If all jungle songs that have videos are perceived to have low micro-cultural capital, then an important weapon in the armoury of commercial forces has been neutralised.

When BPM covers an act with micro-cultural capital (as opposed to a 'pop act') the result, according to Alan, is the dilution of dance culture's radicalism;

> again, nothing really interesting is coming out in the interview [with Bandulu]. I suppose a lot of these people don't really give very good interviews. But the thing is, I know this lot have got interesting things to say, Bandulu do have a go a bit, and have quite strong opinions on things, but that doesn't really come across at all. They should be more provocative, they're not really talking about anything really.

At the point where dance culture's politics could be overtly stated, the interviewing process is perceived to be lacking. It's not that the artists in question, Bandulu, don't have forceful and controversial views it is merely that, for one reason or another, these views are hidden. The agenda of <u>BPM</u> is perceived to be different from that of the culture it represents. Alan emphasises this later on in the interview;

> I think it should deal with a few more important matters really... They should be talking about jungle, and why there is this racism where people are scared to play it[10]. That's just one example of something they could talk about. I don't know, I don't watch it all the time, but I don't think that I've ever seen anything on it that talks about the Criminal Justice Bill or drugs or anything like that. They could use the time more constructively. They could ask the people they're interviewing about that, rather than rambling on about mundane matters such as how they made the record. If they're going to talk about that they should actually go and watch people make a record.

One of Alan's comments was that, when he first saw <u>BPM</u> several years ago, the programme never represented a DJ mixing records either visually or aurally. He was pleased that this policy had changed;

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[10] Here Alan is referring to the continuing segregation of techno and jungle within the music policies of most nightclubs. This particular topic arose in a pre-interview discussion on the latest issue of the dance culture magazine <u>Muzik</u>. The editorial of the magazine suggested that Andy Weatherall and Justin *Robertson*, two 'underground' techno DJs, had been ordered not to play jungle by a particular techno club (see editorial <u>Muzik</u>, No.2, July 1995). Alan considered that this was a form of racism in that jungle is often perceived to be a black sub-genre. Alan went on to suggest that this racism is only held by certain promoters and not dance culture participants themselves. Alan's DJing style is itself testament to this. Although known as a techno DJ, Andy often mixes in jungle records in his DJ sets at Black Magic, and they are well received by the (predominantly white) Black Magic dance floor.

that's good that they do that. I remember when I used to watch it I used to think that it didn't look like the same tune, it didn't look like they were reacting to the same record at all.

Although <u>BPM</u> has always maintained that the soundtrack and visual accompaniment are recorded simultaneously, Alan's comments suggest that the process of representation often obscured this fact. The dialectic of the dance floor, between musical text and dancers, was hidden in the process of representation.

In his summary of <u>BPM</u>, Alan maintained an ambivalence to the eclecticism of <u>BPM</u>, a reaction that neatly falls between, on the one hand, Graham, who disliked the disruption of flow, and on the other hand Stephen, who praised <u>BPM</u>'s variety;

it would be quite easy to go to certain types of clubs and I'm sure it used to do that, I'm sure there never used to be any variation, but it's good that this is very diverse. But also, sometimes, it looks like a mess, jumbled up with different styles. I don't know what the answer is, I'm trying to think what I'd like it to be, but I can't really put into my head how they would truly feasibly represent it [dance culture]... It doesn't really have any focus, it's directionless and meandering.

Viewing Session 10: Lorna and Karen

Time-shifted viewing of two <u>BPM</u> episodes. The first of these was the episode watched in Sessions 1 and 8 (featuring Tribal Gathering 1995). The second was an episode transmitted on 22 October 1995, featuring the London club 'Eurobeat 2000'. The viewing session took place on Monday 23 October. As well as containing useful information in its own right, this viewing session also acted as a 'control group', to check whether the two interviewees would use different techniques in decoding a text

broadcast one day after transmission than those used in decoding a text that was broadcast two months previously. They did not.

The two interviewees were Lorna, who is unemployed, and Karen, who is a primary school teacher. Both Lorna and Karen are in their mid twenties. Both regularly attend Black Magic, and it was on the dance floor of the club that I initially approached them. The episode was watched in the living room of the house that they shared with another friend in Liverpool. This had one noticeable effect in that I felt that they were far more open in their comments than they might have been elsewhere, talking about, in particular, drug consumption in an uninhibited manner.

It was in this session that I felt the interviewees watched <u>BPM</u> in a similar way to how they would have done had I not been present. Three differences however remained.

1.Karen and Lorna frequently watch <u>BPM</u> after returning from a club, but have never watched a time-shifted episode. They both commented upon this at the start of the programme;

> *Karen*: It's nice to be in a normal state watching this, isn't it?
>
> *Lorna*: I know, except the music sounds crap.
>
> *Karen*: But normally you've got speed eyes, fixed at the telly.

2.I would also suggest that there was a second difference between their viewing strategies during this viewing session and how they would normally watch <u>BPM</u>. This is to do with the level of self-analysis that they displayed. By this I mean that they were constantly asking each other questions about the text, and discussing their answers. I feel that this would not have occurred during 'normal' viewing. However, both interviewees often completely ignored me, commenting to each other about the two programmes, and 'fast forwarding' past items that they found uninteresting. I

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found that I could melt into the background whilst Karen and Lorna watched both programmes.

3.Karen and Lorna usually watched <u>BPM</u> under the influence of either amphetamine sulphate, Ecstasy, or both.

The viewing session started with a ritual that Karen and Lorna always perform when watching <u>BPM</u>, and that is to guess which dancers had taken drugs, and which drugs they had taken. By examining the precise physical and facial movements of the dancers, and paying particular attention to their eyes, Karen and Lorna claimed to be able to tell the precise quantities of drug each dancer had consumed, drawing from their knowledge of a wide range of drugs including amphetamine sulphate, Ecstasy, LSD, magic mushrooms, and cannabis. Any dancer perceived to be "posing too much for the cameras" was determined to be not "on one", whilst those dancers that were obviously 'under the influence' caused a great deal of merriment.

This in itself is interesting in that it suggests that those who have consumed drugs in the club environment are less self-conscious of the cameras than those who haven't. The drug Ecstasy enhances and enables 'the ecstasy of disappearance' (Melechi, 1993) and its use occasionally enables dancers to ignore the presence of <u>BPM</u>'s cameras. I would combine this with a neo-Freudian analysis, suggesting that the Ecstasy experience recreates a child-like innocence in the dancer, with the dancer revelling in a pre-Oedipal polymorphous perversity. Many of those dancers that Lorna and Karen considered to be under the influence of Ecstasy had their eyes closed. Perhaps it could therefore be suggested that those Ecstasy consumers represented by <u>BPM</u> are behaving in a similar way to children who think that, because they have their eyes shut and can see no one else, then they themselves are invisible. Or at least if they have got their eyes closed, they don't have to think about the camera tracking their every move. This also provides a link with dance culture's aural emphasis.

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In an informal discussion after viewing session 8, Collette suggested that, rather than appealing to clubbers themselves, <u>BPM</u> was aimed at those people who don't frequent nightclubs, yet maintain an interest in dance music. In particular Collette suggested that she didn't watch <u>BPM</u> every Saturday because, at that hour of the morning, she was often attending some sort of private party. Lorna's view was similar;

> I look in the paper on a Saturday night and go "shit <u>BPM</u>'s on at twenty past two and I'm going to miss it". Half three or four is the best time, because when you come in from a club, by the time you get home from town,
>
> *Karen*: with three taxi-loads of people,
>
> *Lorna:* who have turned up to watch <u>BPM</u>. To be honest, we normally watch it with the sound down.

This last comment is particularly fascinating. Firstly watching <u>BPM</u> with the sound turned down would seem at odds with Karen and Lorna's concentration on the music whilst they watched a time-shifted episode. Secondly, by providing a musical accompaniment via a living room hi-fi, Karen and Lorna break down the four-way relationship between Ecstasy, dance floor, televisual representation and viewing strategy. With a different soundtrack to that provided by <u>BPM</u> the dancers are obviously not synchronised with the music provided by the hi-fi. However, the hi-fi soundtrack prevents the disruption of the beat (so frustrating to the Ecstasy consumer) between <u>BPM</u>'s musical sequences. The visual element of <u>BPM</u> loses its connection with the dance floor and merely becomes the visual stimulus for an Ecstasy 'come-down'. For this reason both Karen and Lorna expressed a preference for the computer-generated promotional videos featured on <u>BPM</u> rather than the dance floor sequences, because they are "nice to watch when you're not quite with it" (Karen). Lorna agrees "dance music suits 'virtual'-type computerised videos rather than people dancing". This use of <u>BPM</u> highlights my earlier suggestion that young people take and

adapt cultural texts; positioning the text within their own lives, and reconstituting it for their own purposes.

Commenting on the perceived sexism of BPM Lorna suggested that "you can tell the camera people are blokes on this, can't you? They always concentrate on girls' tits". Karen, when watching the second screening, agreed;

> it is very sexist this, isn't it? It's girls' tits all the time. I've never actually noticed that before. The thing is, you don't analyse it when you normally watch it.

Lorna agreed;

> you don't normally pay attention to BPM as such, except what drugs people are on, because they look funny.

This last comment confirms the difference between a time-shifted interview and Karen and Lorna's normal viewing strategies, but is also intriguing in the suggestion that the male gaze of the camera is ignored during real-time viewing. This is possibly due to Karen and Lorna's drug usage whilst watching BPM. The visual text ceases to become representational, the television becomes a flickering box in the corner of the room. This is emphasised by Karen and Lorna's preference for abstract non-representational videos.

Viewing Session 11: Mary

Time-shifted viewing of the BPM episode broadcast on 15 October 1995 and watched a week later on the afternoon of Saturday 21 October 1995 (Mary was unable to take part in a viewing session during the week due to work commitments). Mary is in her late twenties and is a freelance print journalist, photographer and local radio DJ. The

episode of BPM under discussion featured footage from the Wildlife club, held at Zone in Port Talbot, Wales. As this was the last interview, and as there was little to be gained from maintaining my previous quiet demeanour during interview, I felt more open to engage Mary in conversation. At times we paid little attention to the television screen, and embarked on long conversations about the state of contemporary dance culture. This interview therefore surfs the boundary between 'viewing session' and academic interview, but is enlightening nonetheless.

This particular interview is interesting in the way the interviewee's viewing strategy oscillated between a concentration on music and a general discussion concerning the state of contemporary dance culture. It was almost as if BPM triggered a whole series of comments that Mary wished to make concerning dance culture. Indeed at points Mary paid little attention to the visual text, and with the soundtrack providing a musical accompaniment to our conversation, she moved from a general discussion of how BPM represented dance culture, to the state of dance culture itself, often concentrating on how changes in dance culture have affected her work as a photographer and journalist.

The first dance floor sequence triggered the following statement;

> I don't think that you can go into a club with a TV camera and catch it, because it always looks tacky. Whatever the atmosphere in the club is, the camera will just show flashing lights, and the camera person is always going to pick people that are dressed the best, i.e. glammy, those who will look good on camera. I don't think I've ever seen anything on television in a club that captures the atmosphere. I think photographers can do it much better, because they can capture a moment. TV cameras can't catch the lighting, the feel of it. If there's too much dry-ice TV cameras can't technically catch that image anyway. There have been some photographs in DJ magazine lately that have been absolutely

brilliant, more like photographs that would be taken for a gallery than ones that you usually see in magazines.

Like Nigel in viewing session 1, Mary suggested the genealogical roots of <u>BPM</u> are to be found in <u>The Hitman and Her</u> series of the late 1980s;

> I think the problem is that dance music is so huge now, it is populist. So in a way this is <u>The Hitman and Her</u> for today. Some of the music is just as tacky. This can never be an underground programme. It did try to be, it did try to reflect the underground. Dance music like this [<u>Sentimental</u>, by Deborah Cox, an artist promoted by Arista Records as the next Whitney Houston] isn't underground. People do with this what they used to do with <u>The Hitman and Her</u>, they stick it on when they come back from a club and just laugh at what people are wearing.

Here Mary is suggesting that dance music in the late 1980s was predominantly, according to the lexicon of contemporary dance culture, 'underground', with little support for more commercial and 'mainstream' clubs and music. <u>The Hitman and Her</u> captured the scene that contemporary dance culture was reacting against, a gauche, commercialised and seemingly old-fashioned culture. When <u>BPM</u> arrived its role was therefore to do for 'underground' culture what <u>The Hitman and Her</u> had done for clubs such as Friday's, mentioned by Nigel in viewing session 1. However, according to Mary, many of those clubs that had begun as part of 'the underground' shifted over a period of years into 'the mainstream'. However, there remained an 'underground' thread in many of these by now 'mainstream' clubs, with, for instance Cream employing 'underground' American DJs.

<u>BPM</u>'s referent had shifted. The <u>BPM</u> cameras couldn't work in 'underground' environments such as Black Magic, with its dark interior and maelstrom of smoke, so it visited clubs such as Zone in Port Talbot, clubs that have little in common with Black

Magic. All this was aided and abetted by record companies eager to promote their newly signed dance music artists, and eager to get their promotional videos featured on BPM. In short BPM could not physically film in the most 'underground' of clubs, and with the discourse of commercialism taking precedence over the discourse of post-Reithianism, it couldn't afford to alienate advertisers. Mary continued;

> I'm not saying that we should all go back to selling it out of the back of vans, but record companies have got a strategy now, so they do with dance music what they did with pop in the eighties. There are still 'undergrounds' there, it's just that the 'undergrounds' become 'overgrounds' a lot lot quicker than they used to. It took years for disco and rare groove in the eighties and then acid house to make it big, but now jungle, which is relatively young is going overground. The space of time that it has taken jungle to 'go overground' is so minute compared to the time it took house to 'go overground'.

So revolt has, yet again, turned into style. But Mary suggests that there is hope. In the same way that Cream has, since this interview took place, moved away from 'mainstream' ethics and now looks towards 'the underground' for its audience, the same can happen with specific dance music sub-genres and micro-cultures;

> something like 'ambient' though has gone overground and then gone back underground again. I think record companies found that they couldn't really successfully market ambient, and the bands that did ambient didn't want to become like The Shamen. People got worried when it went overground, suggesting that it had gone 'new age' which everybody laughs about.

Mary also suggests that the magazine she works for has gone through a similar process as BPM, moving away from 'the underground' towards the forces of commercialism:

When I started writing for DJ magazine it was underground. Now it's been bought by a company that wants to do consumer magazines, and there is a lot of money to be made in dance music. Whereas Christopher [the DJ editor] would take a line and put someone really obscure on the front cover and give them their first show, he can't do that now, because it needs to sell a certain amount. We've had Michelle Gayle on the front cover, which is not what DJ started out to do, but is a reflection of what dance music has become these days. Magazines such as DJ and Mixmag can't reflect the underground, other magazines, fanzines, have to do that.

Shortly after these comments BPM featured a promotional video for the track I'm Ready by Size9 (otherwise known as the recording artist Josh Wink, whose rise to fame was discussed in the previous chapter). Again this triggered off a discussion that was not entirely relevant to BPM itself, but nevertheless makes a fascinating point concerning the relationship between a representational medium (in this case DJ magazine) and what was an 'underground' dance track;

Josh Wink was one of the people that I was trying to push on DJ magazine a couple of years ago, but they weren't having any of it. When I first went to Philadelphia in '93 I kept hearing about this guy called King Britt and this guy called Josh Wink. I tried to search them out. When I went back there I found out that King Britt was the DJ with Digable Planets and Josh Wink was his partner. At the time King Britt was the big name, and Josh Wink wasn't. But Josh had been instrumental in getting the Philadelphia house scene going for years and he was really the catalyst, King Britt just happened to be the DJ who got the publicity. I interviewed Josh and came back and told Christopher that he should do something on Josh Wink. We got pictures taken and

Christopher wouldn't do anything, he just said that the time wasn't right. Josh was fine about it, because I'd never promised him that anything was going to happen. Then what happened was that Josh had a few records out that did really well, and I couldn't track him down anywhere. I wanted to do another interview, but Christopher wanted me to run the interview that I had done in March, but I didn't want to do that because I was friendly with him and I couldn't run an interview that was out of date. In the end he got the cover of <u>Muzik</u>, so Christopher lost him.

It is worth pointing out that the particular episode of <u>BPM</u> that triggered this discussion was broadcast on 15 October 1995. The issue of <u>Muzik</u> that featured Josh Wink was published approximately four weeks before this. I first heard the track <u>I'm Ready</u> in the spring of 1995 in a local bar. <u>BPM</u> were therefore approximately six months behind the DJ in the Baa Bar, Liverpool. This is through no fault of their own; the track was only available on import from America when I first heard it, and as a consequence it did not have a promotional video to accompany it. By the time of its release (and its following commercial success) 'underground' culture had disowned the record. <u>I'm Ready</u> was distinctive and innovative on its release for the spiral of snares and hi-hats that made up its exceedingly long 'breakdown'. Even before the time it was officially released in Britain the style of this breakdown was being copied wholesale by many 'mainstream' artists attempting to cash in on Wink's success. By the time <u>I'm Ready</u> was featured on <u>BPM</u>, extended breakdown patterns were considered passé. The rapid pace of innovation and change within dance culture, combined with the physical inability to film in truly 'underground' clubs, meant that 'underground' dance culture is simply too fast for television to catch up with. Simon Potter, Producer of <u>BPM</u>, admitted this in the interview that I completed with him at the end of 1995:

You've got to realise that television is supposed to be this dynamic fast-moving industry, but it's a slow dinosaur that reacts to phenomena

long after the thing first reared its head, and often they are plugging into

it when it is being played out, so often you're not seeing the best of what

is around (Potter, 1995).

At the end of this viewing session Mary summarised her views concerning the
impossible task which <u>BPM</u> had set itself;

> to represent dance music on television is as difficult as representing live
> music on television. You can't ever capture what it is like being at that
> live concert. It's being there with the people, with sweat dripping down
> you, with the smell, with having got ready to go there, the whole
> experience is completely different than sitting down with a cup of tea
> and watching it on telly. Even if you've got all your mates sitting round
> watching <u>BPM</u> after you've been to a club that's not the same. I think
> making a TV programme on clubs is the TV medium trying to cash in
> on the popularity of dance music. They thought they could do it, in the
> same way that big record companies pick up on dance music and think
> that they then know what's going on. They don't, because they are a big
> record company. The thing is that you could make a TV programme that
> was a part of club culture, not trying to represent it, but trying to be part
> of it. It's like the fact that you buy <u>DJ</u> or <u>Mixmag</u> to know what's going
> on, you could have a TV programme that highlights what records are
> coming out, and maybe do some interviews with people talking about
> clubs, but not actually setting it in a club. Like a magazine on TV.

Conclusion: Key Discourses and Dominant Themes

Within the readings of interviewees who were dedicated members of specific dance
micro-cultures there was a concentration on the music featured within the programme,
with the visual element of videos, dance floor sequences and interviews rarely

commented upon. This was particularly the case with regular clubbers, and less so with occasional dance culture participants. When the visual element was commented upon, the male gaze and gendered discourses encoded within BPM were resolutely shunned. Whereas expressions of sexuality, and to a certain degree dance floor scopophilia, were often accepted as valid elements of contemporary dance culture, the camera turned amorphous ungendered sexual *play* into gendered sexual *display* for the viewer at home, and to the detriment of the dancers' 'privacy' within the communal body of the dance floor. The community of the dance floor was turned into a televisual individualism.

Several viewing sessions acted as 'control groups'. The session with Graham showed that, armed with academic capital, dance culture participants' self-analysis of their readings was similar to my analyses of the readings of dance culture participants without access to cultural theory. The session with Lorna and Karen also showed that a period of two months between broadcast and viewing session did not alter an interviewees' reading of BPM.

Throughout the readings above interviewees showed a ready willingness to use their knowledge of dance culture to 'unlock' the meanings created at the interface between text and reader. It was often the case that the deeper the knowledge that the interviewee had of dance culture, the more negative was their appraisal of BPM. The more the interviewee knew about dance culture, the more likely they were to reject the idea that BPM was a 'true' representation of their lives. Part of the reason for this is the impossibility of the television industry, a "slow dinosaur" in the words of BPM's director, ever capturing and transmitting a culture that is in a perpetual state of change. By the time a track is featured in BPM's video chart, then it has already been rejected by dance culture. If a white label is played as the audio track to a dance floor sequence, then by the time of broadcast it might well have been commercially released and, in the words of BPM's Director, "played out" by dance culture. If it had not achieved a commercial release then it would be considered as a long forgotten component of one

DJs' set in a particular club that, by the time of broadcast, is now a footnote in the history of dance culture.

Dance culture participants did cite with approval certain elements of BPM, such as an emphasis on the role of the DJ, and the ability to hear two records mixed together whilst watching the dialectic between DJ and dance floor. In general though, the belief of those immersed in dance culture was that BPM would never be able to capture the fleeting ephemerality of dance culture. BPM would never be able to catch the lights, the sweat, the drugs, the volume, the sex and the feeling of being part of something quite special; everything that makes dance culture reminiscent of a 'Bakhtinian' carnival.

Having said this, dance culture participants without a full and in-depth knowledge of the scene often found BPM 'informative' in that it allowed them to listen to DJs and musicians that they might not have previously heard. Perhaps during its period of broadcast BPM served dance culture by providing it with new members, intrigued and interested by brief glimpses of dance floor anarchy, albeit filtered and distorted by televisual representation. This was most likely to have occurred when the discourse of post-Reithian public service came to the fore under the able directorship of Simon Potter, and happened less when Potter was implicitly coerced by his employers to pander to the discourse of commercialism.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis began with a statement concerning aims and objectives. In the conclusion of this thesis I therefore wish to examine the extent to which my aims have been pursued and achieved.

Chapter 1 was very tightly focused upon setting out the extent to which contemporary dance culture is political. Here I was moving towards the achievement of the first aim of this thesis, namely the countering of common-sense discourse on the nature of contemporary dance culture. Common-sense discourse views contemporary dance culture as a culture consisting of little more than reckless hedonism, feckless consumerism, and cultural texts of little or no aesthetic worth. In chapter 1 I examined campaigns and actions against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 to counter the suggestion that dance culture was apolitical. I argued that, whilst it could be suggested that acid house in the late 1980s had elements of apoliticism, campaigns against parliamentary legislation meant that, in the 1990s, contemporary dance culture had become politicised. This process was continued in the following section where we saw how the Luton-based collective Exodus had developed a stance at least partially derived from anarcho-libertarian politics, irrespective of campaigns against parliamentary legislation.

Whilst the first two sections of chapter 1 showed us how contemporary dance culture is political, the next section on the Liverpool 'superclub' Cream showed us that, whilst contemporary dance culture is not 'anti-commercial', it does contain a form of commercialism that is different from the commercialism found within other areas of British capitalism. This section on Cream showed how participants in contemporary dance culture do not merely spend their money on whatever capitalist corporations tell them to spend their money on (common-sense discourse views dance culture participants as easily manipulated 'cultural dupes'), but are aesthetically discriminating in the cultural decisions that they make. This theme was continued in chapter 6 where

we saw at first hand how dance culture participants 'read' texts that represent their culture. Crucial to the section on Cream in chapter 1 was my suggestion that there are

elements of contemporary dance culture that, whilst not directly oppositional to the state, are nevertheless in opposition to the unfettered workings of the free market, and therefore in opposition to dominant social discourses concerning how society functions.

Tied to this notion of a 'radical consumerism' was my suggestion that the consumption of Ecstasy is also perceived by dance culture participants to be a radical and political act. Here I showed the extent to which dance culture participants opposed the continuing criminalisation and demonisation of their drug use, and showed how dance culture participants described their drug use in terms of a rejection of common-sense values.

In the following section I suggested that, connected to the consumption of Ecstasy in dance culture, was an attempt by dance culture participants to disappear from the gaze of regulating authorities such as the police. Following this, my examination of the discourse of a 'refusal of language' within contemporary dance culture (also connected to Ecstasy use) suggested that one consequence of the relative lack of lyrics within contemporary dance music was an opposition to the power structures embedded within written and spoken language. Central to this section was my suggestion that "the lack of lyrics within dance music also ties in with the politically resistant nature of the Ecstasy experience, and Ecstasy users' inability to translate their (communal) experiences into an English language which emphasises the bourgeois subject".

The penultimate section of chapter 1 drew a comparison between a specific rural French culture as described by Pierre Bourdieu and contemporary dance culture. In doing so I attempted "to show how the politicisation of dance culture is derived from contradictions in the structural location of young people in the late 1990s". In this

section I emphasised the suggestion that it was the infrastructural location of contemporary dance culture that led dance culture participants to hold, express, and act upon, political beliefs. In particular I suggested that "the politicisation of contemporary dance culture is a logical reaction to the socio-economic conditions that young people find themselves in".

In the conclusion of chapter 1 I drew upon deviancy theory to both prepare the ground for the following chapter, and to move towards the completion of the 'secondary aim' of this thesis, which was to examine methodological and theoretical positions that have traditionally been sidelined by contemporary cultural studies. Crucial to this concluding section was my suggestion that

> common-sense discourse claims that contemporary dance culture is purely hedonistic, and demonises it for *its drug use. A return to* deviancy theory acknowledges that if common-sense discourse labels a societal sub-group as 'deviant' then that sub-group is likely to form a culture based around the difference between their analysis of what they do and the analysis of the rest of society. This allows us to avoid an essentialism that suggests that certain acts are inherently deviant, and allows us to move towards a position where acts are only deviant because 'labelling' institutions such as print media and parliament define them as such.

Having shown how contemporary dance culture is political in chapter 1, chapter 2 saw the provision of a critique of contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth culture. Having made the suggestion in chapter 1 that contemporary dance culture is a significant social development, chapter 2 saw an analysis of why contemporary cultural studies has chosen to ignore this development. In doing so I addressed the second aim of this thesis, the countering of contemporary cultural studies' discourse on contemporary dance culture. In particular I provided an extended critique of the work

that was produced in the 1970s at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. Here I provided a critique of the suggestion that the youth cultures of the 1970s were "not political enough" or not "genuinely political". Broadening my analysis, I then examined the extent to which youth culture is viewed by academia as being either exclusively consumerist or exclusively rebellious.

Having outlined the extent to which contemporary cultural studies provided a Marxist metanarrative that sought to 'explain' youth culture, I then moved on to examine the extent to which this metanarrative collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. This collapse meant that contemporary cultural studies was particularly ill-equipped to analyse the development of youth culture in the 1980s and 1990s. In *particular I* suggested that, within the 1970s,

> contemporary cultural studies saw youth culture as young people's way of making sense of their position in society. What happened when young people couldn't make sense of their structural location, or what happened when young people's structural situation was 'senseless', was not specifically dealt with by contemporary cultural studies... [This] is precisely what has occurred with the rise of dance culture. The contradictions in British society in the 1980s were too profound to be solved, either through culture or through contemporary cultural studies' mythical construction of "genuinely political" action.

Having provided a critique of contemporary cultural studies' discourse on contemporary dance culture (the second aim of this thesis), chapter 3 saw a shift of referent, with a move towards the provision of a critique of televisual discourse on contemporary dance culture. The start of this chapter contextualised the production of televisual representations of contemporary dance culture within the genre of youth television. Having examined the formation and development of youth television, I then looked more closely at the production of BPM, the only sustained attempt on the part

of the British television industry to represent contemporary dance culture. In particular I examined two discourses that were instrumental in the commissioning and production of <u>BPM</u>; the discourse of post-Reithian public service, and the discourse of free-market liberalism. In the penultimate and final sections of this chapter I examined how, at times, these discourse competed with each other, and how the stronger discourse of free-market liberalism led the ITV network to 'decommission' <u>BPM</u> in order to make way for a roster of light entertainment and sport programmes.

Having successfully provided a critique of the two discourses of post-Reithian public service and free-market liberalism, chapter 4 saw a shift of analysis away from the commissioning and production of televisual representations of dance culture towards an analysis of texts themselves. In the introduction to this chapter I suggested that I wished to make a comparison between television's representations of the contemporary dance floor and literary representations of the medieval carnival. Before I could complete this process I examined the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, and, using Bakhtin's work, I drew a comparison between the contemporary dance floor and the medieval carnival, emphasising the destruction of social hierarchies in both. Having compared these two sets of cultural practices, I then went on to examine the extent to which there are similarities in the textual representations of these practices. In particular I made the point that both 'carnivalesque' literature and televisual representations of the dance floor reassert the primacy of 'the gaze', and that the television industry 'decarnivalises' contemporary dance culture, partially destroying its radicalism and its anti-establishment politics. This section was therefore central to the achievement of the third aim of this thesis, the countering of televisual discourse on contemporary dance culture.

The two sections on Bakhtin at the start of chapter 4 also saw the reintroduction of a theorist often sidelined or misused by contemporary cultural studies (within the second section of this chapter I was particularly critical of John Fiske's misuse of Bakhtin's work). The following section continued this work in the reintroduction of analyses

derived from the work of Lucien Goldmann. In particular this section saw how Goldmann's work on homological structures (work that was also adapted by Paul Willis in the 1970s) is of particular use in examining the relationships between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations. Here we saw this thesis move away from achieving its third aim towards the achievement of its fourth and final aim, which was to counter common-sense discourse on the relationship between young people and television. Common-sense discourse suggests that young people uncritically accept anything shown on television, and suggests that televisual representations of the dance floor are mindless 'pap' programmed by the television industry to manipulate and exploit young people. Chapter 3 showed how the producers of <u>BPM</u> were attempting to both inform and educate their viewers (rather than merely package them and 'sell them' to advertisers), whilst the section in chapter 4 entitled 'Dance Culture, Music and Television: A Goldmannian Analysis' showed how television programmes such as <u>BPM</u> are not simplistic representations of a simplistic culture, but have a very complex relationship to the culture that they represent. The following section extended this analysis, showing how the use of Ecstasy within contemporary dance culture further complicated the picture. Within the Goldmannian analyses offered in these sections I drew the attention of the reader to a key facet of contemporary dance culture, that it foregrounds and recognises the inherently repetitive nature of modern daily life, and that this repetition is homologously present in the form of house and techno musics, and in the form of the Ecstasy experience.

Continuing this analysis of how repetition is foregrounded in contemporary dance culture and contemporary dance music, the section entitled 'The Culture of the Weekender' saw how the dance/rock crossover group Flowered Up provided an 'auto-critique' of the repetitive nature of contemporary dance culture in their track entitled <u>Weekender</u>. This section then connected contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations with the suggestion that

there is a formal and structural likeness between Ecstasy, contemporary dance music, and the recreational and occupational activities of members of contemporary dance culture; they are all based on repetition. Add this to editing style and special effects and we have a four-way relationship between drug, cultural activity (dancing), musical text and televisual text.

Common-sense discourse suggests that television programmes such as <u>BPM</u> are banal representations of a banal culture. My Goldmannian analysis showed how this is a somewhat simplistic view.

The next section broadened the formalist definition of homology to include content and style. Here I pointed to the psychedelic nature of the dance floor experience and the psychedelic nature of <u>BPM</u>. Again I drew a connection to the experiences offered by the recreational drug Ecstasy. This section concluded with the assertion that "here we have another facet to the homologous relationship between dance culture, recreational drug, and televisual representation: they are all psychedelic".

Continuing in my attempt to address the secondary aim of this thesis (the re-application of theoretical and methodological positions previously sidelined or misused by contemporary cultural studies) our attentions turned to the work of the Institute of Social Research (the Frankfurt School), and, in particular, the work of Theodor Adorno. In the following two sections I attempted to explain what Adorno's analysis of the repetition found within contemporary dance culture might be.

The aim of the section entitled 'Interlude; An 'Adornoesque' example of journalistic discourse' was to give the reader a journalistic example of the kind of cultural elitism often associated with Adorno and his colleagues. In the following section I came to the somewhat surprising conclusion that Adorno's work could be used to praise, rather

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than criticise, contemporary dance culture, particularly when considering contemporary dance music's foregrounding of repetition.

Having completed my critical appraisal of dance culture's repetitive aesthetic, I then went on to examine one sub-genre of contemporary dance music that takes an entirely different approach to the representation of the everyday lives of its adherents. As we saw in this section the dance music genre of jungle eschews the 'four-to-the-floor' repetitive beat of house and techno, and uses digitally manipulated break beats, along with dissonant chords, to highlight the speed and 'darkness' of urban and suburban life. The conclusion of this section was that house, techno and jungle musics do express social reality, albeit in different ways. Whereas house and techno fans attempt to 'escape' from the repetition of everyday life through subsuming themselves within the communality of the Ecstasy-fuelled dance floor, jungle fans prefer to listen to the stark (and dark) rhythms of drum and bass which force the listener to "face up to reality". Again, I quoted Adorno approvingly, in particular his suggestion that

> music will be better, the more deeply it is able to express - in the antinomies of its own formal language - the exigency of the social situation and to call for change through the coded language of suffering. It is not for music to stare in helpless horror at society. It fulfils its social function more precisely when it presents social problems through its own material and according to its own formal laws - problems which music contains within itself in the innermost cells of its technique (Adorno, 1978b, p.130).

Chapter 5 continued in the pursuit of the achievement of the fourth aim of this thesis. In this chapter we saw the development of a research method for the examination of what dance culture participants thought of televisual representations of the dance floor. In particular I looked at ethnographic methodology to see how it highlighted various difficulties in the obtaining of ethnographic data. In particular I looked at the speed of

change within contemporary dance culture, and the extent to which this speed of change meant that a research method specific to this thesis had to be developed. I also looked at issues around 'passivity', and how the cultural activity of 'chilling out' could be related to debates concerning passivity and femininity in ethnographic methodology. I also addressed the notion of oppositionality and decided that, whilst many previous studies had used Stuart Hall's reformulation of Frank Parkin's notions of "preferred", "negotiated" and "oppositional" readings, to do so in the context of a television programme that represented a deviant 'oppositional' culture would be erroneous.

Chapter 5 concluded with an examination of the ethical concerns that my proposed audience research highlighted, and an examination (and consequent rejection) of current ethnographic language. Having rejected the language and ethics of traditional ethnography, I renamed my audience research 'ethnoanalysis', and outlined the specific method that I employed when gathering the material found in chapter 6.

In chapter 6 I presented data from eleven "viewing sessions". Within these viewing sessions we could see a split developing between the readings of those who were dedicated participants in contemporary dance culture, and those who were not. It became apparent that members of the first category paid far more attention to the soundtrack than those in the later category, who placed more importance on the visual image. I suggested that this was connected to the centrality of music within contemporary dance culture, the relative unimportance of visual texts, and the attempt to escape from 'the gaze' examined in previous chapters. In particular I suggested that "many dance culture participants take joy in subverting the specular hierarchy", and that my interviewees roundly criticised the gendered camera work of BPM.

Throughout chapter 6 my interviewees and I criticised BPM. In particular I suggested that its representational technique prevented it from doing what it set out to achieve; namely to provide a 'running commentary' on contemporary dance culture, keeping up

to date with trends, and informing and educating participants and non-participants alike.

Having made this critical point, I would say that, at times, <u>BPM</u> did its best. It was staffed by people with a genuine love of dance culture, and a genuine awareness of the pernicious influence of multinational music corporations and an increasingly advertiser-oriented ITV network. This was all well and good, but the task that <u>BPM</u> set itself was impossible. In my view <u>BPM</u>'s emphasis on the representation of real dance floors, combined with its heavy reliance on promotional videos provided by multinational record companies, meant that it was destined to be shunned by much of contemporary dance culture, despite its neo-Reithian ethos. Its gendered dance floor footage should also be strongly criticised. It exploited those who were often unaware of the cameras' presence, and presumably the presence of cameras in the club spoilt the untranslatable 'vibe' so evident in the best British dance clubs[1].

Having made these criticisms of <u>BPM</u>, I do not wish to give the impression that television can never capture the energy, euphoria and politics of contemporary dance culture. The question should not be whether any visual text is a 'true' representation of contemporary dance culture (all visual texts are *re*presentations, all visual texts are constructions), but whether it is fair, decent, informative, reasonable, accurate and of aesthetic worth. At times <u>BPM</u> was not. There are ways of achieving these aims, and in closing this concluding chapter I wish to cite the example of a representation of contemporary dance culture that does capture the pleasures, pains and personal politics of contemporary dance culture. To a certain extent, these concluding thoughts do modify my 'verdict' on contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations. Having defended contemporary dance culture from pernicious attacks from common-sense discourses, I now feel able to express my worries concerning

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[1] There were often times in <u>BPM</u> when you could see people reacting in a negative manner to the presence of the camera, waving the camera away, or quickly grimacing and turning around.

contemporary dance culture. I want to achieve this through a critical appraisal of the promotional video/short film of the Flowered Up track Weekender. In doing so I hope to show that contemporary dance culture is now strong enough to allow a degree of internal political debate concerning its future development. In a sense Flowered Up tried to 'kick start' this debate in 1992, whilst, in the mid 1990s, this self-critique was at least partially taken up by jungle.

Written and directed by Wiz, the promotional video/short film for the Flowered Up track Weekender is so painfully evocative of dance culture that it continues to provide me with an insight into why young people feel so powerfully about the particular youth culture that this thesis focuses upon. I have shown the video to numerous dance culture participants who say that it precisely captures the euphoria of contemporary dance culture, whilst also evoking the painful emotions that dance culture participants feel when the Saturday night buzz is fading, and thoughts return to weekday toils.

There are a variety of reasons why Wiz's Weekender is such a success. Firstly, running at 18 minutes and 20 seconds, the form of Weekender is neither simply promotional video nor short film, but somewhere in-between. In openly discussing drug use it was always destined to fail as a promotional video for a record, and has never been shown on terrestrial British television. MTV have shown edited highlights, but their sanitised version is but a mere shadow of the original. Weekender was not commercially successful as a short film either. As independent cinemas continued to shut down in the early 1990s (there are now none in Liverpool), and standard Hollywood fare became ubiquitous throughout Britain, the cinematic outlets for Weekender (originally shot on film) proved to be extremely limited (especially when considering the predominantly non-realist avant-garde nature of much British short film-making in the 1990s). Stripped of an overtly commercial imperative, those involved in the production of Weekender could delve deeply into their collective consciousness in their attempt to represent dance culture.

Part of the success of <u>Weekender</u> is also due to it making no attempt at contemporaneity, but preferring to concentrate on the endless pursuit of unadulterated pleasure that has characterised so many youth cultures since the birth of the teenager in the late 1950s. A great deal of the success of <u>Weekender</u> is also due to the creative genius of Wiz, whose original screenplay and directoral skills mean that <u>Weekender</u> is both evocative of a particular scene (the semi-legal London warehouse scene of 1992), yet timeless and pan-national. Wiz's vision was ably interpreted by lighting cameraman Tim Maurice Jones, whose panoramic shots of the London skyline, and detail of urban decay, are stunning in their simplicity and elegance. In particular Wiz and Jones successfully captured the delightfully untutored acting of Flowered Up, who appear as extras throughout the film.

Wiz and Jones also manage to represent contemporary dance culture's child-like sexuality through the sexually powerful, yet entirely innocent and fleeting, liaison between the lead character "Little Joe", played by Lee Whitlock, and "The E Queen", played by Anna Haigh. In this central scene Wiz resists the temptation to resort to a cheapened sexism so predominant in the vast majority of other visual representations of dance culture. An honourable mention should also go to the under-played naturalistic acting of Lee Whitlock.

Much of the creative success of the <u>Weekender</u> video is also due to the quality of the original Flowered Up soundtrack, a sprawling twelve minute epic described by Bruce Gray in a personal e-mail correspondence as "untouchable..., mercurial, a defining moment for the chemical generation, a Koh-i-noor diamond, a one-off, an MDMA in a world of MDA's" (Gray, 1997, n.p.).

<u>Weekender</u> starts with the character of Little Joe simultaneously rolling a large cannabis joint and explaining to his work colleague, a 'non-participant', why he loves dance culture. A quotation of this opening scene seems a fitting conclusion to this final chapter, capturing as it does the central paradox of contemporary dance culture.

Dance culture participants take part in a culture that provides a joyous release from the weekday grind, yet is so emotional and physically exhausting that it makes Monday to Friday even more painful. Dance culture participants take part in a utopian micro-culture that, because it is situated in a capitalist macro-culture, costs more than it is worth (a basic capitalist principle), thereby making a return to the employment grindstone all the more necessary. Dance culture participants take drugs that, whilst providing a few hours' relief, a few hours away from their frequently humdrum lives, leave them open to both physical and emotional illness. Dance culture participants take part in a brief ritual of communality before returning to the individualist norm. Dance culture participants love dance culture so much that they would willingly immerse themselves in it 24 hours a day, yet the structure of contemporary capitalism makes this all but impossible except for the lucky few. Dance culture participants take part in activities that are so powerful they find it impossible to put them into words, they find it impossible to explain to 'the outside world' why they feel so special[2].

Mate: You ain't smoking that now are you?

Little Joe: Nah, that's for later. I'm getting well loved up this weekend mate!

Mate: You seem to do that every weekend.

Little Joe: Yeah but look, when I'm out with my mates, and we're all on one, buzzing off our nuts, all together, it feels like we could, like we could

Mate (interrupting): What? That you know it all. You're a bit special?

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[2] It should come as no surprise that Weekender consciously pastiches that other great visual representation of the weekender lifestyle, the film Quadrophenia. Like Quadrophenia, Weekender is successful because it captures the double-bind of the working-class hedonist, desperate for the weekend thrill, and desperately bored with the weekday job that both finances Friday and Saturday night, yet contrasts with it in such a painful manner. As suggested in the Literature Review of this thesis, the mod culture that Quadrophenia represents can be seen as an early prototype for contemporary dance culture.

Little Joe: Nah. Well sometimes yeah. No yeah, yeah, definitely, it feels like we could do fucking anything, know what I mean?

Mate: Yeah I used to think that when I was your age. But I'm still cleaning bloody windows...(Wiz, 1992).

Appendix 1: Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to establish what relevant work has already been completed in the field. In particular I am keen to demonstrate in this appendix that this thesis is based upon a thorough understanding of the field, and I am keen to establish where this thesis stands in relation to this previously published work.

An Introduction to the study of youth

Whilst concern over the relationship between young people and new cultural forms was aired as early as Plato's proposed ban on dramatic poets within his ideal republic (see Buckingham, 1987, p.2), modern categorisations of youth date back to the period of rapid industrialisation of the mid 19th century. Hebdige describes this period as one of "haphazard urbanisation, child factory labour and the physical and *cultural separation* of the classes into two separate 'nations'", suggesting that this created "a new social problem: the unsupervised, heathen working-class juvenile" (Hebdige, 1988, p.20). In the cultural texts of the late 19th century, documented in Geoffrey Pearson's Hooligans: A History of Respectable Fears (1983), working-class urban juveniles were seen as having a culture of their own, a subculture based around delinquency and criminality[1]. Furthermore, the creation of separate educational and punitive institutions

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[1] In Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor (Mayhew, 1968) we find sightings of the new phenomena of youth, with Andrew Tolson suggesting that the reason Mayhew is so important in the history of youth culture studies is that his work takes place within "the formation of a particular kind of social perspective, a 'sociological gaze'" (see Tolson, 1990). Whilst rejecting the continuum that Tolson suggests between these Victorian subcultures and the subcultures of the post-World War II period, I do accept Tolson's suggestion that there is a discursive formation in the mid-19th century that codifies and stratifies social concerns on youth, making them visible. The result of this discourse is firstly journalistic accounts such as Mayhew's (published in 1851) and then the 'opening up' of sociology to include the study of youth. This does not mean that there were not earlier concerns regarding young people; merely that these concerns were not, and could not, be documented, certainly not before the rise of the 'sociological gaze' epitomised by Mayhew's style of urban ethnography.

for delinquent urban youth was perceived to have deepened the divide between youth culture and 'adult' culture.

Youth as a category for scholarly analysis dates back to the 1920s, and in particular to the analyses of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Chicago, and functionalist anomie theory (see Brake, 1985, pp.34-53, S. Cohen, 1980, p.iii, and Thornton, 1997b). This work posited a direct correlation between social deprivation and delinquency, and tied this equation to a general theory which suggested that 'youth' was a specific period of psychological development within the life span of an individual. Hebdige sees this work as laying down the basic tenets of enquiry within the study of youth throughout the 20th century, with academics examining "the link between deprivation and juvenile crime... [and] the distinctive forms of juvenile youth culture, the gang, the deviant subculture" (Hebdige, 1988, p.27). Here Hebdige makes the point that, from this point onwards, academia has traditionally analysed youth culture as a social problem.

This is certainly the case with the work of Frederick Thrasher, who argued in the 1920s that family life was breaking down, and that the latest generation of young people were becoming disaffected with the educational structures in which they spent a great deal of their time, creating a "culture through alienation" (Thrasher, 1927, p.3). The result of this process was, according to Thrasher, that "adolescents live in a world which is isolated from that of adults..., they think of themselves as belonging to a 'we-group' as opposed to adult groups" (in Reuter, 1936, p.83).

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s this remained the dominant view within academia. For example in 1949 Talcott Parsons suggests that the 'we-group' of young people was a culture in itself, where there was a "compulsive conformity within the peer group of age mates" (Parson, 1949, pp.342-3).

Writing in the early 1960s, James Coleman describes Parsons' work as "an early statement of the general problem" (Coleman, 1962, p.5), and continued with a functional line of enquiry by suggesting that the school pupil

> is "cut off" from the rest of society, forced inward toward his own age group, made to carry out his social life with others his own age. With his fellows he comes to constitute a small society, one that has most of its important interactions *within* itself, and maintains only a few threads of connection with the outside adult society. In our modern world of mass communication and rapid diffusion of ideas and knowledge, it is hard to realize that separate subcultures can exist right under the very noses of adults, subcultures with languages all of their own, with special symbols, and, most importantly, with value systems that may differ from adults... To put it simply, these young people speak a different language (Coleman, 1961, p.3).

Such views are typical of sociological studies of youth in the 1950s[2] and 1960s[3], and bring us up to the formation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

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[2] A further example of a 1950s' analysis of youth is <u>Delinquent Boys, The Culture of the Gang</u> (Cohen, 1955).

[3] Such views are also typical of other professional discourses on youth, and common-sense discourse. The back cover of <u>The Unattached</u> (the results of a three-year project completed by the National Association of Youth Clubs) contains the following paragraph:

> Resentment, apathy, mistrust - the dead-end job, the Beat sound, and a rejection of the values of adult society. These are the kind of words with which journalists have tried to catch and understand the unattached - the teenagers who don't belong to anyone or anything. What kind of people are they? What are their attitudes, needs, aims, or resentments? How can they be approached and understood? (Morse, 1965)

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In the main body of this thesis I use the phrase 'contemporary cultural studies'. Here I am referring primarily to studies of youth culture completed at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham in the 1970s, and, secondarily, to work completed in Cultural Studies departments in Higher Education institutions that can be traced back to that 'theoretical moment'. Now is not the time for a historical appraisal of the entire works of 'the Centre', but there are some texts that are directly relevant to my thesis that require some elucidation.

The first significant piece of work on the study of youth culture within the field of contemporary cultural studies was Phil Cohen's essay 'Subcultural Conflict and Working-class Community' (P. Cohen, 1972), which the CCCS 'appropriated' for their 'Working Papers in Cultural Studies' series. Within this essay Cohen outlines the dominant concerns of youth cultural study, suggesting that, in particular, the role of 'youth subcultures' is

> to express and resolve, albeit magically the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture. The succession of subcultures which this parent culture generated can thus all be considered as so many variations on a central theme - the contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working-class puritanism and the new hedonism of consumption; at an economic level, between a future as part of a socially mobile elite or as part of the new lumpen proletariat (P. Cohen, 1972, p.23).

Whilst their methods might differ, sociological enquiry and social work shared the same view of youth as journalists, moralists, the police, local authorities, health bodies and other state and quasi non-governmental bodies.

Earlier in this thesis I examine the contradictory positions that young people still find themselves in, showing how these contradictions are irresolvable, no matter how 'magical' the solution. Cohen's essay is also of interest in that it introduces us to a discussion of 'territory', an issue of direct relevance to my discussion of the 'relatively autonomous zone' of the dance floor in chapter 4.

John Clarke's essay 'Skinheads and Youth Culture' (Clarke, 1973), which also appears in an abbreviated form in Hall and Jefferson's <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> (Hall and Jefferson, eds., 1975, see below) contains an early analysis of the relationship between working-class culture and a specific youth 'subculture'. In particular Clarke's work examines issues of territory and 'the magical recovery of community'. Within this thesis I hope to show how the geographies of youth culture in the 1990s are different from the localised, almost gang-like structures of the 1970s.

The 'CCCS approach' to the study of youth cultures is most rigorously defined in the seminal collection edited by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson entitled <u>Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain</u> (Hall and Jefferson, eds., 1975). Work contained within <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> initially appeared in issue 7/8 of the CCCS journal <u>Working Papers in Cultural Studies</u>.

The first section of <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> contains John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts' exposition of key terms and field of enquiry. Here Clarke *et al* define 'youth culture' as "the 'cultural' aspects of youth" (Clarke *et al*, 1975, p.10), and 'culture' as

> the practice which realises or *objectivates* group-life in meaningful shape or form... The culture of a group or class is the peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied, in *mores* and customs, in the uses of objects and material life (p.10).

These definitions are directly relevant to this thesis, in that I intend to outline and analyse some of the *"mores* and customs" of contemporary dance culture.

Clarke *et al*'s essay draws upon some of the classic texts and quotations of Marxism that also feature in this thesis, in particular Marx's suggestion that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1967, p.10). I return to this quotation on more than one occasion in the main body of this thesis.

Where this thesis differs from Clarke *et al*'s exposition is in their rigid adherence to Marx's stipulation in The German Ideology that "the class which has the mean of material production at its disposal, has control, at the same time, over the means of mental production, so that, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it" (Marx, 1970, p.64). In their adherence to this principle lies a 'class determinism' on the part of Clarke *et al* where "*sub*-cultures are sub-sets - smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks [i.e. one or other of the larger classes]" Clarke *et al*, 1975, p.13). The larger class that is of interest to Clarke *et al* is, of course, the working class, which is termed the "parent class" for the youth subcultures under study within their essay, and under study elsewhere in Resistance Through Rituals. Subcultural attitudes and beliefs are seen to be almost directly determined by the relationship between subculture and working-class parent culture.

Whilst Hall and Jefferson's collection is particularly interested in the relationships between working-class youth culture and its parent culture ("Sub-cultures, then, must first be related to the 'parent cultures' of which they are a sub-set", Clarke *et al*, 1975, p.13), this thesis is more concerned with an examination of the relationship between a specific youth culture (which I term contemporary dance culture) and what Clarke *et al*

term "dominant culture". According to Clarke *et al* "sub-cultures must *also* be analysed in terms of their relation to the dominant culture - the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole" (p.13). This is the basis for my suggestion that this thesis is an original and substantial contribution to knowledge. Contemporary dance culture is different from the youth cultures analysed in <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u>. Some of the theoretical techniques outlined in <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> are of use for my analysis, and some are not. As we shall shortly see in this Literature Review there has been a successful attempt, by Sarah Thornton, to analyse relations *within* dance culture, but there has yet to be a full account of relations *between* dance culture and the rest of society. This is part of the role of this thesis.

The rest of <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> is split into three sections. The first section contains the results of ethnographic research on specific subcultures and specific cultural practices. This is of direct relevance to this thesis, in that the final two chapters contain an investigation into ethnographic methodology to see if an analysis of methodology, and the use of research techniques derived from ethnography, can help us to understand the relationship between contemporary dance culture and its televisual representations. The ethnographic work completed at the CCCS is often regarded as its most important and influential legacy to the study of youth culture (and the study of culture in general)[4], and I hope that this thesis is seen as continuing in this tradition.

Dick Hebdige's essay 'The Meaning of Mod' (Hebdige, 1975) looks at how those involved in Mod culture (arguably an early prototype for contemporary dance culture) 'appropriated' certain consumer commodities, and "incorporating them in ways which expressed sub-cultural rather than dominant values" (p.87). Again, there is a parallel process visible within this thesis, with, for example, chapter 6 showing how two dance culture participants 'appropriate' the television text <u>BPM</u> for their own purposes;

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[4] See, for example, Redhead, 1995, p.37.

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turning the sound down, playing tapes 'over the top' of the visual image, and merely allowing the television programme to provide a visual accompaniment to their late-night activities.

Elsewhere in the ethnography section of <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> is an extract from Paul Corrigan's PhD work, completed under the supervision of Stanley Cohen, on Sunderland street-corner culture (Corrigan, 1975). Of particular interest to this thesis is Corrigan's analysis of "doing nothing" (Corrigan, 1975, also see Corrigan 1979, pp.119-141). In chapter 5 I will examine the concept of "chilling out", showing how youthful relaxation is positioned as deviant by common-sense discourse, and showing how young people wilfully and mischievously play with the demonisation of their leisure pursuits.

The next essay in <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u>, Paul Willis's 'The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use' (Willis, 1975), is, again, of direct interest to this thesis. Here Willis outlines his PhD work where he examines the relationship between drug usage and two specific youth subcultures. In particular Willis argues that

> there must be a 'homology' between the values and life-style of a group, its subjective experience, and the musical forms the group adopts. The preferred music must have the potential, at least, in its formal structure, to express meanings which resonate with other aspects of group life (Willis, 1975, p.106).

The notion of structural homology is central to this thesis. Willis's PhD work examines the relationship between LSD, cannabis, amphetamines and barbiturates and hippy culture. John Clarke, who examines the "diffusion and defusion" of style in <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> summarises the position as one where

in a formal sense early Rock 'n' Roll and 'West Coast Rock' have the potential to carry and express different meanings, there is a clear homology or *fit* between the intense activism, physicality, externalisation of attitudes in behaviour, taboo on introspection, and love of speed and machines of his "Motor-bike Boys" and the early Rock 'n' Roll music to which they were exclusively attached (Clarke, 1975a, p.176, see also Willis, 1970, Willis, 1972a, Willis, 1972b, Willis, 1974, Willis, 1975, and Willis, 1978).

In chapter 4 I take the notion of structural homology, trace it back to Lucien Goldmann's analysis of the relationship between literary form and social consciousness, and then re-apply it to the study of the relationship between Ecstasy, musical and televisual form, and social consciousness. In tracing this notion back to Goldmann, and reapplying it to contemporary media and contemporary dance culture, I am continuing the work started by Willis, whilst also providing a new synthesis of some of Willis's ideas, and applying them to a youth culture not in existence at the time of Willis's early work.

Elsewhere in <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u>, but only of peripheral interest to this thesis is Iain Chambers' semiotic analysis of black music, and Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber's analysis of 'Girls and Subcultures' (McRobbie and Garber, 1975), where McRobbie and Garber criticise the marginalisation of female youth culture within subcultural theory, a marginality that I hope to at least partially rectify within this thesis.

Also of direct relevance to this thesis is the final 'theory' essay in <u>Resistance through Rituals</u>, Paul Corrigan and Simon Frith's 'The Politics of Youth Culture' (Corrigan and Frith, 1975). Here Corrigan and Frith outline some of the problems with Marxist analyses of youth culture, and this work is of direct relevance to chapter 2 of this thesis. In particular Corrigan and Frith argue that sociologists view young people as inherently

problematic, where "youth culture has only negative political implications: delinquents are incorporated kids with problems, normal kids are, presumably, incorporated kids without problems" (p.232). Chapter 2 addresses this discourse of 'youth as problem', identifying two separate discourses of 'youth as folk rebel' and 'youth as consumer' showing how, even in the tradition to which <u>Resistance Through Rituals</u> belongs, sociology has always viewed youth culture as inherently apolitical[5].

Another key youth cultural text is the edited collection entitled <u>Working Class Youth Culture</u> (Mungham and Pearson, eds., 1976). In particular, John Clarke and Tony Jefferson's opening essay represents a seminal discussion of youth culture that is of direct relevance to this thesis. Within this essay Clarke and Jefferson outline their position on youth culture as a whole, whilst also examining skinhead and mod subcultures. Here Clarke and Jefferson contextualise the rise of youth culture in the hegemonic struggle between capital and labour in Britain the late 1950s. In particular Clarke and Jefferson provide a useful examination of social structure, a brief description of which will help the reader of this thesis to understand the difference between youth culture and society at large;

> We are all born into a social formation which is not of our own making or choosing... Within this formation we believe it is possible and helpful to distinguish between 'structures', 'cultures' and 'biographies'. 'Structures' are all the elements of the productive system and the necessary forms of social relations and institutions that result from a given productive system: its necessary objectivations. By 'cultures' we mean attempts to come to terms with structures - attempts to impose meaning. As such they are internalized maps of meaning; ways of understanding the productive system; ideologies... Finally,

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[5] At this point it is worth noting that Corrigan and Frith suggest that "youth culture is non-political because it has been defined that way" (Corrigan and Frith, 1975, p.232).

'biographies': these represent an individual's personal experience of both structures and cultures: the unique path that constitutes each individual's own life-history (Clarke and Jefferson, 1976, p.146).

Clarke and Jefferson continue, and, in adapting the work of Frank Parkin (Parkin, 1972), suggest that young people's responses to subordination can be categorised as either 'dominant', 'negotiated' or 'oppositional'. In particular Clarke and Jefferson put forward the suggestion that many youth cultural responses to social structure are "negotiations since they conflict with the dominant social formation only at certain points: they do not represent a total challenge to the social formation and its legitimacy" (Clarke and Jefferson, 1976, p.147). This is of relevance to this thesis, as I provide a critique of Clarke and Jefferson's analysis in chapter 2, whilst also providing a critique of contemporary cultural studies' appropriation of Parkin's categories in chapter 5.

Also in <u>Working Class Youth Cultures</u> Graham Murdock and Robin McCron, both at the time based at the CCCS's main 'rival', the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester, put forward their critique of youth cultural study, suggesting that

> sub-cultural studies start by taking groups who are already card-carrying members of a particular sub-culture such as skinheads, bike boys or hippies, and working backwards to uncover their class location. The approach therefore excludes adolescents who share the same basic class location but who are not members of the sub-culture. As a result it tends to draw too tight a relation between class location and sub-cultural style and to underestimate the range of alternative responses (Murdock and McCron, 1976, p.25).

I hope to rectify this through this thesis, and I also highlight problems in this area in my analysis of subcultural theory in chapter 2.

Elsewhere in <u>Working Class Youth Cultures</u> are various ethnographies, a case study of racist violence in Lancashire, and an analysis of skinheads and Glam Rock. Of more importance however is one of the first academic analyses of dance culture, the essay 'Youth in Pursuit of Itself' by Geoff Mungham (1976). Within this essay Mungham analyses what he terms "the mass dance", the early-1970s' dance halls run by the Mecca Group and the Rank Organisation. Much of *contemporary* dance culture is a direct reaction against the culture that Mungham describes, and, despite subsequent criticisms of Mungham's work (see Thornton 1995, pp.93-94), this essay represents a good description of pre-acid, pre-1980s dance clubs. To understand acid house and subsequent dance cultures it is essential to understand this culture, so Mungham's essay is highly recommended.

Like Mungham's essay, David Robins and Philip Cohen's <u>Knuckle Sandwich</u> (1978) is of interest to us in that it explores notions of youth territory in its narrative based around the formation of a youth disco in two London council estates in 1973. Whilst the ages of Robins and Cohen's youths are in general, lower than those involved in the contemporary dance culture of today, the story of the Black Horse Disco is instructive in its detailing of why young people enjoy dancing, and the kind of gender relationships and social attitudes of 1970s' dance floors that contemporary dance culture 'reacts' against. Robins and Cohen also talk of the 'territoriality' of young people, and this is of direct relevance to this thesis. Contemporary dance culture talks of the dance floor as *its* territory, but, as in the situation described by Robins and Cohen,

> 'territoriality' is a symbolic process of magically appropriating, owning and controlling the material environment in which you live, but which in real, economic and political terms is owned and controlled by

'outsiders' - in our society by private landlords or the State (Robins and Cohen, 1978, p.73).

In a sense the work completed by Paul Willis on education and young people in his Learning To Labour (Willis, 1977) is connected to Robins and Cohen's text in its analysis of the relationship between education, deviancy and what might be termed 'rugged masculinity'. In particular Willis shows how a rejection of school discipline leads working-class young people into a life of manual labour. Willis would have invariably answered Robins and Cohen's question regarding a specific male juvenile delinquent "revolutionary outlaw or self-defeating criminal?" with a variation on the latter category (Robins and Cohen, 1978, p.23). In particular Willis asks why are working-class 'kids' not more rebellious, why do working-class boys "let themselves" get working-class jobs (Willis, 1977, p.1), and why is there "an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism" (Willis, 1977, p.3)? In chapter 2 I examine Willis's book, and criticise it for what I see as its totalising pessimism.

Whilst not a postgraduate or member of staff at the CCCS, Stanley Cohen's much cited book (originally published in 1972) Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers (S. Cohen, 1980) can nevertheless be seen to be part of the CCCS tradition (Cohen himself makes the connection explicit eight years after its first publication in the introduction to the 1980 edition of the book[6]). Although he rejects the implicit suggestion that he might have 'discovered' "an inexorable inner logic" (S. Cohen, 1980, p.i) to the generation of moral panics, Cohen's work is still of

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[6] Stanley Cohen also published an essay entitled 'Breaking out, smashing up and the social context of aspiration' in the CCCS journal Working Papers in Cultural Studies (Cohen, 1974). Steve Redhead (see below) traces the influence of Stanley Cohen's work on what was to become Hall et al's Policing The Crisis (see Redhead, 1995, p.35, and Hall et al, 1978). It is fair to say that, without the work of Stanley Cohen, the CCCS approach to the study of youth culture would have looked very different indeed.

methodological interest in its examination of the way in which the adherents to two specific youth styles became 'folk devils' through their treatment by the mass media. As we shall see below, Steve Redhead's analysis of the early days of acid house, and Sarah Thornton's analysis of the formations of contemporary dance culture, make the point that there is nothing more enticing to British youth than a mass media-determined 'moral panic'. This has resonance at various points in this thesis.

Dick Hebdige's Subculture: The Meaning of Style (Hebdige, 1979) and Hiding in the Light: on images and things (Hebdige, 1988) can be seen as texts of transformation between the 'subculturalist' approach of contemporary cultural studies and what might be termed the 'post-subculturalist' work connected with the Institute for Popular Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University (see below). In particular Hebdige's Subculture book can be seen as move away from the 'culturalist' emphasis of much of the CCCS work (which started with the 'fathers' of British culturalism, Richard Hoggart, E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, and continued with CCCS ethnographers such as Paul Willis) towards a European-influenced structuralist textualism[7]. With Hebdige using Saussurian and Barthesian semiotics in his analysis of punk style, Subculture can also be seen to be moving away from 'grand narratives' that related youth culture to socio-economic position and class, towards an analysis of micro-narratives, an analysis of specific cultural texts. The relevance to this thesis is in my attempts to explain how and why contemporary dance culture has become the most significant youth cultural development since punk, whilst also paying particular attention to individual biographies, and individual, local scenes.

Hebdige can also be used to combat the accusation of "compulsive conformity" within youth style (for example see Parsons, 1949, pp.342-3), and can be used in the study of

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[7] Mike Brake makes this division explicit in his suggestion that there are "two approaches in the CCCS analysis: one to uncover the relations of subcultures and class, the other to unravel the meanings of style and fashion; one looks at signs, the other at signifiers" (Brake, 1985, p.68).

contemporary dance culture to show the micro-tribal, rather than macro-class, nature of much of contemporary dance culture. This notion of 'micro-culture' is employed in chapter 4, but in the meantime it is worth noting that I am suggesting that there has been a move away from the unified 'spectacular' subcultures of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, towards what might be termed a 'compulsive disconformity'. Subculture is also of relevance to this thesis in its use of the notion of homology, with Hebdige analysing the structural fit between punk fashion, music and belief.

The work of Simon Frith is also of relevance to this thesis. In The Sociology of Rock Frith examines the relationship between commercial teenage culture and young people (Frith, 1978). Here we see a move away from the notion of resistance, and a revival of an approach to the study of youth that originated with Mark Abrams' classic study of teenage spending patterns The Teenage Consumer (Abrams, 1959). In particular Frith's work shows how we can examine the relationships between meanings found in the content and form of popular music, and specific socio-economic sub-groups. The relationship between the discourse of resistance (which I term "youth as folk rebels") and the discourse of "youth as consumer" is explored in chapter 2 of this thesis, and elsewhere I show how contemporary dance culture is neither entirely resistive nor purely conformist, but occupies a variety of points on a sliding scale between these two mythical binary opposites.

Angela McRobbie's writings on female youth culture should also be viewed as a product of the 'Birmingham School', in particular her essay entitled 'The Culture of Working Class Girls', found in the edited collection Feminism and Youth Culture (McRobbie, ed., 1991). However it should be noted that much of McRobbie's work, particularly the essay entitled 'Settling Accounts with Subcultures' (McRobbie, 1980) and the collection of essays edited by McRobbie and Mica Nava entitled Gender and Generation (McRobbie and Nava, eds., 1984), is a critique (albeit from the 'inside') of the foci of contemporary cultural studies. This critique is re-appraised within chapter 2 of this thesis.

McRobbie's 1994 collection entitled <u>Postmodernism and Popular Culture</u> (McRobbie, 1994a) contains McRobbie's most recent work on youth culture. There are three chapters within this anthology that are of direct relevance to this thesis. Firstly 'Shut Up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity', published a year earlier in the journal <u>Cultural Studies</u> (McRobbie, 1993), contains a useful analysis of the change in gender relations inherent within dance culture in the mid 1990s. Here McRobbie talks of 'rave' as legitimating

> pure physical abandon in the company of others without requiring the narrative of sex or romance. The culture is one of childhood, of a pre-sexual, pre-oedipal stage. Dancing provides the rationale for rave. Where other youth subcultures have focused on street appearances, or have chosen live rock performances for providing the emblematic opportunity for the display of style, in rave everything happens within the space of the party (McRobbie, 1994a, p.169).

There are themes here, around gender relations, sexuality, and the performative nature of dance culture, that I expand upon at various points in my thesis. In general McRobbie's chapter is an excellent introductory discussion of these themes.

The next chapter in <u>Postmodernism and Popular Culture</u>, entitled 'Different, Youthful, Subjectivities: Towards a Cultural Sociology of Youth' (McRobbie, 1994c), examines the legacy of contemporary cultural studies, and points towards "a rejection of the primacy of the youth and social class couplet which had underpinned the development of 'subcultural theory'" (McRobbie, 1994c, p.181). This rejection of the primacy of class-based analyses of contemporary cultural studies is examined in depth in chapter 2, where I discuss the reasons for contemporary cultural studies' failure to analyse the youth cultures of the 1980s and 1990s.

The final chapter in <u>Postmodernism and Popular Culture</u>, entitled 'The Moral Panic in the Age of the Postmodern Mass Media' (McRobbie, 1994), is of relevance to this thesis in that it re-appraises the work of, in particular, Stanley Cohen and Jock Young. Issues around moral panics, deviance, and law and order are dealt with in chapters 1 and 5 of this thesis, whilst the influence of Stanley Cohen on the study of youth is re-examined in chapter 2.

Other essays and books by a variety of writers offer useful and interesting surveys of youth cultural theory and its historical context, but break no new ground. In particular Mike Brake's <u>The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures</u> (Brake, 1980) offers us a useful reading of CCCS theory, whilst the extended second edition of the book, entitled <u>Comparative Youth Culture. The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada</u> offers, as the title suggests, some useful comparative material. Tony Bennett's essay 'Popular culture and hegemony in post-war Britain' (Bennett, 1982) and John Muncie's essay 'Pop culture, pop music and post-war youth: subcultures' (Muncie, 1982), both found in the course booklets of the Open University's "U203 Popular Culture" course, provide a useful overview of the social context of contemporary cultural studies' analyses of youth.

Post-Birmingham: Youth Cultural Studies in the 1980s and 1990s.

As will be suggested later, the 1980s were a lean time for academic analyses of youth culture[8]. Other than sporadic essays, there were no major revisions, adaptations or critiques of the contemporary cultural studies' approach. Chapter 2 examines why this

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[8] The back cover of Sarah Thornton's <u>Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital</u> (Thornton, 1995) makes this point explicit, albeit in an ironic manner, by citing a review in <u>The Times Higher Education Supplement</u>; "<u>Club Cultures</u>... will be of great use to anyone trying to find out whatever happened to youth culture since the heady days of Dick Hebdige as long ago as 1979" (Thornton, 1995, back cover). Thornton's book is dealt with below.

was the case, and I put forward the proposal that this was not because of the success of the CCCS's totalising perspective, but was due to its inherent failures.

Barring the occasional whisper, the silence was broken by Steve Redhead in his book entitled <u>The end-of-the-century party: youth and pop toward 2000</u> (Redhead, 1990). Redhead starts from the premise that "the discourse and practices which constructed and positioned youth culture historically after the Second World War are now undergoing profound transformation" (Redhead, 1990, p.9). Here Redhead breaks from the tradition that sees youth culture as determined by socio-economic and class positions, towards an analysis whereby youth culture is seen to be determined by almost free-floating discourses;

> rock and pop discourses have produced, over the last forty years, a range of individual positions (styles, poses, identities, narratives, desires) which *youth culture can occupy*. They have helped to create and construct youth culture as a collective subject: for addressing, marketing, cajoling, consoling and so on (Redhead, 1990, p.10).

Redhead continues, drawing upon Foucaultian notions of discourse to make his point; "'counter-cultures' in pop and rock music discourses are in no way separate from or outside... authority. They are, rather, directly produced by such discourses" (Redhead, 1990, p.17).

Redhead's book, in its rejection of subcultural theory, could be seen to discard much that is of use within contemporary cultural studies. Within this thesis my reassertion of homology theory in chapter 4 shows that there is much of methodological use in the work published at Birmingham. My ethnography-inspired work in chapters 5 and 6 are based upon the detailed examination of specific micro-cultures, where Redhead's <u>The end-of-the-century party</u> seems to deal predominantly with 'global' pop and rock cultures. Chapter 4 also examines discourses that Redhead only hints at ("'youth

television', for example, is fast becoming the new international pop style created by television and advertising discourses" Redhead, 1990, p.9).

Throughout this thesis there are elements of Redhead's work that I acknowledge and employ. This is particularly noticeable when I engage with the collection edited by Redhead entitled <u>Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture</u> (Redhead, 1993a). The collection starts with Redhead's own analysis of the developing moral panic surrounding the seemingly irresistible rise in Ecstasy consumption in the late 1980s (Redhead, 1993c). This thesis, at points, continues the tale. However there is little in Redhead's analysis that attempts to explain *why* Ecstasy consumption has expanded so massively in recent years (other than the suggestion that it is an almost entirely media-inspired moral panic that encourages, rather than discourages, deviancy). In chapter 1 I analyse the qualities that Ecstasy offers, and in chapter 4 I show how Ecstasy consumption is directly related to both the form of contemporary dance music, and the social consciousness of young people.

Elsewhere in <u>Rave Off</u> Antonio Melechi outlines a hypothesis based around the title of his essay 'The Ecstasy of Disappearance' (Melechi, 1993). Tracing the origins of contemporary dance culture back to the Balearic island of Ibiza in the mid 1980s, Melechi employs Baudrillardian theories of loss and disappearance to the study of the dance floor. Within this thesis I engage with the idea of 'disappearance', suggesting that it is a way of avoiding the gaze of legal authorities and officialdom (whereas Melechi's analysis is more to do with the dissolution of the male gaze).

Like Melechi, Hillegonda Rietveld's essay in <u>Rave Off</u> entitled 'Living the Dream' (Rietveld, 1993) also proposes a 'disappearance' thesis. In particular Rietveld attacks the notion that contemporary dance culture might form part of a political critique, suggesting that rave merely signified

a threat to the symbolic order... No meaning could be found other than pure escape, suggesting perhaps, a type of tourism. There was the excitement of spending money that had lost its exchange value and of driving into the darkness, the unknown. A disappearance from daily material realities by an undoing of the constructed 'self' in a Dionysian ritual is the ultimate effect (Rietveld, 1993, p.43).

In chapter 4 I confront this 'disappearance' thesis, and, in using Adorno, Bakhtin and Althusser, I suggest another possible interpretation based upon a loss of language, rather than a loss of subjectivity. Chapter 1 of this thesis also contains a more detailed account of the opposition to state interference in rave culture hinted at when Rietveld mentions contemporary dance culture's "sense of belonging, created by an attitude of being pitted against police surveillance" (Rietveld, 1993, p.49). Chapter 4 also extends Rietveld's brief analysis of the role of gender and sexuality in dance culture.

The other chapters in Rave Off are of less significance to this thesis than those written by Redhead, Melechi and Rietveld, although Kristian Russell's 'Lysergia Suburbia' is of some interest in that it looks at the extent to which acid house and rave cultures are influenced by a discourse of 'psychedelia', whilst also examining the effects of Ecstasy consumption on dance culture (an area I cover in depth in chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Redhead's next book, published two years after Rave Off, is his Unpopular Cultures: The birth of law and popular culture (Redhead, 1995). Within this volume Redhead excavates various elements of critical theory in order to examine the relationships between legal discourse and popular culture. Within this book Redhead also re-explores many of the concerns central to his The end-of-the-century party text, in particular a shift from a linear teleology within the analysis of the development of youth cultures to a narrative of circularity where 'it all comes round again" (Redhead,

1990, p.27)[9]. Of specific relevance to this thesis is Redhead's second chapter, which deals with "the minutae" of CCCS theory, and its relation to deviancy theory and criminology. Redhead also briefly deals with the relationship between the digital composition practice known as 'sampling' and the law (Redhead, 1995, pp.55-7), and issues concerning the creative use of sampling are dealt with in chapter 4 of this thesis.

The fourth book involving Redhead that has a relevance for this thesis is the collection of essays edited by Redhead with Derek Wynne and Justin O'Connor entitled The Club Cultures Reader: Readings in Popular Cultural Studies (Redhead et al, 1997)[10]. The opening chapter, written by Simon Frith and Jon Savage entitled 'Pearls and Swine: Intellectuals and the Mass Media' (Frith and Savage, 1997), is an analysis of 'cultural populism' and the development of a discourse within cultural studies that sought to celebrate certain elements of contemporary popular culture in an uncritical manner. What Frith and Savage have to say is of significance to this thesis in my attempt, throughout all chapters, to validate contemporary dance music as a musical form of inherent worth, and eminently worthy of study, without lapsing into uncritical celebration. Frith and Savage would appear to agree that such a process is possible;

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[9] I feel particularly indebted to the circular structuring of Redhead's texts themselves. The end-of-the-century party starts with a "'post'-script" and ends with "the absolute non-end" (see Redhead, 1990), whilst Unpopular Cultures starts with the last chapter that Redhead delivered to his publishers. Redheads' books have strong central narratives but in reading and re-reading them one gets the impression that these narratives are not linear but, as Redhead suggests, circular (and possibly anti-clockwise). It was the structures of The end-of-the-century party and Unpopular Cultures that led me to include in the dedication page of this thesis a reference to the closing credits of the promotional video/short film Weekender, and led me to end the final chapter of this thesis with a transcription of the opening scene of the same video/film. As the title of chapter 2 of The end-of-the-century party suggests "It all comes round again?" (Redhead, 1990, p.27).

[10] Redhead's most recent work, Subculture to Clubcultures: An Introduction to Popular Cultural Studies (Redhead, 1997), contains a diverse collection of predominantly journalistic articles concerning Redhead's joint loves of football and youth culture. Whilst these articles might be of interest to the reader of this thesis, they break no new theoretical ground and I have therefore not included an analysis of them within this literature review.

"dance acts like Orbital or Derrick May draw a more accurate map of the 1992 body, its formation in and by the contemporary experience of desire and space - than any 'fine' artist we can think of" (Frith and Savage, 1997, p.15). Within this thesis I hope to validate the texts of contemporary dance culture in a suitably scholarly manner.

The next essay in <u>The Clubcultures Reader</u> is Beverly Best's 'Over-the-counter-culture: Retheorizing Resistance in Popular Culture' (Best, 1997). Within this essay Best is concerned with charting a course between the cultural pessimism of post-Frankfurt School cultural analyses, and the cultural populism of the likes of John Fiske. Again, there is a direct relevance to this thesis. In chapter 4 I try to envisage what Theodor Adorno (a prominent Frankfurt School theorist) might have made of the form of contemporary dance music, whilst in chapters 4 and 5 I criticise the 'new populism' of John Fiske. Throughout this thesis I attempt to avoid both pessimistic and populist discourses. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the notion of resistance and opposition with regard to the study of contemporary dance culture. Whilst my work in chapters 1 and 2 is, at points, informed by Best's analysis, it also goes beyond it, looking at specific phenomena within dance culture and placing these phenomena within the context of both sociological theory, and socio-economic reality. Best writes of "the negotiated and contextually specific nature of many oppositional relationships" (Best, 1997, p.24). In chapter 1 I provide an analysis of context, whilst also describing the precise relationship of dance culture's 'oppositional relationship' to the state and to common-sense discourse.

The next chapter in <u>The Clubcultures Reader</u> is Chris Stanley's 'Not Drowning but Waving: Urban Dissent in the Wild Zone' (Stanley, 1997, p.36). In chapter 4 I examine whether the contemporary dance floor can be considered a 'relatively autonomous zone', adapting the language of Hakim Bey, but giving it a distinctly Althusserian flavour (see Bey, 1985 and Althusser, 1971). In particular my Bakhtinian analysis of contemporary dance culture, also found in chapter 4, is related to Stanley's suggestion that "the rave party, in which music is the determining element, appropriates and

inverts that which is offered 'officially'" (Stanley, 1997, p.50). Where my analysis differs from Stanley's is in my insistence that my analysis be grounded in a materialism, whereas the analysis of Stanley is reliant on the conventionalist theories of Baudrillard and Foucault.

Other relevant chapters in The Clubcultures Reader include Simon Reynold's 'Rave Culture: Living Dream or Living Death?' (Reynolds, 1997, p.102), which analyses, amongst other things, the relationship between recreational drug use and musical form. In chapter 4 of this thesis I use the work of Lucien Goldmann to present a similar, but more 'grounded' and materialist analysis, of the relationships between drug use and dance music. Like Hillegonda Rietveld in Rave Off, Reynolds also analyses contemporary rave culture in Freudian terms, talking of "pre-Oedipal infancy" and "a 'regression' to the polymorphous 'body without organs' of infancy" (Reynolds, 1997, p.107). This is an analysis that I extend in chapter 4, with my analysis of the relationship between a Barthesian *jouissance*, Ecstasy and contemporary dance culture.

The rest of The Clubcultures Reader contains material not directly relevant to this thesis, although some chapters would be of interest to the 'lay reader', in particular Hillegonda Rietveld's archaeology of house music in 'The House Sound of Chicago' (Rietveld, 1997), and Dave Haslam's analysis of 'DJ Culture' (Haslam, 1997).

In general, whilst this thesis starts from the same position as Redhead did in 1990 (my thesis is an analysis "of the development of what, since 1987, has been described as 'acid house' or 'rave' culture. These changes in youth culture are by no means representative of the whole of contemporary youth culture but they are at the cutting edge of 'politics and deviance'" Redhead, 1993b, p.5), I take issue with Redhead and his colleagues on a number of key matters, and I analyse areas of contemporary dance culture (such as its relationship with the television industry) unexplored by Redhead *et al.* Herein lies the originality of this thesis.

Working almost in parallel to 'the Manchester School' is Sarah Thornton. Thornton's Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital (Thornton, 1995) is probably the most important and influential academic text concerning dance culture, and a detailed exposition of its central theses is required at this stage (particularly as I provide a critique of many of the key assumptions made by Thornton in this thesis).

The central thesis of Thornton's work is that "club cultures are *taste cultures*... Club cultures are riddled with cultural hierarchies" (Thornton, 1995, p.3). Having stated this Thornton goes on to suggest that her intention is to expose "three principal, overarching distinctions which can be briefly designated as: the authentic versus the phoney, the 'hip' versus the 'mainstream', and the 'underground' versus 'the media'" (Thornton, 1995, p.4).

Of less interest to us is the first discourse. I have no intention of using notions of authenticity or inauthenticity within my thesis. There are some elements of Thornton's analysis in this area that I will criticise, however I do broadly concur with Thornton's historical analysis of the shift in dance culture from live performances to "disc culture".

However, crucial to the position of this thesis within the academic field, is Thornton's exposition of two other discourses. The second discourse that Thornton exposes is contemporary dance culture's invocation of 'the mainstream', suggesting that when invoked 'the mainstream' invariably refers to

> the masses - discursive distance from which is a measure of a clubber's cultural worth. Youthful clubber and raver ideologies are almost as *anti-mass culture* as the discourses of the artworld. Both criticize the mainstream/masses for being derivative, superficial and *femme*. Both consciously admire innovative artists, but show disdain for those who have too high a profile as being charlatans or overrated media-sluts (Thornton, 1995, p.5).

Throughout this thesis I have an antagonistic relationship to this central proposal by Thornton. Firstly, I hope to show that 'raver ideology' is not "anti-mass culture" (this is of particular relevance to chapter 5 of this thesis where I briefly engage with what have been termed 'mass society' or 'mass culture' discourses). Secondly, I will show that the implicit accusation of sexism contained within Thornton's book is false, and that dance culture does not "repeatedly disparage and subordinate in speech... [the characteristics] of a feminine working-class minority" (Thornton, 1995, p.166). Thirdly I hope to show that, contrary to Thornton's belief, there are qualitative differences between 'mainstream' and 'underground' musical texts and cultural practices.

The third "subcultural discourse" outlined by Thornton is dance culture's belief that it is a "renegade culture...opposed to, and continually in flight from, the colonizing co-opting media" (Thornton, 1995, p.6). In particular Thornton highlights the key roles played by "micro-media" and "niche-media", suggesting that exposure in these media forms is positively welcomed by dance culture. Within this thesis I agree that this is the case, but I also point out that Thornton's own position is naïve in its suggestion that mass media institutions such as television *do not* attempt to co-opt and use for financial gain subcultural phenomena such as contemporary dance culture. Within this thesis I hope to highlight the difference between what Thornton terms "micro-media", and global media institutions such as the television industry.

Throughout <u>Club Cultures</u> Thornton continually opposes any suggestion that dance culture is a political culture. I intend to counter this notion, and this is one of the big differences between my study and the work of Thornton. This is not to suggest that, in using the subcultural categories of 'the mainstream' and 'the underground', I intend to treat "the discourses of dance culture..., as [an] innocent account... of the way things really are" (Thornton, 1995, p.10). My suggestion is that, in the provision of a critique of CCCS notions of oppositionality, deviance and resistance, Thornton has swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, and, as a consequence, her analysis is simplistic in

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its suggestion that contemporary dance culture is entirely apolitical and purely consumerist (albeit beneath a veneer of politicisation and anti-consumerism that Thornton believes is entirely discursive). I do not intend to "over-politicize" dance culture, however I certainly intend to show how it has become politicised.

Thornton's second publication in the field is the book that she edited with Ken Gelder entitled The Subcultures Reader (Gelder and Thornton, 1997). Whilst this book is a collection of previously published essays, it nevertheless offers a good introduction to the field of youth cultural study, in particular pre-CCCS and non-CCCS analyses.

The most recent publication that concerns contemporary dance culture is Hillegonda Rietveld's book-length study entitled This Is Our House: House Music, Cultural Spaces and Technologies (Rietveld, 1998a). Rietveld's text, published only a matter of weeks before the completion of this thesis, is a comparative ethnography of house music-oriented dance cultures in the United States, the Netherlands and Britain.

I have no argument with Rietveld's general conclusions, and at points in this thesis I use some of Rietveld's analysis to back up my own. In particular I suggest that, like Rietveld, the work contained within later chapters of this thesis is "an example of how ethnography can work from the inside out" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.5)[11]. I am also indebted to Rietveld's analysis of polymorphous perversity and the loss of language within

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[11] A comparison can also be made with the Mass Observation projects of the 1930s. Gary Cross explains why they used a variety of methods that could be seen to be ethnographic;

> the social survey or opinion poll was not enough. Harrison [joint founder of the Mass–Observation project] favoured observation of people in their own time and space - in the routine of their work in the card–room of the mill or on the Promenade at Blackpool in those nine days per year when they were completely free from work. The Mass-Observers had a keen eye for the physical and cultural worlds of ordinary people; they had a passionate interest in how people behaved in their familiar surroundings of bars, churches, and dance halls (Cross, 1990, pp.3–4).

contemporary dance culture, and I reference Rietveld within the body of this thesis when these concepts are dealt with.

There are however analyses within this thesis that differ from Rietveld's. This is often a case of a difference in academic and methodological, rather than cultural, referent. For example Rietveld makes extensive use of Baudrillardian theories of disappearance which only briefly appear in this thesis, and when they do, Baudrillard's eccentric idealism and conventionalism is replaced with a neo-Marxist materialism. In general, it would be fair to suggest that, whereas Rietveld examines Dutch, US and British dance cultures from a post-structuralist perspective indebted to Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard, I examine British dance culture (and its televisual representations) from a broadly Marxist perspective.

A further significant difference between my thesis and Rietveld's book is that my thesis deals with televisual representations of contemporary dance culture, an area that Rietveld entirely ignores. It is also the case that Rietveld, writing in 1995, only takes a cursory look at jungle culture, whilst within chapter 4 of this thesis I argue that jungle is the most significant development within contemporary dance culture since its inception and genesis in the late 1980s.

Miscellaneous other texts

There are many other texts within the field of youth cultural study, but these often lack a central coherence or academic rigour, or are only tentative proposals written as journal articles or as chapters in edited collections. Exceptions include:-

George McKay's excellent account of 'counter-cultural movements' entitled <u>Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties</u> (McKay, 1996). The chapter on dance culture is particularly interesting, and I engage with McKay's analysis at various points in this thesis.

George McKay's edited collection of essays on 'DiY protest' entitled DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain (McKay, ed., 1998a).

Phillip Tagg's essay 'From Refrain to Rave: the decline of figure and the rise of ground' in the journal Popular Music. Tagg offers a brief formalist analysis of 'rave music', and, like Angela McRobbie, a reading of rave culture through his daughter's involvement in the scene (Tagg, 1994).

Nicholas Saunders offers a thorough, if somewhat idealistic, analysis of the relationship between dance culture and Ecstasy use in his book entitled Ecstasy and the Dance Culture (Saunders, 1995).

George Melly offers a surprisingly useful analysis of the relationship between what is in effect youth culture and the media in his much-cited Revolt Into Style: The Pop Arts in Britain (Melly, 1970). I refer to Melly in the body of this thesis, looking at how some of Melly's concerns remain relevant today.

Matthew Collin and John Godfrey offer a very comprehensive journalistic account of the development of contemporary dance culture in Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House (Collin and Godfrey, 1997). If the reader of this thesis is a newcomer to contemporary dance culture then this is an excellent introduction, and I cite some of the details meticulously collected by Collin and Godfrey within the body of my thesis.

Outside of the field of youth cultural study, but still of relevance to this thesis is Simon Frith's 'Youth/Music/Television' in the collection edited by Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg entitled Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader (Frith et al, 1993). Within this chapter Frith examines the various institutional, technological, economic and discursive determinants that led to the creation of the genre of 'youth

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television' in the 1980s. Chapter 4 uses Frith's analysis as a starting point for a detailed examination of the commissioning of one specific television programme entitled <u>BPM</u>, with chapters 5 and 6 looking at the consumption of <u>BPM</u> within the domestic sphere.

Appendix 2: Review

Steyn, M. (1990) 'Lords of the dance: Mark Steyn, chillin out, pursues his solo career' in The Independent, 19 October, p.14.

ON TIMEWATCH, we heard once again the strains of 'Tis the Gift to be Simple' the enduring Shaker hymn which so inspired the composer Aaron Copland. On Dance Energy we heard a new style of Hispanic rapping which has inspired Mellow Man Ace - principally, I assume, to change his name from some baptismal liability like Irving Schmuck. From Appalachian Spring to springy appellations, all on the same channel. Between these Shakers and movers, BBC 2 captured the two strains of American culture - frugal self-denial and rampant hedonism. No prizes for guessing which is in the ascendant at Television Centre. The United Society of Believers rated a one-off documentary, the slap-happy sappy rappers of LA, Philadelphia and London get not only Dance Energy (Monday) but also Dance Energy Update (Wednesday).

Not many BBC programmes require an update within 48 hours: no network controller has ever impressed his confreres at management meetings by crying, 'I've got it, guys [Sing Something Simple - Update]' But Dance Energy is a show whose sell-by date is calibrated in nano-seconds, and no doubt, even as I write, Mellow Man Ace is all washed-up and long since replaced by Ace Man Mellow. In the competitive world of Hip-hop House Funk, the last thing you should ever do is actually spend a quiet night at your, er, house. 'Where you been for the last couple o' months, man?' demanded the presenter, Normski, for whom sixty days off the scene clearly put you in the Emily Dickinson league. 'I've been in Tottenham,' said the rapper calmly, 'just chillin'.' That's okay then: on this show, chillin' in Tottenham has

the same effect as telling Wogan you've been at your beach house in Malibu. But in the meantime, what are the hottest sounds goin' down, as we say in the Perry Como Appreciation Society? Each week, Normski, a likeable dayglo groover in shades and hooded sweatshirt with an admirable disregard for which camera he's on, brings you not only the new dance chart, not only the new updated dance chart but also, just to keep one extra step ahead, a popular record chart for records which aren't yet popular. 'Right about now we're gonna kick up with the Buzz Chart,' he said, embracing the Reithian mission to educate, 'which is the music that's kicking on the dance-floor that isn't selling yet 'cause it's so tough.'

You're telling me. KRS-1, one of several American *rappers to name* himself after his personalised number plate, put it this way: 'Like rappers with nothing to say I crush these idiots and throw 'em away Doesn't matter how fatter The wallet I'd rather Get it together And splatter Whatever Egotistic mystics With macho poses If you heat more plastic, you get guns and roses Understand?'

Well, up to a point. After KRS- 1's barrage, the new bilingual rapping favoured in Los Angeles came as something of a relief: rap, like opera, seems most agreeable when it's in a language you don't understand. As always on shows about pop music, nobody ever talks about the music, preferring instead to chant solemnly the age-old liturgy of the pop interview: Prince's backing singers, for example, during their six-year break from him, had 'pursued their solo careers'. Well, who hasn't? I've been pursuing my solo career ever since it escaped from the cupboard under the stairs in 1981. Still, why talk about the music when you can talk about the issues? 'Mellow Man Ace,' said DJ Ralph M, 'speaks

upon a lot of issues - um, you know, I mean, he talks about this girl who, you know, did him wrong, whatever. . .'

KRS-1 has gone further and thrown his considerable weight behind HEAL, Human Education Against Lies. 'The masses of the people,' he explained, 'are being cheated out of their humanity because before you're a colour, a race, an occupation or a religion, you're a human being. And if we act accordingly like human beings we could see civilisation advance and not technology take over.' Pretty rich, you might think, coming from a representative of a 'musical' genre wholly dependent on technology, whose exponents are so incapable of performing live on television that they have to mouth their latest single and then stand around sheepishly as the record fades behind them. Normski, though, was quick to endorse KRS-1's plea for the advance of human civilisation: 'Okay,' he told the troops, 'make some noise for the philosopher' The audience responded with what became a familiar 'ooh-ooh-ooh' grunting sound, rather like the end of the Goodies' seminal record 'Funky Gibbon'. It would be rather nice to think we had Tim Brooke-Taylor to blame for rap.

For all their amiable inanity, in some of the more political statements you heard vaguely the death knell of America: 'We're supposed to learn about the Redcoats and George Washington and all that. That does not have nothing to do with the young Hispanic,' maintained Kid Frost. 'They call it history but it's not our history.' He's probably right, but it ought to be their history, at least as much as it was Irving Berlin's or Sam Goldwyn's or any of the other first-generation Americans. I suspect, though, Kid Frost isn't much interested in any history.

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Mind you, even those of us who are historically inclined might have got a bit of a jolt from Jane Treays' Timewatch on the last Shaker community in America, at Sabbathday Lake, Maine. To most of us, Shaker now means a type of highly collectable furniture, as the programme's sub-title recognised: 'I Don't Want To Be Remembered As A Chair.' In New Hampshire recently, a woman complained to me about the problems she was having restoring her colonial farmhouse because modern appliances like her washer / dryer looked out of place beside her Shaker antiques. In fact, the Shakers invented the automatic washing-machine, so that they'd have more time for praying. But to the glossy magazines the word means only rustic simplicity: 'Store Clothes The Shaker Way'.

Miss Treays' touching and elegiac film had a lucky fluke when Oprah Winfrey and her entourage turned up at a Shaker auction they were filming and bid $220,000 for a three-drawer chest. But the ironies of functional furniture built for a life of Christian abstinence fetching a fortune seemed lost on everybody but the Shakers themselves. 'When I first saw this chair in an antique dealer's shop,' purred a Connecticut dentist, 'it whispered to me 'Take me home, take me home . . .' Ever since then it's been talking to me, shouting at me, 'I am Shaker, I am honest. Some of the things that make me wonderful are a sense of wonderful proportion in the back slats . . .' The dialogue will go on for a long time.'

Almost imperceptibly, the programme reorientated your perspective: the supposedly normal people came over like whackos while the religious weirdos seemed reasonable and well-balanced. And, watching the Shakers visiting schools in Maine, you couldn't help feeling America's kids would be better off listening to them than to Mellow Man Ace.

Appendix 3: A Brief Structural Analysis of <u>BPM</u>

Episode broadcast 23 July 1995.

00.00 **Title sequence**. With music in an eclectic style (with influences from break beat house and techno) the title sequence contains shots of previous dance floor sequences, with special effects and the <u>BPM</u> logo that appears as a *leitmotif* throughout the whole programme.

00.25 **Introduction**. A piece to camera by our hosts Damon Rocheford and Saffron, filmed at the club Legends, Old Burlington Street, London. Throughout 1995 <u>BPM</u> frequently filmed such introductory sequences at a different club from the one featured in the dance floor sequences within that specific programme. During this introduction both Rocheford and Saffron introduce, with inserted clips, those items featured within this specific programme.

00.52 **Introductory clips**. Short clips from forthcoming interviews.

01.05 **Continued introduction**. Here the presenters introduce the first clip.

01.12 **Dance floor sequence**. Filmed at Kellys, Port Rush, Northern Ireland, with DJ Colin Dale playing <u>Access</u> by DJ Misjah (this information is provided on screen). This club features a slightly dated 'rave' aesthetic, with music that veers towards German and British Trance. The energetic young clientele (18-25) adopt a hedonistic mode of dance, again directly related to early-1990s' rave culture, and I would hazard a suggestion that drug consumption in this club was high.

03.24 **Introduction to "Video of the Week"** with Saffron talking to camera.

03.38 **Video of the Week**. <u>I'll Be There For You</u> by Method Man and Mary J Blige.

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06.12 **Dance floor sequence.** Filmed at Swoon, Stafford with DJ Boy George playing and mixing an untitled White Label by Krupolska and <u>Deja Vu</u> by Deja Vu. This club is a more populist almost 'mainstream' handbag house club, with a young and apparently relatively affluent clientele (with, I would suggest, a sizeable proportion of students) whose dancing is energetic and sexual. During this sequence the camera frequently lingers on women dancing in a provocative manner, whilst only featuring men dancing when they are accompanied by women, or where their dancing or clothing is particularly extravagant.

09.00 **Introduction to interview.** Saffron, talking to camera. introducing an interview with "featured artist" Mary Kiani.

09.18 **Video clip** of <u>When I Call Your Name</u> (Motiv8 mix) by Mary Kiani.

09.30 **Interview.** Shot of Kiani talking. As with all interviews on <u>BPM</u> the music from the video is decreased in volume and played in the background of the interview. Throughout this sequence, we therefore see and hear three clips from promotional videos related to Kiani's career, whilst also hearing Kiani and seeing a video, seeing and hearing Kiani talking, and hearing Kiani talking over a video with the video soundtrack in the background. This helps the flow of the sequence as a whole. The precise sequence is as follows.

10.00 Visual and audio from <u>Real Love</u> video by Time Frequency (Kiani's previous band).

10.20 Interview vocal and <u>Real Love</u> video visuals.

10.29 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

10.53 Visual and audio clip from <u>When I Call Your Name</u> by Mary Kiani.

11.14 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

11.39 Visual clip from <u>When I Call Your Name</u> with interview vocals.

11.58 Visual and audio clip from <u>When I Call Your Name</u>.

12.07 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

12.19 Visual and audio clip from <u>Surrender Your Love</u> by The Nightcrawlers. Interestingly Kiani talks about her personal relationship with the lead singer of The Nightcrawlers. Whether this was prompted by the <u>BPM</u> interviewer we will never know; we do not hear his questions, only her answers.

12.30 Visuals from Nightcrawlers' video and audio from Kiani interview.

12.38 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

13.00 Visual and audio clip from <u>When I Call Your Name</u>.

13.45 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

14.04 **Short sequence** with <u>BPM</u> logo.

14.10 **The <u>BPM</u> video chart.** The usage of a video chart by <u>BPM</u> is intended to suggest that there were some objective criteria in the selection of videos within each episode. This, however, was not the case with Simon Potter, Executive Producer, stating to me in interview that videos were selected on the basis of the personal

preferences of production team. The first clip in the video chart is <u>Captain Dread</u> by Dreadzone.

16.20 Video chart clip from <u>So Whatcha Gonna Do Now</u> by Public Enemy.

18.45 Short outro sequence with <u>BPM</u> logo.

18.52 Advertisements.

20.00 Short intro sequence with <u>BPM</u> logo.

20.07 Dance floor sequence. Filmed at Roseberrys, Hackney, London with the DJ collective The Rampage Crew playing and mixing <u>Voodoo Brown</u> by Voodoo Brown, <u>It's Yer Birthday</u> by Luke Skywalker, and <u>Lighter</u> by DJ SS. The crowd at this club are without exception, working class, and Afro-Caribbean or Black British. Dancing is in a Jamaican style, with women "winding", a sexually provocative mode of dance involving the vigorous shaking of the body in a low position with legs bent and open. The men featured in this video are, to a certain extent, not demonstrative, remaining 'cool' at all times. The camera continually lingers on close up shots of women, with the camera positioned behind the women at or below waist height.

22.35 Introduction to interview. Rocheford, talking to camera, introducing an interview with the band Bandulu.

22.49 Video clip from <u>Changing World</u> by Bandulu. The format of this sequence is similar to the previous interview with Mary Kiani, with the visuals sequence alternating between a video (this time only one video is featured) and the three members of the band (shot in a nightclub setting). The audio track alternates between the music from the video, and a mix of the music from the video in the background and

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Bandulu answering questions from an interviewer, who is out of sight, and whose questions are not revealed to the audience.

23.13 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

23.33 Visual and audio clip from Changing World.

23.50 Interview vocals and visuals with music in background.

24.11 Visual and audio clip from Changing World.

...This process continues, with the visual element alternating between interview and video, and a drop in music volume when we hear and see the interview.

27.40 Visuals from video, audio of music and interview.

27.47 **Dance floor Sequence**. The second sequence from Swoon, with DJ Boy George playing Play This House by The Bum Bum Club.

30.15 **Short sequence with BPM logo.**

30.25 **Video chart.**

30.30 **Video clip**. Take 5 in the Jungle by Teknicolor.

32.45 **Video chart countdown.**

32.50 **Video chart**. Soul Man (X-Mix 4 Version) by Kenny Larkin.

35.29 **Short introductory sequence** with the BPM logo announcing The BPM DJ.

35.34 Visual shot of DJ Paulette playing white label of <u>Everybody Needs Somebody</u> by Ruffneck featuring Yavahn.

35.48 **Interview**. Visual and audio of DJ Paulette talking, with <u>Everybody Needs Somebody</u> playing in the background. Here Paulette describes her DJ style, her motivation, how she entered her profession, and what she hopes to achieve in the future.

36.00 Clip of Paulette mixing with two record decks and a mixer.

36.08 Visual and audio of DJ Paulette talking, with <u>Everybody Needs Somebody</u> playing in the background.

36.15 Clip of Paulette mixing with two record decks and a mixer.

...This alternating between Paulette mixing, and her interview, continues.

37.51 **Short outro sequence** with <u>BPM</u> logo.

37.57 **Advertisements**.

39.03 **Short intro sequence** with <u>BPM</u> logo.

39.10 **Dance floor sequence**. The second sequence from Kellys, with DJ Colin Dale playing <u>Lyrical Bassdrum</u> by Omega Force.

41.50 **Introduction to interview**. Rocheford introducing an interview with the band D-Influence.

42.03 **Video clip** of <u>No Illusion</u> by D-Influence.

42.22 **Interview.** Visual and audio of D-Influence interview filmed with the band seated in an outdoor garden setting. <u>No Illusion</u> music playing in background.

Alternating between interview with music in background and video clips from D-Influence's <u>No Illusion, Midnight</u> and <u>Waiting</u>.

47.34 **Dance floor sequence.** The second sequence from Roseberrys with The Rampage Crew playing <u>Feel It</u> by Randall and Andy C.

49.30 **Short sequence** with <u>BPM</u> logo.

49.36 **Video chart countdown.**

49.42 **Video clip.** <u>It's What's Upfront That Counts</u>, by Yosh.

52.24 **Final piece to camera.** Rocheford and Saffron announce the programme of events for the next two episodes, read a letter of request from a viewer, and wish the audience good-bye.

52.30 **Dance floor sequence.** The third sequence from Kellys, with DJ SY playing and mixing <u>Dreamland</u> by The Max-X-Perience and <u>The Dream</u> by Trance Liner.

54.00 **Outro sequence.** Credits overlaid on dance floor footage from Kellys, with music.

55.30 **Ends.**

Appendix 4: Complete transcript of interview with 'Nigel', 27 July 1995

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: I think most of the people have got a big space around them, because there wasn't that much room to dance in many of the places; you could find quiet bits, but they tended to be really near the speakers.

Nigel: Saw Stef just there.

Nigel: What shall I do if I spot myself then? Yell?

Nigel: I'm fairly sure I could see someone that I went down with, this really tall chap with glasses. Am I allowed to rewind bits?

Interviewer: Yes.

Nigel: can I just rewind second? Thanks.

Interviewer: press play to start again.

[video clip]

Nigel: Nice Acidic colours on it.

Interviewer: why?

Nigel: why?

Interviewer: yes, why are they nice?

Nigel: Just really vibrant. Disturbing, it makes you want to watch it, 'cos it's so unreal.

Nigel: I'm a sucker for spirals as well, they're great!

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: This was a mad tent, so!

Interviewer: But the others *look* wilder.

Nigel: Yeah, but just for really clashing noise, it was the style of music that they were playing, just loads of people yelling and screaming 'cos it was going mad. No I mean the whole place was really going for it, every tent had loads of people in, and everyone was dancing, there wasn't any [*pause*] the only quiet spots were outside the tent. If you were in a tent, you were there to dance, definitely [*pause*] that's the right idea.

[interview with Billy Nasty]

Nigel: It's good that he likes Voodoo. I suppose the way that it is run is quite different from a lot of these events, you know. I reckon they will have a lot more free run in somewhere like Voodoo than certainly going to The Hacienda.

Nigel: Do you reckon this will be his set?

Interviewer: Yes it is.

Nigel: It was in the tent, so.

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: This guy [*Carl Cox*] can play some good stuff as well. He seems to fit in at quite a few places, 'cos he was playing a kind of technoey thing at, he used to do Angels up in Burnley, so, which was much lighter.

Interviewer: Flyers for clubs where he is playing seem to specify whether he is going to do a house set or a techno set.

Nigel: What he was doing up in Angels was quite light, but he did put some harder tunes in as well.

Interviewer: Do you ever watch <u>BPM</u>?

Nigel: Oh yeah, quite often, 'cos I won't get in 'til like half three or four, and I like to unwind a bit before I go to bed, I can't go straight to bed, I wish I could. It makes my whole weekend a lot longer, but I can't do it!

Interviewer: It actually relaxes you then?

Nigel: Yeah, I find it weird because I would have thought that having been out in a club all night and listening to stuff, that I'd get bored of it, but I don't at all, I don't know. You know it's reasonably informative as well, you get to hear stuff which you might have heard the name of and, I don't know, I suppose it just comes from being more choosy in my music these day, so if you can go out and just get a gist of what someone is playing you are at a slight advantage for when you go out. There are loads of DJs about really, and you can get just a hint of what they do. I watch it quite regularly, and there's always some bit of information that I find quite interesting.

[video clip]

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Nigel: I can't cope with this. Who is the sample from, is it the Detroit Spinners or something? *[pause]* Do you watch it much?

Interviewer: Yes, sometimes I don't have much choice about it. I video it a lot.

[adverts]

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: This is a weird thing, but a lot of the lads here are going for it more than the women. I don't know whether that's something that goes on all round. No it's not actually because I know quite a lot of women who really go for it.

[interview with Richie Hawtin/Plastikman]

Interviewer: Did you see Plastikman?

Nigel: Yeah, I think I did, I can't quite remember, he was definitely one of the names that we were trying to get to see. At about 2 o'clock it got a bit messy so I just wandered around and thought, yep that sounds good, great!

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: I like the way they use particular camera tricks, it just spices it up a bit more, it can get a bit boring just looking at people dancing all the time.

[video clip]

Nigel: I presume they're quite limited with what they can show here, because of what's available. I think a lot of the smaller record companies, like R&S, Warp, Junior Boys Own, are not going to make videos for the most part, I think if some people are in bands that are determined to get some visual imagery for it, then it will happen, but there is still quite a big culture of starting off by getting a few white labels out, and then if that goes well then they'll have a run of, I don't know, one to five thousand records. People like that are not going to make videos, so that'll limit it. The videos tend to be more of the mainstream 'souly' type things, but you can only assume that that is for that reason. The way MTV get around it is showing high-tech videos to accompany stuff that obviously hasn't got a video with it, that's one way round it. With this they can show a crowd shot with people dancing to tunes that might not have videos with them, which is probably why you'll get the more hardcore, less commercially successful things there, that's where they get their slot. There's obviously some sort of market for underground stuff, otherwise MTV wouldn't have Dance Zone where they have about an hour of it where they are just showing one of these new computer fractal videos all the way through it and have a mix of fifteen or twenty techno tracks through it, and maybe some of them have got videos, but I doubt it, because of the finance involved in that kind of stuff. What can you do? You're working with a set medium in a way. There is a definite style of techno video, and not a lot of people have broken from that. It's a shame in a way, because I'm sure if people did they'd get more notice for it, but then if you're not having any lyric on it, then what are they going to go for, landscapes, or techno madness or what? Stuff like this is going to pay the pennies, and keep everyone happy, and I don't think these programmes could exist at all unless they were showing what is pretty mainstream souly stuff, but it pays the bills, doesn't it?

[interview with Moby]

Nigel: Saw his set.

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Interviewer: Was he good?

Nigel: yeah, all right, it is sort of, I like the stuff where he is going fast, although having said that I like his big tune, the really sombre one. I've got this amazing seven inch single of his, which is just like a punk rock record.

[adverts]

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: Serious dancer there! Serious bouncer!

[interview with The Drum Club]

Nigel: I just think this lot are trying to market themselves as Orbital mark 2, just their choice of sounds.

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: What a top geezer!

[interview with The Prodigy]

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: Urgh, a man in his knickers! [*pause*] Go on smile, you know you want to!

[video clip]

[dance floor footage]

Nigel: I think it is definitely a worthwhile programme, you see it as a bit of a replacement for The Hitman and Her, but they are definitely aiming it at a different market, and I don't know whether it is because the dance market itself has changed. As they were saying in the programme people like The Prodigy, the underground, has just swelled, because people are accepting that. Hitman and Her was aiming at your 'Fridays' and your 'townie' night out, and that really has died a death, you know. A lot of the people who were going to that are going to the lighter end of house music, like Cream or The Garage Club or whatever. Maybe the change in music has dictated the change in the way that things are, the programme style. On the whole they manage to put quite a lot of variety of dance music styles within BPM. With a lot of DJs being about, you can't afford to go and see them all. As I get more fussy in my old age I just get to hear a bit of a DJ.

Appendix 5: Guide to Compact Disc

Bound within the covers of this thesis is a Compact Disc. This appendix contains a brief commentary on each track found on the CD. Technical limitations have prevented the inclusion of all the tracks cited within the body of this thesis. This CD should therefore be viewed as merely an indicative reference to *some* of the styles of contemporary dance culture mentioned elsewhere in this thesis.

1.Fast Eddie Acid Thunder

(1988, DJ International, Chicago)

A classic piece of acid house from a time when the majority of records played on British dance floors were American in origin. This track is from a time before the homological influence of MDMA and other amphetamine derivatives, when beats per minute hovered around the 120 mark. The high pitched 'acid line' is produced by a Roland TB-303.

2.A Guy Called Gerald Voodoo Ray

(1988, Rham Records, Manchester)

The British version of acid house, containing more melody and groove than the jacking Chicago acid track cited above.

3.Joey Beltram Energy Flash

(1990, R&S Records, Gent, Belgium)

From form to style, the homology between Ecstasy and music is complete. Beltram's Energy Flash not only maintained a rigidly sequenced 'four-to-the-floor' beat emphasis, but also contained some distinctively psychedelic melodies and sounds, and a voice that simply exhorted the dancer to "Ecstasy".

4.Flowered Up Weekender

(1992, Heavenly/Columbia, London).

Dance culture's auto-critique. A sprawling epic that both represents and criticises contemporary dance culture through a mixture of jazz, rock, funk, ambient and house. Note samples from Quadrophenia at the start and end of the track.

5.DJ SS 'The Intro' on The Rollers Convention LP

(1994, Formation Records, London, FORM 04)

This track was *the* essential jungle record of 1994. Despite its melancholic sampling of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, DJ SS's The Intro retained the aggression and fire of the black London jungle scene, whilst other parts of the country were moving towards 'ambient' and 'intelligent' styles. A prototype for a later style of jungle that became known as 'jump up'.

6.Origin Unknown Valley of the Shadows

(1994, RAM Records, Hornchurch, RAMM16CD)

A classic 'darkside' track that not only symbolised hardcore's rejection of 'four-to-the-floor', but also formed a blueprint for later styles of jungle. Note the rejection of euphoric lyrics, and the use of 'dark' and 'moody' chords.

7.Retribution Repetitive Beats - (Mind & Movement Control- On U Sound)

(1994, Sabres of Paradise Records Ltd, London, SRO23RCD)

A track taken from the compilation single entitled 'Retribution', released as a protest against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. This single showed that there

remained a progressive movement within British dance music production dedicated to a politicisation of dance culture.

8.Slam Positive Education

(1993, Soma, Glasgow)

Whilst rave begat break-beat hardcore and jungle, some within the British dance scene continued with the original techno blueprint. This track remains a classic within British techno, and is still heard on contemporary dance floors. Note the use of kick drum and snares provided by a Roland TR-909.

9.Josh Wink Higher State of Consciousness (Radio edit)

(1995, Strictly Rhythm, London, FESCD 3)

As suggested in chapter 4, Higher State of Consciousness was one of the most popular dance floor records of 1995. This track is the abbreviated 'radio edit' which led British dance culture participants to criticise Josh Wink for 'selling out'.

10.Technohead I Wanna Be A Hippy

(1995, Mokum, Amstelveen, Netherlands, DB 1770 3)

The classic 'happy gabber' track of 1995 which saw an amphetamine-inspired upsurge of beats per minute invade the British music charts. This is all-the-more ironic when considering the fact that the lyrics to this track (a cover version of a track originally recorded by the American group MC5) contain a paean to cannabis consumption. This track also showed that, whilst British dance culture was more and more influenced by break beats, European dance culture (Technohead were a duo based in Amsterdam) continued to use aggressive 'four-to-the-floor' beats.

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11.Robert Miles Children (Eat Me edit)

(1996, Deconstruction, London, F:BM620)

A track that united both 'mainstream' and 'underground' clubs throughout 1996. I

personally first heard this track at Bugged Out in Manchester on New Year's Eve 1995.

This track is also included on the CD so that the reader can hear the drum pattern

provided as an illustration in chapter 4.

Appendix 6: Definitions

John Hartley provides extended definitions of "common sense" and "discourse" in O'Sullivan *et al* 's Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies (O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994). These definitions are copied *verbatim* below. When I use the phrase common-sense discourse I am referring to what might be termed a "meta-discourse" on contemporary dance culture, which contains elements of oral discourses, legal discourse, parliamentary discourse and journalistic discourse. For an examination of the ideological nature of the category of common sense see Bennett *et al*, 1981, and Gramsci, 1971.

Discourse.

> A term now quite widely used in a number of different disciplines and schools of thought, often with different purposes. Most uncontroversially, it is used in linguistics to refer to verbal utterances of greater magnitude than the sentence. Discourse analysis is concerned not only with complex utterances by one speaker, but more frequently with the turn-taking interaction between two or more, and with the linguistic rules and conventions that are taken to be in play and governing such discourses in their given context.

> However, the concept of discourse has also developed, separately, out of post-structuralism and semiotics. Here it really represents an attempt to fix, within one term, some of the theoretical ground gained in the early days of the structuralist enterprise. To grasp its significance you have to remember that in this early period structuralism/semiotics was above all an oppositional intellectual force, whose proponents were attempting to criticise and transform the inherited habits of thought and analysis about the question of where meaning comes from. Traditionally, and even now

most 'obviously', meaning was ascribed to objects 'out there' in the world, and to inner essences and feelings of individuals. Structuralism took issue with these ideas, insisting that meaning is an effect of signification, and that signification is a property not of the world out there nor of individual people, but of language. It follows that both the world out there and individual consciousness are themselves comprehensible only as products, not sources, of language/signification. We are what we say, and the world is what we say it is. But the problem with this conclusion is that it is too free-floating and abstract; it gives the impression that - not only in principle but also in practice - the world and the word can mean whatever we like.

Life isn't so simple. The abstract concept of 'language' proved inadequate to account for the historical, political and cultural 'fixing' of certain meanings, and their constant reproduction and circulation via established kinds of speech, forms of representation, and in particular institutional settings. This is the point at which the concept of discourse began to supplant the now flabby and imprecise notion of 'language'. Unlike 'language', the term *discourse* itself is both a noun and a verb. So it is easier to retain the sense of discourse as an *act*, where the noun 'language' often seems to refer to a *thing*. In its established usages, discourse referred both to the interactive process and the end result of thought and communication. Discourse is the social process of making and reproducing sense(s).

Once taken up by structuralism, largely through the writings of Michel Foucault, the concept of discourse proved useful to represent both a very general theoretical notion and numbers of specific discourses.

The general theoretical notion is that while meaning can be generated only from the langue or abstract system of language, and while we can apprehend the world only through language systems, the fact remains that the resources of language-in-general are and always have been subjected to the historical developments and conflicts of social relations in general. In short, although langue may be abstract, meaning never is. Discourses are the product of social, historical and institutional formations, and meanings are produced by these institutionalised discourses. It follows that the potentially infinite senses any language system is capable of producing are always limited and fixed by the structure of social relations which prevails in a given time and place, and which is itself represented through various discourses.

Thus individuals don't simply learn languages as abstract skills. On the contrary, everyone is predated by established discourses in which various subjectivities are represented already - for instance, those of class, gender, nation, ethnicity, age, family and individuality. We establish and experience our own individuality by 'inhabiting' numbers of such discursive subjectivities (some of which confirm each other; others however coexist far from peacefully). The theory of discourse proposes that individuality itself is the site, as it were, on which socially produced and historically established discourses are reproduced and regulated.

Once the general theoretical notion of discourse has been achieved, attention turns to *specific discourses* in which socially established sense is encountered and contested. These range from media discourses like television and news, to institutionalised discourses like medicine, literature and science. Discourses are structured and interrelated; some are more prestigious than others, while there are discourses that have an

uphill struggle to win any recognition at all. Thus discourse are power relations. It follows that much of the social sense-making we're subjected to - in the media, at school, in conversation - is the working through of ideological struggle between discourses: a good contemporary example is that between patriarchy and (emergent, marginalised) feminism. Textual analysis can be employed to follow the moves in this struggle, by showing how particular texts take up elements of different discourse and articulate them (that is, 'knit them together').

However, though discourses may be traced in texts, and though texts may be the means by which discursive knowledges are circulated, established or suppressed, discourses are not themselves textual (Hartley, 1994a, pp.93-4).

Common sense.

A category of knowledge whose 'truth' is proposed as obvious, natural, inevitable, eternal, unarguable, and 'what we always/already know'. Hence, the political philosophy of non-political non-philosophers.

Historically, the concept of 'common sense' was used in radical polemics against the established official knowledges promoted by church or state. It was held to be a more compelling category of knowledge than traditional dogmas, and was based on the argument that if individual experience and belief contradicted the precepts of the Church, then the dictates of the individual experience should prevail. Hence it was a valuable rhetorical device in arguments which Protestants developed against the reactionary medieval Catholic Church, or political radicals used against the established secular state in the nineteenth century. For instance, the unequal distribution of wealth as

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between the sovereign, aristocracy and middle classes on the one hand, and the labourers and poor on the other, was represented as an offence against common sense in Chartist pamphleteering.

However, this example demonstrates that common sense has no 'contents' - it is a category not a repertoire. For in modern times the mass media in particular have colonized the concept, and use it to 'prove' that the unequal distribution of wealth is, far from being an offence against common sense, actually only explicable *as* common sense - that's the way things are, given other 'common sense' notions like 'human nature' (defined as greedy, competitive, untrustworthy, and so on).

Hence common sense is a site of social struggle; contending social groups seek to represent their way of looking at things as being commonsensical. To the extent that one group or 'bloc' succeeds in establishing itself as the source and repository of common sense, it is likely to be able to maintain its hegemony over other groups whose 'sense' is likely to appear as marginal, alien or even dangerous to those of 'us' who are endowed with the real thing (Hartley, 1994b, pp.49-50).

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Glossary

The aim of this glossary is to introduce the general reader to some of the key terms, central issues and musical genres found within contemporary dance culture.

Acid house

This phrase is used to describe both a cultural movement and a musical form. Acid house the music is a minimal form of house music that, more than any other form of house, emphasises perfectly sequenced 'four-to-the-floor' beats and invariably contains the sound of the Roland TB-303 bass sequencer. Fast Eddie's Acid Thunder (contained on the CD bound within the cover of this thesis) is a classic example. Acid house the cultural movement began life in London and Manchester in late 1987 and was initially based around small exclusive parties, but soon became synonymous with illegal raves held in a variety of locations throughout the country in 1988-1989. For a further analysis of acid house the cultural movement see Redhead (ed.) (1993a) and Rietveld (1998a).

Alcopops

Non-traditional alcoholic beverages which either taste of very little ('alcoholic water'), or mask their alcohol content with fruit flavourings (such as Hooch's 'alcoholic lemonade'). During 1997 more esoteric alcopops came onto the market, with, for example Speciality Brands marketing an alcoholic milk called 'Moo'. However, accusations that such drinks were particularly marketed to under-18s led the Portman Group (the alcohol industry's voluntary watchdog) to call for their withdrawal from sale (see Burell, 1997, and The Independent, 28 August 1997). 1998 saw the alcopop market move away from garish advertising images towards a more 'sophisticated' style of advertising and drink as epitomised by 'Bacardi Breezers' (white rum with fruit juice flavours).

Ambient/Ambient House

Drawing influence from artists such as Brian Eno, the Yellow Magic Orchestra, and Tangerine Dream, ambient music contains soothing natural noises such as bird song, whale speech, and other aquatic sounds, often laid over the top of a slow break beat or house rhythm.

Ambient music was largely ignored by the mainstream until the acid house and rave culture boom of the late 1980s. Whilst the main dance floors of most raves and acid house clubs invariably played house and acid house, it was in the 'chill-out rooms' of such clubs that ambient music could be found. Acclaimed records of this period included The KLF's <u>Chill Out</u> (1988), The Orb's <u>A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain that Rules From the Centre of the Ultraworld</u> (1989) and <u>Space</u> by Space, which was a collaboration between The KLF's Jimmy Cauty and The Orb's Alex Patterson, an ex-employee of EG (the record company that released Brian Eno's early ambient records). Whilst some ambient music of this period was implicitly connected with drug culture, The Orb's record made this connection explicit, with its cover sleeve claim to be "ambient house for the E generation".

During the early 1990s ambient music's popularity broadened beyond rave culture, although it remained popular with fans of dance music, and was often listened to after a night spent at a club or rave. The natural calming sounds of The KLF (visually symbolised by the photograph of sheep on the cover of <u>Chill Out</u>) became increasingly popular, and many ambient musicians recorded music that, like <u>Chill Out,</u> contained no beats at all.

The samples contained within this style led to criticisms that ambient music had become obsessed with 'new age' philosophy and green issues. Some artists began to reject the soporific nature of early ambient music in favour of a more abstract

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electronic sound. A good example of this move was The Aphex Twin's <u>Selected</u> <u>Ambient Works Volume Two</u> (1994), which moved away from the serenity of previous ambient music towards a more minimal electronic darkness.

The career of the seminal ambient act The Future Sound of London can also be seen as following the three phases outlined above. Whilst their first single <u>Papua New Guinea</u> (1992) contained natural sounds combined with a dominant house beat, their second single <u>Cascade</u> (1993) was a more dreamy atmospheric sound, whilst their second album <u>ISDN</u> (1995) was more disturbing and abstract.

One sub-genre that has developed within ambient music is ambient dub, which combines the slow rhythm of dub reggae music with the natural and synthesised sounds characteristic of ambient. Again The Orb have been at the forefront of this development with their track <u>Towers of Dub</u>. Following on from this development has been the rise of a hybrid genre entitled ambient jungle. Ambient jungle takes on board the frenetic percussion of jungle, but avoids its aggressiveness through the creative use of strings, 'pads' and natural sounds. Artists working within this field include T-Power, LTJ Bukem, Alex Reece and Jacob's Optical Stairway.

Bootleg

A record that either contains 'uncleared' samples, or is an illegal pressing of a previously published record. For an examination of bootlegs and copyright see Rietveld, 1998a, chapter 6.

B.P.M.

Beats Per Minute.

Cheese/cheesy

Either overly commercial or kitsch.

Chill Out/Chilling

Originally this phrase referred to the practice of either taking a break from dancing in a club or rave (in a 'chill out room'), or resting with others after a dance event (invariably with the aid of cannabis reefers). In the late 1990s this phrase has a cultural currency outside contemporary dance culture, and refers to passing time in a relaxed and restful manner (for example sunbathing could now be described as 'chilling out').

Club Culture

The main precursor to the contemporary nightclub was the fifties' coffee bar. Invariably containing a jukebox full of rock and roll records, the coffee bar became a meeting place for young people in the evenings and at weekends. The first 'proper' clubs drew upon a similar clientele. Containing little more than a simple record player, these clubs became the focus point for emergent youth 'subcultures' such as mods and teds.

As the 'R&B' boom of the early 1960s gathered pace, the ballrooms of the previous generation became venues for dancing to pop and rock and roll music. Of particular importance were those venues in the North of England that played the latest soul music imported from America. 'Northern soul' clubs such as The Wigan Casino and The Twisted Wheel in Manchester attracted a clientele who took their dancing very seriously. Often arriving with several changes of clothes, the dancers remained dancing throughout the night until as late as 8 a.m. Legend has it that the air at The Wigan Casino was thick with the smell of liniment and talcum powder, the former used to prevent muscle-strain, and the latter used to prevent the floor from becoming sticky,

and thus enabling dancers to spin around on at rapid speeds. Some establishment figures expressed concern at the burgeoning drug culture of the club scene in general, and there is certainly evidence to suggest that amphetamines and other stimulants were used to facilitate all-night dancing.

As pop and rock music became increasingly popular throughout the 1960s, so more clubs were developed. Of particular importance was the rise of the Tamla Motown label whose roster included The Supremes, The Temptations and The Four Tops. It was during this period that a split developed between those venues that employed a band to provide a musical accompaniment to dancing, and those venues who merely played records. The former type of venue has developed into the modern rock venue of today, whilst the latter has developed into what we now generally considered to be a club, a place that plays records and is licensed for dancing. This split has developed into the divide between dance music and rock music that continues to this day.

The early 1970s saw the development of a specific style of club known as the disco or discotheque. Discos subsequently became the dominant form of nightclub in Britain, although specialist clubs that played music drawn from rock genres remained popular. The disco emphasised the other-worldly nature of the club experience, with their disorientating lights, elegant surroundings, and a glamorous clientele. These clubs played soul and the emergent musical form of disco, a form of electronic dance music that emphasised its 'artificial' nature. It was during this period that the role of the club DJ became particularly important, with some DJs commanding considerable fees for their ability to transform recorded music through the usage of technology and through mixing two or three records together.

Whilst the disco was the dominant form of club until the mid 1980s, there were exceptions to this rule. The punk rock explosion of the mid 1970s led to the opening of punk clubs in London such as The Roxy and The 100 Club. Spurred on by these developments, punk fans from other cities developed their own scenes. Clubs such as

Eric's in Liverpool were a meeting point for the new generation of musicians who were to become the famous stars of the 1980s. As punk developed into 'new wave', the distinction between dance music and rock music was temporarily blurred by the experimental music of British bands such as The Human League, Depeche Mode and New Order.

The arrival of house music in Britain in 1987 led to the birth of the British club culture that we see today. In particular the birth of acid house is seen as a defining moment. Legend has it that the British house club boom was started by a handful of working-class holiday makers who had been clubbing in Ibiza and decided to attempt to replicate the experience during the winter of 1987/8. 'Balearic' clubs such as Shoom in London became increasingly popular. It was around this time that the drug Ecstasy was first widely used in Britain.

Although initially centred on London, the acid house scene soon developed elsewhere in the country. Of pivotal importance was The Haçienda club in Manchester, with its resident DJs Mike Pickering and Graeme Park playing American house records to an enthusiastic crowd. As the acid house scene grew, it became apparent that a new type of nightclub was needed. The old discos were perceived to have lost their vitality, and the atmosphere in discos was often spoilt by alcohol-fuelled violence. In the search for new venues, acid house promoters began to use green-field sites, disused warehouses and industrial buildings. This is the origin of raves.

As legislation was brought in to outlaw unlicensed raves, more and more venues were built to accommodate house culture's move back indoors. The important clubs of the early 1990s were Quadrant Park in Liverpool, Eclipse in Coventry (the first house club to obtain an all-night dancing license), and Shelly's in Stoke-on-Trent. The early-1990s' explosion in clubs has been fuelled by an explosion in dance music itself, with a bewildering array of sub-genres entering into the lexicon of contemporary youth culture.

Modern clubs are more popular than ever before. Containing a bewildering array of sound and lighting technologies, they are perceived to be places where young people can escape from the harsh realities of contemporary life and spend a few hours dancing. Most modern clubs are connected to a specific style of dance music such as techno or jungle, and employ 'guest DJs', valued for their musical knowledge and technical skills, and who can command thousands of pounds for a few hours work. Also central to the modern club is the resident DJ who can attract a regular clientele who will visit the club every week.

Darkcore/Darkside

A musical precursor of jungle in 1992-3 which emphasised 'dark' or 'moody' chords, aggressive or upsetting sampled lyrics, and a rough sampled break beat.

Drug Culture

British drug culture has its origins in the youth subcultures of the 1950s and 1960s. Whilst some aficionados of jazz smoked cannabis in order to enhance their enjoyment of music, it was the 'mod' scene of the early 1960s that heralded large-scale drug consumption. In particular mods used a variety of legal and illegal drugs to facilitate all-night dancing at mod and Northern soul clubs. Whilst mainstream opinion suggested that drug usage led to dependence, many mods found that they could use drugs recreationally at weekends, with few side effects. However many mods found themselves in difficulty due to the physically addictive nature of the 'uppers' that they consumed. This mirrored problems connected to many prescribed drugs at the time, in that doctors were prescribing amphetamine-based compounds for a variety of illnesses including narcolepsy, obesity and respiratory complaints. 'Amphetamine psychosis' and other unpleasant side effects led to a decrease in the popularity of these stimulants.

As the mod phenomenon declined in popularity a new youth culture took its place. Within hippy culture, drugs were a central element of the hippy lifestyle. Whereas for mods the use of drugs was functional, in that it allowed them to dance for longer than they had previously been able to, the use of drugs by hippies was connected to their political values. Whereas mod culture was a culture of the 'weekender', and most mods held down steady jobs, hippies rejected what they perceived to be the materialism of western culture. In particular hippies took hallucinogenics such as LSD as part of their rejection of the 'work ethic' central to mainstream British culture.

Although LSD does not lead to dependence in the same way as many stimulants, it is nevertheless a powerful drug that produces visual and other sensory distortions. In a sense the hippies created what was the first proper 'drug culture', in that the consumption of hallucinogenics was central to the everyday lifestyle of the hippy. Many of the media texts that hippy culture spawned were connected to the consumption of LSD. In particular The Beatles' album Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band is said to have been influenced by John Lennon and Paul McCartney's experimentation with LSD. This connection is made explicit on the track 'Day in the Life' with its lyric of "I'd love to turn you on".

As with mod culture, hippy culture suffered problems that were directly connected to drug usage. Although LSD has few physical side effects, it has a disturbing power to alter the mind. Many hippies never mentally recovered from their heavy LSD usage. There were some famous casualties, for instance the singer Syd Barrett left the band Pink Floyd as a result of psychiatric problems, and has never fully recovered.

As the hippy dream lost its potency, so British drug culture declined in popularity. The early 1970s are not connected with any specific drug. Although amphetamines, LSD, cannabis and increasingly heroin were used by many people, a culture did not spring from their usage. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, at the time, many young people

were opposed to drug usage, perceiving it to be 'old-fashioned' and connected to delinquency.

This changed with the punk rock explosion of the mid 1970s. The aggressive nature of many punks led them to taking amphetamines at punk clubs and concerts. Amphetamine sulphate and other amphetamine derivatives appeared to be ideal drugs for many punks. In particular amphetamines led to aggression, perceived to be a desirable state of affairs by many punks. Central to the punk ethos was a desire for 'speed' and alertness, a violent opposition to 'the establishment', and a decadent rejection of 'mainstream' values. This led many punks to be attracted to drug misuse. Again there were casualties. Solvent abuse in the form of glue sniffing took many young lives. Poly-drug use, the use of more than one drug at any one time, led to other fatalities, including that of Sid Vicious, a leading punk musician with The Sex Pistols.

Towards the end of the 1970s rising unemployment led to a widespread disillusionment within youth culture. With no likelihood of paid employment, and with right-wing attacks on 'benefit scroungers', many young people perceived themselves as having no place in British society. This led to an increase in heroin consumption in the early 1980s. Heroin is a different drug to cannabis and LSD in that it is very addictive, and users suffer severe withdrawal symptoms if they are unable to obtain the drug. Whereas amphetamines and, to a lesser extent LSD, can make the drug user outgoing and more communicative, heroin use leads to the individual withdrawing from the world around them. The heroin culture of the 1980s was particularly insular, whilst impurities in illegally imported heroin led to many fatalities.

The widespread drug culture of today has its roots in the shift in drug usage in the late 1980s. In particular rave culture has been credited with a general shift in drug culture away from physically addictive 'hard' drugs such as heroin towards the use of 'soft' drugs such as Ecstasy and cannabis. Whereas previously drug usage was perceived to be rebellious, anti-social and immoral, contemporary youth culture holds different

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views. Recent research has shown that up to 50% of young people in certain areas have tried an illegal drug at least once, and some figures suggest that up to 3 million young people use drugs such as Ecstasy. Indeed perhaps contemporary youth culture is not as different to mod culture as may initially appear. The use of Ecstasy and cannabis are said to enhance music and to enable dancing for long periods of time, whilst not affecting the users' ability to maintain steady employment and function as a 'normal' member of society. However, these views are not held by the medical establishment, who suggest that the long-term effects of consuming amphetamines, Ecstasy and cannabis are by no means clear. Whilst some have predicted a softening in societies' attitudes to drug consumption, these medical uncertainties mean that those drugs that are currently illegal will remain so.

Ecstasy

Originally (late 1980s) MDMA, in the 1990s Ecstasy was used to refer to any pill allegedly containing MDMA or any other MDA derivative. MDMA is both an empathogen, in that it increases the users' empathy for others, and an 'entactogen', making "the skin subtly sensitive, creating a higher sense of tactility" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.181) .

EQ

To 'equalise' a piece of music, altering the relative volumes of specific frequency bands.

Four-to-the-floor

This refers to music with a 4/4 time signature that contains a perfectly sequenced kick drum on all four beats of the bar.

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Gabber

Also spelt gabba. A form of 'four-to-the-floor' house music originating in the Netherlands running at speeds of over 150 b.p.m. with aggressive and violent lyrics, and harsh keyboard 'stabs'. Rietveld describes the genre as comparable "to hardcore punk: easy to make at home, purely technological, rough and very energetic because of its high tempo" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.86). For an extended analysis of the Dutch gabber scene see Rietveld, 1998a, pp.69-98.

Garage

Originally referring to the music played at the Paradise Garage in New York, Garage now refers to a more soulful and melodic version of house music with female or gospel-oriented vocals.

Goa Trance

Original based in the beach party scene in India, the Goa Trance scene is now international. Goa Trance parties invariably feature visual imagery from Buddhist and other Eastern religions (aided by fluorescent lighting effects), and a form of lighter and sparser trance music (see below).

Gurning

The involuntary stretching of the facial muscles, caused by the use of Ecstasy and other amphetamine derivatives.

Handbag House

A popular and populist form of house music that emphasises a more traditional song format, and usually features female vocals and long snare rolls.

Happycore/4 Beat

A hybrid of happy hardcore and gabber.

Happy Hardcore

A lighter more melodic form of hardcore that frequently contains vocal samples from 1980s pop and soft rock records. The percussion track of happy hardcore records are more often than not sampled break beats (see jungle below).

Hardcore

An aggressive form of techno music that prioritises a fast and drug-induced aesthetic. Hardcore is the favoured music played at British raves.

House

House music was originally developed in the early 1980s by American musicians and DJs such as Frankie Knuckles, Farley Keith, DJ Pierre and Chip-E. Initially house drew influence from up-tempo 'R&B' and Salsoul. In particular house DJs took records from these genres and 'remixed' them; re-editing them for dance floor consumption, and adding percussion from newly developed drum machines. In particular the American gay scene championed house as 'its music', and clubs such as The Sound Factory in New York and Chicago clubs such as The Power Plant and The Gallery 21 became

focal points. The term house itself is an abbreviation of the name of The Warehouse club in Chicago, and was used by local record shops to describe the music played there.

British dance culture imported house music in the late 1980s. Influenced by the style of house music played in Ibizan clubs during the summer of 1987, a generation of new DJs and musicians returned from their holidays and set about attempting to recreate the Ibiza club experience back in the United Kingdom. The clubs of the late 1980s that were playing house music included The Haçienda in Manchester, and Spectrum and Shoom in London.

As the influence of house music has spread, it has taken over from disco as the dominant form of British dance music. In musical terms, house can be described as an electronic dance music based on a strict 4/4 time signature, with a sequenced 'kick' drum on all 4 crotchet of each bar, at speeds of around 120-130 beats per minute. Melody and vocals are used to break up repetition.

Like contemporary techno (see below), there are now a myriad of different styles of house[12]. The sub-genre of 'handbag house' appears to be particularly popular on British dance floors. Dance culture's usage of the word 'handbag' started life as a derogatory term for clubs where women danced round their handbags. However, since 1993 it has been used to describe house music that has prominent female vocals, 'break downs' (where the kick drum stops, and the track 'breaks down', to be built up again), and a proliferation of piano 'stabs'. 'Hard house' is the term used to describe house music with a more aggressive feel to it, and some hard house of the mid 1990s is

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[12] Rietveld draws some of the musical genres that I have listed in this glossary under an overarching banner of house, suggesting that "categories like rave, techno and trance house mainly share with house a use of similar technologies, DJ techniques, the characteristic of a 4/4 beat at 125 bpm or over as well as their places of consumption" (Rietveld, 1998a, p.26). However, recent developments mean that Rietveld's definition excludes jungle and the (re)emergence of break beat forms in the mid-1990s, and this is why I have used the joint terms of contemporary dance music and contemporary dance culture.

virtually indistinguishable from techno. Other sub-genres popular on British dance floors include the grand orchestral arrangements of 'epic house', the Latin rhythms of Italian house, and the gospel and vocal emphases of 'garage house', named after the Paradise Garage club in New York.

Within dance culture, it is frequently the DJs who become more famous than the musicians themselves. The suggestion is that British house DJs such as Sasha, Danny Rampling and Jeremy Healy are the 1990s equivalent to the rock star. House music fans also have affinities with particular clubs, and often travel hundreds of miles to visit their favourite club. Popular house clubs in Britain at the moment include The Ministry of Sound in London, Wobble in Birmingham, and Cream in Liverpool.

Jungle/Drum and Bass

A British musical genre that developed out of the 'hardcore' music played at British raves. Jungle (or in its more minimal and discursively 'white' form of drum and bass) eschews the 'four-to-the-floor' beat emphasis of house and techno, favouring 'break beats' either sampled from old funk and hip-hop records, or programmed through the use of software such as Steinberg's Cubase. A typical jungle track consists of a frenetic high-hat percussion track at around 320 beats per minute, a second percussion track at around 160 beats per minute, and an irregular and shifting bass-line at around 80 beats per minute. Jungle has become the dominant form of 'inner-city music' within British society, and it is often suggested that jungle is the first black British musical genre.

Mix

'To mix' is to mix two or three records together through the use of two or more turntables and an electronic mixer.

Ragga

A hybrid musical sub-genre that takes the deep bass-lines of Jamaican reggae and dub reggae and combines them with the break beats and aggressive vocals of American hip-hop. From the phrase 'raggamuffin'.

Rap/Hip-H op

A musical genre originating from the United States, that contains sampled break beats and distinctive vocals. Originally termed rap, this musical genre was initially premised on its overtly-political lyrics, although in its fifteen-year history there have been a variety of sub-genres including 'gangsta rap' and 'daisy-age rap'. The most well-known political rap act is Public Enemy, whose late-1980s' albums are considered to milestones both in terms of their musical structure, and in terms of the uncompromising message that they sent to urban blacks in the US. An example of 'daisy-age rap' (a more melodic and psychedelic form) is De La Soul's Three Feet High and Rising album, whilst an example of a 'gangsta rap' (a controversially violent and misanthropic form) is the group NWA (Niggaz With Attitude).

Raves

Raves have their origin in the 'second summer of love' in 1988. Initially held in the North of England in disused Victorian mills and warehouses, and on green-field sites within the M25 motorway surrounding London, raves were all-night parties at which was played a mixture house, acid house, techno, disco and hip-hop. Early raves were characterised by the easy-going nature of those who attended. However, the use of Ecstasy at these parties meant that they attracted the attention of both drug dealers and the police. In order to prevent a rave being shut down, organisers opened up special telephone lines for ravers to ring on the night of an event for information as to the time

and location of the rave. Often convoys of ravers would form on the M25 and those roads heading towards towns in Lancashire and Cheshire.

Police objections to raves initially led to mass arrests, and in 1990 to the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act. This legislation meant that 'unofficial' raves and parties were outlawed. As a consequence of this rave organisers hired nightclubs and outdoor venues for raves. Clubs such as Quadrant Park in Liverpool, The Haçienda in Manchester, and Shelly's in Stoke-on-Trent were at the forefront of these developments. Whilst the music of early raves was an eclectic mix of styles, the early 1990s saw the arrival of 'hardcore' rave music, a more aggressive form of dance music characterised by high-pitched female vocals, fast beats and 'hoover' noises. Some more commercially oriented rave records reached the official top 40, for instance N-Joi's Anthem and The Prodigy's Charly.

The rave scene of the mid 1990s is a very different one to that of the late 1980s. Outdoor raves are now extremely lucrative events that attract a younger crowd than the 'semi-legal' events of the 1980s. Organisers such as United Dance, Evolution, and Dreamscape hold all-night events attended by up to 25,000 ravers who are often prepared to travel hundreds of miles to attend such events. The music played at the raves of the mid 1990s is gabber, happy hardcore and jungle.

Despite the commercialisation of rave in the early 1990s, some promoters continue to organise illegal raves. 'Sound systems' such as Desert Storm, Sativa, Exodus and DiY organise secret parties at secluded country locations. Information about such parties is usually spread by word of mouth, or occasionally through the internet. People who attend such events are usually older than those at legal raves.

Ravers

Those who attend raves. Ravers often wear fluorescent clothing, white gloves and carry luminous 'glow sticks' that are waved whilst dancing. The rave scene appears to be more popular in Scotland than in the rest of the United Kingdom, with organisers such as Rezerection frequently selling out massive venues. The clubs at the forefront of English rave culture include The Drome in Merseyside and Kinetic in Stoke-on-Trent. Whilst there has been some concern about the growing drug culture associated with raves, drug usage at raves appears to be no greater than at discos and other clubs.

Remix

To take a piece of music and alter its sound and structure through the use of computer technology in order to produce a different, yet similar, track. A remix is often completed by a band or DJ who did not originally produce the track. Remixes are often seen by major record labels as a way of increasing the 'underground credibility' of an established 'mainstream' artist.

Rushing

A sudden rush of energy and euphoria caused, generally, by an amphetamine derivative.

Sample/Sampler

To record a snatch of music, store it in computer memory or disk, edit it, and replay it back. So, for example, a kick drum sound found on one record, and a keyboard 'riff' on another, will be sampled and used as the backbone of a new track.

Speed

Any amphetamine derivative, but usually refers to amphetamine sulphate.

Superclubs

Any of the major British clubs. This phrase originating during the time specific British club promoters began to organise 'club tours' (visiting other venues with DJs and visual artists in tows), and sell clothing, records, and other dance cultural paraphernalia (with their club logo prominently displayed).

Techno

A form of electronic music that has its origins in house music. Whilst the gay club scene of Chicago developed the distinctive 4/4 beat of house music, it was Detroit who took this blueprint and developed a harder more electronic music that became known as techno. It was the development of 'MIDI', a way of connecting synthesisers, samplers and computers, that enabled the genre of techno to be developed.

The musicians Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson are credited with developing the techno sound, although bands such as Tangerine Dream, Parliament, Depeche Mode, Can, and in particular Kraftwerk, are said to be central influences. Techno eschews the melody and vocals of house music, whilst emphasising synthesised artificial sounds. Whilst house music continues to draw influence from genres such as soul, funk and jazz, techno is perceived to be more of a 'pure' genre based around a strict technological aesthetic. Connected to this aesthetic are developments in computer graphics and the computer network known as the internet. Many techno acts incorporate these new technologies into their live performances, with, for instance, bands such as The Grid using sound-generated computer graphics as a visual accompaniment to their music.

The music played in British techno clubs is particularly diverse, although British DJs often become known for playing one particular style of techno. At one end of the spectrum is 'hardcore', an aggressive techno sub-genre that reaches the improbable tempo of 200 beats per minute. This form of techno is particularly popular at raves. At the other end of the spectrum is a techno more akin to ambient music, with slow beats, and gentle harmonies. In-between these two extremes lie a bewildering array of sub-genres that often originate from a particular city, region or country. Within the American techno that is popular in Britain, the sound of Chicago is based on a heavily rhythmic percussion, whilst Detroit techno has a raw, minimal feel. Dutch techno, or gabber, is popular in Scotland, and is renowned for its speed and the violent imagery of its lyrics. Techno from Germany, Israel and Goa is particularly popular in London trance clubs such as Return to the Source. British-produced techno appears to draw influence from a variety of global sources. Artists such as Dave Clarke appear to be highly influenced by the original Detroit sound, whilst bands such as Orbital and Underworld have an affinity with European trance.

In Britain at the moment techno is generally played at either large outdoor raves or in small specialist clubs. Those clubs at the forefront of the British techno scene include Voodoo in Liverpool, Bugged Out in Manchester, Beyond The Final Frontier in London and Pure in Edinburgh.

Trainspotting/Trainspotters

Avid music fans who, as legend would have it, memorise the catalogue numbers of their favourite tracks.

Trance

A highly synthesised form of techno music that emphasises layers of keyboard sounds and contains few lyrics. Often contains sounds originally produced by 1970s' analogue synthesisers. For a more detailed examination see Whiteley, 1997, pp.141-2 (also see definition of techno above).

White Label

Originally a test-pressing of a record, *now any small-scale* pressing of a record that avoids the expense of providing cover art or a printed label in the middle of the record.

303

The Roland TB-303 bass sequencer that produced acid house's trademark bass 'squelch'.

909

The Roland TR-909 drum machine. The dominant drum sound of contemporary house and techno.

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Appendix 7

Copy of Metcalfe, S. (1997) 'Ecstasy Evangelists and Psychedelic Warriors' in Melechi (ed.) (1997), pp.166-184.

Note: In 1996 Antonio Melechi asked me to provide a contribution towards a collection of essays that he was editing on drug use within 20th century British society. The following essay, published under the pseudonym of Stuart Metcalfe, contains some of the research data also found in the main body of my thesis, but comes to a radically different conclusion. It is hoped that the reader is aware that opinions can change over time, and that one person can hold contradictory views. Part of the reason for publishing this essay under a pseudonym was to enable myself to take a polemical view towards the possibly negative effects of drug use in contemporary dance culture. This essay should therefore not be considered to be a substantive part of my thesis, and the reason for its inclusion here is the stipulation contained within Liverpool John Moores University research degree regulations that "copies of published material should either be bound in with the thesis or placed in an adequately secured pocket at the end of the thesis".

PSYCHEDELIC WARRIORS AND ECSTASY EVANGELISTS

Stuart Metcalfe

The aim of this essay is to map the route that the psychedelic Amphetamine Ecstasy (3,4 Methylenedioxymethamphetamine or MDMA) has taken on its journey from being an obscure slimming aid and under-used psychoanalysts' tool to being the most talked about 'recreational' drug of the 1990s. In doing so, this essay explains why Ecstasy is the drug of choice for British youth, and why the histories of British House music and Ecstasy are inseparable.

The seemingly unstoppable rise of Ecstasy in Britain can be traced back to the summer of 1987 and the west Mediterranean tourist resort of Ibiza. In this Spanish island lie the genealogical roots of the musical culture of 'Acid House', where, in nightclubs such as Pasha and Amnesia, British holiday-makers first experienced the heady combination of Ecstasy and electronic dance music. Influenced by their summertime psychedelic experimentations, an exclusive coterie of upwardly-mobile working-class clubbers took their memories home and attempted to recreate their ecstatic summer holidays in London nightclubs such as Shoom and Future. 'E' culture was being born, and born to illustrious parents at that, with many of the

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budding music entrepreneurs of this small drug-orientated scene becoming the superstars of contemporary British House music. The likes of Paul Oakenfold and Danny Rampling, pivotal figures in the fledgling scene of 1987, now regularly command huge sums for their DJing and production skills.

As this Ecstasy-based club culture grew, it became attached to a musical style that directly referenced its Iberian origins; the aptly named 'Balearic Beat'. Attempts at defining this genre in musical terms have since proved difficult. This is because the phrase 'Balearic' was used to describe not a specific musical style, but a musical eclecticism and an experimentation that drew upon British Indie music, American Hip-Hop, and Chicago-based House music. Whilst mainstream British pop culture was stagnating amidst a plethora of mutually antagonistic and segregated musical genres, Acid House and the Balearic style signalled that the modernist/postmodern collage aesthetic was here to stay, and that popular music was about to make a great leap forward.

Technological advances within music production had gathered pace throughout the 1980s, and by 1987 the previously rigid boundaries between musical production and consumption were starting to disintegrate. Centred within this development was a new lease of life for the club DJ. Unlike his traditional British counterpart, the Balearic DJ did not merely play one record after another, interspersing the mix with inane banter, but was required to mix two or three records together at the same time, creating a unique collage of sounds and rhythms. With an impressive degree of manual dexterity, the best DJs would perform all manner of turntable tricks, turning a box of records into more than the sum of its parts, providing a complex soundtrack for a night of dancing.

After the Acid House winter of 1987, the so-called 'Second Summer of Love' of 1988 was a magnificent musical heyday that broke down the sterile divisions between musical genres. A significant facet of early rave culture was its success in weakening established gender, race and class barriers. These changes were symbolically reflected in a shift in the dress codes of British youth. In came casual sports wear that had only previously been championed by a football-attending urban underclass. Crucially, this newly popularised style of clothing excluded no-one. The 'baggy' clothing style as worn by Mancunian groups such as The Happy Mondays became increasingly popular, with both men and women sporting dungarees, loose fitting t-shirts and floppy hats. Dance culture was turning its back

upon its previous incarnation as a space where sexual partners were sought after. In a mass refusal of sexuality, previous dress codes were abandoned, and the message was dress not to impress, but simply to sweat.

This second Summer of Love saw British youth using Ecstasy to enhance the rave experience; enriching the sensation of dancing to an eclectic soundtrack, and providing what Steve Redhead termed 'a politics of pleasure, a hedonism (in hard times) – a pleasure for its own sake in times when moral regulation of youth [was] pervasive and deep economic recession [was] rife'.[1] Whilst the Acid House culture of the winter of 1987 drew some influence from the use of Ecstasy and other psychedelics, such drugs were not seen as essential to enjoyment of the scene, and most ravers viewed Ecstasy use as a relatively harmless form of escapism, a way of mentally recovering from the rigours of recession-hit Britain.

By the summer of 1988 Ecstasy use had mushroomed, and elements within rave culture declared that British youth would pick up the psychedelic mantle of 1967 and once again rock society's foundations. A new form of Psychedelic Warrior was born; drawing influence from the role LSD was alleged to have taken in the political changes in the late 1960s, the Ecstasy Evangelists set about their attempt to help history repeat itself, but with Ecstasy instead of LSD as its spiritual fuel.

Spurred on by the liberatory possibilities that Acid House culture had glimpsed, Ecstasy-consuming dancers with a few hundred pounds in the bank could invest in twin record decks and a mixer; thereby creating their own musical creations, turning the DJ into what Grandmaster Flash has called 'the human sampler'. Equally, the experience of Acid House meant that many were inspired to purchase cheap sampling and sequencing equipment, and began to make their own records.

In doing so, Ecstasy-consuming musicians began to pay close attention to one specific psychopharmacological property of Ecstasy,[2] namely its ability to encourage repetitive behaviour by stimulating the 1b receptor in the brain. Add Ecstasy to the sequenced kick drum crotchet beat of House (and its 1990s Techno variant) and you have a dance floor full of Ecstasy consumers who appear to have entirely synchronised their bodies to the music. Many of these new Ecstasy Evangelists suggested that, as well as permanently changing gender, class and racial boundaries, Ecstasy use had led to the discovery of the part of the brain that makes the *Homo sapiens*

species want to dance.

The psychedelic missionaries had found a drug that directly matched the formal properties of sequenced House music, a drug that 'fitted' a musical genre as a hand fits a glove. Slowly but surely the Balearic spirit was abandoned, out went the hip-hop influences, with their 'awkward' emphases on the first two beats of the bar, and out went any rock influences that disrupted the beat. In came a form of perfectly-sequenced 'four to the floor' British House that appeared to liberate music from the stifling restrictions of the male-dominated music scene.

Another psychopharmacological property of Ecstasy is that it acts as an empathogen, encouraging the user to 'enter' and understand the feelings of others. As a result of this rave culture began a phase where the pop audience, previously used to facing forwards at concerts and 'worshipping' the live band and lead singer, turned to each other and indulged in an Ecstasy-inspired embrace. The rave scene developed a makeshift verb to describe the intense emotional bonds formed by E consuming dancers: 'loved up'. The Evangelists suggested that Ecstasy, combined with a computer technology that threatened to remove the egotistical lead signer and 'cock rock' guitarist from the musical equation, had broken the divide between audience and 'star'. The dancer was as much a star at a rave event as the DJ or stage-bound performer. Mirroring this development was the DIY ethic whereby collectives of 'faceless' DJs and musicians played music to a scene that was not interested in who they were, merely the rhythms that they produced. The suggestion was that rave culture had found a drug that simply made things better; music, dancing, sex, and life in general were to be transformed if only enough people could be persuaded to imbibe Ecstasy, and experience its heady cocktail of effects.

The empathogenic qualities of Ecstasy led to suggestions that E could, and would, irrevocably alter the consciousness of British youth culture. According to some, Acid House and rave culture signalled the dawn of a new post-capitalist age of communal co-operation, or alternatively the revival of a pre-historical shamanic order. The Ecstasy Evangelists were gaining strength, prescribing psychedelic drugs as the be-all and end-all of youth culture, as a cure for everything from moral authoritarianism to football hooliganism.

Whilst on their journey to the new Enlightenment, the Evangelists dismissed any warning signs that suggested that all was not as it

should be in the Acid House garden of Eden. Overlooking the Thatcherite entrepreneurial talents of the very drug-dealers who supplied them with their E, and ignoring an influx of 'Acid Teds' (working-class hedonists who held the ideals of Acid House in disdain), the Ecstasy crusaders saw Acid House as a greed-free culture, a blueprint upon which to build their utopian dreams. British society had, at last, found a way out of its late-twentieth century malaise. Amidst these pipe dreams, the Evangelists ignored the central reasons which led to the demise of the hippy 1960s, which crashed down around them at the tragedy of Altamont.

For those intent upon spreading the E word, the next step towards the psychedelic revolution was the production of music that overtly encouraged the use of psychedelic drugs. For these initiates the 'white-label' 12 inch record, pressed up by individuals and sold in small quantities to record shops or out of the back of a van, could bypass the traditional moral regulators; the government, record companies and global capitalism. There was rash of individuals and groups releasing their own Ecstasy-inspired records, and the loved up vibe continued through 1989 and into 1990. One typical example of an Ecstasy-inspired record from this period is the white-label 12 inch produced by the Liverpudlian group Mind, Body and Soul. Whilst the band's name referred to a brand of LSD particularly popular in Liverpool in the late 1980s, the song, a version of Jefferson Airplane's psychedelic anthem 'White Rabbit', sampled the Acid guru Timothy Leary's call to arms 'Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out', prefacing it with a sampled voice saying simply 'Ecstasy'. The track also includd a spoken reading of the rhyme sent by the English psychiatrist Humphrey Osmond to Aldous Huxley in 1955 that suggested a name for the group of drugs that both had been experimenting with: 'to fathom hell or soar angelic, just take a pinch of psychedelic'.3

The comparisons were obvious the second psychedelic wave was upon us. As it was in the 1960s, it would be the job of musicians to go forth and proclaim the truth to the world. During the first period of mass psychedelic drug use it was Tim Leary himself who emphasised pop music's role in spreading the word about LSD; writing in 1967 Leary suggested that 'I've dropped out completely myself. I'm already an anachronism in the LSD movement anyway. The Beatles have taken my place. That latest album – a complete celebration of LSD' (Leary, 1967). Leary went on to rename The Beatles 'the Four Evangelists'. For the likes of Mind, Body and Soul, the 1960s were

alive and well, and the lesson to be learnt was a simple one; drop an E, take Acid, and everything was going to be all right.

May 1990 saw the same story being told in Manchester, with Factory Records latest signing Northside offering up a paean to LSD with the track 'Shall We Take A Trip'. Again, direct connections were made within the song's lyrics to the 1960s psychedelic revolution, and the whole tone of the piece echoed the somewhat naïve attitudes of the original tripsters:

L, S, D
Shall we take a trip down memory lane?
Head in the clouds into the Acid rain
time means nothing, I can smell the trees
chase that rainbow in the summer breeze

(©Factory Records)

There are many examples from this period of the proselytising zeal of the new Psychedelic Warriors, with one of the more humorous being the controversial behaviour of the British deputation to the New Music Seminar, in New York in 1990. Keith Allen, an anarchic British comedian, introduced himself to a perplexed audience of American music bosses as 'Dr' Keith Allen of the Post-Freudian Therapy Centre in Geneva and a world expert on drugs:

the basic psychology was in 1987 in a club called Schoom [sic], I had a load of Ecstasy topped off with a little amyl-nitrate [a stimulant famed for its ability to enhance sexual arousal]... and I would give people one of these tablets and they would give me £20. That's psychology!4

Attempting to get the seminar onto a more intellectual footing, Tony Wilson, boss of Factory Records and part owner of The Hacienda nightclub in Manchester explained the grip that Ecstasy was beginning to hold on British music:

if you're a rock group and you cannot play rock music in the style to which you can dance and with the rhythms that have come out of America but have been ignored here, then you aren't a rock group that matters... I went into my club, The Hacienda two weeks ago and one-and-a-half thousand 18-year-old kids were going mental,

dancing like crazy to Northside, to Mondays, to Marshall Jefferson, to Derrick May, to Pink Floyd, to The Beatles... I've never seen anything like it in my life and I felt old for the first time. The wave is that strong.[5]

If Ecstasy and dancing were to change the world, the psychedelic warriors would require DJs who were able to maintain a continuity of tempo and rhythm throughout the night, so that there was no interruption in the beat that would interfere with the Ecstasy high (a drop in tempo brings the E user down from their trip, a drop in intensity that allows the light of reality to shine on the dance floor).

The demand for continual 4/4 House music throughout the early 1990s meant that dance music's relationship with Ecstasy fundamentally altered. Whereas for most ravers Ecstasy was perceived to be an added bonus to the liberatory atmosphere in clubs and at raves, for the Evangelists it became an essential ingredient of an average night out. Whereas Ecstasy was previously used to enhance the sounds and textures of dance music, the situation reversed, the continuous DJ set was used by Ecstasy consumers to heighten their weekend drug trip. The increasing status of both the DJ and Ecstasy itself led to the pivotal importance of the 'DJ remix', a version of a dance track that emphasises sequenced beats exactly on the bar, thus enabling the DJ to complete a seamless switch between records. Gradually the Balearic spirit of adventure was muted, and DJ sets began to resemble a gradual and inevitable journey towards the peak of the Ecstasy consumers' trip. As more Ecstasy was consumed, the demand for, and eventual supply of, Ecstasy-inspired music grew and grew.

As Ecstasy consumers became Ecstasy Evangelists, and as more and more Evangelists became DJs and musicians, the situation arose whereby Ecstasy-influenced producers were making music solely for Ecstasy consumers. Experimentation was squeezed out of the scene, leading to a dance music that was directly derived from the psychopharmacological properties of Ecstasy, a music that facilitated the much talked about 'trance dancing' that the Ecstasy-consuming elite saw as the first step to the New Age. Whereas Tabloid scare stories emphasised the supposedly sexual hedonism of E-inspired British dance culture, the Evangelists suggested that the Ecstasy experience went beyond mere pleasure and sensuality, beyond the weekend thrill. Ecstasy could and would change the world.

In 1990 bands with an unashamedly 'rock' past, bands who had previously traded upon a macho image (such as Pop Will Eat Itself and Primal Scream), scrambled onto the bandwagon, eager for a piece of the action. The Soup Dragons, previously a group allied to the British indie guitar scene, had a summer hit with the dance track 'I'm Free', and summed up the prevailing mood:

I'm free
to do what I want
any of the time,
because I love you, need you,
love you, need you
because I'm free

(©Raw TV Products)

It was that simple, no effort was needed. Whereas a previous generation had sung The Beastie Boys chorus of 'you've gotta fight for your right to party', the swollen ranks of the Ecstasy Evangelists left it all up to the drug. The Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act of 1990 came and went with little opposition, thereby increasing the penalties for organising unlicensed raves for profit. Overtly political attempts to halt the moral authoritarianism of parliamentary legislation were sneered at by the zealots. Hundreds of ravers were being arrested at illegal raves, but these events were viewed as teething troubles at the dawn of a new paradise. If the whole world could be changed by Ecstasy and by dancing, why on earth did you need to engage with boring old politics.

Dance music had become 'mental food' for Ecstasy consumers, and those who saw Ecstasy as the start of a Brave New World were in raptures. However, things were starting to go badly wrong, and the new hippy dream was gradually turning into a nightmare. In 1991 nightclub and rave entrance prices rose at an alarming rate, and violence crept onto the scene. But for the Psychedelic Warriors this did not signal the end of their dreams, for the problem could be cured simply by consuming more Ecstasy. The Evangelists had forgotten their history lessons. Just as the social battles won in the sixties were a result of political struggle, the liberatory atmosphere of early raves, and the implied communal politics of dancing, were not solely caused by Ecstasy consumption, but were the result of hard work and determination, the result of a direct political opposition...

sition that stated that everyone had the right to party, irrespective of gender, sexuality, colour or creed.

In 1992 the beat continued, Ecstasy consumption increased, and more and more dance records contained lyrics seemingly encouraging people to take an E. The Shamen's 'Ebeneezer Goode' is a classic example of a dance track whose lyrics directly referred to the Ecstasy experience, yet were oblique enough to avoid direct censorship:

Ebeneezer Goode's the leading light of the scene,
know what I mean
he created the vibe
he takes you for a ride, and as if by design
the party ignites like he's coming alive
he takes you to the top
shakes you all around and back down....

A gentleman of leisure,
he's there for your pleasure
But go easy on old Eezer
he's the kind of geezer who should never be abused

[chorus] Eezer Goode, Eezer Goode, he's Ebeneezer Goode.

(© One Little Indian Records)

By this time Ecstasy use was no longer the preserve of a small bohemian elite, it had been democratised to include even the most commercial dance floors. The summer of 1992 saw the traditional Roxy and Mecca discotheques, the last bastions of pre-Acid dance music, resonating to dance floors singing 'Es are good, Es are good' to the chorus of The Shamen's number one hit.

Ecstasy had become as essential to the dance experience as music itself. Home Office statistics suggested that 1.5 million Ecstasy tablets were consumed every weekend in 1995.[6] A survey of 700 young people aged between 14 and 16, compiled by Manchester University, suggested that 51% of those questioned had taken drugs, whilst 76% had been offered them. This did not go unheeded by the British press, with for instance *The Guardian* correctly interpreting this development as meaning that 'drug-taking has become an integral part of youth culture'.[7] Many reports suggested that, within certain geographical areas, the majority of school-leavers had, at some point, consumed an illegal drug.[8]

Whereas the drug-users of previous generations were marginalised and demonised, even by their peers (in the pre-punk 1970s, drug-users were dismissed as hippies by 'ordinary' young people) the new Ecstasy politics have led to the stage whereby it is the non-drug takers who are the deviants within dance culture, in the sense that they deviate from the norm of drug consumption within British youth culture. Howard Parker would appear to agree: 'over the next few years, and certainly in urban areas, non-drug-trying adolescents will be in a minority group. In one sense, they will be the deviants'.[9]

Whilst psychedelic drug consumption has spiralled upwards, the predicted outcomes of the Ecstasy propagandists have not materialised. In particular the heady days of Acid House, with their liberatory atmosphere, have all but vanished. Whilst Acid House was supposed to lead to a situation whereby the old gender relationships of the dance floor disappeared, this has not occurred. The 'refusal of sexuality' has been gradually abandoned, and the dance scene of the mid-1990s has become as rigidly demarcated as the early 1980s. Visit any of the biggest British dance clubs: Cream in Liverpool, The Ministry of Sound in London, or The Haçienda in Manchester, and you'll find mating grounds not dissimilar to the Roxys and Meccas of previous youth cultures. Advertising strategies that employ what some suggest are sexist images are increasingly common. Photographs of semi-naked women abound on flyers and in magazines devoted to dance culture. One the biggest dance floor smashes of 1995 was Nush's 'U Girls'. With a chorus line of 'you girls look so sexy' and a promotional video featuring a procession of 'club babes', Nush's track marked the return of dance as sexual display. Racism has also resurfaced, with segregated scenes, and intolerance simmering beneath the surface. Gay clubs have strengthened their door policies, claiming that Ecstasy-consuming heterosexuals often fake homosexuality in order to gain entry into clubs, but have a less than tolerant attitude to gay men and women whilst inside. Political apathy amongst Ecstasy users has meant that the free party scene has been criminalised with little resistance,[10] and even legal raves such as the 1996 Tribal Gathering in Oxfordshire have been aborted after local political pressure. Tales of stabbings and shootings at clubs and raves are now increasingly common. Class barriers have returned, primarily due to the somewhat excessive door prices of the more prestigious clubs. Few low-paid clubbers can afford the expense of a couple of Es and a ticket for a World of Dance event (£25 + booking fee), or entrance to the 1995/6 New Year's Eve party

at The Hacienda (£40 + booking fee). And it's not just the profiteering of promoters and club owners who have pushed the price of dance culture out of the hands of poorer clubbers. Whilst Acid House promised to break down the barriers between producers and consumers, nowadays dance musicians are as idolised as the rock stars of previous generations. If the top DJ also has a pretty face then he (and it is invariably 'he' in a male-dominated industry) is nothing short of a God. The days of the anonymous DJ getting on with his job are no more and artists such as Todd Terry can command £20,000 for a single performance. Whereas in Acid House the DJ was practically invisible, hidden behind his decks, nowadays DJ boxes resemble altars, with dancers continually looking upwards in the hope of catching a glimpse of the DJ deity.

The psychopharmacological repetition of the E trip has continued to have an influence on dance culture, as well as dance music, but not in the positive manner predicted by the Psychedelic Warriors. Contemporary dance culture has become a culture of the 'weekender'. Unlike the Evangelists, ordinary Ecstasy-users do not believe that psychedelic drugs will change the world, they merely use them to escape from the stresses and strains of modern life. Many of the current wave of clubbers merely live for the weekend, when they can be temporarily free from the reality of their day to day existence. During the week many of these Ecstasy-users work, if work is available, in what have been termed 'McJobs',[11] boring, repetitive work, requiring hard concentration. Those that have managed to find skilled employment also describe their jobs as repetitive and boring. The cure prescribed by those remaining Evangelists for low pay, unemployment and poverty is, of course, more Ecstasy. Dance/Ecstasy culture (for they now amount to the same thing) has become as repetitive as the music. Rather than being a release from the repetition of unfulfilling jobs, Ecstasy consumption has become a repetitive act in itself. Flowered Up, an enthusiastic group of hedonists who never fell for the Evangelical party line, saw the warnings back in 1992, and summed up the situation well with their single Weekender:

I see you everyday, you walk the same way
weekender
you go to work, Friday is Payday
weekender
weekender
give it up, give your life up
weekender

... just live a little (have a good time)

... no work just party party'
you got a new shirt, you got a new suit
saved your life for a two day flirt
you pay the price coz Monday sure does hurt
tell at work your weekend tale
still need the pleasure of a dirty sale
Monday's back, what can you do?

(© Sony Music Entertainment)

Monday's back, nothing has changed, and you've got a drug hangover from hell. Ecstasy hasn't changed the world. What it has done is turn hedonism into ritual, creating a functionalist dance music the sole of aim of which is to increase the Ecstasy high. Whilst experimentation with Ecstasy has reached an all time high, experimentation within House and Techno music has reached an all time low.

With some ravers taking 20 Ecstasy tablets in one weekend, something has had to give way. In 1991 and 1992 the rave scene splintered and shattered into small groupings of socially-opposed musical subgenres. As the 'tolerance levels' of regular Ecstasy-users grew (overuse of Ecstasy means that with each consecutive trip more and more E is required to achieve a satisfactory high), they began to supplement their tablets with amphetamine sulphate. As a result rave begat, amongst other music sub-genres, Gabber, an aggressive and fast amphetamine-inspired dance music that eschews the peaceful character of Acid House. Pronounced 'habber' in its native Dutch, this style of Techno revels in apocalyptic imagery, with, for example, the Dutch group Wedlock calling one of their singles 'I'm The Fuck You Man'. A night spent at a Gabber event can be a disconcerting experience, where young working class skinheads punch the air and throw their bodies around with an alarming ferocity. Gabber is a subgenre that seems a long way from the loved up music of the late eighties, and is a musical form that disconcertingly resembles Heavy Metal, with a lyrical and musical emphasis on violence and destruction.

But all is not l st within the contemporary music scene. In the other direction from Gabber pulled a musical genre that has almost single-handedly saved dance music from Ecstasy-related stagnation. Jungle (recently renamed by some as 'drum and bass') consists

of a frenetic hi-hat percussion track at around 320 beats per minute, a second percussion track at around 160 beats per minute, and an irregular and shifting bass line at around 80 beats per minute. The 160 b.p.m. drum track invariably has an erratic beat emphasis, thereby directly rejecting the 'four to the floor' basis of House and Techno music. An example might be where the first beat of each bar is on the beat, and the rest are syncopated (off the beat). Vocals, strings and synthesised sounds are sandwiched between percussion and bass.

Jungle, whilst still based upon a 4/4 time signature, firmly eschews the crotchet beat that characterises British House and Techno music. Instead of the 4/4 kick drum, jungle relies upon sped up 'break beats', either sampled from American hip-hop records,[12] or programmed using sequencing software such as Steinberg's Cubase©, which allow each drum hit to be graphically represented and edited on screen. The origin of the breakbeat is generally accepted to be the Bronx, New York in the early 1970s, where a DJ would mix two records together, extending the mix at the point of a drum break by cross-cutting between the two records using an audio mixer. Jungle takes these break beats and digitally 'chops' them so that each four bar structure is different. There is no Ecstasy-inspired repetition at the heart of jungle, instead there are never-ending circles of change and difference. Hours and hours of skilled programming mark a return to musicians taking care when they make music, a return to intelligence.

Whereas House and Techno clubs still prosper, and remain soaked in Ecstasy, amphetamine sulphate, and more recently cocaine, contemporary jungle clubs are relatively drug-free (beyond the occasional whiff of a cannabis joint). In particular there is a noticeable lack of 'gurners' in jungle clubs. Gurning is a side-effect of Ecstasy where facial muscles are contorted. During the early 1990s gurning was seen to be part of the 'habitus' of the average raver, part of the grammar of actions that allowed ravers to differentiate between Ecstasy consumers and 'outsiders'.

Whereas the psychopharmacological structure of Ecstasy matches the musical structure of 4/4 House and Techno, the musical structure of jungle discourages Ecstasy use. Jungle's frantic percussion and irregular bass line mitigate against the bodily synchronisation felt by the Ecstasy-user when dancing to House. Shorn of a sequenced beat on each bar, jungle dancers either stay rooted to the spot, moving their arms and gyrating their hips, or frenetically jump up

and down. There appears to be less of the tension visible in those who dance to, in particular, Techno, and more of a relaxed fluidity in their movements.

House and Techno fans are ignoring the long-term risks of Ecstasy consumption, with many taking a potentially brain-frying quantity each and every weekend. Whilst Ecstasy is now deemed to be essential for the full enjoyment of House and Techno music, this is not the case with jungle. The complex relationship between drug (Ecstasy) and music (House rhythms) has broken down. This breakdown has been caused by something as seemingly insignificant as the beat emphasis on a record.

Once the psychopharmacological effects of Ecstasy have been removed from the youth cultural equation, the whole culture surrounding dance music changes. Whereas House and Techno cultures have become stale and repetitive, and seem to lack innovation, jungle appears to be facing up to reality. Even some of the Ecstasy Evangelists are jumping over the fence. Mary Anna Wright, researcher on the Ecstasy Evangelists' bible, Ecstasy and the Dance Culture by Nicholas Saunders, now allies herself with the jungle scene, suggesting that the reason for this is that 'it doesn't lie; there's none of the "Everything's gonna be alright" stuff in the lyrics'.[13]

Whereas the repetitive kick of the House drum is the order of the day for your average Ecstasy consumer, jungle's manic percussion track is widely considered to reflect, or alternatively to originate from, the frantic pace of inner-city life. This is made explicit in one of the rarest of things, a lyric in a jungle record, entitled 'Inner-city Life' by the artist Goldie:

Inner city life
inner city pressure
taking over me
I won't let go no no

(© FFrr Records)

This emphasis on fast urban lifestyles is also combined with an emphasis on 'darkness', which, whilst simultaneously highlighting the largely black origins of jungle, also underlines the shadow cast by the urban and suburban poverty-traps in which so many jungle consumers find themselves situated. There is no suggestion in jungle music that societal change is imminent, there is no Evangelism

suggesting that psychedelics such as Ecstasy and LSD will change the world. Rather there is an overwhelming melancholy, a recognition that things like unemployment, racism, and poverty matter, and to pretend that these things will disappear in an Ecstasy haze is wrong. Steve Shapiro acknowledges this, suggesting that the British jungle experience is:

> ...less about a utopian vision, less about escaping through the music, and more about an acknowledged temporary hiatus from the difficulties of real life. Nothing will have changed after a night out, but for a moment, a good time will be had... Frankly, rave and House music seems to have a predominantly white middle-class audience, whereas jungle has a much stronger presence of black people. They have a mode of representation and cultural referents based on a very different experience of life. This experience is something shared by many working class and poor young people. They share a common existential *experience of urban and suburban ghettos.*[14]

Jungle's sense of darkness means that the Acid House generation has grown up, and that growing up in an accelerated culture can lead to a sense of disenfranchisement from the core of British society. Britain's underclass feels that it has not got the financial resources to keep up with the ever-changing consumerist mainstream. It is no coincidence that the most critically acclaimed jungle club in Britain in 1995 was called Speed, and the primary musical precursor of jungle was known as 'the darkside'.

Having said that the most important musical form since Acid House is not a drug-driven culture, there are still plenty of young teenagers willing to experiment with the thrills and delights that Ecstasy use can bring. Ecstasy use within House and Techno cultures is seen by clubbers as a way out of their repetitive lives, but ends up becoming a repetitive act in itself. With youth unemployment running high, and career structures hard to come by, E appears to be a logical and cheap[15] solution to a very real problem. Egged on by the Evangelists, Ecstasy consumption has become the be-all and end-all of House culture. The liberatory relations fought for by Acid House have been ignored, and intolerance has been allowed to seep in through the back door.

Ecstasy-related rallying cries such as 'Peace, Love, Unity and

Respect' can still be heard within contemporary House culture. Visit any British House club and you will find that the majority of dancers are under the influence of Ecstasy, even if many of them also have a bottle of beer in hand. Original scene makers such as Paul Oakenfold and Danny Rampling have gradually distanced themselves from the musical eclecticism and spirit of adventure present in early Acid House. Interestingly, both DJs now champion the 'Goa Trance' movement, a scene within a scene where Leary-esque hippy platitudes abound. Goa Trance is itself currently merging with 'Dream House', a variant of House with extended string-laden intros designed to increase Ecstasy's empathogenic qualities. It is no coincidence that Dream House bears more than a passing similarity to the Acidhead's Progressive Rock of the 1970s, and is derided by many as a retrogressive musical form.

Whilst the above tale might seem pessimistic, this should not necessarily be the case. Let us not forget that Ecstasy is a relatively safe drug. Ecstasy kills very few people compared with, say alcohol, and blame for the vast majority of fatalities lies fairly and squarely at government unwillingness to provide impartial risk-minimalisation information, and at nightclubs who are unwilling to invest in air-conditioning and free water supplies (Ecstasy, combined with hours of dancing, can lead to bodily dehydration). Whereas alcohol-driven music scenes are narcissistic and violent, some Ecstasy-orientated dance clubs do still feel full of love. But for every free-spirited and adventurous club, there are several money-grabbing, violent, and intimidatory scenes. Whilst not wishing to sound like an Ecstasy Evangelist, the effects of good quality E can be the foundation of a marvellous night out. Even the government agrees that rave culture and Ecstasy use are inseparable; under pressure from their liquor-producing sponsors (alcohol consumption amongst British youth has dropped in the 1990s) and the powerful farming lobby (fearful of their land being used for raves) the Conservative government have effectively banned outdoor raves with The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1995. This act criminalises both the participants and organisers of events at which are played, in the (immortal) words of the act, 'sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats'.

Elements within British youth culture appear to have grown out of reckless hedonism, and as such British musical culture is entering a more mature phase. This process is not aided by books such as the

aforementioned *Ecstasy and the Dance Culture*. In this book, Nicholas Saunders, a refugee from the 1960s whose enthusiasm for Ecstasy borders on the obsessive, suggests that Ecstasy, as well as enlivening and enriching dance culture, can improve sexual and family relationships, cure chronic depression, improve problem solving, increase physical fitness, advance sporting prowess, relieve pain and even lead to better job prospects.[16] Such talk is dangerous. If society is to create a music and culture that can bring about change, if youth culture is to progress and to diversify, then simply following in the footsteps of the 1960s will not suffice. Recreational drugs and psychedelic experimentation amount to no more than beautiful eyelid movies, an inner entertainment that must never be allowed to become the be-all and end-all of life itself.

Notes

1. Redhead, 1993, p 7.
2. Dr. Martin Paulus, Resident in Psychiatry, University of California at San Diego offers a more scientific account:

   One basis of the rave phenomenon is the music synchronising people's behaviour to an underlying rhythm. When you move to that rhythm you essentially do one type of behaviour - demands on your behaviour are to do the same thing over and over again: you're taking a drug that does the same thing over and over again, and it seems to fit perfectly together (quoted in MacDougal Craig, 1995).

3. Cited in Stevens, 1987, p 94.
4. Quoted in Sutherland, 1990.
5. Quoted in Sutherland, 1990.
6. Cited in Wroe et al, 1995, p 18.
7. 15 August 1995, p 10.
8. See for instance Parker et al, 1995.
9. Quoted in Boseley, 1995, p 2.
10. Honourable exceptions must be made at this point. The Exodus Collective in Luton have continually opposed government interference. The Reclaim the Streets group have also been active, with their 'Rave Against The Machine' protest bringing a six-lane major road in North London to a standstill. United Systems and Advance Party, both organisations campaigning for the right to hold raves,

have attempted to muster some political action. However the point stands, the vast majority of dance culture has allowed Government legislation to be passed without protest, and have witnessed the destruction of the liberatory atmosphere of early Acid House raves

11. 'low-pay, low-prestige, low-dignity, low-benefit, no-future job in the service sector' Coupland, D (1992) *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. London: Abacus, p. 5. Although originally a term used to describe American youth, the publication of Coupland's book in Britain in 1992 popularised the term here.
12. It is this origin that led to jungle's frequent emphasis on the first two beats of the bar, the traditional waltz beat that characterises hip-hop, which can contrasted with House's 4/4 march emphasis
13. Quoted in McKay, 1996, p 109.
14. Shapiro, 1995.
15. One result of the phenomenal demand for Ecstasy in Britain has been the professionalisation of its supply. Whereas in the late 1980s Ecstasy production was a relatively expensive process, nowadays European Ecstasy laboratories are commercial drug factories pumping out more and more of the drug As a result of this the price of Ecstasy has fallen dramatically, from between £15 and £20 in 1987 to as little as £7 in 1996
16. See Saunders, 1995, pp 106-23.

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