

INTRODUCTION

Most likely the [Columbine High massacre] assailants identified with the industrial subculture, which can overlap with the goths on the left and the neo-Nazis on the right. Unlike the goths, which re-enact Victorian horror literature, those in the industrial subculture are more fascinated with video violence ... Buts [goths] share some fashions and music and a death obsession with the more aggressive industrial crew. KMFDM, a German industrial band that Littleton's Trench Coat Mafia reportedly listened to, is similar in style to many neo-Nazi bands.

—Rodgers-Melnick, *Post-Gazette* Littleton, Colorado, 27 April, 1999.

The killers' fascination with Hitler and their targeting of Christians and blacks, combined with their apparent preoccupation with "industrial" music, together suggest the possible influence of a fascistic youth subculture that has inspired horrific violence elsewhere.

—Conason, *Salon News*. 4 May, 1999.

They are outcasts, they wear black, don't participate in sports or extracurricular activities, they may listen to heavy metal, industrial or Goth music, they may try to hack computers, or play shoot-em-up games like Doom.

—Joseph, *ABC News*, 21 April 1999 (<http://www.abcnews.go.com> 10/10/99).

Så långt kan det tyckas relativt oskyldigt men det finns också en allvarigare sida som bland de mer extrema anhängarna av Goth inkluderar vapenfixering, nazistsympatier, rasistiska tankegångar och brutala våldsfantasier.¹

—Pehrson, *Dagens Nyheter*, 21 April 1999.

We still cannot believe how nowadays, at the threshold of the new millennium, narrow-mindedness and ignorance are so strong and deep-rooted within the social and political texture of our so called "civilised" countries ... the reactions of the institutions have been deliberately simpleminded and superficial, choosing to blame music, media, movies, any form of artistic entertainment ... and purposely ignoring more serious and complex social and cultural connections ... the problem is in the environment that surrounds him, in the family, in the community he lives in, and it is not his own individual "disease" but a more profound social one.

—Industrial fan response to the accusations following the Columbine incident, in UK fanzine *Darklife*, Issue Three, Summer 1999.

1 'To this extent it might seem relatively innocent, but there is also a serious side amongst the more extreme followers of Goth [and industrial], including weapon-fixation, nazi-sympathy and racist thoughts, and brutal violent fantasies' (my translation).

When two adolescents armed themselves, went to school, and killed thirteen of their fellow students in April 1999, the people of Littleton, Colorado demanded an explanation.² Many reports suggested that ‘industrial’, a popular electronic music genre, was one of the catalysts of the carnage.³ Among several bands cited as potential instigators was KMFDM, a German industrial group whose final album was to be released on the day the massacre occurred.⁴

Industrial music was suddenly plunged into the media spotlight. Debates raged about what industrial was, what it meant, and whether this music was capable of inciting youths to violent uprisings. Journalists, scrambling to offer explanations, alluded to ‘fascism’, ‘Satanism’, ‘white supremacism’, ‘hacker culture’, ‘death obsession’ and ‘violence’ to describe the fans and the music. Fans countered these descriptions with accusations that the media were only propagating a system that had created such tragedies in the first place.

2 More detail of the Columbine massacre is provided in Chapter Four. See Hodkinson (2001: 218) for the reaction of the goth community.

3 See below for more detailed definitions of both industrial and genre. Since ‘industrial’ is used in this thesis mostly to denote the genre that is the topic of this work, I will, when using the word in that sense, present it without inverted comas in normal typeface.

4 Ironically titled *Adios* (1999). There was speculation at the time that the album had specifically been released on that day because it also happened to be Hitler’s birthday.

My own experience also contradicted the media's representation of industrial in relation to the Columbine tragedy. I had been involved with industrial music for approximately fifteen years, in the following capacities:

- as a fan, listening to the music, attending concerts and club events, purchasing industrial music and magazines, and congregating with other industrial fans;
- as a journalist and editor, writing for various industrial fanzines and magazines internationally, which has involved liaising with, reviewing and interviewing artists, DJs, promoters and labels;
- as a graphic designer, working on industrial albums or logos;
- as a promoter involved in the inception and development of an independent Canadian distributor and label, involved with industrial and other related genres;
- as a manager in music retail dealing with the ordering and sales of various kinds of music, including industrial;
- as a collaborator on industrial albums and videos, and on a documentary about industrial;
- as a composer of the music, though to a limited degree.

I have chosen to summarise my involvement in industrial in this way for three reasons: First, to indicate that I have had first-hand experience of the genre. Second, to be explicit about my personal relationship to the genre: even though I have been involved, I have attempted to minimise any bias, as it has not been my intention to advocate greater legitimacy for industrial than any other genre. Finally, to highlight the polarity of opinion that has arisen in relation to industrial. This last point is important because none of these aspects of my involvement in industrial gave me any grounds to suspect

the music of having contributed to the Columbine massacre. Nor did that experience give me any evidence of fascism, Satanism, white supremacism, etc. within the genre.

Eventually, the Columbine debate in the international media subsided, but it left many confused about the following questions: What exactly was industrial music, who listened to it, and why? Was this just another case of ‘folk devils and moral panics’ (Cohen 1973), or was there something more serious going on?

Industrial music had previously achieved mass media coverage in the early 1990s when Nine Inch Nails topped the US Billboard charts and garnered several Grammy Awards.⁵ Apart from the success of Nine Inch Nails, however, industrial has rarely broken into the commonly cited commercial music charts.⁶ Industrial has, nevertheless, enjoyed some popularity,⁷ witnessed by its many appearances in alternative charts,

5 In the US Billboard charts, *Broken* (1992) achieved platinum sales and went to #7 in 1992. *The Downward Spiral* (1994) achieved quadruple platinum and went to #2 in 1994. *Further Down the Spiral* (1995) went gold in 1995, and *The Fragile* (1999) went double platinum, going to number one in the USA in 1999. Nine Inch Nails were nominated for Grammy Awards for best heavy metal album in 1993, heavy metal performance in 1996, hard rock performance in 1998, alternative music performance in 2000, modern rock clip in 2000, and male rock vocal performance in 2001. The variation in music categories indicates the difficulties involved in defining industrial.

6 ‘Commercial’ is used throughout the thesis to describe the largely profit-motivated major corporate-owned media (particularly the four giant music conglomerates), which is often conceived of by fans as a diametrical force to industrial, as we shall see.

7 The commonly cited charts are notoriously unreliable as indicators of popularity. Middleton (1990: 1-5), among others, has highlighted problems with definitions of popular music that centre on quantitative measurements

inclusion on the soundtracks to many blockbuster Hollywood films,⁸ its use in a Vodafone advertisement and in an election campaign by *Die Grünen*, and its unmistakable influences on much contemporary popular music.⁹

Despite the importance of industrial—not only to popular music’s development, but, judging by the quotations at the start of this thesis, its influence on Western culture in general—very little has been written about it, as I will outline below. It is therefore a principal aim of this thesis *to address this lack of literature by providing a comprehensive genre study of industrial music*. Nevertheless, before outlining my secondary aims, it is worth summarising what has previously been covered in both journalistic and academic work on industrial, as well as what a genre study entails.

0.1 Existing Literature on Industrial

Journalists have assembled several reference books on industrial, containing interviews, biographies or discographic facts, but offering no analyses or explanations of the music

of statistics which are open to manipulation, and the ‘tendency to treat heterogeneous markets as part of an aggregate; thus, an example of relatively high dissemination in one sector may be lost among the larger figures of the whole’.

8 For instance, *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), *Demon Knight* (1994), *The Crow* (1994), *The Matrix* (1999), *End of Days* (1999), *Seven* (1995), *Sliver* (1996), *Mortal Kombat* (1995), and *Bad Influence* (1990).

9 *Die Grünen* (the German Green Party) used Einstürzende Neubauten’s ‘Kollaps’ (1981). Vodafone in 2002 used the Nine Inch Nails song ‘Perfect Drug’ (1999) in a UK television advertisement.

involved, or of its fans.¹⁰ Jon Savage's short introduction to one of these books, the *Industrial Culture Handbook* (1983), has influenced some academic studies, if only because it is one of the few relevant articles that does not take the form of record reviews or artist interviews. Savage identifies five defining elements of industrial:

- 'organisational autonomy' (i.e. industrial's production and dissemination via an independent record network that exists outside the major label system);
- the concept of an 'information war', i.e. the use of industrial music to disseminate subversive information (aligning industrial music with a political intent);
- the use of synthesisers and 'anti-music' (the idea that industrial developed in deliberate opposition to the popular music of the day);
- the reliance on non-musical elements such as literary techniques, films and videos;
- the use of shock tactics.

All of Savage's concepts are useful for the understanding of industrial and recur throughout this thesis, but I will draw particular attention to the concept of 'anti-music', which was vital to the inception and development of industrial as a distinct musical genre.

Brian Duguid (1996), in a paper written for an unpublished book, takes Savage's five premises and expands upon them, focusing on their historical precedence. Duguid explores some of the links between industrial and twentieth-century movements in

10 For instance, Vale (1983), Neal (1987), Ford (1999), or Thompson (1997).

avant-garde music and visual art (see Chapter Two), but abandons his historical account just as industrial emerges as a genre.

Like Duguid, Lewis (1998) and Coreno (1994) attempt to situate industrial in an avant-garde historical setting. Both authors, however, neglect to discuss industrial until the last few paragraphs, and fail to define or describe the genre in any detail, except to mention the genre's unique cultural positioning on the edge of the avant-garde and the popular. Soccio's (1998) attempt to align industrial with the avant-garde, meanwhile, has included industrial to a more significant degree, but exclusively deals with 'shock tactics', which is just one of industrial's many defining aspects. Novotny (1997) also locates industrial on the cusp between the popular and the avant-garde, but focuses more specifically on cyberpunk, a dystopian science fiction genre.¹¹ Still, although he provides a relatively thorough account of techniques used in cyberpunk literature and industrial lyrics, his treatment of industrial as music is rather superficial, relying primarily on the lyrical analysis of a single song.

Other publications written about industrial music have either focussed on one specific geographic area (Locher 1994), or accounted for one single record label (Lee 1995), or else they have suffered from factual inaccuracies and contradictions (Toth 1997).¹²

¹¹ Cyberpunk, dystopia and science fiction are explained in Chapter Two.

¹² For example, Toth claims that a 'second wave' of industrial music originated in the United States, and that the group Ministry 'exercised the greatest influence' (1987: 86), when in fact the USA's role was fairly insignificant, and Ministry's importance pales in comparison to that of, for instance, Skinny Puppy or Front 242. He also claims that Throbbing

Donohoe's *Music for the Last Factory* (1993), on the other hand, while not discussing industrial as musical text, provides some useful ethnographic information with which I was able to compare the findings of my own, more extensive survey. It is therefore surprising that Donohoe's work has yet to be published.

Although the above review of industrial-related literature contains only English-language texts, I was unable to find specifically industrial-related academic work in any other language. Even taken collectively, this disparate scattering of publications fails to offer much explanation of what industrial—as an internationally popular music genre—might be about. Indeed, considering the wide dissemination of industrial music, mentioned above, through advertising and blockbuster movies, it is surprising that the genre has hitherto received no serious academic attention. One would assume that this lack of literature is due to the unfamiliarity of scholars with industrial, yet industrial has quite frequently been *referred to in passing* in academic texts dealing with popular music or with science fiction (see below). Even more telling, perhaps, is the fact that in such texts it is usually assumed that the reader understands what is meant by the term industrial. Deena Weinstein, for instance, informs us:

Melding thrash with industrial dance music is the way bands as diverse as Godflesh, Fear Factory, and Rammstein create their sound. On the border of this industrial metal subgenre are bands like Ministry and Nine Inch Nails, more accurately

Gristle/Psychic TV 'rejected repetitive modes of technology, considering itself sub-electronic' (*ibid.*: 88), but later cites the band as saying 'the most up-to-date available technology should be used' (*ibid.*: 83), and neglects to remark that they relied heavily on samplers and synthesisers for their sound.

understood, perhaps, as metallized industrial music (2000: 288).

Such references to industrial, including those provided by scholars such as Frith (for 1998: 298 n. 30), Poschardt (1995: 320, 322), Gill (1995: 27, 132, 161-163) or Potter, R.A. (1998: 36), fail to problematise or define the genre. It is therefore necessary to explore existing uses of the term industrial before presenting a working definition.

0.2 Defining 'Industrial' and 'Genre'

Industrial, as a term applied to music, goes back to at least the preface of Balilla Pratella's *Musica Futurista* of 1912, which described the sound of 'big industrial plants ... the rule of the machine and the victorious reign of electricity' (cited in Sachs 1953: 363). Starting from that time, there have been many manifestos and articles that make reference to particular musical pieces or styles sounding 'industrial' (e.g. Flint 1968: 23). In popular music the term has been used to describe a variety of styles, from the mechanical rhythms of electronic artists like Père Ubu, Devo and Kraftwerk (with their 'industrielle Volksmusik'—see Bussy 1993: 64), to punk's rhythmic force: 'Heavy, monotonous, industrial, mechanical ... relentless power-drill sound' (Birch, cited in Laing 1985: 12).

The term 'industrial' became more frequently used during the late 1970s, after it was adopted as the name of a record label, Industrial Records, which used the slogan, 'Industrial music for industrial people'. Genesis P-Orridge, founder of Industrial

Records and lead singer with the industrial group Throbbing Gristle explained the name:

There's an irony in the word "industrial" because there's the music industry. And then there's the joke we often used to make in interviews about churning out records like motorcars—that sense of industrial ... "industrial" has a very cynical ring to it. It's not like that kind of romance of "paying your dues, man"; of being "on the road"—rock'n'roll as a career being worthwhile in itself, and all that shit. So it was cynical and ironic, and also accurate. And we liked the imagery of factories—I mean, we just thought there was a whole untapped area of imagery and noise which was suggested when we thought of "industrial" (cited in Vale 1983: 9-10).

After Industrial Records used the term, fans of the music adapted it to describe those artists associated with the label, as well as other similar-sounding artists, and the term gradually came to refer to an entire genre. By 'genre', I mean a set of 'musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules', though what these rules are, and which group socially accepts them, can vary from time to time or place to place (Fabbri 1981: 52). More specifically, in the case of industrial there seems to be a marked disparity between what fans and non-fans of the genre consider to be industrial. Amongst fans themselves there are also differences of opinion as to how the term should be defined.

Today's commercial press uses the term industrial more adjectivally than as a genre title, as any glance through a music magazine will show. *Rock Sound*, for example, featured an industrial music special in its September 1999 issue, using the word throughout the magazine in an ambiguous and confusing way; 'pop-industrial', 'industrial noise', 'industrial rock', 'industrial metal', 'industrial anger', 'industrial wasteland', 'aggro-industrial', 'goth-industrial', 'industrial synthpop', and 'industrial

techno'. The magazine's only hint of a definition or explanation of this 'industrial' was to call it 'machine-based music, hard-edged and bleak', a rather vague characterisation, to say the least.

Definitions of industrial have also been offered by other journalists or popular texts.

However, these definitions have been highly problematic.¹³ *All Music*, for instance, provides the following definition:

Industrial music was a dissonant, abrasive genre that grew out of the electronic experiments of post-punk bands like Cabaret Voltaire and Throbbing Gristle. The music was largely electronic, with fast, pounding drum machines and samples. It was named industrial because of Throbbing Gristle's label, Industrial Records. Though industrial sometimes flirts with hard rock—Ministry and Nine Inch Nails, in particular, subvert hard rock formulas with their music—it always has experimental and dance underpinnings that keep it from falling into traditional rock & roll conventions. E.g. Nine Inch Nails, Ministry, Skinny Puppy.¹⁴

What is meant by 'subvert hard rock formulas', by 'always [having] experimental and dance underpinnings', or by kept from 'falling into traditional rock & roll conventions' is left unsaid. Michael Mahan, promoter for the industrial label Metropolis Records and a writer for various fanzines,¹⁵ offers an equally elusive definition by focussing on *only*

13 See Appendix Two for a more detailed discussion of the uses of the term.

14 *All-Music Guide Online* [Http://www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com) (02/03/00).

15 The difference between a fanzine and a magazine is usually determined by production quality (e.g. magazines tend to be coloured and glossy), print-run (magazines tend to have a print-run upwards of 10 000), size (fanzines tend to be smaller, such as A5), distribution, and dependence on advertising. For purposes here, a magazine will refer to an A4 or letter-size glossy, regardless of print-run or advertising. Fanzine will include its online version, the e-zine.

the ideological dimensions—leaving us wondering what, exactly, the music *sounds* like:

Industrial music is an artistic reflection of the de-humanisation of our people and the inexorable pollution of our planet by our factory-based socio-economic state.¹⁶

Another definition goes to great lengths to explain the social aspects of industrial, but also largely leaves out the music:

"Industrial" may have been coined by and for a select few early bands, but over time it has become a cultural umbrella term for subversive electronic music, and associated aesthetics, dance, media and ideology, which thousands of people have chosen to identify with and nurture. Lyrical and sample content seems to indicate we believe in free-thinking and a healthy degree of skepticism, which, for example, leads us to condemn manipulation by corporate media. We also seem to be against tyranny, oppression, commodification and exploitation in any form, such as religion, fascism, imperialism, plutocracy, oligarchy and hierarchy. (However, sometimes it seems like we have our "uniforms" and elitism, too.) We also don't shy away from the darkness and horror of life—we confront it. In general, industrial ideology seems to be a strange blend of socialist, atheist, humanist, anarchist and libertarian thought, with a little bit of paganism thrown in for spice.¹⁷

Some fans are quite strict about the definition of industrial, limiting it to those artists on the Industrial Records label, or to very similar-sounding artists. These fans often begin and end the genre with Throbbing Gristle and Industrial Records (1976-1981).

16 *Alternative Press* January 1994. Again, there are other problematic questions with this definition: who is 'our people'? Where is this 'factory-based socio-economic state'?

17 Interview with Kevin of Dystopian records, *Toronto Industrial Kollektive*, [Http://www.yip.org/squid/interview/dystopian.htm](http://www.yip.org/squid/interview/dystopian.htm) (04/06/02).

Most fans, however, use the term much more liberally. I will adopt a similarly broad view of industrial as a starting point for this study whose primary aim is ‘to provide a comprehensive genre study of industrial (p. 6). However, that initial ‘broad view’ needs refining in order to establish a working definition of ‘industrial’ which, in its turn, is a prerequisite for a viable selection of analysis materials and methods. I have therefore established my working definition in the manner described in Appendix Two. The procedure basically consisted of constructing a composite of recurrent traits in available definitions of the genre. That composite reads as follows: *Originally using mechanical and electric machinery, and later advancing to synthesisers, samplers and electronic percussion as the technology developed, industrial music is built around ‘non-musical’¹⁸ and often distorted, repetitive, percussive sounds of mechanical, electric and industrial machinery, commonly reflecting feelings of alienation and dehumanisation as a form of social critique.*

It must be said by qualification, however, that some non-industrial music may fit this definition. What, then, are the parameters that make a song *industrial*? Based on my definition, what stops the soundtrack from *Terminator 2* (Fiedel 1997) or some dark techno from being labelled industrial, even if its sonic characteristics fulfil the genre’s

18 Although ‘non-musical’ is perhaps not an ideal term, for the purpose of this thesis it will refer to sounds created by instruments not originally designed or primarily intended for the purpose of producing sounds intrinsic to musical discourse.

musical style criteria?¹⁹ One answer, of course, is that musical rules are not the sole determinants of genre. Industrial fans are quick to point this out, for example:

Industrial is a meta-genre. It is a system-belief structure for creating music. The ethos is critical. There is no defining style—you cannot define industrial by style but by intent and execution [only] ... It is not a style of music, or a simple genre. It is a philosophy of how to go about creating art, the reasons for creating [it] [Edward].²⁰

Fabbri (1981) has shown genres to have several different aspects, or rules: formal and technical, semiotic, behavioural, social, ideological, and economic. These rules are worth summarising here, since they provide a foundation for the understanding of any genre.

Formal and technical rules are the musical, structural conventions that distinguish one genre from another. They are often the most commonly cited rules in musicological literature, ‘to the point where genre, style and form become synonymous’ (Fabbri 1981: 55). As Fabbri indicates, these rules may include performance techniques, instrumental characteristics, the technical ability of a musician, and so on.

Fabbri (*ibid.*) clarifies semiotic rules by pointing out that ‘of course all rules of genre are semiotic, since they are codes which create a relation between the expression of a

19 See James (1997) for an explanation of dark techno.

20 Responses from primary source interviews are referenced in square brackets. A first name only indicates that the fan wished to remain anonymous. Details of interviews can be found in Appendix One.

musical event and its content' (*ibid.*). What he means by semiotic rules is that there are rules that govern the way a genre might convey meanings. The use or function of the music, as well as its meanings for the audience would be categorised as semiotic.

Behavioural rules include the community of fans and artists involved with the genre (such as a performer's sincerity), the ways in which they listen to or perform the music, and their social codes such as the fashion, etiquette, conversation and rituals which would 'quickly show up any intruder who is not well informed' (*ibid.*: 57). These behavioural rules cross over with the social and ideological rules:

Every genre is defined by a community of varying structure which accepts the rules and whose members participate in various forms during the course of a musical event (*ibid.*: 58).

Social or ideological rules might include social divisions between and within groups such as cultural, geographic, historical, class, or generational boundaries.

Finally, there are economic and juridical rules, which are responsible for the survival and prosperity of the genre. Included in these, although Fabbri does not mention them explicitly, are the ways in which the music is distributed, mediated and marketed, which are particularly important to musical genres whose 'authenticity' is tied to notions of 'independence'. Negus (1999) has discussed at length the importance of the cultural industries to genre. Negus suggests that the audience's expectations and

assumptions of genre inevitably impact upon song writing and upon performance (1999: 5).²¹ He writes:

Musical genres are formally codified into specific organizational departments, narrow assumptions about markets, and “targeted” promotional practices, and this is strategically managed by recorded entertainment companies (Negus 1999: 28).

Negus draws significantly on Frith’s writing on genre. Frith suggests that genres are essential to the way the music industry functions: ‘Genre is a way of defining music in its market, or, alternatively, the market in its music’ (Frith 1998: 76).

The rules outlined above combine to determine and delineate a genre’s boundaries. Each rule may or may not play a significant role in any one genre—some genres may have more ideologically emphasised rules, while others may have more stylistic rules (Frith 1998: 93). It is important to also note that genres are in constant flux, as Krims argues:

Genres are constantly shifting entities, guidelines at best. They are not universally shared and yet they remain indispensable for approaching the uses of music. Furthermore, the scholar proposing to outline a set of related genres encounters the problem posed by the very positing of something like an overarching abstract principle (2001: 89. *cf.* Negus 1999: 26).

21 Although Negus seems largely sceptical of the use of genre by industry, Beebe (1994: 8–10) offers an illuminating critique of ‘the academic reaction against the marketability of genre’ by suggesting that genre assists us in reading texts by establishing expectations. Frith (1998: *ff.*76) suggests that record companies are usually behind in the use of generic labelling.

An understanding of the *creation* and the subsequent *learning* of those rules is as important as the rules themselves (Radway 1987: 10).

Since the aim of this thesis is, as stated, a genre study of industrial, and having established working definitions of what genres and what industrial constitutes, the next step is to review literature dealing with popular music genres other than industrial. The aim of this review is to ascertain which approaches to popular music genre can be of use in this thesis.

0.3 Review of Popular Music Genre Studies

Although many genres have yet to become the object of much scholarly study (synthpop, disco, goth),²² there are many academic and journalistic publications that claim or attempt to be the ‘definitive’ account of a particular genre.²³ One would assume that serious genre studies, especially those claiming to be ‘definitive’, would take into consideration the full range of stylistic and generic rules put forward by Fabbri, Frith (1998) and Negus (1999). However, few studies have tackled more than one or two of the generic rules involved.

22 This is not to say that there are no studies available, only that there has been *less* work on these genres than on others such as rock, hip-hop, or rave.

23 Weinstein’s 2000 edition for instance quotes on the front cover, ‘The definitive book on heavy metal’.

Most journalistic genre studies have focussed on important historical and/or biographical aspects (e.g. Toop 1984, Ellison 1989, Toscher 1989, Heilbut 1992, Thompson 1997, True 2001), but such accounts tend to neglect both the audience and the texts,²⁴ and many of the journalistic accounts are based on secondary material, containing little or no empirical research.²⁵

Very few academics have explicitly claimed to have undertaken a music genre study as such. Nevertheless, there are several notable academic works whose title or subtitle includes a genre name, which would imply substantial coverage of that genre. I will use the term ‘genre study’ broadly, then. Many of these studies have continued the popular tradition of historical surveys (e.g. Poschardt 1995) or combinations of historic/biographic background and lyrical analysis (e.g. Oliver 1990). Others have conducted ethnographic research of the audiences or musicians involved with a particular genre, and some of these have even combined this research with historical background or lyrical analysis (e.g. Laing 1985, Keil 1991, Weinstein 1991, 2000,

24 Although Toscher (1989) at least attempts to look at the lyrics. My list of genre studies is not all-encompassing, but suggests a survey of the available approaches to genre. I have not included a discussion of genre studies of other media for several reasons. Firstly, for logistical reasons of time and space, the discussion had to be limited and musical genres were the most relevant to the discussion, Secondly, most studies of genres of other media share similar issues of scope, neglecting either text or audience.

25 One notable exception is Bradley (2000).

Arnett 1995, Rose 1994, Hodgkinson 2001). Most have, however, largely ignored the music text, whether in the form of recordings or live performance.

Those studies that (knowingly or otherwise) follow Fabbri's approach to genre try to examine a combination of genre rules, thus considering both text and context, although many of these studies omit discussion of the meanings and aspirations of the audience (e.g. Cantwell 1992, De Veaux 1997, Berger 1999).²⁶ There have, however, been a few who attempt to consider audience, artist, text and context, most notably Krims (2001) and Walser (1993). The multi-faceted character of these last two studies makes them particularly relevant to this thesis, and they will therefore be examined in greater detail.

Adam Krims describes his book, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (2001), as complementary to other literature on rap, because it provides the textual analysis that supplements studies of rap's historical and social background, particularly in terms of its gender and racial issues (e.g. Rose 1994). Although he adopts a musicological approach, Krims attacks traditional musicology for the inappropriate predominance of harmony and melody in the analysis of a style where those parameters can hardly be considered of prime importance. He also indicts traditional music analysis

26 Berger, for example, combines ethnography with musical analysis, although his determining of meaning is limited to artists, rather than other listeners. Beebe (1994: 4-6), drawing on Janice Radway's work on the romance novel (1987), informs us how uses ('use-values') help audiences to construct their own meanings from genres.

for eliding institutional facts and often avoiding questions of social relevance, but also for sidestepping the possibility that audiences might shape their own responses to music, challenging and reinscribing its cultural force and significance (2001: 14).

Krims combines text and context in what he terms a ‘poetics of music’, i.e. a musical theory ‘which addresses the organization of sound as part of broader cultural processes’ (2001: 14). Krims ambitiously suggests that musical poetics might show how social processes are sometimes ‘internalised’ in the music:

In other words, musical poetics in some sense transcodes the social dynamics that are otherwise considered external to it; and a relational map of the social world is charted within the genre system to be described here, invoking African-American traditions, pre-existing genres, gender-relations (and gender domination), class relations, and the possibilities more generally of (especially American) urban life (2001: 46).

However, Krims seems only half-convinced of his own theory, since he suggests that rap may be uniquely situated, due to ‘its obviously very different means of organization’ (2001:32). He goes on to warn us that:

One may easily slip into some form of expressive causality, in which some aspect of social life is seen as somehow “causing” the musical poetics to take a specific form. The music thus ends up either epiphenomenal to, or homologous with, other aspects of culture for reasons left inexplicit (2001: 32).

To demonstrate how his poetics theory might function, Krims first undertakes a close reading of one song, Ice Cube’s ‘The Nigga Ya Love to Hate’. After a lengthy explanation of complex graphs that replace the traditional transcription, Krims undertakes an exhaustive study of the lyrics and rhythm of the song. While some of Krims’ points seem valid with regard to his lyric analysis, he suggests, in the case of rap’s rhythm, that:

Pleasure and rhythm have historically been loaded with racialized discourses. The simple basic rhythms and complex counter-rhythms of rap music are

closely related to (and often make explicit reference to) similar traits in other Afro-diasporic musics. As such, the foregrounding of rhythm *may invoke* and reinforce old racist stereotypes about African-Americans (2001: 112. my emphasis).

Falling into some of the same traps he critiques, Krims clearly suffers from an idealised and racially stereotyped conception of rap.²⁷ But even if we agree with what Krims says is being evoked, several questions still remain, such as, for whom—and how—may the foregrounding of rhythm invoke these racist stereotypes? One can only surmise that he is referring to the audience he was previously criticising musicology for leaving out, but which is also absent from any textual analysis in his work. In short, Krims' genre study is problematic, since it largely relies on his own interpretations.

Of all of the genre studies mentioned above, Walser (1993) comes closest to covering all of those rules of genre discussed by Fabbri. Walser places heavy metal in the context of social, economic, cultural, political and gender issues by combining ethnography, cultural criticism and musical analysis to understand heavy metal as a 'social signifying system', and as a 'discourse' (1993: xiv). Walser is one of very few popular music scholars to interpret music in such a way, that is, to include the cultural aspects of the genre, as well as the music. Although some of Walser's methods are not

27 Others have likewise similarly concluded that an emphasis on rhythmic percussion is somehow a 'black' phenomenon (e.g. Rose 1995: 66), and while this may hold true for nineteenth century music, the assumption of the foregrounding of rhythmic elements as a racial aspect in the twentieth century—and now the twenty-first—is dubious, and, as I will show for the case of industrial which uses similar foregrounding of rhythm, falls down under scrutiny (see also Tamlyn 1998: 22, Tagg 1998).

entirely clear,²⁸ his combination of audience ethnography and semiotic analysis of visual, verbal and musical expression is exceptional.

Walser uses what he describes as a triangulation of ethnography ‘as a check on textual interpretation, and developing ethnographic strategies out of my own and others’ cultural analyses’ (1993: xiii). It is disappointing then, that, despite providing some evidence of ethnographic work, the fans’ voices—their responses, interpretations and opinions—are absent throughout. On the one hand, Walser rightly suggests, for instance, that:

Many people talk about the “meaning” of a song when what they are really discussing is only the song’s lyrics. But verbal meanings are only a fraction of whatever it is that makes musicians and fans respond to and care about popular music (1993: 26).

Walser also admits the polysemic nature of music, and even goes so far as to argue

The range of possible interpretations may be theoretically infinite, but in fact certain preferred meanings tend to be supported by those involved with a genre, and related variant meanings are commonly negotiated (1993: 33).

On the other hand, it is unfortunate that he does little to supply evidence of what these meanings might be to many of those who listen to the music.²⁹ In fact, although he includes quotations from various guitar magazines to illustrate some of his points, the

28 Walser informs us that he has interviewed fans and musicians, and provides us with a copy of his questionnaire, but details regarding the distribution and collection—and how he has used this information—remain vague.

29 For a further critique of Walser, see Shepherd and Wicke (1997: 144–149).

plausibility of his interpretations is weakened by a lack of empirical evidence on audience members.³⁰ Therefore, although drawing on Walser's useful model of triangulation, it is clear that I will need to complement that approach with substantial consideration of industrial's *audience*.

In fact, to my knowledge there has yet to be a study of a musical genre which takes into consideration the meanings attributed to the music by the audience, but which also involves the audience in textual analysis. I would contend here that such a combination of ethnographic approaches to the audience and semiotic approaches to the music might tell us more not only about both the audience and the music, but also about how the two are integrated.

I have now established that there is a strong need for a comprehensive genre study of industrial. I have also established that genres have many rules, and that each of these rules needs to be addressed in order to develop a meaningful conception of those genres. Therefore, I may now expand on my earlier aim to provide a comprehensive genre study of industrial music. Such a study needs to address questions such as: *What is industrial? Where does it come from? Who listens to it, how and where and why do they listen to it? How is the music mediated and disseminated? What does the music communicate, and how does it communicate these meanings?* Answering these questions for industrial may also assist us in understanding genre in general. I will

30 Such as, for instance, his interpretation of the phrygian mode as 'claustrophobic and unstable' (1993: 47).

elaborate further on this approach below, but it is necessary first to explain the use of a few problematic terms.

0.4 Recurrent Problematic Terms

Several problematic terms arise in the thesis, most of which are clarified as they arise. There are, however, several terms which are recurrent and need a particularly detailed explanation, including ‘subculture’, ‘community’, ‘fan’ and ‘mainstream’.

Because this is a genre study, I am concerned with all of the people engaged with the music of that genre, rather than with a narrowly conceived notion of ‘subculture’. Subcultural studies have often been exclusionary in terms of gender, class, age or degree of involvement.³¹ The notion of the audience as *youthful*, meaning “12-24” (Shuker 1998: 315-316), or the audience as *subversive and oppositional*, excludes so many who may use, enjoy and participate in the music in ways other than what has traditionally been referred to by these terms. For instance, like many who study popular music audiences, Weinstein focuses on youth, determining that adult heavy metal fans are ‘hard to come by’ (1991:110), even though many of those creating and mediating the majority of the music are adults (who are evidently not considered by Weinstein to be fans). She makes a distinction between heavy metal’s *audience* and heavy metal’s *subculture*, suggesting,

³¹ For instance, Thornton (1995) suffers largely from the latter two. McRobbie (1990), Middleton (1990:5-6) and Cohen (1993) have all criticised the emphasis on male youth in studies of popular music audiences.

For any music-based subculture it is an empirical question as to what proportion of the *audience* for the genre is made up of members of the *subculture* (2000: 98, my emphases).

For Weinstein, belonging to this subculture is partially reliant on age. Symptomatic of the problem, Shuker's *Key Concepts in Popular Music* (1998: 291) provides a definition of 'subculture' that tells us only 'see *youth* subculture', as if the two were always equal.³² As we will see later, participants in my own fan questionnaire (see below) ranged up to the age of fifty, with an *average* age of twenty-four, which is on the upper border of Shuker's 'youth' category.

Equally exclusive in his conceptions of music audiences, Mike Brake (1980: 12) establishes that one of the central elements of subcultures is 'style', which, according to Brake consists of 'image' (fashion), 'demeanour' (posture) and 'argot' (vernacular). Although some industrial fans undoubtedly share amongst themselves some specific styles of dress or image, certainly not all do. How then do I discuss those who do not participate in this aspect of fandom, or do not fall into this category of 'youth' or 'subculture', but still enjoy the music?

Whether fans participate completely in and are devoted to a genre according to the standards set by subcultural theory may have nothing to do with their commitment to the music, but rather may depend, for instance, on their economic status, family

32 For more on the many possibilities invoked by the term subculture, see Toffler's 'A Surfeit of Subcultures' chapter (1970). Hodkinson (2001) and Bennett (2000) also summarise the problems with the term 'subculture'.

obligations, age or gender. Rather than deeming these fans ‘inauthentic’, or devaluing their commitment by excluding them from study, I believe it is necessary to accept everyone involved as part of the audience, and therefore worthy of inclusion in a genre study.

Some fans use the word community to describe the interaction between them: ‘Industrial is, in a way, the music of outcasts. We listen to industrial and we have a community’ [Peter]. Adopting the term from its original Latin, *communis*, meaning ‘common’ I will use the term community, as Fabbri (1981) has, to denote a group of people sharing a common interest, in this case a particular musical interest. Members of the industrial community then are free to remain simultaneously parts of alternative musical, familial, social, religious, geographical, political or even other musical communities, while still sharing the musical interest with others in the industrial community. Unfortunately, ‘community’ is itself problematic.³³ Nevertheless, any other terminology suggested by other scholars seems equally problematic (see Hodkinson 2001, or Bennett 2000 for a summary), and so I have settled on the term community because it is, for the reasons just stated, most appropriate to the topic of this thesis.

The next of our problematic terms is ‘fan’. In this thesis, the term ‘fan’ will broadly refer to any member of this musical community, including artists, DJs and journalists.

33 For a discussion of the term community, see for instance, Cohen (1985: 15), Straw (1997: 494), Mayo (2000: 2, 36-45).

A fan *may* share a feeling that he or she is somehow connected to a network of people through his or her enjoyment of, or identification with the music, and subsequently *may* adopt or share traits of this network of people. On the other hand, a fan may enjoy the music on a solitary level and not become involved in other aspects of the community.

Fandom has often been denigrated, ridiculed and even idealised as culturally subversive. Matt Hills (2002: 28. *cf.* Moores 1993) questions the trend in English language cultural studies towards positing notions of fandom as 'resistive' culture.³⁴ Hills shows fans to be in a much more contradictory and convoluted position with regards to what they may appear to be resisting, whether this is called 'the mainstream', 'the system', or 'hegemony'. Nevertheless, fans themselves often feel that by becoming involved with one niche culture, they are defining themselves against some perceived, less differentiating mainstream. This mainstream perhaps does not exist in 'reality', in the sense that it reflects some real, homogenised majority,³⁵ but a view of mainstream *is* significantly maintained and reinforced by the mass media (by which I mean commercial, or corporate-owned media). The mainstream is what

34 As Ien Ang argues (1996: 8), the backlash against the Frankfurt School's conception of the audience as merely receptive (see below) to a preferred meaning led to an exaggeration of the audience's power to construct meaning, and promoted a 'cultural populism' that is most notable in the work of John Fiske.

35 As Williams indicated, 'There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses' (1961: 289).

Chomsky refers to as ‘what the propaganda system [i.e. mass media] *asserts* to be the norm’ (1989: 33 my emphasis).³⁶

The industrial community’s resistance against the mainstream is, as I will show in the following chapters, largely a resistance against those values and beliefs that are accepted and asserted by the mass media:

Industrial music is an escape from the monotonous repetitive onslaught of images and sounds from popular culture... my day is full of a general marketing ploy for products people don’t necessarily need, but will buy anyway. When I play industrial music, that goes away [Tony].

For many fans, distinctions about the music are often made based on the *record label*, more than on any definable musical-structural element. Corporate-owned or managed music is often the equivalent of mainstream to these fans:

All I can say is I don’t listen to mainstream industrial... Your NIN’s, Stabbing Westwards, Gravity Kills ... all these “mainstream” bands blow goats. I am sure my tastes are a bit more subversive than most [Chad].³⁷

36 The term ‘mainstreaming’ in media studies, in fact, is described as ‘the development of a common set of values among heavy television viewers’ (Kerbel 1995: 8).

37 All of these artists (Nine Inch Nails, Stabbing Westward and Gravity Kills) are on major labels. See Chapter Five for further discussion. I am in agreement with Björnberg (1987: 49-50) and Fabbri (1981) that the mainstream is itself also a kind of ‘supergenre’ (*överordnad genre*) incorporating many sub-genres. The distinguishing factor of the musical mainstream is that it is not driven by stylistic or generic change (Professor Line Grenier, Dept of Communication Studies, Université de Montréal, interviewed by Philip Tagg, 13/07/02).

Of course, the mass media—or mass culture in general—has long been seen by certain Marxist schools of thought as a tool of omnipotent repression.³⁸ The mass media were seen as something imposed *upon* the viewer. It is only recently that the mass media have been viewed as sites whose meanings the audience might to some extent create. In this sense, most *non*-mass media have become celebrated and idealised not only as resistive, but also as representative of some higher value:

Those with the capacity to discriminate [in media] are perceived as active contributors to culture, critical, self-conscious interpreters of complex cultural artefacts. So the tacit picture here is one constructed around concepts of them and us, centre and periphery, in which the vast ordinary population of mass society are unable to resist the all-powerful constraint of the might media (Tudor 1999: 25).

I do not wish to suggest here, then, that consumers of (and by extension, participators in) mass media are in any way cultural dupes. Indeed, many cultural theorists of recent decades believe that audiences take an active role in the process of interpretation and the production of meanings. However, the fact remains that there are information and values that are ‘suppressed or driven to the margins within the existing social and political order’ (Chomsky 1989: 136),³⁹ creating a kind of reinforced mainstream

38 Some members of the Frankfurt school and their followers, for instance, were well-known advocates of this view.

39 Chomsky writes that these values include ‘community, solidarity, concern for a fragile environment that will have to sustain future generations, creative work under voluntary control, independent thought, and true democratic participation in varied aspects of life’ (1989: 136). I quote from Chomsky in particular, as he is a recurrent (if occasional) figure in fan literature—for instance, the reading lists in liner notes to industrial compilations such as *Resist the Command* (2000). There is of course much other work that supports these ideas—see for instance Kerbel (1995) or Iyengar and Kinder (1987).

value system. As the following chapters will show, industrial fans often see themselves as part of an alternative to this mainstream, and as such *embrace* some of those marginalised values, to the extent that they also often *attack* the mainstream ideas that predominate in the mass media. Nevertheless, as we will also see in the thesis, there are elements of what could be called mainstream culture that are accepted—and even propagated—by industrial. So while there is some resistance against the mainstream, this process should be viewed as more of a *negotiation* than an outright mutiny.

The notion that audiences themselves might construct meaning from the media has come to be a subject of growing interest in cultural and media studies of the past two decades, and is a notion which has informed my own research. The previous structuralist assumption that texts had a preferred reading to be decoded gave way to a new post-structuralist theory of texts as having polysemic meanings largely determined by the audience. This change in focus from the text to the audience, or what has been referred to as the ‘return of the reader’ or the ‘death of the author’, is exemplified by the work of Hobson (1982) and Brunson and Morley (1978) and has been well documented (see for instance, Moores 1993, or Tudor 1999), so I will not reiterate this history here.

The focus on audiences in these studies is not without its own weaknesses, as the authors themselves have in some cases pointed out. It has been suggested that audience research might be more successful if it turned to *genre-based* theories of interpretation (see Morley 1980: 10, Moores 1993: 7). Radway (1987) has expanded

on Morley's ideas in the updated Introduction to her audience study, *Reading the Romance*, in which she writes,

A theory in which genre is conceived as a set of rules for the production of meaning... might therefore be able to explain why certain sets of texts are especially interesting to particular groups of people (and not others) ... This genre framework would focus attention on interdiscursive formations, that is, on questions about the kinds of cultural competences that are learned as a consequence of certain social formations and how these are activated and perpetuated within and through multiple, related genres and discourses (1987:10).

Radway's conception of genre indicates that perhaps genres can be a meeting ground between semioticians and sociologists, a reconciliation of the text/context dualism in cultural studies (see Ang 1996: 19). After all, the return of the reader is all well and good, but must the author necessarily 'die' in the process? What might we learn from an approach which considers both 'transmitter' (e.g. artist, producer) and audience, in the context of genre?

0.5 Theoretical Approaches

This idea of integrating the reader and producer, text and context, is central to the theory of social semiotics. As Hodge and Kress illustrate,

social dimensions of semiotic systems are so intrinsic to their nature and function that the systems cannot be studied in isolation... Maintream semiotics emphasizes structures and codes, at the expense of functions and social uses of semiotic systems, the complex interrelations of semiotic systems in social practice, all of the factors which provide their motivation, their origins and destructions, their forms and substance (1988:1).

There have been a growing number of works concerned with social semiotic approaches to popular music. Summaries of these works have been provided by Martin (1995), Middleton (1990) and Shepherd and Wicke (1997).⁴⁰ Unfortunately, many studies concerned with the integration of text and context have lacked the empirical evidence to support their theoretical approach. The two most notable of these works are Middleton (1990) and Shepherd and Wicke (1997), which I will discuss in Chapter Six. Most crucial to the discussion here is that few of the social semiotic texts just referred to approach musical meaning from within the context of genre (two exceptions being Walser and Krims, discussed above). Genres, as we have seen, have distinct social, behavioural, ideological, economic, semiotic and structural rules, and the empirical study of these rules may offer us a more illuminating understanding of the creation of meanings from cultural texts.

As I will be taking a relatively new approach to musical genre of combining text and context, I have privileged no one theoretical position, although the approach taken could be said to be loosely in a social semiotics framework. I have used an interdisciplinary, holistic combination of approaches, which takes account of empirical and hermeneutic aspects, sociological and semiotic methods. If there are many tools of methodology at our disposal, there should be no reason not to use as many of them as possible. After all,

40 Of course, ethnomusicology has a much longer history of concern with text and context—for instance, Lomax (1968), Keil (1969), Feld (1982), Blacking (1973), Ellis (1985).

Our individual methods may be flawed, but fortunately the flaws in each are not identical. A diversity of imperfection allows us to combine methods not only to gain their individual strengths but also to compensate for their particular faults and limitations (Brewer and Hunter, cited in Hodkinson 2001: 54).

I have therefore used, broadly speaking, not only an interdisciplinary approach, but an intermethodological approach, combining several contextual and ‘ethnographic’ methods with various forms of textual analysis.⁴¹ These methods will each be considered here, and discussed in further detail in the appendices and at appropriate points throughout the text.

0.6 Methodology

This section discusses in more detail the various research methods that I used to study industrial music, focusing firstly upon those methods relating to the study of industrial texts and secondly on the those methods used to analyse the audience.

0.6.1 Textual Methods: Content & Semiotic Analysis

Textual analysis in this thesis involves applying a combination of semiotic and content analysis to industrial music, videos, fan magazines, and other visual sources such as advertising and flyers. Each of these methods has its benefits:

Semiology can admittedly do a better job on the single [text] in isolation, because it is explicitly concerned with the “movement” of meaning with the text and between the text and the outside world. Content analysis can do little more

41 As Moores (1993: 3-5) indicates, the term ethnography has come to be used much more broadly than it was originally intended. For the purposes of this thesis I have used the term ‘ethnography’ to refer to all of the various methods of interacting with participants.

than “unpack” the surface meaning of [a text] in a rather obvious way; its strength stems from its ability to relate this information to the sample as a whole in a rigorous manner, and to detect patterns of similarities and differences (Leiss *et al.* 1990: 218).

Content analyses of the texts include systematic descriptions of lyrics, images, sound and are used for classificatory purposes and to determine and quantify the main thematic elements of various forms of text in order to make broader inferences about the genre. These methods are discussed in detail as each arises in the thesis.

Traditional musicology has been largely abandoned by popular music scholars due to its inappropriate or loaded terminology, notational centrality, abstractionism. (Middleton 1990: 4 *ff.* cf. Tagg 2000b). Formalist musicology, e.g. Schenkerian analysis, is largely dependent on formal tonal elements, and would be inappropriate for the study of industrial music. Moreover, traditional musicology relies significantly on the scholar’s own interpretations of the music, largely ignoring the audience. Tagg (1982a, 1999) has advanced methods for analysing popular music that accommodate genres with less tonal emphasis and include the interpretations of the audience or musicians and it is primarily for these reasons that I adopt his methods, discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

As well as content and semiotic textual analysis, there are several methods I use to situate the text in its context. I have suggested above that a combined approach examining not only the audience, but also the producers and mediators of texts will likely lead to a more comprehensive understanding of a musical genre. Equal attention cannot be paid to all of these areas, for simple reasons of time. Therefore, although I

interview and discuss the mediators and producers of industrial, using the ethnographic methods described below, I have chosen to focus more on the audiences who use and ascribe meaning to the texts.

0.6.2 Contextual Methods

I use several different methods of gathering and interpreting contextual data that may help to situate the textual analysis. The primary method is participant observation and several secondary methods are used to correct, verify or augment the understanding that has been gained through participant observation. These secondary methods were:

- the exploration and analysis of fan discussions in textual materials such as magazines, and web-sites;
- the gathering of statistical data on the audience via a questionnaire;
- interviews and discussions with those involved in the production, distribution or consumption of industrial music;
- a case study, involving a combination of ethnographic methods.

These methods will now be discussed in greater detail.

0.6.2.1 Participant Observation

My involvement with industrial music outlined above has been fairly extensive and long-term, covering most areas of production and consumption. However, it generally took place in South-Western Ontario from about 1985 to 1999, and was therefore indicative of a specific local area during a specific period of time. As one of the aims of

the thesis was to explore industrial on a more general level, for comparison purposes I therefore conducted research at various events in the UK, in particular Nottingham and London, during which time I travelled with several artists, including Inertia (UK), Project-X (Sweden) and Evil's Toy (Germany).

My position as a researcher in the UK was *close* to that of the 'critical outsider'. Although I still had a personal involvement with the music, I did not have a personal involvement with the fans, particularly because of my Canadian accent and associated cultural differences, my lack of acquaintances in the UK community, and my role as a researcher. I have therefore benefited from a more distanced and critical perspective on industrial as well as a more personal involvement with it. In this sense, my experience in Canada was that of a participant, and in the UK it was that of participant *observer*.

Several authors have raised issues regarding objectivity in relation to participant observation. Shank for instance asks,

Can an admittedly interested and involved ethnographer say something meaningful about the cultural practices in which he or she is involved? Or do the personal interests limit the validity of the ethnographer's interpretation? (1994: xi).

There have certainly been cases where studies that have developed from an academic's own fandom have suffered from unsubstantiated, celebratory claims designed to develop credibility for the genre. For instance, Tricia Rose's study of hip-hop attempts to stake a claim for 'black' music by trying to convince us of its innovative values—as in the use of sampling, for example (1994: 90)—while marginalising or ignoring the importance of outside, 'non-black' influences, including sampling techniques derived

from European avant-garde or popular music (see Poschardt 1995). Such factual fallacies detract from an otherwise useful study of the genre.

Nevertheless, many examinations of music-based communities, although adopting a more critical outsider approach (e.g. Cohen 1972, Hebdige 1979, or Thornton 1995) have lacked the sense of distinctive understanding or empathy of the insider. Having insider knowledge means that questions can be developed from one's own experience, questions that an outsider might not have thought to ask, and these questions can confirm or negate one's own experience in relation to that of other fans. Perhaps more important to a study with a scope as wide as this, is the fact that as an outsider I would have had to expend a significant amount of time developing a rapport with the audience before I could progress, whereas a knowledge of industrial meant that I had much easier access to discussion. Taking into consideration the limitations of the participant observer method, my interpretation of my own experience is elaborated on and put to trial by a series of other ethnographic methods outlined below.

0.6.2.2 Questionnaire

As an initial method of determining commonalities or differences between fans located in widely dispersed geographic areas, I used an internet questionnaire (see Appendix One for details and a copy of the questionnaire). The questionnaire was also aimed at a demographically diverse cross-section in order to determine general characteristics of industrial fans. This helped me to gain a better sense of who industrial fans were before I began the interviews that followed.

In order to examine fan characteristics, however, I first had to have some idea of what those characteristics were. Prior to formulating the questionnaire, I compared stereotypes of industrial fans with my own experience as a fan. I gathered these stereotypes from a well-known e-zine, 'Industrial 101', which published an 'introductory course' offering newcomers instructions on how to be a 'rivet-head' (i.e. industrial fan).⁴² With tongue in cheek, the e-zine highlights the stereotypes associated with for instance industrial lyrics, dress, attitude, dancing, and outside interests. These fan-based stereotypes were then compared with those put forth by the news media in the wake of the Columbine High massacre (see above). By comparing these sources and relating them back to my own experiences, I was able to draw up questions to determine if there was a common basis of experience amongst fans.

The questionnaire was circulated primarily over the internet. I first carried out a pilot among five industrial fan acquaintances and made adjustments to the questions to avoid any misinterpretations. I then posted a request to fill in the questionnaire to the three most active industrial newsgroups; rec.music.industrial, alt.music.industrial and alt.cyberpunk on the 12th of November, 2000 and re-posted two weeks later. After two months, the questionnaire was posted to the two most active artist-specific newsgroups, alt.music.nin, and alt.music.kmfddm (12th January, 2001). The purpose of

42 By September 1999 the site had over thirty thousand visitors. The *Industrial 101* pages had been assembled by fans from the US, Canada and the UK and therefore already offered a somewhat international, if Anglocentric, perspective. [Http://www.sonic-boom.com](http://www.sonic-boom.com) (10/09/99).

the second posting was to compare the fans of the more commercially successful artists with the previous responses.⁴³ Following this, and on the recommendation of some of the fans, several months later the questionnaire was posted to alt.gothic.cybergoth, uk.people.gothic, de.soc.subkultur.gothic, aus.culture.gothic, alt.gothic.music, de.rec.music.elektronisch, alt.music.ebm and alt.music.skinny-puppy (5th March 2001). Some of these newsgroups were more geographically specific, and therefore yielded results relating to specific national contexts. Some fans reported that they had re-circulated my invitation to fill in the questionnaire on some private newsgroups, or had e-mailed their friends about it, and so the questionnaire was circulated through a variety of electronic means.

The questionnaire was a widely distributable and affordable way of gathering information, and it lends itself to future replication, interpretation, and comparison. Nevertheless, obtaining a global sample of fans was difficult, and the responses clearly show the middle-class Anglo-American dominance of the internet newsgroups,⁴⁴

43 The fans were roughly consistent in responses, although there were a few minor discrepancies. For instance, the only fans to respond that they did not listen to industrial in languages they did not speak were from these newsgroups. The more commercial artists also tended to attract younger fans with less involvement. The responses from all newsgroups were consolidated into one database due to the minor nature of the discrepancies.

44 Recent statistics indicate that the one hundred most popular newsgroups are all English-language. For full statistics see <http://newsadmin.com/spamreports.htm> (29/07/01).

although the responses are also largely consistent with my experience and with previous studies (e.g. Donohoe 1993).⁴⁵

The questionnaire statistics indicated a similar pattern of response among the 140 participants. Although these responses cannot provide statistically reliable data, they can provide some circumstantial evidence, from which general viable hypotheses can be drawn. The discovery of general patterns of experience among fans, therefore, aided by my own experience presented earlier, and provided some further questions as a starting point for the interviews that followed.

0.6.2.3 Interviews

I interviewed forty fans selected from the questionnaire participants based on several criteria. The selected fans represented a wide range of involvement, gender, age, geographic areas, and they all stated a willingness to be interviewed at length. Interviews were generally unstructured (open) or slightly structured (guided), although some more formally structured interviews were carried out when I had a very specific list of questions to ask a large number of people. Interviews were also conducted with those contacts made through other means during the course of research, and I also drew upon interviews I had conducted prior to the start of the research. The details of these interviews can be found in Appendix One.

45 See [Http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/demographics/](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/demographics/) for internet statistics [10/06/01],

Fans were interviewed about specific issues based on their questionnaire responses. These interviews were conducted for the most part through e-mail, but also through telephone and in person in both Canada and the UK, and one interview was conducted live on air (WCSB Ohio). Using e-mail meant that the participants had time to reflect on the questions, and I had more time to ask more people the same questions. E-mail can ‘remove elements of sexism and racism ... [and] tends to give people time to digest what is said in a conversation and to think about their own responses’, but a ‘lack of physical cues can easily lead to misunderstandings’ (Cavicchi 1998: 17), and therefore great care was taken in formulating questions.

I quote from these interviews at several stages in the thesis. Some scholars have argued that too much emphasis has been accorded to fans’ views, criticising insider approaches to fan studies privileging what the group says and ‘ignoring the unreliability of their conceptions of beliefs’ (Thornton 1995: 105). Undoubtedly some fans may idealise or exaggerate elements of their involvement in industrial. Nevertheless, it is surely important also to recognise what fans do believe, what they *view* as the ideals. In this way we might understand what they hope to obtain from their involvement—what they hope it is or it will become—in order to determine their reasons for being involved. Therefore, I present fan opinions in places as examples of both what industrial *is*, and what it is struggling *to be*.

0.6.2.4 Artist Case Study

In order to take into account the views of industrial artists as well as fans, and develop a detailed understanding of industrial music-making, I carried out a case study. Ideally, case studies should have been carried out on more than one artist, however due to the scope of this study and my previous involvement, I chose one artist. The case study involved regular contact with the Swedish band Project-X. The selection of Project-X was based on several criteria:

1. *Popularity*: Since the start of this study Project-X have released their first album, several singles and two EPs which sold well and resulted in two North American tours and an award-winning video. The band has won several Swedish Alternative Music Awards and is growing in popularity around the world. There are frequent articles about the band in industrial fan magazines;
2. *Diversity*: Torny Gottberg, as the band's composer, was involved in several aspects of industrial, having also worked for labels and magazines. Torny had been involved with the music for about the same length of time as I had, and has extended knowledge about the community in Scandinavia and Germany through touring and through his own fandom;
3. *Representative*: Project-X were representative of perhaps the 'average' industrial band, not seeing the degree of fame achieved by, for instance, Nine Inch Nails, and yet having enjoyed a significant degree of success within the community. Due to an otherwise Anglocentric take on the industrial community,⁴⁶ Project-X were an important source to provide an angle from another culture's perspective;

⁴⁶ I say Anglocentric because, despite the input of fans from non-Anglo countries, the majority of my experience and that of those I had lengthy conversations with were other Anglos.

4. *Availability and Practicability*: Perhaps most crucial to the decision to select Project-X was the fact that the band were amenable to being interviewed at length.

The case study involved regular telephone conversations, travelling with the band for several concerts, and a lengthy series of discussions about the composition of their music. The latter discussions took place during one week in Älmhult, Sweden, where I observed Torny in his studio and took the opportunity to discuss the creation of industrial songs, and one song in particular detail (see Chapter Six).

0.7 Summary

The methods discussed above are all of equal importance to the understanding of genre, but they obviously cannot be dealt with all at the same time. Earlier, it was established that there are many determinant factors—or rules—that constitute a genre, including formal and technical rules, semiotic rules, behavioural rules, social and ideological rules, and economic and juridical rules. These sets of rules are not mutually exclusive: elements of each may cross over with elements of others. As such, each set of rules is addressed to some extent in every chapter.

At its widest structural level, the thesis is roughly broken into three parts. The first part deals with the textual, structural determinants of the industrial genre (the music, or the formal and technical rules). The second part undertakes a study of the contextual, socio-economic and cultural determinants of the genre (the history, the audience, the marketing and dissemination, or the behavioural, social, ideological, and economic

rules). The final part of the thesis synthesises these first two parts in order to examine the reception and communication of the music, its semiotic rules.

More specifically, the thesis is broken down into the constituent parts of my main questions: Chapter One deals with ‘What is industrial?’ by examining the musical parameters of the genre. ‘Where does industrial come from?’ is the subject of Chapter Two, which situates industrial in terms of its historical, social and cultural context. Chapters Three and Four attempt to answer the questions, ‘Who listens to it, why do they listen to it, what do they believe in, what does it mean to them?’ Chapter Five asks ‘How is the music marketed, mediated and disseminated?’ Chapter Six explores ‘What does the music communicate?’ by carrying out a series of audience reception tests. Finally, ‘How does the music communicate these meanings?’ is the subject of Chapter Seven.

The Introduction has raised several aims of this thesis. It is my primary aim to bring together both textual analysis and ethnographic methods to try to determine what industrial is, where it came from, who listens to it, why they listen to it, what it communicates, and how it communicates these meanings. In doing so the intention is to learn not only about industrial, but also about genre more generally, and about methodology within popular music studies. As stated above, one important hypothesis of this study is that combining ethnographic approaches to the audience with semiotic methods might tell us more about not only the audience and the music, but also about how the two integrate in genres.