

Chapter Three

THE INDUSTRIAL MUSIC COMMUNITY: The Creation of an 'Alternative World'

3.0 Introduction: Who listens to industrial?

This chapter will explore who the fans of industrial are, how they use the music and what the music means to them. The industrial fan community is far more diverse than can be presented here, and therefore some generalisation will be necessary in order to discuss the broader trends. These broader trends revolve around the basic premise that industrial fans identify themselves with the position of the outsider, in order to differentiate themselves from the mainstream. This differentiation process includes the creation of an anti-mainstream alternative world in which they can feel comfortable.

In order to explore these points, I have used several approaches to gather empirical information on fans and their views. As I explained in the Introduction, I constructed a questionnaire which, combined with my own previous experience, enabled me to make some general inferences about the fans. I then confirmed or negated these inferences using several means, including interviews and information on fans gathered from fanzines and newsgroups.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ For procedure and rationale see the Introduction. For the questionnaire see Appendix One.

I will first explore how fans are positioned in Western society in regards to nationality, race, education and employment. Following this, I will explore how many fans feel alienated from Western society in terms of their interests, sexual preferences and beliefs about gender roles. I will then explore various strategies many fans have used to overcome this sense of alienation.

3.1 The Position Within: The Invisible Outsider

Questionnaire responses were collected from eighty-seven North Americans, forty-six (mainly Western) Europeans, four Australians, and three East-Asians.¹⁶⁰ Despite the fact that the results reflect some of the restrictions of the English-language questionnaire, these results do reflect the areas where industrial music is most popular—Western Europe and North America.

Racial composition was also relatively homogeneous. Participants were 86% Caucasian, 6% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 2% mixed-race and 1% First Nation.¹⁶¹ While there are bands with non-white members (e.g. Inertia, Code Industry), and the audience in some areas is quite racially mixed (South America and Asia in particular),

160 During the course of research I came across industrial fans from more than half of the geographic world, including the entire North American and European continents, Russia, Turkey, Israel, Japan, Hong Kong, Mauritius, South Africa, India, some of South America (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Peru), Australia and New Zealand.

161 These are approximate figures. Several participants chose to leave the field blank, or insisted it was irrelevant.

the music's Western audience remains predominantly white. Similarly homogeneous were the economic backgrounds of the participants. Nearly all participants could be categorised as middle to upper-middle class,¹⁶² and most had entered or completed post-secondary education.¹⁶³ Most of the participants who had finished their education worked largely in the service industries (20% in retail, bars or restaurants), in the arts (18%), or in information technology (another 18%).¹⁶⁴

These statistics indicate that most fans are invariably positioned, at least outwardly (from a traditional, historical viewpoint), in what is arguably one of Western capitalism's most privileged positions—that of the white, Western, educated middle-class (and largely male, see below). Despite this positioning, many respondents felt in some way alienated or ostracised from the prevailing Western ideologies and social norms, as we saw in the Introduction; 'industrial is, in a way, the music of outcasts' [Peter].

162 Based on a question about parental occupation, and the likely associated pay scale.

163 Only 13% of those over 18 had not attended post-secondary education. 41% were still in education. In the United States, current averages are roughly 62% of the population attending post-secondary education, therefore these are higher than average. [Http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97984.html](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97984.html) (10/02/02). I make most references in this chapter to North American statistics, as these saw the greatest number of responses.

164 Although they are therefore largely underemployed, this is not unusual for today's university graduates, particularly those from the Arts and Humanities, which many fans had chosen to study. For statistics on prospects for university graduates, see for example [Http://www.jobfutures.ca](http://www.jobfutures.ca) (04/03/01). For further information on recent employment opportunities in the West in general, see Kline (2000: 233).

For instance, fans showed little or no interest in popular pursuits like sports and shopping,¹⁶⁵ while indicating a strong interest in literature, cinema, music,¹⁶⁶ and computers. Despite being involved in music, most (76%) fans did not watch music television, and many pointedly stated that they hated television in general.¹⁶⁷ While, as we shall see, much of the mass media comes under fire by the industrial community, television is viewed with particular suspicion. The band Snog's cover for the album *Dear Valued Customer*, for instance, along with a tag line 'Consumption will fill the void', depicts a woman holding a television with the words 'Mind Control' on it. Furthermore, an advertisement for an industrial club in an early edition of *Industrial*

165 Based on a hierarchical list of interests in the questionnaire and in interviews. Compare this with one poll that found that 93% of US American teenage girls rate shopping as their favourite activity, and will spend an average of two years of their life watching just television commercials (de Graaf et al, 2001: 14-15, 149). Fan statements in the rec.music.industrial newsgroup illustrate the feeling towards sports: 'we're computer nerds and technology-geeks... and we don't hate anyone... (except the bullies and jocks that traumatized us in high school maybe)' from: alien encounter. Teknik14@oanet.com. (13/09/99).

166 More than half played an instrument themselves, everything from the guitar to the Theremin, various types of computer-generated music and one response that listed 'bangy things'.

167 In fact, one fan went so far as to put 'smashing televisions' down as a hobby, and some fans referred to MTV as 'empty-V'. It could be in particular a dislike of MTV's main purpose as advertising (see Barber 2001). Of course, in dystopia television is nearly always viewed as a form of social control. As Barber points out, 'Television was a state monopoly not only in Communist countries, but in many Western democracies as well, where its potential influence, educational or corrupting, was deemed too important to leave to the private sector (2001: 112-113).

Nation magazine warns fans, 'TV: Unsafe on any channel'.¹⁶⁸ A dislike for television

also arises in interviews with industrial artists:

I listen with attention to the music I don't like; I analyse what I don't like. It isn't a problem of style. I hate music for what it represents. The social group, the background, the marketing ... I hate all this attitude. Sometimes I watch MTV just to see what I hate (Einstürzende Neubauten in Cangioli 1993: 11).

In a way, the most evil instrument now is television, and the saviour will be the home video camera. Before [home video cameras] only the richest people had control of the TV and they decided what you saw—including the disease of advertising. But now because of video cameras in the USSR and the video camera that caught [Rodney King] getting beat up by the cops in LA, the power is beginning to even out. Before, it was just information gushing out of your TV, and for the last thirty years we ate it up... But when I watch TV now, I'm screaming at it, "Shut Up!" and "Fuck you!" I hope that people do the same. There has to be equalization within our media. We can't have all the information going one way (Dwayne Goettel, Skinny Puppy. *Mondo 2000*, #4/91).

Television is, within the industry of consciousness (in addition to the school system) the leading moulder of uniform thought processes. The television program is fundamentally centralized, with one broadcaster and a mass of receivers/consumers, while communication between them is disabled...Television... functionally decreases analytical capabilities and emotional response, causes apathy and insensitivity, and as such, psychologically edifies and fortifies the consumer (Laibach).¹⁶⁹

Being uninterested in popular pursuits like television, shopping¹⁷⁰ and sports is not the only factor in the fans' feelings of alienation. Many fans' opinions about sex and gender roles are also views that have been marginalised. There was a fairly significant

168 *Industrial Nation* #5/92: 19.

169 *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (1991: 50). Note the reference to Hitler's one broadcaster and mass of receivers. Laibach frequently play with or make reference to fascism, which is discussed in Chapter Four.

170 That is shopping in general—many of them of course enjoy shopping for industrial-related goods.

proportion of non-heterosexual participants (about 20% of those who answered the question), particularly females, who were 46% non-heterosexual.¹⁷¹ Generally, a strong anti-homophobic attitude exists amongst most fans, and some artists work towards an awareness of gay issues in their lyrics, seeing homophobia as integrated in a wider cultural pattern of oppression:

My old band used to do a lot of work in the lesbian and gay community in San Francisco. For some reason, though we had a cut dealing specifically with these issues, it didn't make it to the record. A lot of lesbians and gays who looked to us said, "Hey, there's a band that understands that the community of oppression extends beyond racism and sexism into sexual preferences and homophobia—and they forgot us, they fucked us." So, we're trying to be a bit more comprehensive this time. It's not something we leave out in terms of the way we deal with people, but obviously it was left out of the discourse in the way our band publicly represents itself. We're trying to be more conscious of the whole scope of oppression—race relations, gender relations, sexual preference relations and even species relations (Consolidated in *EFN* March 1991).

Many fans also rejected conventional heterosexual gender roles. Some fans pointed to an androgyny offered by industrial as a way out of typical gender patterns:

171 Compare this to a suggested international average of between one and ten percent. The *Washington Post* suggests ten percent of US American men and five percent of American women are homosexual (see http://www.familyresearchinst.org/FRI_AIM_Talk.html 22/07/02). The percentage of non-heterosexuals then is much higher in the industrial community than that of the population in general. Of course, I am generalising by placing all gays, lesbians and bisexuals into one category, but my discussion is limited and therefore simplified. Many early artists made their start playing in gay bars, and were influenced by gay synth-pop acts like Bronski Beat, Pet Shop Boys and Soft Cell in particular. Marc Almond had even worked with some early industrial artists. For more on industrial and its association with the gay community, see Lee (1995), or Gill (1995).

I see industrial as being somewhat androgynous ... It's more about mental strength and acuity than physical might. The music is empowering; whether you're a 90-pound weakling or a 200-pound bodybuilder, female or male, passive or aggressive, it's about what's *inside* [Heather].

Women involved in the community sometimes take on so-called 'masculine' traits in other areas of their lives:

I have always had more aptitude in all things "male" than most other females. Math, science, computers, spatial visualisation, logic. I've also always been somewhat of a tomboy—more into physical endeavours [Heather].

[I am] highly independent. I also run my own business, and have for most of my working life. I am very uncomfortable unless I am in control, or [with] someone I trust with my interests. In general, I am very untraditional and I ∇ not see myself as filling traditional roles, either male or female in any aspects of my life [Karin, Collide].

Some males took on more so-called 'feminine' roles:

I find many of the men on the scene to actually be quite sensitive (promoter Michelle Anderson, in Reesman 1999: 46).

I can't think of anyone who would call Trent Reznor "macho" ;) You know, I never got a "macho" vibe in this scene [Maria, Battery].

Unconventional gender or sexual imagery is common in industrial-related magazines and fanzines—for instance, a cover photo depicting a popular male EBM artist with a baby (front cover, *Orkus* 7-8 July/August 1998), or male or female same-sex partners together (back cover, *EBM* #1). There are, however, fewer females than males participating in the industrial community, particularly when it comes to music making. Although involvement in clubs, concerts and fanzines is relatively evenly divided in

terms of gender, the majority of those creating the music are male.¹⁷² Despite this predominance of males, women in bands have remarked on being welcomed, rather than discouraged from music making (or otherwise participating). For example, Battery have commented that ‘the people who dealt with us at all never gave me any shit for being a woman’ [Maria, Battery]. Another artist responded, ‘Everything about the industrial scene is alternative, so you’re not likely to find it [sexism] very easily’ [Kristin, Evulva]. In fact, some of the most popular bands have female members.¹⁷³

There is also an annual awards show well-known to fans called the Female in Industrial and Goth (FIG) awards. The FIG winners are awarded a statuette trophy, described in one fan magazine as a manipulation of ‘the ultimate symbol of socio-cultural female alienation: the Barbie doll, and using circuitry boards, micro chips, nails, wires and electric tape [they are] mutilated and mutated ... into wicked, fetish Barbie-Borg characters’ (*Side-Line* #25: 63).¹⁷⁴

I have also seen magazine reviews written by males that demanded more female involvement in industrial compilations (for instance, *Prospective* #3 2000: 45). In

172 For instance, at various club events in the UK that I attended in April of 2000 and 2001 in London, there was an evenly divided gender distribution.

173 Including, for example, Throbbing Gristle, Decoded Feedback, Battery, Flesh Field and Collide.

174 As we will see, it is particularly important that fans make a direct connection between their alienation and those ideals presented by the mass media.

general, there is a strong feminist current in the community, amongst both male and female fans:

I know that Al Jourgensen [of Ministry] hates us because we've gone on the record to say that his music promotes the same kind of aggressive, fascist violence that goes on at his shows like heavy metal does. His shows uphold abusive treatment of women, when they have women up on stage dancing in underwear. We get people asking us and writing us saying, "Why does this band do this? This is industrial music, it's supposed to be cool" (Adam, Consolidated in *EFN* March 1991).

Many fans then, despite *appearing* to be statistically within the mainstream, are also positioned outside it in some way, or at least they *feel* that they are. This alienation from the mainstream is overcome by various tools of empowerment which I will now discuss. One way of accomplishing and expressing this sense of difference is to *outwardly*—visually—distinguish oneself.

3.2 The Alternative World: The Visible Outsider

There is no distinct industrial 'dress code', and fashion styles vary between geographic areas. As one artist once described, 'I'll get up on stage in my boxer shorts. I look like a normal guy' or as another artist said, 'black, just black; it doesn't matter as long as it's black'.¹⁷⁵ Certainly not many industrial fans are outwardly identifiable. For instance, at one stage in my research I remarked to a Manchester-based fan that I had not met anybody in Liverpool who listened to the music. His reply was, 'well how

¹⁷⁵ Gary Dassing (Mentallo & The Fixer), and Volker Lutz (Evil's Toy). Ironically, it often seems to be that apart from onstage, the artists dress up less than the audience does. One German artist said that he could not believe all the 'freaks' that were at the UK clubs.

would you know?', implying that many industrial fans are not always outwardly identifiable. Whereas some people dress to show their allegiance to particular musical genres, industrial fans can look like any combination of fashion styles, or none at all. The audience, in that sense, is not necessarily obvious. There are however roughly five main recurrent fashion inclinations, what I will call the dystopian style, the cyborg style, the worker style, the militaristic style and the fetish style. It should be pointed out, however, that these styles are primarily for club going, concerts and press photos. During everyday life the same people are much more 'normal' looking, which may be partly due to the constraints of employment. Style is nevertheless quite important to club-going:

some [fans] seem more concerned about their clothes and fashion than the actual music, and it seems as though they would probably be as happy dancing to other genres so long as they can get into a club wearing their Cyberdog gear, hair extensions and UV make-up! ... This is positive for the scene though as long as they keep supporting the music! [Lisa].

The different fashion styles are to some extent inseparable, as fans may combine elements of each. The most common fashion style is a kind of amalgamation, generally reminiscent of the dress of the main characters in many dystopian films. This includes dreadlocks or partially-shaven heads, long trench-coats, huge metal-and-leather boots, even the incorporation or imitation of armoured motorcycle gear (à la *Mad Max*) or the gestapo-like attire of *The Matrix*.

A cyborg-like fashion style is also appropriated from science fiction, developed through the incorporation of metal and plastic into the attire, sometimes combined with a fetish style.



Figure 3.1 Evil's Toy Photo: <http://www.evilstoy.de> (05/06/01)

The worker style, incorporating suit-and-tie or factory clothes, probably stems from Kraftwerk, and remains common to electronic music.¹⁷⁶ One fan describes, 'If you look like you belong in an old Soviet war factory, you've just about done it... try to incorporate things from the USSR if you can'.¹⁷⁷ Rather than a suit-and-tie indicating acquiescence to the mainstream, as it might suggest, the original meaning of the style is mocked through its combination with shaven heads and multiple piercings, or with obviously out-of-place combat pants or boots, or the simple fact it is a woman wearing the suit. The style is also purposely used to ridicule typical gender roles. Battery for instance have commented that 'new female artists on the scene are going to prove that ... women don't have to wear a leather bra to be on stage—they can also wear a tie' (Reesman, 1999: 44).

176 Possibly related to a similar idea developed by Kraftwerk during their *Die Mensch Maschine* period in order to create a more disciplined and militant look (Bussy 1993: 100).

177 <http://sykospark.net/php4/php/rivethead/> (10/10/01).

It's an easy way out to get up there and wiggle around and be a girl and have big hair. But I've never felt comfortable with that ... I'm not saying women can't be sexual and explore that as well, I just think ... well, just look at MTV ... we just don't need that anymore (Battery, *Permission* #9 1997: 78).

The style has also been used as an ironic industrial in-joke. For instance, Laibach have used the style ironically, in this case for a promotional image, entitled 'Our name might be dirty, but we are clean':¹⁷⁸



Figure 3.2: Laibach. 'Our name might be dirty, but we are clean'

Quite often, work-wear will be combined with military apparel, such as combat trousers, heavy combat boots, camouflage or partially-shaven heads. This militarist style first became popularised by Throbbing Gristle, and then by Front 242 (possibly one reason why they were confused with fascists (see Chapter Four), and remains particularly popular amongst neo-folk fans and in former East Germany.

There is also a certain "naive" kind of fascination with martial themes, which seems very wrong for western Europeans. And in fact, many of the German bands from this scene are from

178 The title is a reference to the fact that the use of the name 'Laibach', German for the city of Ljubljana, was banned by the Yugoslav government. Laibach responded with the statement 'our name might be dirty, but we are clean'. The story is explained in the liner notes to the album *M.B. 21 December 1984* (1997).

the former German Democratic Republic, where they had (in my view) totally naively continued the ideas of educating the youth for military service and primed them for resistance against the "fascist west", i.e. the capitalist world. This had continued until the 1990 reunification, at which point all these things suddenly became meaningless and were discontinued. However, the images are still very present in many people in the east. I think this accounts for a great deal of the uniform fetishism, and in fact most of the people I observed at concerts who wore uniform-like clothes had an accent which clearly identified them as coming from the eastern part of Germany [Mark].¹⁷⁹

But there are also inseparable qualities that the militaristic has with the mechanistic.

Front 242 explained,

Terrorism is about a group of people, a *disciplined* unit, working against other people. And that's how we feel in relation to pop music. We use the idea of terrorism because it conveys a very *strong impression of power and energy* (in Reynolds 1990: 162, my emphasis).

And according to Simon Reynolds,

Front 242's form of survivalist resistance is what has been dubbed "micro-fascism": *disciplining* your own body and soul along military lines, maximizing your *efficiency*, erasing doubt, *mechanizing* your responses in order to achieve *infallibility* (1990: 163, my emphasis).

When Laibach were asked about their militarist stylistic aesthetic, they also reflected a similar sentiment:

The militant is not necessarily bad. A militant stance is one reflecting *stability, decision, an immutable* fact. Our stage appearance is not only militant, it is *mechanised* (*Neue Slowenische Kunst* (1991: 57), my emphasis).

179 For more about the collapse of communism and the rise of the right in East Germany, see Hockenos (1993), or Bredel 2002 (see pp. 321-347 of Bredel for an analysis of the Columbine incident).

The qualities emphasised in the above quotes associated with the militaristic are also ones frequently associated with machines and dystopia, and will need to be explored further in Chapter Seven.¹⁸⁰

Uniforms also have a particular place in the world of sexual fetish,¹⁸¹ especially the idea of discipline and its links with bondage, domination and sado-masochism (BDSM).¹⁸² The fetish look, less common in industrial than in goth, is usually limited to latex or PVC tops, leather halters, or PVC/leather trousers and skirts combined with many body piercings and tattoos, although some men and women go to varying extremes such as wearing tight corsets, etc. The image of a fan below combines traditional fetish materials of PVC and leather with a slightly militaristic/cyborg style of black, heavy boots and armbands:

180 'It is the uniform's true function to manifest and ordain order in the world, to arrest the confusion and flux of life, just as it conceals whatever in the human body is soft and flowing...' (Hermann Broch in Steele 1996: 182). cf. also Theweleit (1989).

181 'The erotic connotations of military uniforms derive, in part, from the sexual excitement that many people associate with violence and with the relationship between dominance and submission' (Steele 1996: 180)

182 There is a distinction between BDSM and fetish. Sexual fetish is defined as 'when an inanimate object or part of the body becomes the focus of arousal in preference to a person' (Gamman and Makinen 1994: 27). BDSM involves the interaction between people and therefore does not fall into the category of fetish, however as fetish is often associated with rubber, leather and PVC, it is quite closely linked to BDSM, and, due to my limited discussion of the subject, I will amalgamate the two here.



Figure 3.3: 'Fetish Style'

Photo: <http://www.funprox.com>
(10/06/01)

As Hodgkinson found in his study of goths (2001: 104), despite taking on what some might call overtly sexual attire, the sexual threat of wearing provocative clothing is not present in industrial clubs. Fans would agree; 'The main thing in common with gothic and fetish clubs is that you can turn up wearing whatever you want, or as little as you want, and no one gives you a second glance' (Deranged Psyche 1997: 46).

There are not many industrial fans involved in BDSM although there are some industrial artists who produce music specifically with BDSM clubs in mind.¹⁸³ Most industrial magazines include advertisements for fetish wear, and several, including *Orkus*, *Side-Line* and *Dark Life* have included articles about the relationship between BDSM and industrial. *Side-Line* hypothesised several ideological connections with the music, including intellectualism ('S/M is the highest intellectual form of sexuality'), avant-gardism ('A kind of avant-garde of sexuality') and politics ('To have control and

183 Including for instance, Die Form and Fetisch Park. See Deranged Psyche (1997).

to give it away, has also to do with politics, so maybe S/M is the political side of sexuality') (Deranged Psyche 1997: 46). Most significantly, perhaps, is that BDSM is not accepted by mainstream society and therefore takes on an aura of opposition.¹⁸⁴

One particular element of fetish and BDSM popular amongst industrial fans is body piercing. Body modification, although in more recent years somewhat of a popular fashion, remains one way to differentiate oneself from the 'rest' of society by physically and often permanently announcing oneself as different, while at the same time marking oneself out to belong to a specific 'tribe'.¹⁸⁵ As one club-goer points out, in Steele's book on fashion and fetish, 'This is about being in people's faces. It's me saying, "*I am a freak. I am queer. I'm not like you*"' (1996: 161). Cultural theorist Mark Kingwall

184 For instance, Bill Thompson, lawyer and author of a book on the legalities of BDSM hypothesised that 'SM's threat to the "established order" which persecutes devotees follows from the fact that the roles adopted poke fun both at the stereotypical norms covering orientation, gender and class, and at the political system which cannot handle a concept of power unconnected to a real form of privilege' (1994: 148). Many others have linked sexual behaviour and 'deviancy' to politics. Baker has pointed out that in dystopias, 'sexual acts become the locus of prohibition and control' (1998: 98). Collins (1973: 47-48) also points out the use of sex as a politically subversive tool in the work of Zamyatin. Perhaps, by making sexuality explicit, the fetish style appropriates some of the power associated with overcoming that loss of control. See also Marcuse (1974), Gramsci in Naremore and Brantlinger (1991:45), or Foucault in Booker (1994:13).

185 Also seen of course in tattooing. 'Tattoos have distinct anti-authority appeal ... tattooing today [still] has an aura of the forbidden about it' (Edgar and Dingman in Vale and Juno 1989: 203).

likewise believes popular piercing to be part of a 'celluloid-based "dystopian-chic" popularised by movies such as *Mad Max* or *Blade Runner*' (in Terrien 1997: 2).¹⁸⁶

There is a common denominator in all of these styles, particularly fetish wear and militaristic dress: they show a rejection of popular fashion. By dressing the part of the outsider, those who would otherwise not outwardly be the outsiders in our society, who represent the 'status quo' and therefore have no outward signs of alienation—particularly white males—can put themselves in the role of the rejected, the outsider. They can therefore immediately be viewed as against 'the system', if only symbolically.

3.3 Ideological Distinctions

In addition to the physical distinctions made by fans, there are ideological distinctions concerning the music itself.¹⁸⁷ Many fans think the music differentiates itself significantly from most commercially successful chart music, and there are elements that *do* differentiate it, as we saw in Chapter One. The fans' enjoyment of the music is partially based on this sense of difference.

Examinations of how music is used are often left out of analyses of both music and audiences, but they are highly important (see Middleton 1990: 247-249). These uses affect not only the music's structure, but also its marketing, and the age level of fans.

186 For alternative views, see Boyd (1995), Dwyer (1999: 114), or Terrien (1997).

187 By 'ideology' I mean any system of beliefs or ideas.

For example, EBM's success has meant that dance-orientated songs or remixes are more likely to be produced by industrial artists, with specific elements designed for club atmospheres—more compressed percussion, and less reverb, for instance—while the reliance on exposure to new material largely through industrial dance clubs means EBM fans are typically those that attend clubs.¹⁸⁸

Fans reported using industrial music in a wide variety of ways. Home and personal stereo use were the most popular listening venues, followed by clubs, parties, cars and work, indicating a wide range of listening practices, but significantly, the most frequent use was when fans were alone.¹⁸⁹ Although largely dependent on style, the music seems to fulfil both a corporeal and an intellectual need—hence the fans' distinction of some styles of industrial as 'Intelligent Dance Music'.¹⁹⁰ Many fans agreed that the music was very important to their lives, and reported using the music as an empowerment or survival tool to help them get through the day:¹⁹¹

Most of the time when I listen to industrial music, I feel deeply empowered about myself, like I can take on the world. For a few songs, I get a feeling of happiness, but over a general feeling of socially-conscious rage [Tony].

188 For more about how structure might impact use, see Rösing (1984).

189 The uses of industrial music was also a topic of discussion in rec.music.industrial. Subject: Best way to listen to industrial music? Original post from N. Scott Kozyra (nattwerk@sprynet.com) (16/02/98).

190 Although 'Intelligent Dance Music', or IDM, has become a term encompassing some non-industrial styles and is narrowing in terms of its meaning, the term was originally adopted by industrial fans to describe the industrial dance styles.

191 This is not to suggest, of course, that this is unique to industrial.

It makes me feel empowered, strong, maybe a little more aggressive than I normally am [Heather].

The opportunity to express "my" music through DJing makes all the day to day nonsense tolerable [DJ Richard].

In fact, many saw industrial as not just a musical interest, but something much more integrated into their lives: 'My father still thinks I'm going through a "phase" ... I think eight years is more like a lifestyle choice' [Scott].

The feelings of empowerment are indicative of an empathy or sympathy with the lyrics or music, or from the sense of being part of a community. To reinforce community boundaries and ensure a degree of stability, a series of ideological distinctions about the music and community are common. Several fans indicated that the conceptual ideas behind the music were as important to them as the finished product.

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. Industrial can sound like anything at all ... There is no industrial sound. Anyone who tells you there is knows nothing. ... Bands like VNV Nation are simply using old EBM/Techno methods and adding bad goth vocals. These people are killing industrial. They ruin its name by trying to attach a sound to a concept of continual change and experimentation, with cynical soulless re-hashing of old ideas [Edward].

The music is often not easily instantly likeable, lacking a traditional melodic hook, and can sound 'difficult', or 'confusing'. This absence of immediate accessibility was appreciated by fans. While some fans found the music immediately agreeable, many were attracted to it for other reasons, such as an interest in the community.

It did take me a while to get into industrial. I "fell" into it in steps ... At first, a newer, more difficult work sounded "weird" or "difficult," but still somehow fulfilling with a sort of mystique. The music then grew on me [Andy].

It took me a while to get into. I liked goth first; I thought it was more complex. But then, as I became more politically radical and involved in the philosophy of technology, I found

industrial more appealing and much more complex [David Parisi].

Industrial is very difficult to get into. The ideas and ethos become more apparent if you spend the time and effort to appreciate the concepts and drive behind the artist's work ... In order to appreciate what they are doing you must understand their paradigm. This takes effort and intelligence [Richard].

Whether the music actually *is* more complex is perhaps irrelevant. What is important is that the fans respond to the perceived lyrical or musical complexity as a virtue differentiating industrial from other styles.

Industrial fans also perceive the music to be individualistic, innovative and experimental. Some consider artists who are not innovative to be outside the sphere of industrial:

There are two tiers to industrial: stylistic and conceptual. Stylistic [artists] only care for the surface, image etc ... There is the other "pure" industrial side. The one that believes in the ethos of creating something new, original, that challenges your perception of the world and music, and says something from the heart. Skinny Puppy are often imitated but the people who imitate them are not industrial. They have no ethos behind it: They are simply copying a form, the antithesis of industrial [Edward].

In fact, some fans were so against the idea of conformity that they did not consider themselves to be a part of any unified industrial community, and saw even labelling it *as a community as a sign of some form of uniformity*:¹⁹²

192 Of course, individualism is relative, and when such an emphasis is placed on being different, there arises a uniformity in their anti-conformity, as R.U. Sirius pointed out, 'If you want to shock an industrial culture audience out of its complacency, show up dressed in a pink clown suit and sing Donovan songs' (1999: 154).

I've always experienced myself at the fringe of many ideas and movements, which for me made perfect sense in my very personal interpretation of the various themes and the blending together. But I always knew that my ideas were very non-canonical, so I was never part of any scene. I've taken much of my personal beliefs upon myself alone. I usually was able to share, but only to a certain degree. I guess I don't blend in easily, but perhaps this is because to me there's always so much more bullshit involved with the one core idea I identify with than I am willing to tolerate. Therefore I have decided to be on my own, to find my individual expression by taking what I need, but without getting caught in the web of "if you wanna be one of us, then...." In situations like this I am only too happy to state that I *don't* want to be one of them [Mark].

A careful border patrolling by the industrial community can sometimes be seen (for instance in fanzines—see Chapter Five), in order to ensure that the ideals of industrial and its sense of community are maintained. Industrial has never 'sold out' by achieving much commercial success, and for fans it therefore maintains its integrity as a style that is not dictated by capital. Combined with the community's anti-capitalist political ideology (see Chapters Four and Five), this element of originality and distinction from mainstream music becomes an important defining element of the genre. Originality, as indicated by Duncombe, is 'the product of an attempt to create something—anything—that has not already been manufactured by the commercial culture industry, and moreover, will be difficult for it to co-opt' (1997: 149).

Any kind of movement can rapidly be swallowed by our consumption industry! There's so much money on the table and it's easy to manipulate people when playing with their weaknesses ... See what happened to rock, a so-called "anti-culture"? This is why I want to stay isolated and independent (Philippe Fichot *Side-Line* #27: 9).

I've tried [in lectures] to use industrial as an example of anti-capitalist art that's insulated itself from the market by not being commercially viable on a large scale, almost as if it exists below the radar screen. There are other movements like this, but all of them have been at one point or another trapped and exploited by mass culture ... [Rock] is stylized posturing that pretends to be genuine. I've never bought the image of a suffering millionaire rockstar, or the lie that such a person can any longer relate to their target audience. With industrial, the audience and the artist aren't really that far apart, and they don't have a team of marketing

consultants to sculpt the lyrics to appeal to a broad demographic base [David Parisi].

It has been an important criterion for some fans, therefore, that industrial remain at least somewhat unpopular, and largely outside the sphere of the major label commercial music industry. While most genres have had independent labels which enjoyed partnerships with, or were subsidiaries of major labels, industrial has never really gained much major label support. Major labels have rarely bought out artists or labels that have catered exclusively to an industrial audience.¹⁹³ Those labels that have been absorbed by majors attempt to maintain—even if superficially—some ideological stance against it, as the slogan of Invisible Records suggests; ‘Inside the system and fucking with it’.

Stephen Lee (1995) writes that Wax Trax!, possibly the most commercially successful industrial label of the late 1980s, rarely sold more than 40 000 copies of a release, however, there was a big change about 1990. According to Lee (1995: 22), most of Wax Trax!’s ‘previously unique or shocking elements turned up with increasing regularity on releases put out by the majors, or, more specifically, by subsidiaries of the majors that were designed to “look and feel” like indie labels’. Many of these changes directly affected music genres such as industrial by using some of those elements that previously helped to distinguish the mainstream from other genres.

193 There are exceptions of course—such as Wax Trax!, partnered with TVT/Interscope/Nothing/etc. (subsidiaries of Island/PolyGram), although the label never exclusively offered industrial music. Artists to sign to majors include for instance Skinny Puppy, Nitzer Ebb, Nine Inch Nails.

Industrial artists who were ‘discovered’ by majors outside the community and then produced by major labels after the success of Nine Inch Nails (c. 1992) typically enjoyed marginal popularity in the commercial music market but derision within the community (for example, *Stabbing Westward* or *Gravity Kills*). This is explained by Reconstruction Records’ label head Chase, ‘the Major labels who want[ed] to capitalize on this “new” style ... started serving up recently constructed, often watered-down, fringe-related acts, as opposed to the independently-signed bands who have cultivated the synth-&-snarl scene over the last half decade’ (*MFTEQ* 12: 117).

Perhaps one reason for the derision is the ignorance of major labels towards the style. At the time of Nine Inch Nails’ success, several major labels—unaware of what constituted an industrial band—sought out heavy metal artists who had keyboards or samplers and began to market these as industrial, much to the dismay of fans of both genres. Not managing to gain either the support of the heavy metal fans or industrial fans, the major labels seem to have given up on industrial at that time as an unmarketable genre.

Several artists who have achieved commercial success from ‘out of the underground’ have also been accorded some derision by fans, although not to the same degree as these major-label spawned artists (e.g. *KMFDM*). This derision typically entails jokes about various artists amongst fans (see Chapter Five). On the other hand, there have been artists who have achieved some (albeit limited) success and largely maintained their underground integrity (*Front 242*, *Nitzer Ebb*). Though many fans derided the popularity of Nine Inch Nails, the band did maintain a core of fans after their

success.¹⁹⁴ In fact, Nine Inch Nails offered a stepping stone for the influx of many new fans (and therefore many new artists) into the community.

Some fans and artists argued that commercial success is not a primary concern, provided that innovation is maintained. Many fans who were open to the possibility of industrial being commercially successful, however, made the qualification that this was on the condition that the music maintains its ideals:

Of course, I listen to music I like because I like it, not because no one else listens to it. Actually, I'd probably listen more, since if industrial was mainstream the discs would be more easily available. I am all for the artists "hitting the bigtime", as long as they don't have over-inflated egos because of it [Jeff].

If it didn't change, I would still listen to it, but inevitably, when something underground becomes popular, it changes completely to suit the tastes of the wide audience, and is no longer diverse and interesting [Bogart].

The most probable reason for such opinions is that several artists have changed their style after achieving popular success. For example, Ministry and KMFDM stopped drawing on industrial and softened their style or added guitars into the music, and did indeed draw a wider audience. In particular, commercial popularity appears to threaten fans who prefer the more exclusive, smaller sense of community.

[Popularity] is actually a fear of mine, because I like being into something [that is] not very well known, because it brings the fans closer together, we feel like a family [Jeremy].

The primary reason I listen to what I listen to, is because I love the music. But I'm not going to lie and tell you that I don't like the fact that I have a music that's "just for me."

194 Possibly because Reznor maintained his integrity by creating music videos which were in no way playable on public television.

The industrial genre is so small and tightly knit, that it really is like a personalised thing ... It's not music for the masses, it's music for a handful of people that really care [Link].

Collectively, these ideologies act as forms of elitism that are in part developed out of enthusiasm for the genre, although they also serve other purposes. They discourage others from joining the community, thereby maintaining 'indie-credibility'. They create tight intellectual boundaries around the genre, segregating it from other genres deemed inferior. The music and community help to reinforce fans' sense of difference by being different from that which is accepted by mainstream society.

3.4 Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that many industrial fans experience a particular alienation from mainstream Western culture. It is particularly those values reinforced by the mass media that are rejected. The audience's association of the mainstream with a certain repressive ideal—seen in the desecration of Barbie, for instance—means that fans must make distinctions about the music to differentiate it from this mainstream. Alienation is, of course, hardly unique to industrial; there are many people and communities that feel alienated on some level. Jancovich for instance has pointed out that 'youth cultures usually reject the culture of white middle-class America through an identification with other outsider figures' (1996: 85). Hodkinson (2001) and Thornton (1995) have drawn on the work of Bourdieu (1992) to show how goths and club cultures respectively use distinction as part of a formation of identity. What is perhaps unique to industrial is the explicit *appropriation of dystopian imagery* to express this identification with the outsider figure.

I suggested in Chapter Two that one of the main themes of dystopia is the resistance force and its leader, the outsider hero. This outsider is someone who is originally positioned within 'the system', but comes to an awakening and realises that he/she must fight against it. Identification with the outsider requires an embrace of those elements that are also marginalised by mainstream society. The alternative world created by fans offers a positive reinforcement of difference, and the dystopian outsider shows identification with such difference as not only desirable, but, in a sense, heroic.

The appropriation discussed in this and in the following chapters is concerned with the recontextualisation and recreation of meanings from various symbols—often symbols of power. For fans then, this draws boundaries between those 'in the know' and the rest of society, tightening community bonds. As Anthony Cohen writes,

the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished (1985: 12).

But Cohen is quick to also point out also that boundaries exist in the minds of the beholders, that they may be perceived differently by people on the opposite, or even on the same side; 'its meaning varies with its members' unique orientations to it' (1985: 15). Those not 'in the know' may misinterpret the irony involved, and this has led to some problems in the recent past. In Chapter Four I take up this issue by examining the wider ideologies and beliefs of fans, and the misinterpretation of these ideologies by the mainstream.

Chapter Four

INDUSTRIAL MUSIC IS FASCIST?:

Irony and Ideology

4.0 Introduction: What do industrial fans believe in?

In Chapter Three a few of the ideologies of industrial fans were touched upon. This chapter will elaborate on the further ideological distinctions often made by fans. Spiritual and political ideologies have been explored separately in order to address in detail the concerns and accusations made by the media, following the Columbine High massacre, introduced at the start of the thesis. These accusations centred around the concern that industrial was fascist, Satanic and white supremacist. Since these are quite serious accusations, they are worth exploring in greater detail.

Ideologies in general are also worth examining in detail because they inevitably affect the ways fans read and interpret texts, and may shape—and may be shaped by—other aspects of fan behaviour. They may provide a basis upon which fans build relationships with each other, develop identities, and they can often play important roles in how fans define themselves. I will begin with a survey of industrial fans' spiritual beliefs in order to question whether or not industrial may be Satanic. I then focus on the accusations that industrial is associated with right-wing, racist and fascist beliefs.

4.1 Industrial Fan Spiritual Beliefs and Practices

Responses to the questionnaire indicated that industrial fans are overwhelmingly in favour of agnosticism or atheism.¹⁹⁵ Of those who practised a spiritual belief, most favoured non-institutionalised, non-Western and non-patriarchal beliefs, which is worth exploring in greater detail.

Less than five percent of participants indicated Christian or Roman Catholic beliefs, and most of those clarified that they were non-church-going practitioners. There are very few Christian industrial artists, and these artists are popular with only a minority of fans. There are some artists who have made actively anti-Christian statements in their songs.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the anti-Christian sentiment must not be read as a pro-Satanist view. Satanists and Christians are equally parodied by the majority of industrial artists.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, there is some support amongst fans and artists for learning about the occult, perhaps as part of a general fascination with the marginal. A

195 About 72% of participants were agnostic, atheistic, or listed no religion.

196 Sometimes tied to an anti-capitalist belief, such as Snog's lyrics to 'Hey Christian God' (1995); 'I beg to be free of the crap that Christmas brings, an excuse for selling things...' accompanied by cash register sounds and vocoded hallelujahs. However, other anti-capitalist artists have used Christianity in the opposite way, such as Cat Rapes Dog's 'Capitalist Punishment' (*Electrocity V. 11* 1999): 'should have spent life doing good instead of the American way ... Greedy corporations/ Sweet Jesus will smite them all'.

197 Electric Hellfire Club's 'Unholy Roller' (1998), for example, uses 'Satanic' lyrics set to the Bay City Rollers' 'Saturday Night'.

few artists or songs have referred to black magickian¹⁹⁸ Aleister Crowley (band YelworC, for example, is Crowley spelled backwards). Throbbing Gristle, Psychic TV, Coil and Current 93 have all embraced Crowley's ideas at one time. Crowley's tenet, 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law' has been a central belief of Anton LaVey's Satanic Church.¹⁹⁹ It is possible that some have viewed any use of Crowley's ideas to be Satanic.

Genesis P-Orridge of Psychic TV/Throbbing Gristle at one time started his own religious cult, Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth.²⁰⁰ However, after being accused of child abuse (the police found no evidence), he disassociated himself from the cult, leaving England to flee to California.²⁰¹ P-Orridge also helped to resurrect the Process Church,²⁰² which has members from Skinny Puppy and Electric Hellfire Club. While

198 As is customary with those who practice these beliefs to distinguish it from illusion and sleight-of-hand trickery, I will spell magick with a 'k'.

199 Despite moral panics about Satanism, and the hype about LaVey's Church of Satan, the religion remains for a large part a construct of sensationalising media in part as a witchhunt for the socially marginalised (see Bromley 1991, Best 1991, Rowe and Cavender 1991, Richardson, Best and Bromley 1991: 8. *cf.* Ellis 1991).

200 Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth (TOPY) clearly draws from P-Orridge's own philosophy, itself largely influenced by Burroughs: 'For the most part, people that are attracted to TOPY do feel a certain sense of rejection from society, and a desire to break the chains imposed on them by that society ' (see the TOPY FAQ: [Http://www.topy.net](http://www.topy.net) (10/12/01)).

201 See Dwyer (1999) for in-depth examination of the cult.

202 The Process Church of the Final Judgement began as a Scientology spin-off in the 1960s. William Sims Bainbridge, who studied the group, found that contrary to popular belief, there was 'no violence and no indiscriminate sex', rather, a 'remarkably aesthetic and intelligent

inevitably some fans must have joined the cults at one time, no questionnaire participants indicated being, or having been, a member of either cult.

Although there is, therefore, little involvement in Western religion and occultism, there are a significant number (perhaps ten percent) of artists and fans who practise some form of pagan spirituality.²⁰³ Coil and David Tibet, for example, are among the handful of artists explicit about their beliefs in their music and imagery. Some others follow the doctrine of Buddhism (Project Pitchfork's Peter Spilles, for example).²⁰⁴ Buddhism perhaps fits nicely with the overall anti-capitalist philosophy of fans, emphasising a respect for the environment, and the abandonment of acquisitiveness (see Harvey 1990: 190).

Initially [my pagan beliefs and interest in industrial music] were something completely separate. In fact I was actually not pagan [when I first became a fan] and was actually Christian. However, I believe the music portrays a realistic perspective of our world (internally and externally) in such that all things can be questioned and can influence us in various ways [Edwin].

alternative to conventional religion' (1991: 298). Their religious beliefs centre around the idea that God and the Devil are no longer enemies, but 'will stand together in the rubble, judging human souls' (Kugler, Burgess 1994: 32). The new members revived the group that originally dissolved in 1974, after the public discovered Charles Manson was once a member. Significantly, the Process members have found their beliefs to be a useful tool in 'waging war against ... greed-driven, slave-minded humanity' (Kugler, Burgess 1994: 31).

203 I include all forms of non-institutionalised, largely non-patriarchal spiritualism or occultism under the heading of 'pagan', including for instance Wicca, ChaosMagick, First Nation spirituality, and Tao (see Smith, S.R. 1998: 252).

204 Interview, Toronto, September 1998. About five percent of fans indicated they were Buddhists.

I have never been drawn to Christianity or any god-centred religion. I'd much rather worship the earth and its creatures, the power of the human mind, of love and compassion. I think industrial is a cerebral genre and it fits in nicely with my world-view [as a Buddhist] [Philip].

The pagan and occult interests are perhaps an attraction as they are seen to represent a threat to Western institutions and ideologies. Eastern and pagan religions offer a more individual and less institutionalised faith. It is particularly the organised, dogmatic, institutionalised and accepted Western religions that are ostensibly deemed by many fans to be a kind of escapism, or 'opiate for the masses', which is closely tied to the political ideologies of fans.

4.2 Industrial Fan Political Ideologies

An overwhelming majority of fans (eighty-three percent of those who indicated any political ideology)²⁰⁵ indicated their political beliefs to be Green, socialist, communist, liberal, labour, anarchist or otherwise left-leaning. Only six percent of fans identified with conservative or right-wing ideologies.²⁰⁶ Despite such a strong left-wing nature, there still remains a popular misconception amongst some of the general public that

205 About 70% of fans indicated a political ideology. Not all fans interpret industrial as political: 'Overall, the politics/ethics of an industrial band doesn't have much to do with things. On rare occasions it spills over' [Chris].

206 The remainder were ambiguous: independent or libertarian. I have simplified things here by putting interest ideologies and anarchism under the left, however this can be reasonably assumed, particularly in light of other comments by those fans.

industrial represents some kind of fascist ideology.²⁰⁷ There are several possible reasons for this accusation. First, some industrial is political in nature. Second, some fans have a distinct Germanophilia. Third, there are a few fringe artists who are possibly involved in fascist activities. Finally, some popular industrial artists have toyed with totalitarian imagery. It is necessary to explore these points in greater detail to arrive at an understanding of the connections to fascism.

4.2.1 Industrial's Political Nature

It was established in Chapter Three that the great majority of industrial fans have had a relatively privileged upbringing economically, yet they do not feel that they are a part of 'the system' or that they fit into the system's roles. It is possible that due to the high education levels of industrial fans, the critique of the mainstream has taken on a specifically political, rather than the more nihilistic approach of some other underground music based communities, such as goth or heavy metal.²⁰⁸

Industrial artists are by no means all politically motivated or politically positioned. Certainly, there are many artists with little or no interest in politics. Nevertheless,

207 The term 'fascism' originally had more socialist connotations, and there were close links with early Italian fascists and the socialists and Syndicalists. However, by 'fascist' in this thesis, I will refer to the more familiar authoritarian, right-wing and anti-liberal political ideology such as that of Mussolini, Moseley, and the Nazi party (see Vincent 1992).

208 Although nihilistic statements or sentiments are certainly present in some industrial songs.

nearly all of the most popular artists have at one time or another openly espoused some political ideas (Laibach, Skinny Puppy, etc.) while many others have been vaguely political through a more general critique of the West (whatever the politics), seeing no simple solution in any political belief.

Although such artists usually maintain a left-wing stance, some industrial music can be overtly political, and critical of the West in particular, and it is possible that some non-fans view the use of *any* political imagery or criticism as threatening. Often, it is the denial of the discussion of alternatives to the present socio-economic system itself that is a point being espoused:

Here in Germany the forthcoming release of Michael Jackson's new album was actually head-line news in the evening TV newsbroadcast a few weeks ago! ... the political spectrum has collapsed, because anyone uttering quite extreme conservative opinions is immediately labelled a Nazi ... whereas anyone voicing left wing opinions is immediately discredited because Communism has proven to be unsuccessful. So political life takes place on a field as wide as a stamp, and all the parties are trying to fit on that stamp, which makes them lose their profile... The agenda of some of these bands is to change that, to expand the spectrum to allow views which are controversial, but should still be at least debatable instead of dismissed right away. However, this *never* goes as far as actually voicing opinions that incite or condone violence, let alone violence against foreigners [Mark].

Some fans have argued that even when there is no political agenda in the lyrics, industrial is by its very nature political: 'The fact [i.e. existence] of the music is more political than its intent'.²⁰⁹ Like many underground music cultures, an oppositional

209 Post to rec.music.industrial. Poster: Mutilato Subject: RE: right wing/pmrc (16/12/97).

stance is part of the genre's identity, and by its nature the expression of dissatisfaction with 'the system' is an inherently political one, as Walser also argues:

Rebellion is critique; whether apparently effectual or not, it is politics. But even more important, what seems like rejection, alienation, or nihilism is usually better seen as *an attempt to create an alternative identity that is grounded in a vision or the actual experience of an alternative community* (1993: xvii my emphasis).

Nevertheless, rebellion in industrial is taken to what some would see as a pseudo-militaristic extreme by using the language and imagery of the military, as the mission statement of Cop Int'l Records would suggest:

Our tactic: Cybernetic digital audio warfare, infiltrate and corrupt the stagnating force of corporate music industry with the help of college radio stations, the underground press, alternative clubs and the internet.

Our identity: COP is a collective entity of musicians and "troopers" working behind the scene to spread the disease more efficiently. Those people share the same sense of subversion and integrity and are the very essence and true strength of the label.²¹⁰

While not all fans recognise the political aspects to some of the artists, many fans have made a connection between the music and an anti-capitalist ideology, if not in recent industrial then at least in older industrial, and many long-time fans have lamented the more recent trend away from political activism in the music and community:

If one thing has vanished from American industrial music in the last five years, it is the critique of capitalism as a unifying theme. I think this may be at least in part due to the strength of the American economy and the myth that the "new" proletariat (computer workers) isn't a proletariat at all [David Parisi].

210 [Http://www.copint.com/manifesto.html](http://www.copint.com/manifesto.html) (04/03/02).

My only issue is that many listeners and even creators of the music genre do not understand its ethos and origins and this seriously degrades its validity and this is what makes it much like "pop" music in a sense [TG Mondalf].

This change in the politicisation of the music has led to some older fans actively seeking to 'put the politics back into the music', as a mission statement of Dystopian Records suggests. Such labels and artists have begun to create works that are overtly political with the intention of reminding the fans of the initial source of the music as a form of political expression. The reinforcement of political ideologies is achieved through lyrics, interviews, magazine advertising and writing, album liner notes and community interaction. For example, the liner notes to albums such as Dystopian Records' *Resist the Command* compilations (2000, 2002) include artist comments on the state of the world to accompany their songs: topics covered range from critiques of war, fascism, capitalism, over-consumption and globalisation and are pro-Communist and pro-animal rights. At the same time, artists spoke of the importance of forming one's own opinions;

It's a call for individual thought. The whole problem was caused by people telling other people what to do in the first place. Don't look to me; I'm in no position to make your decisions for you. The facts are there. Figure it out for yourself (*Resist the Command*).

One artist even included suggested reading lists (Chomsky, Barsamian, etc.), while others quote Marx or Gramsci. The first CD cover appropriates from *They Live*, a cityscape with signs ironically demanding 'apathy, question nothing, consume, conform, stay passive, accept your place, exploit, etc.' and the album was advertised using clearly socialist iconography. The views expressed are not party-specific, but for

the most part are an incitement to become more politically active, whatever one's view:

Corporations dominate the kind of political economy we live under, they give rise to the tendencies that the entertainment industry exerts over us. Race relations, gender relations, homophobia, "speciesism"—these are things which are right in our faces every day of our lives. We're not answering anybody's questions, but we feel that these things are important to bring up in the context of pop music because they just aren't elsewhere. Or if they are, then it's the other way around, where women are here to be abused and manipulated, racism sells, homophobia's fine and eating meat is dinner. We have a problem with that. We're not here to say "We are your leaders, we're going to focus on one of these issues, and we're going to eradicate it." We're not going to say that, we're just going to say that we write about the things in our music that we think about. Obviously when we deal locally—Philip's involved with animal rights, and my wife and I work hands on with a youth shelter organization in San Francisco—Consolidated contributes to their social environment. We're not a band saying we can end the world's problems, we're not a band saying we can change the world, we're a band that says "This is what we see in our neighbourhood, this is how we've been motivated to act locally, and we encourage you to find a way to be motivated to act locally" (Adam, Consolidated *EFN* #13: 1991).

Of course, fans may not interpret content as political unless it is explicitly called 'political'. However, the fact that older fans, labels and artists are trying to educate the younger fans indicates how deeply some of the fans feel about the importance of the political ethos.

4.2.2 Germanophilia Amongst Fans

There is a growing Germanophilia amongst industrial fans. Several recent advertisements in German language by English labels in English magazines have used

German words—neue, tanz, über, etc.²¹¹ If an Anglo artist is referred to as having a ‘Teutonic’ sound in a review, this is to be admired by fans.

The accusations that industrial was associated with fascism which followed from the Columbine Massacre came about in part because one youth—Eric Harris—had KMFDM quotes on his website. The fact that KMFDM were originally German (living in the USA), was allegedly an attraction to the boys.²¹² KMFDM had released their final album, *Adios*, on April 20th, which was the date of Hitler’s birthday and also the day of the massacre. The band’s Sascha Konietzko, who was of Jewish heritage, wrote on his website shortly after the massacre that KMFDM was not affiliated with any political party, but that ‘From the beginning, our music has been a statement against war, oppression, fascism and violence against others’.²¹³

211 Although, for Anglo fans, it also seems that the love of the German language is just tied to liking to hear something different, as artists who sing in other languages have also become popular. Mexican industrial artists like Hocico, for instance, sing much of their material in Spanish, and enjoy a growing fanbase.

212 See Roberts (2000), Rodgers-Melnick (1999), Briggs and Green (1999), and particularly the quotes at the beginning of the thesis. There was no evidence provided to support the accusations, but rather the assumption seemed to be that because one of the bands was German, and the boys showed an interest in Nazism, therefore the band must also be fascist.

213 Boehlert, E. *Rolling Stone* 1999.

[Http://www.rollingstone.com/news/newsarticle.asp?nid=7665](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/newsarticle.asp?nid=7665) (10/09/01).

It is likely that the popular press included KMFDM in the same category as neo-Nazi artists because the band is German.²¹⁴ In another article implicating industrial fans in some form of neo-Nazi leanings (Derrick 1997), the author focuses primarily on the Germanophilia of some fans, then equates Germany with Nazism. For several reasons this indicates an Anglocentric racism on the part of the accusers. First, that Germanophilia is equated with (neo) Nazism, rather than with the communism of East Germany, the present day free-market democracy or with non-political aspects of Germany.²¹⁵ It is perhaps ironic that within Germany, industrial artists have been physically attacked for being too left-wing, and the music has been used for left-wing political advertising.²¹⁶ Second, there is a proliferation of German artists who sing in their mother tongue, and many of these artists are those that are continually accused of fascist leanings. Einstürzende Neubauten have lamented the fact that the Anglo press seems to categorise any German artist singing in their mother tongue as neo-Nazi.

There has always been a problem with German music about singing in our own language. For countries that did not have this interruption of the Third Reich such as France and Italy, it is quite natural for bands to sing in French and Italian. I have learned to construct music around the German language, which is not capable of rock'n'roll inflexions, learned how

214 Contrary to the reports, there is little correspondence musically between the disco-industrial of the band and any neo-Nazi artists who I am aware of.

215 While writing this, I discovered a small article in the UK Daily Mail, regarding the fact that German tourists are apparently the 'best-behaved holidaymakers'. The article was entitled, 'They're Not so Nazi' (Heffer 2002).

216 Feindflug from Chemnitz for instance have reported having bricks thrown through their windows (*Prospective* #3, 2000: 9). *Die Grünen* used Einstürzende Neubauten song 'Kollaps' (1981) for their electoral campaign.

the music has to be different to accommodate the language
(Blixa Bargeld in Stubbs 1987).

Besides the fact that for most of the artists who sing in German it is their native tongue, it could be argued that the language suits the music itself. Some have suggested that German is more percussive sounding than most other European languages, due to its more aspirated consonants (particularly at the end of words), which arguably makes it easier to write to a very mechanical beat:

We create out of the German language, the mother language, which is very mechanical, we use as the basic structure of our music. Also the machines, from the industries of Germany (Ralf Hütter, of Kraftwerk, in Barr 1998: 89).

Besides the language, Germany—particularly in terms of popular music—is inevitably tied to a machine aesthetic that goes back at least as far as Kraftwerk’s ‘Autobahn’ (1974), idealising Germany as a place where speed and technology reign supreme.²¹⁷ Most accounts of popular electronic music history begin in Germany—after mentioning the avant-garde, the usual next step is German Cosmic Music—see Shapiro 2000 for instance.

I have simplified this argument by focussing on Germany, which gives rise to the most anxiety in the press, but there is also a strong attraction to Russia in industrial, which, again, could be taken as promotion of a totalitarian Stalinistic regime or communism. For every reference to the right-wing extreme there is at least one to the left-wing

217 Certainly Volkswagen-Audi would like us to believe that ‘German engineered’ is the most advanced, as advertising slogans would indicate.

extreme; for example, the band Mao Tse Tung Experience, the Velvet Acid Christ song 'Cyber Communists Plotting Red Revolt' (*Resist the Command* 2000), etc. The point is not whether it is the extreme right or left, but the extent to which the countries and ideologies involved are regarded as having been the most recent threat to the 'American way of life'.²¹⁸ By embracing Russian and German culture, it could be argued that the fans are once again rejecting the values of the 'West' (primarily USA). Even though the threat of Germany and Russia has passed, the taboo of embracing these cultures remains, as is seen by the simple fact that many Anglo journalists still equate Germany with Nazism.

4.2.3 Fascists in the Fringe

Despite the ostensibly left-wing nature of most fans and artists, there are a few artists and fans on the fringe that are of right-wing political views. For instance, there are some artists, including Death in June, Whitehouse and Blood Axis, with ties to right-wing movements in the UK, Germany and the United States. These artists—while marginal in terms of industrial's community—are often cited by industrial's detractors as 'evidence' that the genre is fascist, and so it will be necessary to explain who they are.

218 At least, up until 9/11/01. Nazi writer Gregor Strasser for instance, 'We are Socialists, are enemies, mortal enemies of the present capitalist economic system with its exploitation' (cited in Vincent 1992: 169).

My list of 'possible fascists' below is not comprehensive, however, it includes most of those artists commonly named. Although today there are neo-Nazis that listen to black metal or punk artists such as Werwolf, Skrewdriver and Störkraft, this music always has explicitly fascist lyrics like 'Rudolph Hess is Free', 'Kill Jews and Foreigners' or 'Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer', something absent from nearly all industrial. Most industrial lyrics that spoke of fascist issues are clearly anti-fascist, such as in a;GRUMH's 'C.B.B. (14%)' (1989): 'Those bastards of the National Front don't bring any solution, just hate, shame and confusion', Snog's 'Skinhead' (*Dear Valued Customer* 1995: 'I'd rather be dead than a skinhead'), Kill Switch Klick's 'Fascist Smash' (*Industrial Revolution 3rd Ed.* 1996: 'Smash this fascist racist bullshit') etc. Nevertheless, I will devote some space now to the three most commonly cited possibly fascist artists, Death in June, Whitehouse and Blood Axis.

Death in June formed from an originally left-wing political punk band called Crisis, who worked closely with left-wing organisation Rock Against Racism (RAR). Bassist Tony Wakeford was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, and the band's rhythm guitarist was a member of the International Marxist Group, and regularly played Anti-Nazi League concerts. Lyrics were unambiguously left wing, including phrases such as 'search and destroy the Nazis, the National Front, smash the National Front'. After numerous problems at RAR gigs (reportedly never getting the equipment they had been promised, and even having faulty equipment that led to member Pearce being hospitalised for electric shock), the band became disillusioned with the left-wing movement, and dissolved (see Home 2000). However, Pearce and Wakeford then

went on to form Death in June. Their first concert was for Workers Against Racism in 1981, where they posed in paramilitary uniforms and used fascist iconography. Musically, the band says that the press were accusing them of 'being this, that and the other ... I thought, alright, let's go all out ... I went for contradictions' (Home 2000: 30). The band then juxtaposed Nazi with anti-Nazi elements, leaving it up to the fans to interpret, what Stewart Home calls an attempt to 'fuel speculation that he is dodgy and thus shift units of his product to those wanting to consume fascism as pornography' (2000: 30). Wakeford however did become involved with the National Front, and was dropped by the band at that time. Although the band, as a neo-folk group, does not fit most musical criteria of industrial, they do attract some industrial and goth fans.

William Bennett of Whitehouse, named after anti-pornography campaigner Mary Whitehouse, is another artist who writes songs about many extremist topics (coprophilia, paedophilia, etc.) and has also played with fascist imagery. His work is experimental Noise, and he has gained a very small following, particularly since he is one of the first Noise artists associated with industrial (having worked with Steve Stapleton of Nurse With Wound).²¹⁹

Boyd Rice is currently a part of the extreme or black metal community, though once was involved with industrial under the moniker Non. Rice is allegedly a member of the

²¹⁹ See for instance

[Http://www.lastsigh.com/interviews99/whitehousechat_part2.htm](http://www.lastsigh.com/interviews99/whitehousechat_part2.htm) 22/07/02.

American Front and the Council of Nine (the governing body of the Church of Satan). Rice is involved in the Abraxas Foundation with Feral House publishing head Adam Parfrey, who is closely associated with Michael Moynihan, author of *Lords of Chaos*, a book about the far right in Norway's black metal community. Moynihan himself was accused in 1999 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the national US anti-racist organisation, to be 'a major purveyor of neo-Nazism, occult fascism and international industrial and black metal music' (Dundas 2000).²²⁰ Moynihan was once a part of the industrial-metal act Sleep Chamber, though since then he has collaborated with Boyd Rice and Blood Axis, on a kind of neo-folk electronic experimental band.²²¹

There are a few other artists with marginal popularity that have also been the subject of controversy and remain largely ambiguous about their ideological position, such as Torbund Sturmwerk, Der Blutharsch, Von Thronstahl, etc. With few exceptions, most of these artists—and other artists who may be involved in a form of 'occult-fascism'—exist on industrial's fringe, typically in the Noise or neo-folk communities which, as indicated, are outside the scope this thesis.²²² Often, though, even these artists are

220 Although not one participant I had encountered during the course of study had heard of Moynihan.

221 Much of the information in this paragraph is based on Emory).

222 For instance, one fan informed me that, 'Maybe it would be better to think in terms of 'occult-fascism' rather than 'political-fascism'. The term Occult-fascist seems deliberately vague and obscurist but it does describe many of the individuals I know in the noise/neo-folk movement. I think Francis King's definition of an 'occult-fascist' basically says that certain magicians see themselves as 'apart' of 'separated' from society, forming an 'elite' with a disdainful attitude towards the mass of society. From here it is a small step to assuming 'fascist' attitudes - although - and here is the crux - those attitudes are expressed in metaphysical and

using the imagery or language of fascism for what they see as aesthetic, rather than political reasons.²²³

These few fringe artists are hardly enough to declare the entire genre fascist, however. In fact, none of these artists was mentioned by fans at all during the entire research period (other than when the issue of right-wing possibilities was broached), and I was unable to find any overtly (or for that matter, seemingly hidden) fascist lyrics, other than those by the aforementioned artists.

4.2.4 The Falsely Accused “Fascists”

There have also been a few industrial artists who have used fascist imagery, or have been accused of being fascists, but were not. Throbbing Gristle perhaps started the

‘occult’ terms rather than political in the accepted sense. He also points out that both magick and fascism have a common goal - i.e. the transformation of the human into the ‘super-human’ (these terms are not precise!)... Many of the individuals in the noise/neo-folk scene have an involvement with Asa Tru, Satanism, Thelema or Chaos Magick (or all of them) and are influenced by thinkers such as Evola, Otto Rahn, Karl Mari Wiligut, Gabrielle d’Annunzio etc.’ [Chris]. This is clearly a subject that needs exploring further, but is a thesis in itself.

223 According to one artist, for instance, ‘Actually, there are very few [Noise/Neo-folk] groups that have incorporated political ideas into their work and those that do often do not have a political agenda... There were a lot of philosophical, aesthetic and esoteric elements that inspired and determined the direction and dissolution of its historical manifestation... Some bands have a too simplistic approach that makes them appear like they are advocating a right-wing revival, but in many cases this is far from their real intentions which is to conjure the power of the martial spirit and admit to its appeal on an aesthetic and philosophical level’ (Richard, of Ostara/ Strength Through Joy.

[Http://www.battlehelm.com/altsection/ostara.html](http://www.battlehelm.com/altsection/ostara.html) [10/04/02]).

controversy, their logo resembling that of Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists' 'England Ignite' and the Nazi SS insignia. The symbol also means 'Danger: Electricity', which has been called 'appropriate for a band that used lots of electronic gadgetry and made repeated references to industrialisation' (Ford 1999: 7.19), and was also used, among others, by DC comic book character Shazam during the 1970s. The band said about the logo, 'The funny thing is the National Front think it's the Socialist Workers Party and they think it's the National Front' (*Zig Zag*, March 1978).

It did not help that Throbbing Gristle's album covers used imagery referencing the Holocaust—for example, *Second Annual Report* used images of Auschwitz ovens. P-Orridge described the picture as a

cold, ascetic photo of the main ovens at Auschwitz that it was agreed symbolised unequivocally and with unerring precision that malignancy [we] intended to expose and describe through the Industrial culture concept. A factory of death literally, just as a factory is symbolically the cause of creative death, death of self-worth to so many in industrialised societies (P-Orridge 1988).²²⁴

Throbbing Gristle's fascist imagery was often intentionally paralleled with images of Thatcher's Britain as an attempt to make ironic shock statements, juxtaposing images of Auschwitz with those of a Tesco supermarket being built.²²⁵

224 <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~vijay/tg/texts/text2.html> (08/02/02).

225 <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~vijay/tg/texts/text2.html> (08/02/02).

Front 242 has also suffered from accusations after posing in paramilitary gear in the early 1980s, even being demonstrated against in Örebro and Antwerp by several dozen anti-fascists.²²⁶ The band however were openly clear where they stood, and issued a press release as follows:

The group Front 242 would like to reaffirm that its members are totally opposed to any extreme right-wing ideas, doctrines or ideologies. Front 242 refuse to be associated with fascism, nazism or neo-nazism or any other anti-democratic, extremist tendency of whatever leaning.²²⁷

Nocturnal Emissions has also been accused of being fascist, especially after sampling Class War on early eighties records.²²⁸ The band even had to write 'against fascism' on their tour posters after neo-Nazis began showing up at concerts. The artist responded to the accusations,

In the past I've had this out with Whitehouse, for their stupid "New Britain" pose in early 80s—they just never grew up. Perhaps it's all P-Orridge's fault with his mission to create a white man's music stripped of the influence of jazz—as I remember him being quoted in some fanzine [in] the late 70s ... I think at the time this may have been intended as an anti-consumerism anti-globalisation thing—linking Tesco with Auschwitz and manufactured pop product, but twenty years down the line, it wears a bit thin. A couple of years ago [a] posse of nitwits turned up at a gig I did at Esterhofen, near Dachau, with white power badges and death's heads badges and

226 [Http://users.skynet.be/front242/quotes.htm](http://users.skynet.be/front242/quotes.htm) (14/10/00).

227 [Http://242.herrebout.com/242/faq.html](http://242.herrebout.com/242/faq.html) (14/10/00). I broached the subject with singer Jean-Luc de Meyer, and he became quite enraged about the press calling the band fascists without evidence.

228 See *Songs of Love and Revolution* (1992), for instance, where a chant at the start of 'We are Everywhere' samples Ian Bone saying 'We want to get rid of the rich, we want to get rid of the ruling class, we want to get rid of the state. This is only the beginning...' recorded at Class War's 'Bash the Rich March' in 1985. Class War were a London-based direct action anarchist publishing group.

dressed up in SS gear. I don't know whether it's a fun-to-shock-your-parents-thing, a sex thing, an in-joke, or just plain stupidity—but I found that stuff offensive and I let them know it [Nigel Ayers].

Slovenian artists Laibach are perhaps the most popular ambiguous and often cryptic band, being very nationalistic to their own invented nation-state, NSK (*Neue Slowenische Kunst*). Laibach have toyed with totalitarian, religious and socialist imagery. In their early work especially, the band used images of swastikas and other such iconography, derived from John Heartfield montages.²²⁹



Figure 4.1 (left): John Heartfield, 'As in the Middle Ages... So in the Third Reich' 1934.

Figure 4.2 (right): Laibach poster 'Resurr Exit', 1986. Also used on the cover for their debut album in 1985.²³⁰

229 John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfeld) was part of the Berlin Dada movement and joined the German Communist Party in 1918, continuing to make anti-fascist art throughout World War II.

230 Information and images from
[Http://www.gla.ac.uk/~dc4w/laibach/heartfield.html](http://www.gla.ac.uk/~dc4w/laibach/heartfield.html) / (10/10/00).

The confusion about Laibach began in 1983 after they produced a poster depicting a couple who 'wore a suspicious-looking armband with the "approved" star and the words "Disko FV" ... the woman had two badges on her dress, with the inscriptions "Crazy Governments" and "Nazi Punks Fuck Off" (Ramet 1994: 120).²³¹ The government had previously put NSK artist Igor Vidmar in jail for the badges' "alleged fascist overtones" (*ibid.*)

Laibach's imagery has largely drawn from political imagery, but 'It's too simplistic to view Laibach as either pro-Nazi or anti-Nazi, although its members are, for that matter, fiercely anti-totalitarian, but that is not the point' (Ramet 1994: 120). Although some have interpreted Laibach as being critical of the socialist Yugoslavian state under Tito (see Barber-Keršovan 1989), Laibach make it fairly clear that the fascist iconography is directed at totalitarianism and oppression in general, but in particular at the authoritarian nature of Western capitalism. Their albums combine songs about capitalism with samples from dystopian films, such as from the album *Kapital* which samples from George Lucas' dystopian film, *THX1138*, making connections obvious for those who know how to 'decode' them.

"Fascism is sexy!" is the commercial slogan of those manufacturers in the West who still produce fascist accessories for the "Carnaby-Street-like" market. For us, Nazi-fascism is an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, chauvinist and imperialist elements of the financial capital. Nazi-fascism under the disguise of democracy is the rule of financial capital itself (*Neue Slowenische Kunst* 1991: 57)

231 "Nazi Punks Fuck Off" was taken from a Dead Kennedys song of the same name.

4.3 Irony for politicisation and protection

It is clear that some industrial artists have used fascist imagery in their work. It is also clear that this imagery is for the most part intended to be ironic. Industrial's use of fascist iconography is often used to symbolise totalitarianism in general, rather than Nazism specifically. That so many industrial artists have used fascist imagery juxtaposed with consumerist imagery is no coincidence.²³² Taking on fascist imagery is one way of critiquing the system that exists now—a criticism that is part of the community distinction described in Chapter Three.

Most industrial artists who have used fascist imagery have done so with ironic intent. Index, for example, used a swastika on their *Faith in Motion* CD, and though they also have a swastika being thrown into a trash bin on the reverse, as well as a song on the CD where a sample repeats, 'Stop Racism', some inevitably were confused, and Eric Chamberlain explained:

The combining of Nazi imagery and religious symbolism was meant to show the similarities in thought between these two types of organizations; specifically and bluntly to the point, if you're not a member of the club then you're considered inferior. Both ideals show an archaic way of thinking, one that is outdated and eventually defeated by bigger minds who understand the necessity for humans to advance socially and to adapt to an ever changing world. ... I tried to investigate what fascism really was, and I found that it's different on paper than it is in reality. It exalts the nation, or the state, above individuality. But wait a minute. We make young American kids recite the Pledge of Allegiance every day in school, and they don't know what it means: they're too young. Yet we drill somebody else's ideas into their heads before they're wise enough about life to make their own decisions

232 Consolidated, for example, titled their critique of US America *Friendly Fa\$cism* (1989).

about things, which is the freedom that Americans are supposed to have, the individuality that fascism takes away. By programming their brains before they can effectively think for themselves we are defeating the entire notion of freedom of thought. ... Instead of teaching our children to make their own decisions when they grow up, we are teaching them to obey.²³³

The use of ironic imagery, however, requires the knowledge that it is intended as ironic. It seems fairly clear that industrial requires a certain cultural competence in order to understand the ironic discourse that takes place. This competence involves knowledge of both politics and the industrial community, and thereby requires fans to take a more active role in political thought. It is necessary for the understanding of industrial imagery to have a basic understanding of various political points of view. It is inevitable then that some non-fans and even some fans will see the imagery as intended to be fascist. Taken out of context, some imagery in industrial is fascist. In context, though, it is typically no more than a comment on the quasi-fascist traits of Western capitalism. The dangers of ambiguity lie not with the culturally aware (most fans), but with those outside the context of the industrial community. To understand industrial imagery, it is necessary to engage with the fans and with the fan material (e.g. magazines). For instance, there was a lengthy debate about this very issue on the RMI newgroup in November of 2002. Fans debated whether Laibach's irony could be compared to that of rap singer Eminem, who it was suggested was posing as "white trash" in order to have people re-evaluate white American society. The debate eventually got to the point where a main argument was that while Laibach drop "hints"

233 http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palms/6031/index_band.html
(10/10/00).

about their position in interviews and on record sleeves, Eminem prefers to remain ambiguous in both his music and interviews:

Laibach have left hints on the background of their concept in almost every interview, not to mention that they've spelled out their M.O. in tracks like "Perspektive" from the "Rekapitulacija" album. I'm willing to bet you don't have any similar references to back up your 'Eminem is all the same' argument.²³⁴

Fans on Laibach's side were suggesting that the others "read up on Laibach" and learn about Slovenian history in order to understand the band. The irony therefore may easily exclude those unable or unwilling to access and embrace so many elements of the community. Such exclusionary mechanisms also serve to tighten community bonds:

Let me put it to you this way: while I know how to handle and understand this kind of music, I would not really want to let anyone who does not know me personally and who never encountered this type of music before have a look at or listen to some of my CDs and records ... It is certainly not a mass-compatible kind of music. If one takes things at face value, misunderstandings are unavoidable [Mark].

Stephen Duncombe has also found that irony is used to keep communities small, as a 'boundary of exclusion' that 'reiterates a belief system and reinforces group solidarity':

Unlike an affirmative assertion, irony depends for its meaning entirely on context and on a knowing audience. Outside its original setting and translated for an uninitiated audience, it makes no sense ... Irony also demands an active engagement with its audience ... And as it takes at least two—with a shared meaning system—to make effective irony, this form of humor reinforces community. While irony functions to disconnect the underground from the dominant society, it also functions to connect those in the underground to one another (1997: 146 ff.).

234 Post from Locke (locke@mad.scientist.com) Re: Are they still cool? 23/11/2002.

Such a process seems to be used by the industrial community, which has discouraged others from becoming involved, but strengthened the community internally.

4.4 Conclusion

The alternative community that industrial fans are creating is one largely based on a rejection of mainstream ideologies, rather than a positive embracing of particular other ideologies. The important point of industrial ideologies is that the views of the fans represent a critique of mainstream ideology that has permeated all aspects of their community involvement. What occurs is a rejection of common belief systems, morals and values that have come to represent the mainstream as a source of their alienation, although some of industrial's values—environmentalism and animal rights, for instance—could now be arguably called somewhat mainstream.

Not all industrial fans necessarily feel alienated, and my generalisation in this chapter perhaps gives an exaggerated sense of the community. The desire to distinguish oneself against the mainstream may also be born out of a need to feel like an individual. By symbolically resisting 'the system', we are made to feel that we have agency over our lives. Nevertheless, any identification with *dystopia* (seen in Chapters Two and Three) suggests a shared sentiment that something is *wrong* with the present system. Rejecting the mainstream then becomes a point of pride. As Duncombe points out,

For most ... deviance is something to be avoided, a virus to be controlled, the tacit assumption being that society is healthy and deviance is evidence of maladjustment. But if one believes that society is ill, then a deviant career is something to be celebrated and its stages cultivated (1997: 181).

To reiterate an earlier point, the rejection of the mainstream and embracing of other marginalised groups is not unique to industrial. As Reynolds and Press have indicated, punks too ‘identified with the demonised figures that had threatened Britain’ (1995: 147). What is significant to industrial is the particular appropriation of dystopia to show this distinction. The specific beliefs seen here—anti-capitalism and non-Western spirituality have links to both dystopian and horror narratives. For instance, it is often the occult in horror narratives that ends up ‘saving’ the day, or that has, in the case of dystopia, replaced conventional religion, offering a new alternative to the previous religions that it is implied helped bring about the downfall. This type of narrative coincides with the cyberpunk movement in literature, which has little use for organised religion, although it *does* include various forms of pagan spiritualism (see Smith, S. R. 1998).

Dystopia and horror also have a connection to fascist and military iconography used to signify authoritarianism and oppression, as in, for instance, Orwell’s *1984*. This connection will be explored further in Chapter Seven. The music may also contain some inherent fascist elements, and this possibility will also be examined also in Chapter Seven.

At several points in this chapter I discussed the concept of irony and the need for *involvement* in the industrial culture in order to be able to decode certain aspects of the imagery, music or language involved. This discussion begs the question of how fans learn the boundaries of these behavioural and ideological rules, and especially how knowledge of irony is gained. We have seen in several cases the dissemination of

ideology through cover art or advertising, and we will need to look further at this. We have also not yet seen how such an anti-capitalist ideological position may affect the marketing or dissemination of the music itself in a market economy, which I will discuss next.